

EUCCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY IN ECUMENICAL CONTEXTS

LEARNING FROM MONASTIC EXPERIENCES



Fokke Wouda

Netherlands Studies in Ritual and Liturgy 26

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Secretary

IRiLiS
De Boelelaan 1105
1081 HV Amsterdam
PO Box 7161
1007 MC Amsterdam
Phone: +31 20 598 57 16
Email: irilis@pthu.nl

Orders

Centre for Religion and Heritage,
University of Groningen
Oude Boteringestraat 38
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Phone: +31 50 363 45 87
Email: crh@rug.nl

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EUCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY IN ECUMENICAL CONTEXTS

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Promotores:

Prof. dr. J.R. Först, Universität Würzburg

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Is sharing the Lord's Supper the end of a journey
or is it the viaticum for walking together?

Pope Francis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	I
ABBREVIATIONS	III
PART ONE	
INTRODUCTION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON A SENSITIVE QUESTION	1
INTRODUCTION	3
1 ECUMENICAL PROGRESS AND STAGNATION: EUCCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY AS WAY TO PROCEED?	9
1.1 Past and present of the ecumenical process	9
1.2 Approaches to ecumenical dialogue	21
1.3 Eucharistic hospitality: A debated pastoral question	33
1.4 Eucharistic hospitality: Towards an ecumenical quest	42
1.5 Complementing a charged debate	52
2 A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY: ARTICULATING PRACTICES, EXPERIENCES, AND IMPLICATIONS	61
2.1 Starting point: The object of this study	62
2.2 A practical theological methodology	63
2.3 Research design: Empirical methods	75
2.4 The empirical process	80
2.5 Synopsis: Objectives, scope, methods	89

PART TWO	
AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT: MONASTIC EXPERIENCES DOCUMENTED	93
3 EUCHARIST IN ECUMENICAL MONASTERIES: DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICES	95
3.1 Context: New Monastic Communities	95
3.2 Taizé: Reformed and ecumenical	98
3.3 Bose: Roman Catholic and ecumenical	115
4 MONASTIC VOCATION WITH ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS	123
4.1 Common life as primary motivation and mission	124
4.2 Lived ecumenism as catalyst for ecumenical commitment	129
4.3 Responses to newly encountered liturgical traditions	134
4.4 The primacy of practice in coping with differences	140
4.5 Synthesis	149
5 DYNAMICS OF COMMON LIFE AND COMMON EUCHARIST	153
5.1 Common life results in common Eucharist	154
5.2 Eucharist as a basis for the common life	159
5.3 Organic growth	164
5.4 Trust	168
5.5 Synthesis	174
6 A TEMPORARY SOLUTION FOR A PERMANENT PROBLEM	177
6.1 The notion of scandal	178
6.2 A provisional and local solution	184
6.3 A continuous struggle	188
6.4 A sign for the churches	194
6.5 Synthesis	200
7 LIVING IN COMMUNION	203
7.1 Faithfulness	204
7.2 Baptism, church, and the denominations	208
7.3 <i>De facto</i> double belonging	214
7.4 What does communion mean?	222
7.5 Synthesis	226
8 POSITIONING OF THE EUCHARIST	229
8.1 Focal point of a wider liturgy and life	229
8.2 “Do we have two Eucharists?”	234
8.3 Eucharistic sharing: Summit or source?	236
8.4 Synthesis	240

PART THREE	
CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS	243
9 IMPLICATIONS I: PRIORITIES AND PRESUPPOSITIONS	245
9.1 Division is the scandal, not sharing the Eucharist	246
9.2 Challenging a counter-argument: The ‘pain stimulus’	248
9.3 Cultivation of trust and the maximization of recognition	251
10 IMPLICATIONS II: A PATH TOWARDS UNITY?	253
10.1 Regaining momentum: Transcending the Rahner-Fries paradox	253
10.2 Inclusive faithfulness fostering ecclesiastical coalescence	257
10.3 Eucharistic hospitality as a means for the restoration of Christian unity	262
10.4 General ecumenical strategy: Examples of receptive ecumenism	265
11 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	269
11.1 Some suggestions for churches and the communities	269
11.2 Recommendations for further research into the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts	273
11.3 Recommendations for theological research in general	275
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE	277
APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM	279
APPENDIX 3: DUTCH TRANSCRIPTS (TA)	281
ABSTRACT	289
SAMENVATTING	295
BIBLIOGRAPHY	303
INDEX	319
BIOGRAPHY	323

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Holy Thursday (14 April 2022), grateful for the institution of the Eucharist.

Fokke Wouda

ABBREVIATIONS

Organizations

CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
ÖAK	Ökumenische Arbeitskreis Evangelischer und Katholischer Theologen
PCPCU	Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (successor of SPCU)
SPCU	Secretariat for Christian Unity (predecessor of PCPCU)
WCC	World Council of Churches

Documents

BEM	<i>Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry</i> . Faith and Order Paper No. 111. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982. Also referred to as Lima document.
CIC/1983	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i> . Code of Canon Law, Rome 1983.
EE	John Paul II. <i>Ecclesia de Eucharistia</i> . Encyclical on the Eucharist in Relation to the Church. Rome, 2003.
<i>Ecumenical Directory</i>	Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. <i>Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism</i> . Vatican, 1993. With occasional reference to its predecessor of 1967/1970.
LG	Second Vatican Council. <i>Lumen Gentium</i> . Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Rome, 1964.
UR	Second Vatican Council. <i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> . Decree on Ecumenism, Rome, 1964.
UUS	John Paul II. <i>Ut Unum Sint</i> . Encyclical on Commitment to Ecumenism. Rome, 1995.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON A SENSITIVE QUESTION

This part introduces the research questions (Introduction) and describes the status quaestionis of the debate on Eucharistic hospitality (Chapter 1). It then explains the research design and offers an account of the empirical process, formulating its objectives, scope, and methods (Chapter 2).

INTRODUCTION

“Yes, the springtime of ecumenism has flowered on the hill of Taizé,”¹ said Cardinal Walter Kasper at the funeral of Roger Schutz-Marsauche in 2005. Brother Roger was the founder and first prior of the ecumenical community in the small village of Taizé in Burgundy, France. The community had been a sign of ecumenical hope for sixty-five years that day. Remarkably, however, Cardinal Kasper – the Roman Catholic Church’s most senior ecumenical officer at the time – uttered these words in a period commonly referred to as the ecumenical winter, in which the movement encountered a crisis preventing it from establishing the goal of full, visible ecclesiastical unity. The cardinal analyses:

To some degree the crisis of the ecumenical movement is paradoxically the result of its success. Ecumenism for many became obvious. But the closer we come to one another, the more painful is the perception that we are not yet in full communion. We are hurt by what still separates us and hinders us from joining around the table of the Lord.²

This pain, experienced by many, sparks the question of Eucharistic hospitality: would it be possible to share the Eucharist already in this stage of the ecumenical process?

In their 1983 proposal for an imminent reunion of the (German) churches, Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner adequately captured the paradox of the

¹ Walter Kasper, “Cardinal Kasper’s Address at Brother Roger’s Funeral,” 2005, <https://zenit.org/articles/cardinal-kasper-s-address-at-brother-roger-s-funeral/>.

² Walter Kasper, “Present Situation and Future of the Ecumenical Movement,” 2001, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20011117_kasper-prolusio_en.html.

question of Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts: “as long as no eucharistic fellowship exists, there will be no church fellowship, and as long as no church fellowship exists, there will be no eucharistic fellowship.”³ The only way to escape this paradox seems to prioritize either Eucharistic communion or ecclesial communion as a prerequisite for the other. The Roman Catholic Church, interpreting the Council’s statement that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of Christian life,”⁴ encountered this problem, too. Since the Church emphasizes the function of the Eucharist as expression of full unity, it does not consider Eucharistic sharing as a viable way towards restoration of such unity in general, even though current regulations permit Eucharistic hospitality towards individual non-Catholic baptized as a channel of grace under certain conditions.

This study explores two places where Eucharistic hospitality is practiced in order to learn from their experiences and to reflect on the place of Eucharistic sharing in the context of ecumenical rapprochement. One important conclusion will be that, in these particular contexts, the dynamic of Eucharistic hospitality transcends the individual spiritual needs of the respondents and, as a consequence, embodies a general ecumenical relevance.

The first chapter outlines the evolution of the ecumenical movement, which intended to reverse the schisms inflicted to the church. It summarizes some of the main currents in the movement’s history, the stagnation of its progress, and explores the debate concerning one form of spirituality that might enable a new step forward, namely, Eucharistic hospitality. Against that backdrop, I will make an argument for studying the decades-long tradition of Eucharistic hospitality in the ecumenical monastic communities of Taizé and Bose. Starting from these very practices, this study intends to enrich the debate on that controversial topic by confronting theology with the reality of concrete instances of Eucharistic hospitality. Because of significant developments in this debate parallel to my research, the chapter is rather elaborate as it aims at presenting the evolving *status quaestionis* properly.

³ Heinrich Fries and Karl Rahner, *Unity of The Churches: An Actual Possibility*, trans. Ruth C.L. Gritch and Eric W. Gritch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 123. Originally published as Heinrich. Fries and Karl Rahner, *Einigung der Kirchen - Reale Möglichkeit*, *Quaestiones Disputatae* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1983).

⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism, 1964, sec. 11, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (henceforth cited as *UR*).

After explaining the *why* of studying this concrete practice in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 explores *how* this can be done, introducing this study's methodology. It elucidates two fundamental presuppositions underpinning this study, namely, the necessity to listen carefully to the concrete experiences of the faithful as a source for theological consideration, and to do so in a systematic way using methods from the humanities. As a consequence, this study focuses on the empirical data it produces: the process of generating and interpreting this data is at the very core of my study, in the tradition of Johannes van der Ven's school of empirical theology.⁵ As such, the study finds itself at the crossroads of systematic theology (questions), practical theology (methodology), and the social sciences (methods). This interdisciplinary character opens a unique and innovative perspective on the matter at hand but also implies some limitations since not every aspect of the three disciplines can be addressed in-depth.

Given these presuppositions and the interdisciplinary character with its benefits and limitations, the aim of this research is threefold: describing the concrete and particular practice of Eucharistic hospitality in its context; articulating the experiences acquired through this practice and reconstructing their implicit theological rationale; and formulating some of the implications this rationale might have for the theological discourse on the topic. The following lists the sub-questions contributing to this study's main research question:

Which theological implications can be formulated based on the concrete experiences with Eucharistic hospitality in the ecumenical monastic communities of Taizé and Bose in order to complement the charged debate on this sensitive issue?

⁵ Johannes van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, trans. Barbara Schultz (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993); Annemarie Dillen, "Lived Religion and the Complex Relations between Practical Theology, Empirical Theology, and Religious Studies," in *Catholic Approaches in Practical Theology: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Claire E. Wolfeich and Annemarie Dillen, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 286 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016).

Part One addresses the *status quaestionis*, the theological and academic relevance of the topic and perspective, and the research design, by answering the sub-questions:

Chapter 1 How does the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as encountered in Taizé and Bose relate to the ongoing ecumenical process and the debate on this controversial topic?

Chapter 2 How can the concrete reality of the experience with Eucharistic hospitality be studied and articulated in order to become a meaningful voice in the theological discourse? In other words: how can an ‘hermeneutic of experience’ be operationalized?

Part Two presents the result of the empirical inquiry and answers the sub-questions:

Chapter 3 What does the practice of Eucharistic hospitality look like today, and how and why has it emerged in these particular contexts?

Chapters 4-8 How do monastics inhabiting these communities articulate their experiences with the practice and what theological rationale is embedded in it?

Part Three, finally, discusses the results in the context of the broader debate and draws conclusions by formulating implications. It also offers some suggestions and recommendations, addressing the sub-questions:

Chapters 9-10 What are possible implications of the theological rationale embedded in these practices and experiences, and how do they affect the debate on Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts?

Chapter 11 Which concrete recommendations for future policy can be formulated for the communities involved and for the Roman Catholic Church? Which suggestions for further research follow from this study?

Because of the practical theological nature of this research, and considering the objective to learn from the encountered practice, this study takes a positive view on the phenomenon as starting point. Consequently, this study does not offer a comprehensive critique of the encountered practice. Such criticism is, without doubt, possible from various disciplinary backgrounds. The practice could be evaluated and critically reviewed from liturgical, canonical, and dogmatic perspectives, for instance. Yet given the purpose of this study, critical reflection will take place from the very perspective of the practice itself and directed towards the theological consensus, addressing the other options only occasionally.

Finally, this research is embedded in a research program of Tilburg University's School of Catholic Theology: 'The Transformation of Religion in Late Modernity: The Case of New Catholicism.' It relates to one of the program's sub-questions in particular: "What kinds of theology, what practices, and what forms of spirituality are being advanced or should be advanced?" This question, with its normative connotation, loosely plays a role in the background. In the context of this study, it can be rephrased into the question that this research in and of itself cannot fully answer, but to which it tries to contribute nonetheless: Might Eucharistic hospitality be the way to proceed as a next step during this liminal and intermediate stage of the ecumenical process towards Christian unity? Thus, this study approaches a highly relevant topic in contemporary Catholic and ecumenical theology from an innovative and challenging interdisciplinary perspective.

1

ECUMENICAL PROGRESS AND STAGNATION: EUCCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY AS WAY TO PROCEED?

This first chapter briefly introduces the history of Christian division and the emergence of the ecumenical movement, providing the wider context in which this study finds itself in section 1.1. Section 1.2 discusses perspectives and methods within the ecumenical dialogue, situating the question of Eucharistic hospitality within the field. Sections 1.3 and 1.4 represent the *status quaestionis*; they consist of my contribution to the debate sparked by the proposal of the German Bishops' Conference on facilitating Eucharistic sharing in the context of ecumenical marriages. The (sometimes fierce) exchange of arguments following the publication of this proposal depicts the current state of the debate. Section 1.5 lists several other recent contributions to the debate, completing the *status quaestionis*.

1.1 PAST AND PRESENT OF THE ECUMENICAL PROCESS

Response to Christian division

When considering the division that the church faces today, two moments in church history come to mind immediately: 1054 representing the Great Schism between the Christian East and West, and the Reformation usually associated with the year 1517. As Walter Kasper analyses, they mark two types of division.⁶ The former is a schism between clusters of local churches who still share a similar ecclesiological self-understanding. They can be regarded as sister

⁶ Walter Kasper, "Vatican II: Toward a Multifaceted Unity," *Origins* 45, no. 9 (2015): secs. 155–156. Cf. *UR*, secs. 3; 13.

churches,⁷ almost in full communion. The latter category of division is denominational in nature, based on confessions rather than on local churches. Kasper notes that the Reformation introduced an altogether new type of division and pushed the Catholic Church to a form of self-understanding alien to its nature:

[T]he Catholic Church has never understood itself as a confessional church but through the decrees of the Council of Trent, the Trent confession and the Trent catechism factually adopted characteristics of a confessional church. That resulted in a situation that had never existed before: confessional churches existing alongside one another that differed and differ not only in individual questions of the confession of faith, the sacraments and the understanding of their ministries but also in their ecclesial self-understanding.⁸

Kasper mentions a third category of division: the emergence of new types of Christian communities inspired by the evangelical movement in the twentieth century, often at the cost of traditional churches. For Kasper, this third category is harder to grasp because the communities involved are so different in nature and in their level of ecumenical engagement. Some even take anti-ecumenical positions. These communities are, by their emphasis on the local manifestation of church, less inclined to engage in supra-local ecumenical dialogues, let alone seek for visible unity. Moreover, the altogether different conception of church as a theological concept in these communities makes it difficult to discuss structural unity, since they do not start from a sacramental (Catholic, Orthodox) or confessional (Protestant) point of departure, but from the perspective of individual conversion. As Jelle Creemers concludes:

[F]ree churches are very ecumenical – in their own way. Their different starting point in conversionist soteriology, however, makes them unusual partners in ecumenical dialogue. Their full acceptance as partners in dialogue and their full inclusion in ecumenical

⁷ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a “Note on the Expression ‘Sister Churches’” in 2000 to advocate the term’s proper use. According to the Congregation, the term can only be applied to particular churches that have preserved the valid episcopate and Eucharist, but never to the universal church, which should be regarded as mother with relation to the particular churches. Therefore, the Roman Catholic Church as a whole cannot be regarded as a sister church of the Orthodox Churches, whereas, e.g., the particular church (i.e., the diocese) of Rome can.

⁸ Kasper, “Vatican II: Toward a Multifaceted Unity,” 156.

initiatives surely involves challenges when considering ecumenical priorities and ecumenical methodology today.⁹

Nonetheless, with Christians belonging to this category, too, a dialogue has been taking place since the 1970s, with its own methodologies and goals.¹⁰

Given the western context of the ecumenical communities studied in this research, the current study focuses (although not exclusively) on Kasper's second category, namely, the ecumenical process of the Roman Catholic Church and the churches and ecclesial communities in the West.¹¹ Since the Council did not differentiate between the communities stemming from the Reformation era – that is, between Lutherans, Reformed, Old Catholics, and Anglicans on the one hand, and the Evangelical and Pentecostal communities on the other – much of what the Council states applies to the latter category as well. Moreover, since this study aims at contributing to the theological debate behind the regulations, the outcomes can contribute to the debate on Eucharistic sharing involving all categories.

The ecumenical movement

In response to the divisions, the modern ecumenical movement (starting in the early twentieth century) tries to bring churches closer together. The prayer of Jesus can be considered the creed of the ecumenical movement: “May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.”¹² It is the testament

⁹ Jelle Creemers, “Ecumenical Recognition and Reception in Free Church Perspective,” in *Just Do It?! Recognition and Reception in Ecumenical Relations/Anerkennung und Rezeption im ökumenischen Miteinander*, ed. Dagmar Heller and Minna Hietamäki, Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018), 64.

¹⁰ Creemers addresses the difficulties of this particular dialogue in comparison with traditional Roman Catholic/Protestant dialogues, cf. e.g., the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue IRCCPD as analyzed in Jelle Creemers, *Theological Dialogue with Classical Pentecostals: Challenges and Opportunities*, Ecclesiological Investigations (London/New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780567665201>.

¹¹ Because of a different ecclesiological qualification of the Christian communities in the East and the West, the Council considers the Catholic Church's relationship with them in different sections of the Decree on Ecumenism, cf. *UR*, secs. 14-18 for the Eastern churches and secs. 19-24 for Christian communities in the West. Some worship in common (*communicatio in sacris*), which includes the sharing of the Eucharist, is only explicitly encouraged in relation to the Eastern churches, cf. *UR*, sec. 15. Since this is not the focus of my study, I will engage with the Catholic Church's regulations regarding common worship in the Western context more frequently throughout this thesis.

¹² John 17:21 NJB.

of Jesus, provided immediately after the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and on the eve of his death and resurrection. The prayer reflects the double meaning of the term ecumenical, as used by the church throughout history. The term was used by the Greeks to indicate the entire inhabited world. The Romans identified this world with their empire, an identification adopted by the early Church. Thus, the ecumenical councils (the prototype of which is recorded to be held in Jerusalem by the Apostles¹³) addressed issues concerning all of Christianity within the Roman-Byzantine Empire. Likewise, Eastern Orthodoxy speaks of the patriarch of Constantinople as an ecumenical patriarch, recognizing him as the *primus inter pares* of all the Orthodox bishops.¹⁴ A similar role is attributed to the bishop of Rome in the West, although it is theologically and canonically defined differently compared to the Orthodox ecumenical patriarchate. The papacy is conceived as a “ministry of unity.”¹⁵ The unity of the followers of Christ has thus in several ways been given practical implications throughout history.

As the prayer of Jesus indicates, the unity of the church is not merely a goal in itself. Ideally the entire inhabited world and the church coincide. This is the Christian conception of the *eschaton* – a situation in which the new or renewed creation is inhabited by the people of God. Christianity has the mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God and thus to evangelize, to which the unity of the church ought to contribute. This basic conclusion is fundamental for the modern ecumenical movement, which itself emerged from the fields of mission. The 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference is commonly recognized as the starting point of the ecumenical movement. This was a conference aimed at closer cooperation between Protestant denominations in their respective mission activities. Inspired by the prayer of Jesus, the conviction that Christian

¹³ Cf. Acts 15:1-35. Held from the fourth century onward, seven councils are commonly accepted and therefore called ecumenical. However, with Western and Eastern Christianity parting ways, the ecumenicity of subsequent councils is disputed. The Roman Catholic Church acknowledges the Second Vatican Council to be the 21st ecumenical council, whereas the Orthodox do not recognize any council after the Second Council of Nicaea as ecumenical. In its reception, the 2016 Holy and Great Council of Crete may prove to have been an ecumenical synod. Protestants in general do not attribute theological significance to councils, although many accept (parts of) the teachings of the first seven ecumenical councils, among which is the creed of Nicene-Constantinople.

¹⁴ Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 3.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, Encyclical on Commitment to Ecumenism (Rome, 1995), secs. 88–89, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html (henceforth cited as *UUS*).

unity is essential for mission and evangelization emerged. Catholic ecclesiology, too, includes this goal of Christianity, as Bruce T. Morrill points out: “[t]he theme of unity – of Christians and, then, all humanity – reflects the ultimate meaning and purpose of Holy Communion in Western Christian tradition, namely, the *res tantum* of the sacrament being the unity of the church as the mystical body of Christ.”¹⁶

The two elements of Christ’s prayer combined form the main theological inspiration of the modern ecumenical movement. In addition, other developments urged the churches to cooperate more closely. In the early twentieth century, however, churches were increasingly inclined to cooperate as they faced the challenges of modern society: for example, the growing interdependence due to the process of globalization while secularization threatened the dominance of Christianity in Europe and the world, and a concomitant theological renewal of Christian identity. Thus, both external, sociological changes and internal, theological developments have inspired and continue to inspire the modern ecumenical movement.¹⁷

Since its institution in 1948, the World Council of Churches (WCC) has played a decisive role in the ecumenical movement. With the pre-existing movements of Faith and Order (dedicated to comparative theology) and of Life and Work (promoting the application of Christian principles in all realms of society) at its core, the WCC has been the main institutionalization of the ecumenical movement. The WCC has provided a platform for interchurch encounter. Confessing that the unity of the church is already given by God, WCC acknowledges that ecclesiastical unity is not to be made but, rather, to be searched for. Important clarifications on its self-understanding were presented in the 1950 Toronto Statement.¹⁸ The WCC explicated that it does not imagine itself to be a super-church, superseding the existing churches, nor does membership demand adjustment of one’s own ecclesiological self-understanding or view on other churches or communities.

¹⁶ Bruce T. Morrill, “Good Table Manners? The Presence and Participation of Fellow Christians at Roman Catholic Mass,” *Liturgy* 31, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 42–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0458063X.2016.1155912>.

¹⁷ See Willem Adolph Visser ’t Hooft, “The General Ecumenical Development since 1948,” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement. Volume 2, 1948-1968, The Ecumenical Advance*, ed. Harold E. Fey (London: SPCK, 1970), 3–6.

¹⁸ World Council of Churches, “The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches: The Ecclesiological Significance of the World Council of Churches,” Toronto Statement, 1950, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/toronto-statement>.

To date, the WCC has contributed significantly to the inter-church relations, ecumenical theology, and the common witness of the churches in societal and ethical issues. However, given its own self-understanding, the WCC does not account for the interchurch dialogues and negotiations about alliances or reunions. Therefore, apart from the World Council's activities, countless bilateral and multilateral dialogues were initiated, especially when the Roman Catholic Church committed to the ecumenical movement. Ever since, however significant its activities still are, the WCC is no longer the primary and dominant embodiment of the ecumenical movement. Programmatically, the WCC upholds the same goal as the broader movement, i.e., the reunion of the Christian church. However, lacking any authority over its members, the WCC can only facilitate ecclesiastical encounters without having the means to establish the unity it envisions. Nevertheless, the WCC is still a driving force for the movement and a point of reference for evaluating the state of the ecumenical process. Its influence is felt through its Assemblies and statements and through the numerous national, regional, and local councils of churches that have been instituted after the example of the WCC.

The Roman Catholic Church has never applied for formal membership in the WCC, although on national and regional levels, Catholic dioceses and parishes do take part in councils of churches. Membership is ecclesiologicaly problematic for the Catholic Church as a whole because it does not consider itself to be a confessional denomination in the same way as other WCC members:

[M]embership could present real pastoral problems to many Roman Catholics because the decision to belong to a world-wide fellowship of churches could easily be misunderstood. Then there is the way in which authority is considered in the Roman Catholic Church and the processes through which it is exercised.¹⁹

In addition, Catholic membership would have endangered the fragile equilibrium within the WCC, given the sheer size of the Roman Catholic Church compared to the WCC member churches. The problem of membership was resolved by the erection of a Joint Working Group in 1965. The Roman Catholic Church also became a full member of the Faith and Order commission.

¹⁹ World Council of Churches and Roman Catholic Church, "Fourth Official Report of the Joint Working Group (RCC/WCC)," 1975, 20, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/04%20Fourth%20Report%20Joint%20Working%20Group.pdf>.

Roman Catholic ecumenical engagement

Due to its exclusive identification with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of Christ, and its tradition of polemics portraying other Christians as schismatics and heretics, the Roman Catholic Church initially observed the movement of the “pan-Christians”²⁰ with the utmost suspicion. Catholics were forbidden to participate in it, as was officially stated in Pope Pius XI’s 1928 encyclical *Mortalium Animos*. However, Pius XII, following the cautious examples of the earlier Popes Leo XIII and Benedict XV, opened the way for Catholic involvement in ecumenical discussions, albeit under strict regulations and supervision.²¹ The Catholic conception of restoring church unity was still explicitly an ecumenism of return or an invitation to other Christians to return to the Roman Catholic Church. An important initiative utilizing the space given by Pius XII was the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions (CCEQ) in the Netherlands, initiated by Dutch priests Johannes Willebrands and Frans Thijssen. The Conference established a European network of Catholic ecumenists, as well as numerous ecumenical contacts. The CCEQ operated under supervision of Cardinal Augustin Bea.²²

A major shift in Catholic ecumenical engagement was initiated by Pope John XXIII. He proved not to be the intermediate pope he was expected to be upon his election in 1959. To everyone’s surprise, he convoked a Council dedicated to *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*. He also envisioned the Council to prioritize the theme of Christian unity.²³ John XXIII appointed Cardinal Bea as head of a new body, the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity (SPCU), with Willebrands as its secretary. They employed the CCEQ’s networks for setting up the SPCU and for inviting ecumenical observers to the Council. From the start, the scope of the SPCU’s activities was limited (although these activities were deliberately formulated rather unspecified to enable newly

²⁰ Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, Encyclical on Religious Unity (Rome, 1928), 5 and 8, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html.

²¹ Karim Schelkens, “Pioneers at the Crossroads: The Preconciliar Itineraries of W.A. Visser-’t Hooft and J.G.M. Willebrands,” *Catholica. Vierteljahresschrift Für Ökumenische Theologie* 70, no. 1 (2016): 27.

²² Karim Schelkens, *Johannes Willebrands: Een leven in gesprek* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2020), 195–98.

²³ *UR*, sec. 1 therefore declares that “[t]he restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council.” Cf. John XXIII, “Allocutio Ioannis PP. XXIII in Sollemni SS. Concilii Inauguratione,” 1962, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/la/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council.html.

emerging tasks to be included), but the Secretariat soon became involved in drafting several of the Council's *schemata*. Although initially no separate statement on ecumenism was anticipated, the need for such a document emerged as the Council proceeded. The SPCU was assigned the task to draft one, which became the decree eventually known as *Unitatis Redintegratio*.²⁴

Another document, the constitution on the church *Lumen Gentium*, laid the necessary foundations for the Catholic Church's ecumenical engagement through its ecclesiological presuppositions. While reflecting on the ecumenical commitment of Vatican II, it is important to note that *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* should be considered together and in the context of the other conciliar documents, since all the documents together reflect fully the ecumenical program of the Council.²⁵ This program is explicated in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, but the implications of the Council's ecumenical intentions are also represented in other documents and embedded in the ecclesiology as expressed in *Lumen Gentium*; the reciprocal complementarity of the two documents is strikingly demonstrated in their joint promulgation on 21 November 1964. Defending the value of *Unitatis Redintegratio* against critics of ecumenical commitment, Cardinal Kasper insists:

[T]here is no opposition between the doctrinally binding character, on the one hand, and the pastoral or disciplinary character on the other. Rather, any wish to discredit the theological aspect of the Decree on Ecumenism would be contrary to the overall ecumenical intention of the Second Vatican Council.²⁶

One of the most significant and revolutionary concepts of *Lumen Gentium* is its rephrasing of the Catholic Church's identification with the church of Christ. *Lumen Gentium*, section 8, famously states that the church of Christ *subsistit in* the Roman Catholic Church. Unlike the originally intended verb *est*, this phrase leaves space for ecclesiality outside the confines of the Catholic

²⁴ Cf. Thomas F. Stransky, "The Foundation of the SPCU," in *Vatican II by Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986).

²⁵ As such, the conciliar documents represent the movements that also inspired the ecumenical movement: the liturgical movement (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), the Biblical movement (*Dei Verbum*), the missionary movement (*Gaudium et Spes, Ad Gentes, Nostra Aetate*), a growing awareness of ecumenical relations (*Unitatis Redintegratio, Orientalium Ecclesiarum*), combined with a growing need for a coherent ecclesiological self-understanding (*Lumen Gentium*) and a definition of the internal life of the church (*Christus Dominus, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Perfectae Caritatis*).

²⁶ Walter Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity* (London/New York, NY: Burns & Oates, 2004), 8.

Church. In the lead up to the Council, questions were raised about the nature of the communities to which other Christians belonged. The ecumenism of return model, which focusses on the return of non-Catholic individuals to the Catholic Church, was not yet abandoned. However, the question of membership in, or (gradual) belonging to, the church through Baptism, opened the discussion on the status of other communities.²⁷ The Council then utilized this space to appreciate other churches and ecclesial communities,²⁸ and to introduce the concept of gradual communion with other Christians.²⁹ These important presuppositions have governed the attitude of the Catholic Church towards other Christian communities and its engagement in the ecumenical movement ever since.

As a result, the unilateral ecumenism of return advocated previously gave way to an “ecumenism of common return, or common conversion to Jesus Christ.”³⁰ Bernd Jochen Hilberath speaks of a paradigm shift, a *Perspektivenwechsel*, explaining that “[t]he question ‘How do others relate to us?’ is, in principle (not in every individual formulation), resolved by the question ‘How do we and others relate to Jesus Christ, who is central to us?’”³¹ The ecclesiological reevaluation of other Christians implies the necessity of dialogue and a common search for the restoration of Christian unity, which includes reciprocal efforts to bridge the dogmatic, ecclesiastical, and cultural gaps. Thus, the Council committed itself to an ecumenical movement together with other Christians, directed towards the head of the church: Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Council committed explicitly to *the existing* ecumenical

²⁷ Myriam Wijlens, *Sharing the Eucharist: A Theological Evaluation of the Post Conciliar Legislation* (Lanham Md: University Press of America, 2000), 91–109.

²⁸ Cf. *UR*, secs. 3–4; 14–17; 19–23.

²⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964, sec. 15, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (henceforth cited as *LG*) and *UR*, secs. 3–4.

³⁰ Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 67.

³¹ Bernd Jochen Hilberath, “Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über den Ökumenismus Unitatis Redintegratio,” in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Vol. 3, ed. Peter. Hünermann, Bernd Jochen. Hilberath, and Guido Bausenhart (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2005), 103. Original text in German: “[d]ie Frage ‘In welchem Verhältnis stehen die Anderen zu uns?’ wird prinzipiell (nicht in jeder einzelnen Formulierung) abgelöst durch die Frage ‘Wie stehen wir und die Anderen zu Jesus Christus, der unser Mittelpunkt ist?’” (translation: FW).

movement, acknowledging the efforts already made by many Protestant and Orthodox churches.³²

Overall, the Council – encouraged by Pope John XXIII, the ecumenical observers, and the SPCU – dealt with various topics relevant to ecumenism, for example, by addressing questions that the First Vatican Council (1870), prematurely concluded, had left unanswered. As then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger analyzed the merits of Vatican II:

[T]he Council reinserted into the Church as a whole a doctrine of primacy that was dangerously isolated; it integrated into the one mystery of the Body of Christ a too-isolated conception of the hierarchy; it restored to the ordered unity of the faith an isolated Mariology; it gave the biblical word its full due; it made the liturgy once more accessible; and, in addition, it made a courageous step forward toward the unity of all Christians.³³

And Pope John Paul II confirmed in his 1985 encyclical on ecumenism *Ut Unum Sint*: “[a]t the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself *irrevocably* to following the path of the ecumenical venture;”³⁴ a statement often repeated. This commitment was carried out primarily by the SPCU, which, during John Paul II’s reforms, was remodeled into the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU). It has initiated many bilateral dialogues, which have achieved considerable results. Some dialogues have produced significant convergence texts, while others are still in an early stage of getting acquainted and clarifying past misunderstandings. Cardinal Walter Kasper presents the achievements and the questions that remain open of the most prominent dialogues in his *Harvesting the Fruits*.³⁵ The cooperation with the WCC, too, has resulted in important progress, which is best seen in the convergence texts *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM, also known as the Lima Text, 1982) and *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (2013). Both texts

³² Significant in this regard is the change that took place in the title of the first chapter of the *schema* on ecumenism. Instead of calling it *De oecumenismi catholici principiiis*, the title *De catholicis oecumenismi principiiis* was adopted. It makes clear that no independent Catholic type of ecumenism was intended, but that the Council expressed Catholic principles for engagement in the broader ecumenical movement.

³³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology; Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Francis McCarthy (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987), 370.

³⁴ John Paul II, *UUS*, sec. 3 (italics in original).

³⁵ Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London/New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009).

demonstrate profound convergence on doctrinal issues achieved in the ecumenical dialogues.

Another significant impetus for the Council comes from the liturgical movement, which has its origins in the late nineteenth century. The achievement of this movement was that the theological understanding of the role of the laity in Mass shifted from a passive observation of the effective action of the priest towards active participation in the celebration of the Eucharist. Receiving Communion became considered an integral and significant part of the Eucharistic rite. Consequently, the practice of frequent Communion was advocated.³⁶ Myriam Wijlens concludes that questions like the one addressed in the current study result from this process:

Increased appreciation of the connection between celebration of the eucharist and the reception of it on the one hand and the impulses coming from the Ecumenical Movement on the other hand paved together the road to questions about sharing the eucharist.³⁷

An intermediate period

The ecumenical movement is currently experiencing a crisis. The 1960s and 1970s, in particular, were marked by optimism and enthusiasm, fueled by the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II and the Assemblies of the WCC. Many expected visible and concrete reunion to be within reach – a period celebrated as the Spring of ecumenism. The 1980s and early 1990s were still dedicated to resolving the major dogmatic themes, resulting *inter alia* in the already mentioned 1982 Lima Text and the 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, which tackled one of the most prominent issues dividing the church in the history of Western Christianity.³⁸ However, from the 1990s onward, a crisis emerged. Cardinal Kasper analyses:

To some degree the crisis of the ecumenical movement is paradoxically the result of its success. Ecumenism for many became obvious. But the closer we come to one another, the more painful is the perception that we are not yet in full communion. We are hurt by what still separates us and hinders us from joining around the table

³⁶ Cf. Wijlens, *Sharing the Eucharist*, 109–15.

³⁷ Wijlens, 122.

³⁸ *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982); Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” 1999, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html.

of the Lord; we are increasingly dissatisfied with the ecumenical status quo; in this atmosphere, ecumenical frustration and sometimes even opposition develops. Paradoxically it is the same ecumenical progress that is also the cause for the ecumenical malaise.³⁹

Additionally, within many Churches, financial and human resources have declined over the past years at the cost of ecumenical commitment. Furthermore, new divisive topics have arisen, threatening both inter- and intra-confessional relations. Most of them are ethical in nature, for example, the ordination of women and the debates on homosexuality, abortion, and euthanasia in Lutheranism and the Anglican Communion. In the Orthodox world, church political disputes about jurisprudence and primacy resulted in a breach of Eucharistic communion between Moscow and Constantinople in 2018. Finally, revitalized denominationalism in reaction to globalization and postmodern relativism undermines genuine efforts to overcome dogmatic differences and hampers the reception of earlier agreements. Moreover, confessions tend to point at each other's shortcomings. Ola Tjørhom offers a striking example of this latter tendency, including this study's topic:

[A]mong Protestants the Catholic reluctance to open up to forms of Eucharistic sharing is sharply criticized, while Roman Catholics claim that the goal of visible unity in effect has been abandoned by the Protestant churches.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, this stage of the ecumenical process also offers hope as it reflects the vast progress already made. In this sense, the so-called ecumenical Winter is just another stage, one following the phase of getting acquainted with and resolving past misunderstandings, and prior to the phase of final reunion. It is an "intermediate situation between the 'already' and the 'not yet',"⁴¹ with its particular needs and challenges. The main objectives of this stage are consolidation of past results by protecting them against new potentially divisive influences and by their reception in the lives of the churches, as well as finding new ways to proceed towards the next stage of the ecumenical process.

The distinct nature of this particular intermediate stage in the ecumenical process requires its own approach. Annemarie Dillen and Stefan Gärtner,

³⁹ Kasper, "Present Situation."

⁴⁰ Ola Tjørhom, "An 'Ecumenical Winter'? Challenges in Contemporary Catholic Ecumenism," *The Heythrop Journal* 49, no. 5 (September 1, 2008): 49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2008.00380.x>.

⁴¹ Kasper, "Present Situation." Indeed, Cardinal Kasper strongly rejects the pessimism implied in the word 'winter'.

arguing for a preferential option for marginalized people and practices in practical theological research (in general), state:

Places or periods in between two things are places or phases of uncertainty and transition, but they can also be places where creativity emerges, where new ideas are given scope to develop, where experiments can happen with other visions and practices. Cultural anthropology, a partner discipline of practical theology, calls this liminality.⁴²

The ecumenical intermediate or liminal stage, too, has its own rationality and momentum. Ecumenical theologians and church officials need to look for appropriate and meaningful ways to address its particular challenges with a clear eye on the goal of ecumenism: Christian unity.

1.2 APPROACHES TO ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

William o observes that prioritizing worship (*lex orandi*), doctrine (*lex credendi*), or polity (*lex agenda*) in the ecclesiological circle results in different approaches to the question of the place of common worship in the ecumenical process. He states that the liturgical movement takes the *lex orandi* as its starting point, while the ecumenical movement tends to depart from the *lex credendi*. Many others seem to prioritize the *lex agendi*, resulting in a focus on canon law. Recalling the ecumenical process between Lutherans and Anglicans in the United States, Peterson signals that the same dynamic obstructed the process towards full communion in so far as Lutherans focused on ‘right doctrine,’ whereas Anglicans focused on ‘right orders.’ Only when they engaged in Eucharistic sharing and joint liturgical renewal did the dialogue partners notice the following:

[T]hat the theological prerequisites of ‘right doctrine’ and the polity demands of ‘right order’ were really dependent upon continuance over time and in the presence of a central conduit of apostolicity, literally, an ortho-doxy consisting of ‘right praise’!⁴³

This example shows that the starting point for addressing the question of Eucharistic hospitality is important for the course of the process. The following

⁴² Annemarie Dillen and Stefan Gärtner, *Discovering Practical Theology: Exploring Boundaries*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 47 (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 4.

⁴³ William H. Peterson, “Worship in Ecumenical Contexts: Impetus to Unity or Focus of Difficulty?,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 53, no. 2 (2018): 219–20.

sections explore the different ecumenical strategies, their presuppositions, and their implications, as well as the shift of perspective as proposed in recent contributions.

Consensus ecumenism and the problem of reception

Remarkable progress has been made over the last century due mainly to personal exchanges and meticulous comparative theological research aiming at consensus on disputed issues. The WCC has been a meeting point for many churches, the Second Vatican Council has offered a significant impetus for the ecumenical movement on all levels of ecclesial life, and the bi- and multilateral dialogues have produced numerous convergence and agreement texts. The addition of the concept of differentiated consensus, leaving space for legitimate diversity in which certain differences are regarded compatible or even complementary,⁴⁴ has certainly been important for the realization of these documents. However, Lutheran theologian Gesa Thiessen expresses the concern of many ecumenists:

Yet, despite such advancement, the slow progress in the reception of these statements into the churches is keenly felt among those who have dedicated themselves to ecumenism, and above all among the many believers whose ecumenism of life is often far more advanced than what has been officially agreed.⁴⁵

She concludes: “In short, the problem is that the many documents worked out in painstaking fashion are not put into practice in the churches.”⁴⁶ What is more, Geert van Dartel, the current president of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, signals that, despite theological rapprochement, initiatives of Eucharistic hospitality that have emerged since the 1970s in the Netherlands have only been discouraged and forbidden in the last fifteen years.⁴⁷ Catherine Clifford, too, senses a “dichotomy between the growing theological consensus

⁴⁴ Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, “Seeking Unity: Reflecting on Methods in Contemporary Ecumenical Dialogue,” in *Ecumenical Ecclesiology: Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World*, ed. Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, Ecclesiological Investigations (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2009), 37, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780567660527>.

⁴⁵ Thiessen, 35.

⁴⁶ Thiessen, 36.

⁴⁷ Geert van Dartel, “Uit de zijde van de Heer,” *Perspectief*, no. 38 (2017): 61, <http://www.oecumene.nl/files/Books/Perspectief/38/54/>.

and the lack of ecclesial reception.”⁴⁸ Clifford argues that, although consensus ecumenism remains a vital part of the ecumenical process, ecumenists realize that a more complex and differentiated method is needed to ensure actual reception of theological consensus within ecclesial practice. The World Council of Churches agrees, stating in the report of its 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea: “We will continue theological conversations, giving attention to new voices and different methods of approach. We will seek to live out the consequences of our theological agreements.”⁴⁹

Several theologians associated with the *Societas Oecumenica* address the difficulties related to the theme of reception and recognition in ecumenical relations.⁵⁰ The very terms *recognition* and *reception* themselves are subject to controversy. Dagmar Heller proposes a definition of both terms in their interconnectedness, arguing that the growing recognition of each other through dialogue and encounter eventually leads to reception of the other. This reception, then, is the formal adoption of the achieved agreement by church authorities and the mutual official acceptance of one another.⁵¹ Others, however, use the terms recognition and reception exactly the other way around, defining the act of recognition as a final formal and juridical act, while referring to reception as an ongoing process of integrating the results of the dialogues, as well as the dialogue partners themselves, in one’s own tradition. The disagreement over the definition of terms demonstrates the complexity of

⁴⁸ Catherine E. Clifford, “Dialogue and Method; Linking Theological Consensus and Ecumenism of Life,” in *Ökumene des Lebens als Herausforderung der wissenschaftlichen Theologie: Tagungsbericht Der 14. wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica = Ecumenism of Life as a Challenge for Academic Theology: Proceedings of the 14th Academic Consultation*, ed. Bernd Jochen Hilberath et al., Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008), 209.

⁴⁹ World Council of Churches, “Unity Statement of the 10th Assembly: God’s Gift and Call to Unity - and Our Commitment,” in *Encountering the God of Life: Official Report of the 10th Assembly*, ed. Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2014), sec. 15, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/10thAssemblyReport.pdf>.

⁵⁰ See several contributions in Dagmar Heller and Minna Hietamäki, eds., *Just Do It?! Recognition and Reception in Ecumenical Relations/Anerkennung und Rezeption im ökumenischen Miteinander*, Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018).

⁵¹ Dagmar Heller, “Receive What You Recognize - Recognize What You Receive : Reception and Recognition - Two Key Terms in the Ecumenical Discourse,” in *Just Do It?! Recognition and Reception in Ecumenical Relations/Anerkennung und Rezeption im ökumenischen Miteinander*, ed. Dagmar Heller and Minna Hietamäki, Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018).

the field of identification, acknowledgement, understanding, etcetera, of ‘the other’, to which the terms recognition and reception refer.

Additional insights are presented by Veronika Hoffmann, who draws attention to the fact that something is always recognized *as* something. Following Thomas Bedorf, she argues that it is impossible to appreciate something or someone fully in the construction *x recognizes y as z*. The perception *x* has of *y*, as expressed in *z* is always limited in several regards and focusses on one particular aspect. Thus, acknowledging the relativity of recognition in general, Hoffmann reconsiders the ways of recognition applicable to ecumenical relations. Her distinction of three levels is of particular interest. The first level, according to Hoffmann, is that of recognition of certain facts, values, viewpoints, etcetera, for example, recognizing Baptism in another tradition to be true or valid. The second level is that of formal recognition of persons and institutions, for example, acknowledging another Christian community as being a ‘church’. The third, finally, is the level of interpersonal recognition. Dwelling especially on the argument that the relationship between God and human beings can best be regarded in terms of this last level of interpersonal recognition, Hoffmann concludes that this level should be the most important when considering recognition in ecumenical relations. She notes, however, that, in general, the ecumenical dialogues and contacts focus on recognition on the first and second levels. Therefore, Hoffmann advocates for a reconsidering of strategy in favor of recognition on the interpersonal level.⁵² It seems to me that this analysis sheds light on the dynamics related to the question of admission and non-admission to Eucharistic communion. The debates seem to concentrate on historical facts and theological definitions, while people at a grass-roots level often complain about the feeling that they are not recognized as persons and as Christians. In other words, their understanding of the situation is informed by the dynamics of the interpersonal level.

The ecumenical dialogues take place in several dimensions. Gabriel Monet notes that the consensus ecumenism is not only fixated on the formal level as described by Hoffman - and that it is, consequently, addressed by church leaders and prominent theologians - but also predominantly takes place in the

⁵² Veronika Hoffmann, “Vielfältige Anerkennungsprozesse Und Die Frage Nach Ihrer Theologischen Basis,” in *Just Do It?! Recognition and Reception in Ecumenical Relations/ Anerkennung und Rezeption im ökumenischen Miteinander*, ed. Dagmar Heller and Minna Hietamäki, Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018).

realm of reason. He considers that the cognitive level is overemphasized, or, consequently, that other dimensions are underemphasized and underdeveloped. He coins the term “de-cognition of recognition,” to propose a transfer of the prime interest of the ecumenical dialogue from an exclusively cognitive dimension to a state in which all aspects of human interaction and encounter are included.⁵³ His view echoes the focus of Couturier’s spiritual ecumenism.

Spiritual ecumenism and receptive ecumenism

Abbé Paul Couturier, the ‘father of spiritual ecumenism,’ resisted and challenged the triumphalist attitude of the then dominant ecumenism of return paradigm. Couturier’s views centered around the conviction that all Christians, including the Roman Catholic Church, should acknowledge accountability for divisions and the need for repentance and conversion. This is an utterly spiritual way of understanding ecumenism.

Walter Kasper, too, acknowledges the insufficiency of an isolated consensus ecumenism. In a lecture delivered at the International Theological Colloquium held in Taizé in 2015, commemorating Brother Roger and addressing his contribution to theology, Kasper said:

Brother Roger knew and acknowledged that the council had led to remarkable dialogues and exchanges among the Churches. We then produced a large stack of ecumenical documents. Of course, they are helpful; they have solved many problems and prepared the path of reconciliation. But they are not enough; they remain a dead letter if they are not put into practice and become a life which is lived out. And that is the program, or better yet Brother Roger’s very personal ecumenical mission. With him everything became existential. Ecumenism for him was not a dead letter but a reality written by his life and his personal biography.⁵⁴

The spiritual dimension has accompanied the bilateral dialogues from the beginning and consists of repentance for past misunderstandings and

⁵³ Gabriel Monet, “The De-Cognition of Recognition: Theological Reflections on the Consequences of Recognition and Non-Recognition in the Local Church Context,” in *Just Do It?! Recognition and Reception in Ecumenical Relations/Anerkennung und Rezeption im ökumenischen Miteinander*, ed. Dagmar Heller and Minna Hietamäki, Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018).

⁵⁴ Walter Kasper, “Mercy and the Ecumenical Journey of Brother Roger,” in *Brother Roger’s Contribution to Theological Thought: Acts of the International Colloquium, Taizé, August 31 - September 5, 2015.*, ed. Taizé Community (Taizé: Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 2016), 291.

misbehaviors *vis-à-vis* the dialogue partner, common conversion towards Christ (and, consequently, towards one another), and common prayer. Without these actions and attitudes, ecumenical dialogue would be mere diplomacy rather than true reconciliation. In the words of Vatican II: “This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name ‘spiritual ecumenism’.”⁵⁵ It is significant in this regard that Jesus did not *command* or *instruct* his disciples to be united as one, but that he *prayed* for their unity. The same prayer belongs at the heart of any ecumenical endeavor, as it has been, for example, through the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Therefore, responding to the theme of the ecumenical Winter, Kasper is convinced that “we can only widen the ecumenical dialogue when we deepen it. Only spiritually can we overcome its present crisis.”⁵⁶ Consensus ecumenism and spiritual ecumenism are two sides of the same coin. The spiritual dimension, therefore, should also not be isolated from theological dialogue.

Antonia Pizzey summarizes Michael Kinnamon’s position, the former general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States, indicating that he, too, promotes the following:

[A] renewed focus on Spiritual Ecumenism, as he critiques the tendency to over-emphasise practical ecumenism at the expense of its spiritual dimensions. He reflects that ecumenism has ‘become so preoccupied with doing – conferences, committees, dialogues, reports – that it feels like business as usual rather than something Spirit- led’ and calls for a renewed focus on prayer and spirituality.⁵⁷

Pizzey herself concludes: “While the Ecumenical Movement is certainly not without hope, it is floundering. It is no surprise, therefore, that the current time is characterized by a call for renewal. The time is ripe for ecumenism to look back towards its roots in Spiritual Ecumenism.”⁵⁸ She continues: “Arguably, while both theological and practical ecumenism have been well developed, established, and successful, Spiritual Ecumenism remains under developed, and its potential is largely untapped.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ UR, sec. 8.

⁵⁶ Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 17.

⁵⁷ Antonia Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2019), 7. She quotes Michael Kinnamon, *Can a Renewal Movement be Renewed? Questions for the Future of Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans, 2014), 152-153.

⁵⁸ Pizzey, 8.

⁵⁹ Pizzey, 10.

Appreciating the results of consensus ecumenism but considering the difficulties of their reception within the life of the churches involved, Paul Murray suggests a new strategy for the ecumenical process. His main concern is that classical consensus ecumenism does not successfully enhance growth within traditions because it still departs from the question of what the ecumenical partner can learn from 'us'. Instead, under the name 'receptive ecumenism', and following the appeals already made by among others Abbé Paul Couturier and Pope John Paul II,⁶⁰ Murray advocates for a radical change of attitude. Specifically, he seeks one that embraces the decree's call to conversion and the primacy of spiritual ecumenism. The basic question should be what one's own tradition can genuinely learn from the ecumenical other, while confronting its own difficulties. He explains:

[T]he primary aim of Receptive Ecumenism is to ask neither how the churches might work more effectively together (the traditional Life and Works concern), nor how they might come to a common mind on disputed matters (the traditional Faith and Order concern). Whilst each of these might be viewed as potential happy by-products of Receptive Ecumenism, here the primary aim is about promoting growth within each of the traditions rather than, directly at least, between them. As such, Receptive Ecumenism represents a strategy aimed not, in the first instance at least, at overcoming difference, nor at finding common middle ground between the traditions, but at seeking to promote learning precisely in face of and across continuing difference (continuing for the medium-term at least) and in such a way as implies not the forsaking and diminishing of diverse particular identities but their intensification and enrichment.⁶¹

Through this shift in objectives, Murray looks for ways to give a new impulse to the ecumenical dialogue, which, at this point, despite the reports and documents that are still being produced, seems incapable of effecting practical change in the everyday reality of ecclesial division.⁶² Murray aims at

⁶⁰ Especially in *UUS* in which he proposes a joint effort in finding new ways to shape the Petrine ministry.

⁶¹ Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs," *Louvain Studies* 33, no. 1 (June 30, 2008): 39, <https://doi.org/10.2143/LS.33.1.2034334> (italics in original).

⁶² Paul D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning - Establishing the Agenda," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray and Luca Badini Confalonieri (Oxford/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14.

reinforcing the basic attitude of conversion as expressed in Cardinal Kasper's spiritual ecumenism:

Receptive Ecumenism both resonates with Cardinal Kasper's and Archbishop Rowan Williams's joint advocacy of the need for 'spiritual ecumenism' and expands upon this by explicitly drawing out the interpersonal and structural-institutional dimensions alongside the more obviously personal that is the focus of spiritual ecumenism.⁶³

Receptive ecumenism thus integrates the heart of spiritual ecumenism into theological exchange, complementing consensus ecumenism. In the words of Cardinal Kasper: "This enterprise is thus a part of an 'ecumenism of life' which needs to accompany the 'ecumenism of truth' reflected in the dialogues."⁶⁴ As a result:

[T]he fundamental principle of Receptive Ecumenism can be viewed as going to the very core of what is required for any real effective progress to occur at all. That is, Receptive Ecumenism is here being understood not simply as a compensatory secondary-best suited to the present interim situation, but as the essential way forwards towards the anticipated goal of organic structural unity.⁶⁵

Murray proposes prioritizing the receptive attitude and employing it intentionally in the current phase of the ecumenical process. Both in the lead up to the Council, as well as in the dialogues initiated afterwards, the essentials of Murray's receptive ecumenism have already been put into practice, as demonstrated, for example, by the influence of Orthodox theology on the ecclesiological thinking of the Council. The focus on the local church, the rediscovery of the intimate relation between the Eucharist and the church, and the Trinitarian renaissance, which has played an important role in the current understanding of the church as *communio*, are fine examples of this influence. Therefore, the strategy of receptive ecumenism is not new in itself. However, the way in which Murray advocates for it to be prioritized and used intentionally is innovative. He considers the question: 'what is to be learned from the other?' This is a question that could bring ecumenism beyond the current impasse:

⁶³ Murray, 15.

⁶⁴ Walter Kasper, "Foreword," in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray and Luca Badini Confalonieri (Oxford/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), viii.

⁶⁵ Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism - Establishing the Agenda," 15.

The conviction is that this is an ecumenically significant question with great transformative potential that can continue to be asked even when there is no realistic chance of coming to closer, programmed agreement with the other on particular points.⁶⁶

In short:

Receptive Ecumenism is about having evoked in us the desire to become more fully, more freely, and more richly what we already are through the expansion of possibilities that relationship brings. From the Roman Catholic perspective, for example, this much-needed process of ecclesial growth, conversion, and maturing through receptive ecumenical learning is not a matter of becoming *less* Catholic but of becoming *more* Catholic precisely by becoming more appropriately Anglican, more appropriate Lutheran, more appropriately Methodist, more appropriately Orthodox, etc.⁶⁷

Interestingly, this very process is reflected in the interviews when the monastics articulate their own ecumenical development. The theme will be explored most notably in sections 7.1 and 10.4.

Lived ecumenism and the significance of experience

The questions concerning the reception of theological convergence and agreement in the bi- and multilateral dialogues (Thiessen, Clifford, Kasper) have so far demonstrated the need for an intensification of spiritual ecumenism (Kasper, Pizzey), shifts of focus from the formal to the interpersonal level (Hoffmann) and from the cognitive dimension to other realms of human interaction (Monet), and a renewed ecumenical strategy of receptiveness (Murray). Another consultation of the Societas Oecumenica urges a reckoning with the actual ecumenical practice and experience of grassroots initiatives: lived ecumenism. As Johanna Rahner puts it:

The local ecumenical interaction, the shared life of Christians, plays a central role in theological truth-finding. What is recognized, acknowledged, and practiced as ‘true’ in concrete encounters cannot

⁶⁶ Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism - Receiving Gifts,” 39.

⁶⁷ Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism - Establishing the Agenda,” 16 (italics in original). Antonia Pizzey notes that the willingness to learn is not only the biggest strength of receptive ecumenism but at the same time also the biggest challenge for its success. It cannot succeed as an ecumenical method if it is not adopted by a majority within a particular church, she argues. Cf. Pizzey, *Receptive Ecumenism*, 218–25.

simply be 'false' theologically; even though practice should always critically prove itself.⁶⁸

Bernd Jochen Hilberath agrees with this by referring explicitly to the theological notion of the *sensus fidelium*: "Precisely in the present situation of the ecumenical movement, there is need to give closer attention to the 'instinct of faith of the whole People of God'."⁶⁹ The Societas Oecumenica explored the concept of an ecumenism of life as genuine contribution to the ecumenical process – and thus as a challenge for academic theology and consensus ecumenism – during its 2006 conference:

If 'ecumenism of life' does not mean to call upon the Christian communities to 'finally' do what they are 'already' allowed to do, and if it also does not lead to a tacit toleration of 'informal ecumenism', then 'ecumenism of life' clearly poses a decisive theological challenge for the ongoing ecumenical movement. (...) Academic theology thus faces the considerable challenge of reversing the (still) common methodology, which can be characterized succinctly as the transition from a hermeneutics of application to a hermeneutics of experience.⁷⁰

The Societas thus proposes radically reversing the approach to reception in order to complement the classical one-way approach, from consensus at the levels of academic theology and ecclesiastical authority to the life of the church

⁶⁸ Johanna Rahner, "Ökumene Des Lebens – Zeichen des Stillstands oder Fortschritt für das ökumenische Gespräch?," in *Ökumene des Lebens als Herausforderung der wissenschaftlichen Theologie: Tagungsbericht Der 14. wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica = Ecumenism of Life as a Challenge for Academic Theology: Proceedings of the 14th Academic Consultation*, ed. Bernd Jochen Hilberath et al., Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008), 67. Original text in German: "Das ökumenische Miteinander vor Ort, das geteilte Leben von Christinnen und Christen hat zentralen Anteil an der theologischen Wahrheitsfindung. Was im praktischen Miteinander als ‚wahr‘ erkannt, anerkannt und praktiziert wird, kann theologisch nicht einfach ‚falsch‘ sein; auch wenn sich die Praxis immer wieder kritisch bewähren muss" (translation: FW).

⁶⁹ Bernd Jochen Hilberath, "Communicative Theology: A New Way of Engagement," in *Where We Dwell in Common: The Quest for Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Gerard Mannion, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 189.

⁷⁰ Bernd Jochen Hilberath and Ivana Noble, "Introduction," in *Ökumene des Lebens als Herausforderung der wissenschaftlichen Theologie: Tagungsbericht Der 14. wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica = Ecumenism of Life as a Challenge for Academic Theology: Proceedings of the 14th Academic Consultation*, ed. Bernd Jochen Hilberath et al., Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008), 12; for an elaborate definition of 'communicative theology,' see Hilberath, "Where We Dwell."

in general, towards a genuine exchange between the levels. Such a turn would offer a profoundly different perspective on the ecumenical process and may offer valuable suggestions to overcome the current impasse. It is precisely this ‘hermeneutics of experience’ that is envisioned in the current study. I will elaborate on this in section 2.2.

The ecumenical process and Eucharistic hospitality

Within the spheres of lived ecumenism and spiritual ecumenism, the question of Eucharistic hospitality inevitably emerges. Although ecclesial regulations have evolved from an unambiguous prohibition of any form of Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts towards permitting such sharing under specific conditions, there has always been a clear stance: Eucharistic communion generally presupposes ecclesial communion. After providing a helpful, concise overview of ecclesial documents on the subject from the 1917 Code of Canon Law up until Pope Benedict XVI’s 2007 apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Brendan Daly concludes: “There have been consistent statements in principle that there is an essential link between ecclesial and Eucharistic communion,”⁷¹ resulting in a general rejection of Eucharistic hospitality as means for the restoration of unity. For instance, Daly quotes Pope Benedict XVI, who writes: “We hold that eucharistic communion and ecclesial communion are so linked as to make it generally impossible for non-Catholic Christians to receive the former without enjoying the latter.”⁷² Canonist Myriam Wijlens, on the other hand, strongly emphasizes that the ecumenical insights adopted by the Second Vatican Council have resulted in a fundamental change: “There is thus a change in perspective, which originates in the new ecclesiology and is also the result of the many ecumenical dialogues. It must be kept in mind, that the general perspective is that of a permission, not a prohibition!!!”⁷³ The new

⁷¹ Brendan Daly, “The Stance of the Catholic Church on Sharing the Eucharist with Baptised Non-Catholics Such as Anglicans and Presbyterians,” *The Australian Catholic Record* 38, no. 3 (2007): 304. This principle is reiterated in the most recent document on the issue, see Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum*, 2020, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/12/04/201205a.html>.

⁷² Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, post-synodal apostolic exhortation (Rome, 2007), sec. 56, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html#The_Eucharist_and_the_Church

⁷³ Myriam Wijlens, “Interchurch Marriages and Pastoral Care in Sickness: A Canonical Consideration,” *Proceedings of the Canon Law Society of America* 72 (2010): 264. At the same time, she acknowledges that many faithful and pastors still perceive the general intention as

ecclesiological paradigm includes the nuanced self-identification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Church of Christ as discussed in section 1.1 and the acknowledgement of “elements of sanctification and of truth”⁷⁴ in other Christian churches and ecclesial communities. Thanks to this shift, every baptized Christian is now seen as being in communion with the Roman Catholic Church to a certain extent. In consequence, they can exercise the right to receive the sacraments as described in canons 213 and 843 §1 *CIC/1983*, Wijlens argues. Canon 844 merely lists some conditions to which non-Catholic baptized are subject.⁷⁵ This is an important change of attitude towards individual non-Catholic Christians with great ecumenical significance and potential but does not take away the hesitance of the Roman Catholic Church to employ Eucharistic hospitality intentionally to promote the restoration of full, visible ecclesial communion.

Instead, rather than encouraging Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts, leaders of the Roman Catholic Church stress that spiritual ecumenism should not be limited to the Eucharist and that many other kinds of liturgy can be celebrated in ecumenical contexts. Nonetheless, the question of Eucharistic hospitality as part of ecumenical rapprochement is often entertained – by Roman Catholic as well as non-Catholic faithful and theologians.⁷⁶ The attitude of listening to and learning from practical experience is also advocated by Peter Philips when he addresses the question of Eucharistic hospitality in the first volume on receptive ecumenism: “If we take the authority of experience as our starting-point we are sometimes led to a different conclusion about what is happening than that achieved by the rigorous application of carefully honed

a prohibition, cf. Myriam Wijlens, “Eucharistiegemeinschaft mit anderen Christen. Vom Verbot mit Ausnahmen zur Erlaubnis unter Bedingungen als Folge vertiefter ekklesiologischer Einsichten,” in *Iustum. Festschrift für Helmuth Pree zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Elmar Güthoff and Stephan Haering, *Kanonistische Studien und Texte* 65 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2015), 627. Other theologians refer to the starting point expressed in canon 844§1 *CIC/1983* as a prohibition, cf. Jeffrey Vanderwilt, “Eucharistic Sharing: Revising the Question,” *Theological Studies* 63, no. 6 (2002): 828; Dutch canonist Ton Meijers speaks of “not allowed” and “exceptions” (“niet toegestaan” and “uitzonderingen” in Dutch), Ton Meijers, *Compendium van het katholiek canoniek recht. Deel II: Verkondiging en sacramenten*. (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2017), 90.

⁷⁴ *LG*, sec. 8.

⁷⁵ Wijlens, “Interchurch Marriages,” 264–65.

⁷⁶ Several of these contributions will be discussed in section 1.5.

and abstract legal norms.”⁷⁷ This obviously does not imply ignoring, neglecting, or disregarding doctrine and canon law but it does require bracketing these perspectives for a moment. The mere idea of the Eucharist as a constitutive part of the restoration of Christian unity has often been discarded based on certain interpretations of the Second Vatican Council and canon law. However, confronted with a concrete situation in which sharing the Eucharist seems to have such a function, it is worthwhile to bracket these presuppositions momentarily in order to examine carefully whether the actual experience might offer new insights into the question.

Bracketing can only be fruitful when done consciously. Therefore, the following sections are devoted to describing the *status quaestionis* of the debate about Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts. They do so by examining the recent debate about the orientation aid issued by the German Bishops’ Conference in July 2018 as a case study. In addition, they also reflect my conviction that the issue of Eucharistic hospitality has been treated all too often only as an individual pastoral question. Instead, as I will argue, it should also be addressed as part of the broader ecumenical process: all the more reason to study the encountered practices as potentially providing new insights in the positive role that sharing the Eucharist in fact may have for the promotion of Christian unity.

1.3 EUCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY: A DEBATED PASTORAL QUESTION⁷⁸

The German 2018 Orientierungshilfe: A case study

Pope Francis encouraged renewed debate about the question of Eucharistic hospitality during a visit to the Lutheran congregation in Rome in November 2015. In response to an interchurch couple’s question, he replied: “Is sharing the Lord’s banquet the goal of a journey or is it the viaticum for journeying together? I leave that question to the theologians.”⁷⁹ Indeed, the pope’s request

⁷⁷ Peter Philips, “Receiving the Experience of Eucharistic Celebration,” in *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. Paul D. Murray and Luca Badini Confalonieri (Oxford/New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 461.

⁷⁸ Sections 1.3 and 1.4 are based on Fokke Wouda, “Eucharistic Hospitality: From Pastoral Question to Ecumenical Quest. A Response to the German Kommuniondebatte,” *Catholica. Vierteljahresschrift für ökumenische Theologie* 72, no. 4 (2018): 246–62.

⁷⁹ Francis, “Visit to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rome: Address of His Holiness Pope Francis,” 2015, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151115_chiesa-evangelica-luterana.html.

has sparked debate, resulting in a concrete proposal by the German Bishops' Conference in February 2018. The fierce discussion in Germany itself as well as worldwide in reaction to the proposal expressively illustrates the *status quaestionis* of the debate on Eucharistic hospitality. Therefore, I will discuss it rather extensively in this section. The proposal itself, published in June 2018 under the title *Mit Christus gehen – Der Einheit auf der Spur: Konfessionsverbindende Ehen und gemeinsame Teilnahme an der Eucharistie*,⁸⁰ exemplifies how the phenomenon is treated in canon law as an individual pastoral matter rather than an issue of genuine ecumenical significance. In this section and the next, however, I will argue that the question of Eucharistic hospitality should indeed be considered as the latter issue as well. This thesis is also the point of departure for investigating the phenomenon in the current study.

The majority of the German bishops voted in favor of implementing a pastoral guideline, adopting a wider interpretation of current regulations with regard to Eucharistic hospitality towards non-Catholic spouses in mixed marriages. A minority of the bishops, however, disagreed to the point of requesting intervention by the Holy See. After a special consultation with representatives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU), and the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts (PCLT), the German bishops were asked to “seek ‘a possibly unanimous arrangement’.”⁸¹ Apparently, this was not the end of the Holy See’s internal discussion resulting in a change of course. A few weeks later, CDF prefect Archbishop Ladaria wrote to the bishops that, taking into account new considerations, “the Holy Father therefore reached the conclusion that the document is not ready for publication.”⁸² The topic was not closed, however, as Vatican dicasteries were reported to continue studying the topic. Pope Francis endorsed the content of the proposal during an in-flight

⁸⁰ Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, “Mit Christus gehen - Der Einheit auf der Spur: Konfessionsverbindende Ehen und gemeinsame Teilnahme an der Eucharistie,” 2018, https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2018/08-Orientierungshilfe-Kommunion.pdf.

⁸¹ Vatican press release on the meeting, quoting CDF Prefect Luis Cardinal Ladaria on behalf of Pope Francis: Vatican News, “Pope to German Bishops: Find Possibly Unanimous Arrangement,” May 4, 2018, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2018-05/german-bishops-pope-francis-communion-meeting-rome-ladaria.html>.

⁸² The letter (dated May 25, 2018) of then Archbishop (now Cardinal) Luis Ladaria was published in full in Italian media: Sandro Magister, “Francis Blocks the Document by the German Bishops in Favor of Intercommunion. The Complete Text of the Letter,” June 4, 2018, <http://magister.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2018/06/04/francis-blocks-the-document-by-the-german-bishops-in-favor-of-intercommunion-the-compleTC-text-of-the-letter/>.

press conference on 21 June 2018,⁸³ despite his objections to the fact that it was the Bishops' Conference that would issue the guidelines, rather than individual bishops. In its definitive form, eventually published with papal consent under the title *Mit Christus gehen – Der Einheit auf der Spur; Konfessionsverbindende Ehen und gemeinsame Teilnahme an der Eucharistie*, it is no longer a binding document obligating individual bishops to act accordingly but, rather, is a suggestion from the Bishops' Conference. Each diocesan bishop now has the liberty to decide on an application suitable for their own diocese.

Sharing the Eucharist, intercommunion, and Eucharistic hospitality

In media coverage as well as interventions by theologians and bishops, the German proposal has often been referred to as a case of intercommunion. It is, in this case, better to speak of Eucharistic hospitality as a specific form of sharing the Eucharist. Sharing the Eucharist (which is the most general way of addressing the issue) is part of regular liturgical life. Within the Roman Catholic Church, for example, the Eucharist is shared amongst all the faithful affiliated with this ecclesiastical body. First of all, it is concretely shared with the faith community in which one celebrates Mass. The priest celebrates the Eucharist in intimate connection with his bishop whose episcopal ministry is, ecclesiologically speaking, the most fundamental ministry within the Roman Catholic Church. The bishop, in turn, secures communion with the church universal through maintaining fraternal bonds with the bishop of Rome, the pope. Especially when seen through the lens of *communio* ecclesiology, the Roman Catholic Church is already in itself an utterly ecumenical reality: it is a collection of local churches, most profoundly unified in and through the Eucharist. Current PCPCU president Cardinal Koch therefore speaks of a “network of Eucharistic communities.”⁸⁴ This connection is not only established with Christians all over the world (Roman Catholics, Eastern Catholics, etcetera), but also diachronically: *communio* exists between present communities and Christians from past times (the heavenly church or church triumphant), as well as with generations to come. This conception of full

⁸³ Francis, “Press Conference on the Return Flight from Geneva,” June 21, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/june/documents/papa-francesco_20180621_voloritorno-ginevra.html.

⁸⁴ Kurt Koch, *Die Kirche Gottes: Gemeinschaft im Geheimnis des Glaubens* (Augsburg: Sankt-Ulrich-Verlag, 2007), 34–36. Title of that section in German: “Kirche als Netz von eucharistischen Gemeinschaften,” (translation: FW).

communion, expressed most profoundly in the celebration of the Eucharist,⁸⁵ inevitably makes the question of Eucharistic sharing in general a matter of universal significance. Full communion implies that Christians from different traditions within the communion (for example, Latin, Antiochian, or Byzantine) can celebrate church unity by sharing the Eucharist. Priests and bishops, in turn, can concelebrate the Eucharist. The (current) Roman Catholic conviction is that sharing or concelebrating are, in principle, impossible between those who are not in full communion.⁸⁶ In 1992, then CDF prefect Cardinal Ratzinger stressed that “[t]he unity of the Eucharist and the unity of the Episcopate *with Peter and under Peter* are not independent roots of the unity of the Church, since Christ instituted the Eucharist and the Episcopate as essentially interlinked realities,”⁸⁷ thereby articulating the foundations of the Roman Catholic hesitance to share the Eucharist with Christians who are not in full communion with the bishop of Rome. Nevertheless, the relationship with other Christian churches and communities is defined by communion as well, founded in Baptism. This communion, however, is not full but only partly realized.⁸⁸

Other communions, such as the Anglican communion, operate according to similar principles. However, between two such communions, no full communion exists (as of yet). If a member of one communion wishes to partake of the Eucharist celebrated in another communion, one will encounter one’s own ecclesial law as well as that of the other communion promoting or prohibiting participation. We can differentiate between levels of admission, as Faith and Order did in its 1971 report, which speaks of limited, general, and

⁸⁵ The Eucharist understood as an expression of unity inspires the prohibition of sharing the Eucharist with those not in full communion. However, others argue that the Eucharist, as the “source and summit of Christian life” (*LG* sec. 11) is just as much the source for unity.

⁸⁶ With many Churches and communities, fundamental differences in understanding of ministry and sacraments still prevent full communion. In the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches, such differences barely exist. The Roman Catholic Church, therefore, regards them as proper sister churches and stimulates Eucharistic sharing with these communities. However, since this attitude is not reciprocal, even in these relationships Eucharistic sharing is uncommon.

⁸⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and Joseph Ratzinger, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion,” Vatican website, 1992, sec. 14, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communionis-notio_en.html (italics in original).

⁸⁸ *UR*, sec. 3 discriminates between full communion/*communio plena* and imperfect communion/*communio non plena* or *imperfecta*. The latter is not further defined or differentiated: the concept seems to indicate a continuous scale rather than clearly defined levels or stages.

reciprocal participation in the Eucharist.⁸⁹ The latter, the level of reciprocal participation, is what can be defined as intercommunion. It is an agreement between communions that their lay members can participate fully in the Eucharistic celebrations of both. It is the closest to full communion. In the case of general admission, one communion allows members of another communion to receive the Eucharist based on their membership of that specific communion. The most restrictive category is that of limited admission. It does allow for participation in some cases based on membership and/or other criteria, such as occasion, circumstances, etcetera. Both levels lack reciprocity and can be categorized as a one-sided invitation towards individual members of other communions for occasional or durable participation in the Eucharist. In my opinion, the term Eucharistic hospitality suits this situation best.⁹⁰

The case of the German guidelines, as we will see, is a question of limited admission. Its preconditions are not so much based on a particular membership but on certain circumstances (a mixed marriage) and individual spiritual needs. The document does not include arrangements for reciprocity. In line with the considerations above, it is better to speak of Eucharistic hospitality than of intercommunion.

Eucharistic hospitality as a pastoral question

Several things should be considered concerning the document *Mit Christus gehen*. First of all, the document published by the German Bishops' Conference is an orientation aid, even though it was initially presented as a pastoral guideline,⁹¹ intended to assist pastors in their pastoral care for marriages in which one partner is Roman Catholic and the other a non-Catholic Christian. As a consequence, it is a pastoral rather than a dogmatic or juridical document. The main question the document is concerned with is expressed by the bishops when they write: "We indicate how spouses in confession-uniting marriages (*konfessionsverbindende Ehe*), through pastoral counseling, can arrive at a moral

⁸⁹ World Council of Churches, *Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents*, Faith and Order Paper 59 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971), 63–64.

⁹⁰ For a more elaborated reflection on the terminology, see Giulia Casadei and Fokke Wouda, "Eucharistic Hospitality: Reconsidering the Terminology," *Perspectief*, no. 34 (2016): 50–57, <http://www.oecumene.nl/files/Books/Perspectief/34/index.html#50>.

⁹¹ The only difference is that a proper guideline established by the German Bishop's Conference would have had binding implications for the policy of individual bishops in their dioceses. The final *Orientierungshilfe* expresses the same principles (it is not clear if and to what extent the text has been rewritten in the meantime), but merely act as suggestions for bishops to contemplate.

discernment which they can publicly express in the Catholic Church, when appropriate by receiving Holy Communion, too.”⁹² Or, quoting the press-release about the original draft, the main question is: “to examine the concrete situation in pastoral dialogue and to come to a responsible discernment concerning the non-Catholic partner’s ability to receive Holy Communion.”⁹³ By this expression, the bishops seem to have captured Pope Francis’ preferred pastoral approach rather well: to depart from people’s actual situation and to discern from that point a realistic and merciful path towards the ideals of the church.

Additionally, the bishops tie their proposal to a specific interpretation of canon law. Canon 844§4 of the *Code of Canon Law* of 1983 (CIC/1983), which governs the admission of non-Catholics to communion and which is explicitly quoted by the bishops, states that when “danger of death is present, or if, in the judgment of the diocesan bishop or conference of bishops, some other grave necessity urges it, Catholic ministers administer these same sacraments licitly also to other Christians.”

The majority of the German bishops have concluded that the durable situation of mixed couples itself can be considered a grave necessity and that the bishops’ conference has the competence to implement this wider interpretation. In order to clarify the nature of the grave necessity in the context of mixed marriages, *Mit Christus gehen* states:

It is a grave necessity when the faith, which inspired a woman and a man to administer the sacrament of Matrimony to one another and to reciprocally receive it from one another, sparks a desire to receive

⁹² Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, “Mit Christus gehen,” sec. 6. Original text in German: “Wir zeigen, wie Eheleute, die in einer konfessionsverbindenden Ehe leben, in pastoraler Begleitung zu einer Gewissensentscheidung kommen können, der sie öffentlich in der katholischen Kirche Ausdruck verleihen können, gegebenenfalls auch mit dem Empfang der Kommunion” (translation: FW).

⁹³ Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, “Pressebericht des Vorsitzenden der Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, Kardinal Reinhard Marx, anlässlich der Pressekonferenz zum Abschluss der Frühjahrs-Vollversammlung der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz am 22. Februar 2018 in Ingolstadt,” February 22, 2018, 5, https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2018/2018-033-Pressebericht-FVV-Ingolstadt.pdf. Original text in German: “um im seelsorglichen Gespräch die konkrete Situation anzuschauen und zu einer verantwortbaren Entscheidung über die Möglichkeit des Kommunionempfangs des nichtkatholischen Partners zu kommen” (translation: FW).

Communion together, without the opportunity to respond to this wish with the blessing of the church.⁹⁴

The press release of 22 February formulates a little stronger that “in interconfessional marriages, in individual cases, the spiritual hunger for common reception of Communion can be so pressing that it can become a hazard to the marriage and the faith of the spouse not to be allowed to respond to it.”⁹⁵

The intention is clear: to resolve the specific challenges partners in a mixed marriage experience in their marital bond or personal faith due to the inability to receive Communion together with their spouses. In this sense, the document truly is a *pastoral* aid, concerned primarily with the spiritual well-being of Catholic individuals and their spouses.⁹⁶

The debate: Objections with some considerations

Several objections were made to the proposal before the final document was released. Some mentioned here come from the bishops that urged Rome to intervene, while others were expressed in the subsequent international debate. I will discuss them because they summarize the debate about the topic of Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts.

The first objection is formal in nature. It considers the competence of bishops' conferences in general to address the question in the first place. Cardinal Woelki, archbishop of Cologne and informal leader of those voting against the proposal, explains that the topic is so important “that we consider it

⁹⁴ Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, “Mit Christus gehen,” sec. 18. Original text in German: “Es ist eine große Not, wenn der Glaube, der eine Frau und einen Mann dazu geführt hat, einander das Sakrament der Ehe zu spenden und es wechselseitig voneinander zu empfangen, zur Sehnsucht nach der gemeinsamen Kommunion führt, ohne dass sich ein Weg zeigt, diesem Wunsch mit dem Segen der Kirche zu entsprechen” (translation: FW).

⁹⁵ Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, “Pressebericht des Vorsitzenden der DBK,” 5. Original text in German: “in konfessionsverschiedenen Ehen im Einzelfall der geistliche Hunger nach dem gemeinsamen Empfang der Kommunion so drängend sein kann, dass es eine Gefährdung der Ehe und des Glaubens der Ehepartner nach sich ziehen könnte, ihn nicht stillen zu dürfen” (translation: FW).

⁹⁶ The bishops hereby take into account the interpretation of grave necessity provided by Pope John Paul II. He leaves out the precondition of danger of death and only speaks of non-Catholics “who greatly desire to receive these sacraments” (*UUS*, sec. 46; John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Encyclical on the Eucharist in Relation to the Church (Rome, 2003), sec. 46 (henceforth cited as *EE*)) and concludes that “the intention is to meet a grave spiritual need for the eternal salvation of an individual believer” (*EE*, sec. 45).

imperative to address this together with the church universal.”⁹⁷ Obviously, the topic involved finds itself at the crossroads of pastoral responsibility on the one hand and church teaching and discipline on the other, which makes the deliberations of Cardinal Woelki and others understandable. However, as Dutch auxiliary bishop Msgr. Hendriks, member of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, points out: “it is clear that drafting such a document – as far as the pastoral aim is embedded in the general terms and conditions of canon law – belongs to the responsibility and task of the bishops’ conference”.⁹⁸ The question of whether this is indeed the case in this particular instance has been the prime motivation in taking the issue to Rome.

The second objection is focused on the content of the proposal. Provided that the bishops’ conference is competent to implement new guidelines, the question remains if the chosen solution is in fact within the existing norms. Does the situation of mixed marriages automatically constitute the grave necessity required by canon law? The document clearly does not consider every mixed couple to meet this criterion. It explicitly states that this only applies to individual cases and that proper discernment is needed. Of course, in the end, discernment in individual cases could theoretically imply that the majority of couples is granted such permission.

A third objection is closely related to the second. Although many bishops’ conferences have ruled that mixed couples can receive Communion together on the occasion of their wedding day (even though general policy often is to discourage celebrating Mass at all during mixed weddings, out of respect for all traditions involved), it is rather uncommon to extend Eucharistic hospitality beyond the ceremony. Ruth Reardon, founding member of the British Association of Interchurch Families, analyses that the *Ecumenical Directory* does not explicitly refer to “certain circumstances, by way of exception, and under

⁹⁷ Rainer Maria Woelki, cited in Katholisch.de, “Woelki ruft im Streit um Kommunion zu Gelassenheit auf,” April 7, 2018, <https://www.katholisch.de/aktuelles/aktuelle-artikel/kommunion-fur-protestanten-woelki-erstaunt-uber-rummel>. Original text in German: “dass wir denken, es sei notwendig, dies miteinander mit der Weltkirche abzustimmen” (translation: FW).

⁹⁸ Jan Hendriks, “Communie voor gemengd-gehuwden? De handreiking van de Duitse bisschoppen en het antwoord van Rome,” May 16, 2018. Original text in Dutch: “Het is echter duidelijk dat het uitwerken van een dergelijk document - als de pastorale doelstelling binnen de algemene voorwaarden en bepalingen van het canoniek recht bewaard blijft - tot de bevoegdheid en taak van een bisschoppenconferentie behoort” (translation: FW).

certain conditions”⁹⁹ as occasions, but that they may just as well include cases: “Here ‘cases’ is taken to refer to couples, that is, to persons and not to ‘occasions’.”¹⁰⁰ Such a reading of the *Directory* would allow for the interpretation proposed by the German initiative. Indeed, the orientation aid states: “This reference not only directs the attention towards a specific situation, but also towards a specific attitude of people.”¹⁰¹

Fourth, Dutch Cardinal Eijk expressed his concern that “Protestants do not share the faith in the priesthood and the Eucharist.”¹⁰² Canon law requires non-Catholics who wish to receive Communion to express faith in Catholic teaching about the sacrament. As a matter of fact, immense ecumenical work has been done in this field, as can be seen in the 2017 Catholic-Lutheran dialogue document *From Conflict to Communion*.¹⁰³ Apart from that, individual Lutherans (or other Protestants) may have developed considerable understanding of and faith in Catholic teaching at this point. Partners in mixed marriages seem the most likely to gain insight in Catholic doctrine, provided that they engage in a sincere dialogue with their spouses. Moreover, Cardinal Kasper, former president of the PCPCU, points out that few Catholics would be able to

⁹⁹ Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican, 1993), sec. 129, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/documenti/testo-in-inglese.html>. Usually referred to as *Ecumenical Directory*.

¹⁰⁰ Reardon does so in response to the 1999 document of the Bishops conferences of England & Wales, Ireland, and Schotland, *One Bread One Body*. Ruth Reardon, “One Bread One Body: A Commentary From an Interchurch Family Point of View,” *One in Christ* 35, no. 2 (1999): this article was consulted at http://www.interchurchfamilies.org/articles/OBOB_commentary.html.

¹⁰¹ Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, “Mit Christus gehen,” sec. 16. Original text in German: “Dieser Hinweis richtet die Aufmerksamkeit nicht nur auf eine bestimmte Situation, sondern auch auf eine bestimmte Einstellung der Menschen” (translation: FW).

¹⁰² Willem Jacobus Eijk, “Cardinal Eijk: Pope Francis Needed to Give Clarity on Intercommunion,” New Catholic Register website, May 7, 2018, http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/cardinal-eijk-pope-needed-to-give-clarity-to-german-bishops-on-intercommuni?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+NCRegisterDailyBlog+National+Catholic+Register#When%3A2018-05-7+08%3A03%3A0.

¹⁰³ The Lutheran World Federation and The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>. See especially sec. 140-161. The document states in sec. 153 that “[t]he question of the reality of the presence of Jesus Christ in the Lord’s Supper is not a matter of controversy between Catholics and Lutherans.” The Lutheran-Catholic debate rather circles around the question of presiding over the Eucharist and the sacrament of orders in general.

distinguish formal Roman Catholic transubstantiation theory from Lutheran teaching on consubstantiation – and that the Catholic Church does not expect them to as a prerequisite for receiving Communion. So, by what standards are non-Catholics evaluated?¹⁰⁴ In any case, and as expected, the German bishops encourage pastors to educate couples who request permission to receive Communion together. The document mentions this on several occasions and provides a guide to help pastors engage with the topic.

Finally, Cardinal Chaput, archbishop of Philadelphia, raises the question of the sliding scale or slippery slope. Although he believes that it is not the intention of the German proposal, he fears that “[o]nce this step is taken, pressure to widen intercommunion will naturally increase, with diminishing reasons and credibility to resist it,” and “what happens in Germany, will not stay in Germany.”¹⁰⁵

1.4 EUCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY: TOWARDS AN ECUMENICAL QUEST¹⁰⁶

Interpretation of Pope Francis’ comments

Despite his initial decision to stall publication of the document, Pope Francis eventually endorsed its content. His hesitation towards publication seems to be inspired more by church political reasons (for example, the unity of the German and universal episcopates) than by theological or canonical arguments. Yet, it seems that Francis, unlike *Mit Christus gehen*, understands the question of Eucharistic hospitality not as an isolated individual pastoral question, but as a genuinely ecumenical issue with much wider implications. This assumption is partly based on the fact that he, in his responses to the German bishops, first of all praises their ecumenical commitment before addressing the guidelines themselves. But mostly, it is based on his remarks during his 2015 visit to the Lutheran congregation in Rome, already mentioned above.

It is worthwhile reading Francis’ remarks in context since they deal with the same topic as the German proposal. His words were uttered during a

¹⁰⁴ Walter Kasper, “Kasper: Ehrlich über Kommunion-Teilnahme nachdenken,” *Katholisch.De*, April 23, 2018, <https://www.katholisch.de/aktuelles/aktuelle-artikel/kasper-ehrlich-uber-kommunion-teilnahme-nachdenken>.

¹⁰⁵ John L. Allen Jr., “Chaput: German Intercommunion Row Not Just a ‘Religious Quirk,’” May 28, 2018, <https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2018/05/28/chaput-german-intercommunion-row-not-just-a-religious-quirk/>.

¹⁰⁶ Sections 1.3 and 1.4 are based on Wouda, “Eucharistic Hospitality.”

historical visit to the Lutheran community in Rome on 15 November 2015. Some parish members had prepared questions for Pope Francis. One of them, a Lutheran woman named Anke de Bernardinis, who had a Roman Catholic husband, expressed her sorrow that they had been unable to share the Eucharist as a family and asked the pope: “what more can we do to reach communion on this point?”¹⁰⁷ Pope Francis gave an elaborate answer, of which I quote some extensive excerpts:

[O]n the journey, I wonder – and I don’t know how to answer, but I am making your question my own – I ask myself: ‘Is sharing the Lord’s Supper the end of a journey or is it the viaticum for walking together?’ I leave the question to the theologians, to those who understand. It is true that in a certain sense sharing is saying that there are no differences between us, that we have the same doctrine – I underline the word, a difficult word to understand – but I ask myself: don’t we have the same Baptism? And if we have the same Baptism, we have to walk together. You are a witness to an even profound journey because it is a conjugal journey, truly a family journey, of human love and of shared faith.

(...) The question: and the Supper? There are questions to which only if one is honest with oneself and with the few theological ‘lights’ that I have, one must respond the same, you see.

(...) I respond to your question only with a question: how can I participate with my husband, so that the Lord’s Supper may accompany me on my path? It is a problem to which each person must respond. A pastor friend of mine said to me: ‘We believe that the Lord is present there. He is present. You believe that the Lord is present. So what is the difference?’ – ‘Well, there are explanations, interpretations...’. Life is greater than explanations and interpretations. Always refer to Baptism: ‘One faith, one Baptism, one Lord’, as Paul tells us, and take the outcome from there. I would never dare give permission to do this because I do not have the authority. One Baptism, one Lord, one faith. Speak with the Lord and go forward. I do not dare say more.¹⁰⁸

There are many layers in this response (which in fact is even longer and includes several anecdotes). I think that several important elements should be kept in mind when considering the pope’s responses to the German bishops.

¹⁰⁷ Francis, “Visit to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rome.”

¹⁰⁸ Francis.

First of all, although Francis eventually addresses Mrs. de Bernardinis' personal situation, he clearly positions it in the wider context of ecumenical relations: he even includes himself. The "profound journey" of mixed couples is thus really incorporated into the wider ecumenical process. The pastoral situation of these couples, then, should not be isolated from the rest of the church or its ecumenical commitment. I suggest that *Mit Christus gehen* should be considered in this light. Even though the bishops focus primarily on the pastoral dimension of the question, the situation of mixed marriages cannot be isolated from the larger ecumenical process. In many regards, interdenominational couples are, or have to potential to be, among the forerunners along the ecumenical way. The German bishops eventually acknowledge this when they write:

When confession-uniting couples, based on a personal moral judgement, partake of the Eucharist together, it reminds us that further growth in unity is necessary, both in the concrete situation of this marriage as well as between divided Churches. Thus, the confession-uniting couples, who partake in Communion together and who do not yield the longing for the unity of the Church, also become a sign of and a driving force for the ecumenical effort in the quest for full unity between all Christians.¹⁰⁹

When he insists that we walk together, Pope Francis embraces the post-conciliar view on ecumenism. No longer are others expected to "walk with us," that is, to return to the ranks of Roman Catholicism. Pope John Paul II says:

¹⁰⁹ Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, "Mit Christus gehen," sec. 57. Original text in German: "Wenn konfessionsverbindende Eheleute aufgrund einer persönlichen Gewissensentscheidung gemeinsam an der Eucharistie teilnehmen, erinnert dies daran, dass ein weiteres Wachsen in der Einheit nötig ist, sowohl in der konkreten Situation dieser Ehe als auch zwischen den getrennten Kirchen. So werden die konfessionsverbindende Ehepaare, die gemeinsam an der Kommunion teilnehmen und die Sehnsucht nach der Einheit der Kirche nicht aufgeben, auch zum Zeichen und Motor für das ökumenische Vorankommen in der Suche nach der vollen Einheit aller Christen" (translation: FW). Still, *Mit Christus gehen* considers this merely as a consequence of the practice, not as an intention. The bishops confirm that the Eucharist should not be instrumentalized for the promotion of Christian unity (cf. sec. 3). Secondly, in my opinion, this does not imply that these couples should feel obliged to take more responsibility for Christian unity than any other faithful (which, of course, they may voluntarily): their faithfulness to both faith communities and their unity in the sacraments of Baptism and holy matrimony (and now, in some cases, in Eucharistic communion) already unites confessions in a profoundly existential way (hence the German *konfessionsverbindende Ehe*).

At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord, who teaches people to interpret carefully the ‘signs of the times.’¹¹⁰

An ecumenism of return is a theological principle from the past. Its ecclesial and pastoral consequences should be, too. Ecumenism aims at unity between communities.¹¹¹ Furthermore:

From this eschatological and spiritual perspective the goal of ecumenism cannot be described simply as ‘the others’ returning to the fold of the Catholic Church. The goal of full unity can only be achieved through conversion, when all are impelled by the spirit of God to turn to the one head of the church, Christ Jesus.¹¹²

Therefore, it does not engage in any form of proselytism, which should be avoided.¹¹³ In line with this conviction, Cardinal Eijk’s comment about mixed couples who seek to receive Communion together, namely, that “[b]y accepting [the Eucharist], the person can, however, do only one thing: enter into full communion with the Catholic Church,”¹¹⁴ can hardly apply to all non-Catholic Christians who yearn for unity. For some, indeed, the incorporation into the Roman Catholic Church may be an explicit and individual desire and course of action. However, in general, individual non-Catholic Christians should be encouraged to remain faithful members of their respective communities and to

¹¹⁰ *UUS*, sec. 3.

¹¹¹ Although the question of what that unity means and should look like remains under continuous discussion. In this regard, it is significant that Pope Francis prefers the model of the polyhedron over the classic model of concentric circles: a model which genuinely avoids uniformity and endorses legitimate diversity. Cf. Annemarie C. Mayer, “The Ecumenical Vision of Pope Francis: Journeying Together as Fellow Pilgrims – ‘the Mystery of Unity Has Already Begun,’” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 17, no. 3 (2017): 156–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1474225X.2017.1403840>.

¹¹² Walter Kasper, “The Decree on Ecumenism – Read Anew After 40 Years,” November 11, 2004, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20041111_kasper-ecumenism_en.html#_ftn1. Kasper continues: “To the degree that we are one with Christ we will all be one with one another and thus realise the intrinsic catholicity of the church in its concrete fullness. Theologically the Council defined this goal as *communio* unity.”

¹¹³ Cf. Joint Working Group Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, “The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness: A Study Document of the Joint Working Group,” *The Ecumenical Review* 48, no. 2 (April 1, 1996): 212–21, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.1996.tb03469.x>.

¹¹⁴ Willem Jacobus Eijk, “Cardinal Eijk: Pope Francis Needed to Give Clarity.”

seek full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, together with their community and through ecumenical effort.

This is, in my view, the light in which the issue of Eucharistic hospitality towards mixed marriages should be discussed. Pope Francis raises the question of whether the Eucharist can be a “viaticum for journeying together.”¹¹⁵ The fact that he raises this question indicates that he is thinking in this direction and, at the very least, suggests that he considers it an option.

The Eucharist as a ‘means for the restoration of Christian unity’?

Can sharing the Eucharist be a “means to be used (...) for the restoration of Christian unity?”¹¹⁶ No, says Vatican II’s decree on ecumenism; at least not “indiscriminately” (Latin *indiscretim*, the word left blank in the above quotation). George Tavard, co-author of this section of the decree, states that the two guiding principles (expressing unity and a means of grace) cannot be separated, but that they stand in dialectical relationship to each other, which “implies that each side relates intimately to the other in creative tension. (...) *Indiscretim* means ‘indiscretely’ in the sense of ‘indiscontinuously’, rather than ‘indiscretely’ in the sense of something needing to be done ‘with discrimination’.”¹¹⁷ This understanding of the intimate relationship between the two principles prevents the Roman Catholic Church from using it as means to promote unity, Tavard explains. Therefore, abstention of common worship is preferred in general in the absence of fully realized unity, with the possibility of exceptions based on the principle of the Eucharist as channel of divine grace.¹¹⁸ In another article, however, Tavard himself arrives at a rather generous interpretation of the space for exceptional cases:

¹¹⁵ Francis, “Visit to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rome.”

¹¹⁶ *UR*, sec. 8.

¹¹⁷ George H. Tavard, “Praying Together: Communicatio in Sacris in the Decree on Ecumenism,” in *Vatican II by Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 214.; Cf. Thomas P. Rausch, “Occasional Eucharistic Hospitality: Revisiting the Question,” *Theological Studies* 74, no. 2 (2013): 401, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056391307400207>.

¹¹⁸ Tavard recollects how the minds of the drafters of the decree and of the Council Fathers went through different stages, from maintaining the clear prohibition of the 1917 Code of Canon Law towards adopting the juxtaposition proposed by Tavard allowing for some *communicatio in sacris* based on the Council’s new ecclesiological and ecumenical insights, cf. Tavard, “Praying Together,” 213. For an understanding of the Council’s use of juxtapositions, cf. Henk Witte, “Reform with the Help of Juxtapositions: A Challenge to the Interpretation of the Documents of Vatican II,” *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 71, no. 1 (2011):

The sharing of Eucharistic communion in an inter-Church marriage or in an ecumenical dialogue would be in the spirit of the decree on ecumenism. This is evidently one of the ways in which two Churches can learn to grow together. The bishops who have used this provision, however, are far from numerous.¹¹⁹

Canonist Myriam Wijlens, in her comparative study of pre- and post-conciliar legislation concerning sharing the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts, concludes that in today's regulations governing Eucharistic sharing, the principle of 'means of grace' has only been applied to the spiritual need of individual non-Catholic Christians. It does not anticipate the use of Eucharistic sharing to promote restoration of unity between faith communities. Even when it comes to the churches of the East, with whom Eucharistic sharing is not only possible but even explicitly recommended, she notes:

Analysis of the conciliar texts reveals that the foundation for *communicatio in sacris* in the Decree on Oriental Churches, however, is not so much based on the ecclesiological insights expressed in the Decree on Ecumenism; instead, it is governed by the principle of salvation of the soul of an individual baptized person.¹²⁰

Referring to Tavad's remarks, she continues:

Considering that the legislation does not count for this dialectical and creative tension but only counts for the Eucharist as a means of grace, the challenge for further developments in legislation will be to adopt this dialectic relationship. Thus, in fact, this study has shown that the Catholic Church still has to face the challenge to provide for norms on sharing the Eucharist in which baptized non-Catholics are seen first

20–34, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jur.2011.0033>. Witte, too, stresses that the juxtaposed contents should be kept together. He concludes that juxtapositions “invite us to keep the space open between the differing positions they articulate. Keeping this space really open, sometimes against our natural inclination to reduce tensions, may be a key towards a fruitful dealing with juxtapositions and the reform intentions of Vatican II,” echoing Tavad's concepts of dialectical relationship and creative tension between the two principles of *UR*, sec. 8. Following this interpretation of the Council, my research explores how Taizé and Bose inhabit the space provided by the tension articulated in the decree and how this relates to the advancing insight of the Secretariat and the Council. It thus contributes to the question to what extent this tension can be fruitfully used for the restoration of unity in today's advanced ecumenical context as a next stage in the development of the regulations concerning *communicatio in sacris*.

¹¹⁹ George H. Tavad, *Vatican II and the Ecumenical Way*, Marquette Studies in Theology (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2007), 52.

¹²⁰ Wijlens, *Sharing the Eucharist*, 363.

as members of an Ecclesial Community or Church not in full communion with the Catholic Church.¹²¹

Current law and regulations, therefore, do not reflect on Eucharistic sharing as part of an ecumenical process, but merely as part of the individual pastoral situation. Is, therefore, an interpretation that justifies ecumenical interests as motivation for Eucharistic sharing possible? A reflection on the regulations is needed, starting from the principles of Vatican II and by considering practical experiences in the life of the church.

It is the creative tension of which Tavard speaks that may show potential for accepting the Eucharist as a means for the restoration of Christian unity (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) or viaticum along the ecumenical path (Pope Francis). Current norms and their application, including *Mit Christus gehen*, do not engage with this creative tension. This study investigates some contexts that do – in explicit or implicit ways – in order to look for ways to include this perspective in rethinking the question of Eucharistic hospitality (be it in the case of mixed marriages or other ecumenical contexts). As I have argued, this should depart from the conviction that it truly is an ecumenical issue that concerns the whole church and not ‘merely’ a pastoral one affecting isolated individuals.

Exploring new impulses: The paths of Taizé and Bose

Accepting this challenge brings us to mostly uncharted territory. Despite the fact that in many countries the (unauthorized) *practice* of Eucharistic hospitality for explicitly ecumenical reasons is widespread, it still lacks proper (academic) reflection. Now that Pope Francis has reopened and authorized the theological debate on this point, such evaluation should take place in order to learn from it.

In the debates surrounding *Mit Christus gehen*, one such case was often mentioned: the case of Brother Roger, founder and first Prior of the Taizé community and Reformed pastor until his violent death in 2005. Section 3.2 speaks in more detail about the community and its practice of Eucharistic hospitality, which was endorsed by the local bishop in the early 1970s. The occasion especially referred to in the discussions took place in 2005. During the funeral Mass of Pope John Paul II, Brother Roger was witnessed receiving Communion from the hands of then CDF prefect Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI).

¹²¹ Wijlens, 365.

Some, leaning on a straightforward interpretation of canon law, concluded from this act that Brother Roger had secretly converted to Roman Catholicism. Brother Roger's successor as prior of the Taizé community, Brother Alois, disputed this interpretation. He recalls one of Brother Roger's anecdotes, dating back far before the incident:

He often told how, during his last meeting with John XXIII, in 1963, he was eager to hear a spiritual testament from the pope and he asked him about the place of Taizé in the Church. John XXIII replied, making circular gestures with his hands, 'The Catholic Church is made of concentric circles that are always bigger and bigger.' The pope did not specify in which circle he saw Taizé but Brother Roger understood that the pope wanted to say to him: you are already within, continue simply on this path. And that is what he did.¹²²

Others considered Cardinal Ratzinger's action an unfortunate mistake that should have been avoided. Myriam Wijlens, on the other hand, claims that the circumstances (Brother Roger's public acceptance of Catholic doctrine concerning the sacrament, his personal friendship with the deceased pope, and the unique, non-recurring event of the funeral) actually meet the requirements of the regulations.¹²³ Cardinal Kasper takes it one step further, noting that this was not an isolated event. He insists that Cardinal Ratzinger intended this course of action and that he did nothing unprecedented:

As the years passed the faith of the prior of Taizé was progressively enriched by the patrimony of faith of the Catholic Church. According to his own testimony, it was with reference to the mystery of the Catholic faith that he understood some of the elements of the faith, such as the role of the Virgin Mary in salvation history, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic gifts and the apostolic ministry in the Church, including the ministry of unity exercised by the Bishop of Rome. In response to this, the Catholic Church had accepted that he take communion at the Eucharist, as he did every morning in the large church at Taizé. Brother Roger also received communion several times from the hands of Pope John Paul II, who had become

¹²² Jean-Marie Guenois, "Something That Was without Precedent," trans. Taizé Community, *La Croix*, September 7, 2006, https://www.taize.fr/en_article6739.html.

¹²³ Myriam Wijlens, "Eucharistiegemeinschaft mit anderen Christen," 629-630. Wijlens uses the case to demonstrate that a careful articulation of a specific situation is part of the hermeneutic process of the interpretation of canon law and affects the outcome of canonical considerations.

friends with him from the days of the Second Vatican Council and who was well acquainted with his personal journey with respect to the Catholic Church. In this sense, there was nothing secret or hidden in the attitude of the Catholic Church, neither at Taizé or in Rome. During the funeral of Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Ratzinger only repeated what had already been done before him in Saint Peter's Basilica, at the time of the late Pope. There was nothing new or premeditated in the Cardinal's act.¹²⁴

What was unprecedented, though, was the spiritual path of Brother Roger that led to this level of communion with the Roman Catholic Church. His spirituality expressed an "inner reconciliation of the faith of his origins with the Mystery of the Catholic faith, without breaking fellowship with anyone,"¹²⁵ as Cardinal Kasper paraphrases Brother Roger's own words. On another occasion, Kasper comments:

Such a personal journey cannot be copied. But, if I am not mistaken, a similar question arises today for many serious Christians. At this moment, the reconciliation between the Churches has reached a point where, with the grace of God, we must make a personal decision. Brother Roger showed us that we can do it without denying or renouncing anything and without breaking with anyone.¹²⁶

He concludes:

Brother Roger's charism has radiated outward upon the community of Taizé brothers and, far beyond them, upon all Christendom. For this reason, it seems to me that Brother Roger's personal journey, guided by the Holy Spirit, is a discreet indication by the Holy Spirit for the future ecumenical path.¹²⁷

Concretely, Brother Roger's charism also radiated upon the Bose community as Taizé's spirituality and ecumenical commitment inspired Bose's

¹²⁴ L'Osservatore Romano, "Interview with Cardinal Kasper Three Years after the Death of Brother Roger: The Monk, Symbol of Spiritual Ecumenism," *L'Osservatore Romano* (Weekly edition in English), August 27, 2008. Consulted at <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/interview-with-cardinal-kasper-three-years-after-the-death-of-brother-roger-1336>.

Brother Richard of Taizé notes that Pope John Paul II invited all the brothers of Taizé to receive communion during the European Meetings in Rome in 1982-1983 and 1987-1988: Brother Richard, "Unter Einem Dach Am Selben Tisch: Eucharistischen Gastfreundschaft in Taizé," *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 12, no. 2 (2020): 336, <https://doi.org/0.2478/ress-2020-0021>.

¹²⁵ L'Osservatore Romano, "Interview with Cardinal Kasper"

¹²⁶ Kasper, "Mercy and the Ecumenical Journey of Brother Roger," 295.

¹²⁷ Kasper, 294.

founder and first prior, Catholic layman Enzo Bianchi.¹²⁸ However, both men still represent exceptions to the general situation. Thus, Msgr. Gérard Daucourt, then bishop of Nanterre and member of the PCPCU, asks: “Do we agree at least to wonder whether this ‘exception’ is not called one day to become less exceptional, and to open up the way for many others?”¹²⁹

Clearly, Cardinal Kasper does not refer explicitly to the arrangement between the Roman Catholic Church and Brother Roger concerning the Eucharist. He repeatedly stresses that Brother Roger’s way is not a model to be copied. Therefore, Brother Roger’s Eucharistic practice cannot easily be interpreted as precedent in the canonical sense, entitling others to claim similar arrangements. Yet, it is such an important consequence of Brother Roger’s spiritual path that it should be taken into consideration when reviewing the perspective opened up by Cardinal Kasper. Brother Roger’s successor, Brother Alois, contemplates:

Brother Roger’s path is a delicate and demanding one, and we have not finished exploring it. In his steps, we want to anticipate reconciliation in our lives, starting from the Baptism that unites us, by living as people who are already reconciled, and this experience certainly prepares theological developments. In the history of the Church, has not lived-out faith always preceded the theological expression of it?¹³⁰

Indeed, the theological implications of Brother Roger’s path must be explored not only in Taizé but in Bose as well, a community that has committed itself to the ecumenical mission of the Second Vatican Council to restore Christian unity. At a conference in Bose in 2014, regretting its apparent lack of contribution to consensus ecumenism,¹³¹ Bose’s members Adalberto Mainardi

¹²⁸ In addition, the community of Reformed women of Grandchamp should be mentioned. The communities mutually inspired and enriched one another, with Grandchamps benefiting from the theological and liturgical efforts of Taizé, adapting its rule and office to its own context. See Minke de Vries, Thomas F. Best, and Nancy S. Gower, eds., *The Fruits of Grace: The Ecumenical Experience of the Community of Grandchamp*, trans. Nancy Sanders Gower (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017).

¹²⁹ Gérard Daucourt, “Ecumenism Is First of All an Exchange of Gifts,” trans. Taizé Community, *La Croix*, 2006, https://www.taize.fr/en_article6740.html.

¹³⁰ Brother Alois, “A Passion for the Unity of Christ’s Body,” Lecture at the 50th International Eucharistic Congress, 2012, <https://saltandlighttv.org/blogfeed/getpost.php?id=37049>.

¹³¹ Adalberto Mainardi and Matthias Wirz, “Expériences monastiques et mouvement oecuménique au XXe siècle,” in *Toward a History of the Desire for Christian Unity: Preliminary Research Papers: Proceedings of the International Conference at the Monastery of Bose*, ed. Luca

and Matthias Wirz, too, acknowledged monasticism's contribution to spiritual ecumenism:

The ecumenical movement was not born in the monastic setting. Yet, the appeal to evangelical radicalism, the tendency towards interior unification, the search for the essential through the spiritual life, constitute a strong impulse for Christian unity and the reconciliation of the Churches.¹³²

The most recent PCPCU document regarding this issue agrees and specifically mentions the contribution of new monastic communities like Bose:

Consecrated life, which is rooted in the common tradition of the undivided Church, undoubtedly has a particular vocation in promoting unity. Established monastic and religious communities as well as new communities and ecclesial movements can be privileged places of ecumenical hospitality, of prayer for unity and for the 'exchange of gifts' among Christians. Some recently founded communities have the promotion of Christian unity as their particular charism, and some of these include members from different Christian traditions.¹³³

The examples of Brother Roger, Brother Enzo, and their communities spark the question of whether Roman Catholic leaders can acknowledge the paths of others, too, whose lives reflect a spiritual integrity, ecumenical commitment, prudence, and faithfulness (both towards their church of origin and the Roman Catholic Church) similar to Brother Roger's – including the Eucharistic implications. These questions become all the more pressing given that both communities are so renowned – both on grassroots and official levels – for their significance for the ecumenical process.

1.5 COMPLEMENTING A CHARGED DEBATE

The previous sections have offered a case study of a recent episode in the debate about Eucharistic hospitality culminating in a plea for further research on the

Ferracci and John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies in Bologna (Zürich: Lit Verlag GMBH, 2015), 81.

¹³² Mainardi and Wirz, 97. Original French: "Le mouvement œcuménique ne naît pas dans le milieu monastique. Mais l'appel au radicalisme évangélique, la tension vers l'unification intérieure, la recherche de l'essentiel dans la vie spirituelle, constituent une impulsion forte vers l'unité des chrétiens et la réconciliation entre les Églises" (translation: FW).

¹³³ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Bishop and Christian Unity*, sec. 23.

topic from the perspective of lived ecumenism in Taizé and Bose. In this section, I would like to broaden the view on the *status quaestionis* by mentioning briefly several other recent and innovative contributions to the debate from the German, Anglo-Saxon, and Dutch contexts. This overview is not comprehensive and does not seek to analyze the contributions as thoroughly as has been done in the case of *Mit Christus gehen* in sections 1.3 and 1.4. It simply lists some recent contributions that stand out because of their impact or for taking a more practical theological perspective.

German contributions

The German context – cradle of the Lutheran Reformation – has made multiple attempts to justify the call for Eucharistic hospitality theologically. Fifteen years before the initiative of the German bishops discussed above, in 2003, the ecumenical institutes of Strasbourg (France), Tübingen, and Bensheim (both in Germany) published *Abendmahlsgemeinschaft ist möglich. Thesen zur eucharistischen Gastfreundschaft*. They present seven theses in favor of Eucharistic sharing, translated as follows:¹³⁴ 1) admission of baptized Christians to communion does not call for justification – refusing them rather does; 2) lived ecumenism and the lack of Eucharistic communion contradict each other. This weakens the church's witness and makes it appear incredible while facing societal challenges; 3) in countless exceptional cases, Eucharistic hospitality is already being extended to individuals; 4) Baptism is the doorway to the community of the church, the body of Christ, which is reconstituted in the Eucharist; 5) it is Jesus who invites to the Eucharist, he is both giver and gift. The church merely invites on his behalf. This cannot be done indiscriminately but should spring from the will of Jesus Christ; 6) communion in Baptism exceeds ecclesial communion; and 7) the church lives as a community of proclamation, worship, and service to the world. Ecclesial communion presupposes these acts as well as a common basic consensus, not one defined historical liturgical form.

Since *Mit Christus gehen* in 2018, yet another document concerning Eucharistic sharing has been published in Germany. In their 2019 statement *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn*, theologians collaborating in the Ökumenische Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholische Theologen (ÖAK) plead for

¹³⁴ Centre d'Études Œcumeniques (Strasbourg), Institut für Ökumenische Forschung (Tübingen), and Konfessionskundliches Institut (Bensheim), *Abendmahlsgemeinschaft ist möglich: Thesen zur eucharistischen Gastfreundschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2003) (translation: FW).

reciprocal Eucharistic hospitality based on biblical, dogmatic, liturgical, and historical arguments.¹³⁵ Arguing that Protestant-Catholic dialogues have established sufficient theological convergence regarding Eucharist, ministry, and apostolic succession, they urged the leaderships of both churches to engage in reciprocal Eucharistic hospitality, especially with the ecumenical *Kirchentag* soon approaching (this was scheduled for and took place in May 2021 predominantly online due to the COVID-19 pandemic).¹³⁶ They conclude that the history of the Eucharist is marked by liturgical multiplicity (Chapter 4 of *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn*) as well as by ambiguity concerning the uninterrupted apostolic succession through the laying on of hands (Chapter 6). With an appeal to ecumenical sensitivity in liturgical action (as proposed, for example, in the 1982 Lima report) and to acknowledgement of forms of collegial and communal exercise of the office of *episkopè* and corresponding views on apostolic succession, they argue that the mutual recognition of Eucharist/Holy Supper and ministry is possible.

In addition to these (in the understanding of the ÖAK) resolved arguments *against* intercommunion, the document also lists arguments *in favor of* intercommunion, most notably the fundamental ecclesiological significance of Baptism, the consequences of mutual recognition of the sacrament in both traditions, and the fact that it is Jesus who hosts the Eucharist rather than the church.

Geert van Dartel, president of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands, interviewing his predecessor Ton van Eijk about *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn*, notes that the document did not spark as much debate as he had anticipated.¹³⁷ In the interview, Van Eijk praises the document's solid biblical-theological basis, the reflection on the historical variety of liturgical forms, and the

¹³⁵ Dorothea Sattler, ed., *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn: Ein Votum des ökumenischen Arbeitskreises evangelischer und katholischer Theologen*, 2019, https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/fb2/zentraleseiten/aktuelles/gemeinsam_am_tisch_des_herrn._ein_votum_des_ökumenischen_arbeitskreises_evangelischer_und_katholischer_theologen.pdf.

¹³⁶ Presiding ministers of both confessions indeed exchanged – and accepted – reciprocal invitations to partake of their respective Eucharistic celebrations on 15 May 2021, see Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur, “Keine leichte Entscheidung. Kirchentagsveranstalter verteidigen ökumenische Gastfreundschaft,” *Domradio.de*, May 16, 2021, <https://www.domradio.de/themen/kirchentag/2021-05-16/keine-leichTC-entscheidung-kirchentagsveranstalter-verteidigen-oekumenische-gastfreundschaft>.

¹³⁷ Geert van Dartel, “Oecumenische fijnproeverij. Interview met dr. Ton van Eijk over ‘Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn,’” *Perspectief*, no. 49 (2020): 5, <http://www.oecumene.nl/files/Books/Perspectief/49/index.html>.

discussion of ecumenical convergence concerning Eucharistic theology.¹³⁸ At the same time, he suggests that some points will most likely fail to persuade Roman Catholic leadership, such as the differentiated view on apostolic succession with its more substantial reliance on the Holy Spirit and the implications of recognizing Protestant ordination in general, and of women in particular.¹³⁹

The lack of reactions signaled by Van Dartel turned out to be a silence before the storm: in September 2020, one year after its publication, CDF prefect Cardinal Luis Ladaria sent a letter to Msgr. Georg Bätzing, co-president of the ÖAK on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church but addressed to him in his capacity as president of the German Bishops' Conference, rejecting the votum of *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn*.¹⁴⁰ This rejection was supported by the president of the PCPCU, Cardinal Kurt Koch, as he made clear in a letter to professor Volker Leppin, academic foreman of the ÖAK's Protestant section.¹⁴¹

With the aftermath of the publication of *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn* still unfolding, several observations are important for this study. Firstly, the document defends and promotes *reciprocal* Eucharistic hospitality as a valid next step. My study concerns *unilateral* Eucharistic hospitality as it studies the concrete practices of Taizé and Bose, as will be explained in more detail later. Secondly, *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn* engages in classical consensus ecumenism to build its case for Eucharistic hospitality, presupposing theological convergence as a basis for renewed practice. Interestingly, it is Cardinal Koch in his response to Volker Leppin who refers most explicitly to the reality of the life of the church, claiming that the ÖAK has lost touch with this reality while drafting *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn*.¹⁴² He confronts the

¹³⁸ Dartel, 6.

¹³⁹ Dartel, 8-9.

¹⁴⁰ Luis Ladaria and Giacomo Morandi, "Letter to Georg Bätzing, 18 September 2020," WWU Münster website, 2020, <https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/fb2/zentraleseiten/aktuelles/brief.glaubenskongregation.vorsitzender.dbk.pdf>.

They substantiate their response in an attachement: Luis Ladaria and Giacomo Morandi, "Lehrmäßige Anmerkungen zum Dokument *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn* (GTH) des ökumenischen Arbeitskreis katholischer und evangelischer Theologen (Jäger-Stahlin-Kreis)," WWU Münster website, 2020, https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/fb2/zentraleseiten/aktuelles/glaubenskongregation.lehrma_igeanmerkungen.gath.pdf.

¹⁴¹ Kurt Koch, "Offener Brief an Professor Volker Leppin als Antwort auf sein Interview in Katholisch.de vom 3. Februar 2021," Vatican website, 2021, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/dam/unitacristiani/Relazioni%20ecumeniche/Sezione%20occidentale/Federazione%20luterana%20mondiale/2021%2002%2008%20Offener%20Brief%20an%20Professor%20Volker%20Leppin.pdf>.

¹⁴² Koch.

ÖAK with examples within the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) in which Baptism apparently is not required for admission to Communion; in which – in case of emergency – a layman can preside over a Eucharistic liturgy; or in which anamnesis and epiclesis are poorly developed, if at all, in a liturgy designed to prepare for the 2021 ecumenical *Kirchentag*. Still, his line of argumentation presupposes that the ideal of theological convergence should be reflected in practice and does not necessarily examine practice as a source of theology in the way my study does. The issue of practice and experience as *locus theologicus* will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.

Anglo-Saxon contributions

Other contributions to the debate do start from practice, such as those articulating the experiences of mixed marriages. In a response to the 1998 teaching document by the Catholic bishops of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland entitled *One Bread One Body*,¹⁴³ secretary of the Association for Interchurch Families, Ruth Reardon, heralds its comprehensive presentation of the Catholic Eucharistic faith – manifesting what is listed among the preconditions for Eucharistic hospitality. In addition to her already mentioned alternative view on the nature of the *Directory*'s 'certain circumstances' as *cases* rather than *occasions*, Reardon's main point of criticism is that the bishops fail to acknowledge the deep reality of the 'need' of mixed couples: they do not merely experience pain from encountering a boundary, but "their need springs from the nature of the marriage commitment itself."¹⁴⁴ This vision is shared by the wider community of interchurch families, noting that "many feel the need for Eucharistic sharing every time they are at mass together."¹⁴⁵ As described in section 1.3, this interpretation has now been adopted by the majority of the German bishops.

Summarizing recent developments in ecumenical theology, systematic theologian Thomas P. Rausch argued in 2013 that "current Roman Catholic discipline regarding sacramental sharing does not seem to express the degree of communion that now exists between and among the churches."¹⁴⁶ He

¹⁴³ Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales Ireland and Scotland, *One Bread, One Body: A Teaching Document on the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, 1998. The document clarifies the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the eucharist and the implications for ecumenical contexts, reiterating the norms of the 1993 *Ecumenical Directory*.

¹⁴⁴ Reardon, "One Bread One Body: A Commentary."

¹⁴⁵ Association of Interchurch Families, "Interchurch Families and Christian Unity: Rome 2003," 2003, sec. D,7.

¹⁴⁶ Rausch, "Occasional Eucharistic Hospitality," 399.

indicates that the Roman Catholic Church considers Protestant churches, ministries, and sacraments as improper rather than completely invalid, acknowledging their capability of mediating saving grace. This acknowledgement enables the positive evaluation of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which speaks of partial or incomplete communion rather than of a lack of communion. On this basis, Rausch argues in favor of occasional Eucharistic hospitality, rhetorically contemplating: “Would not such an offer of eucharistic hospitality better engage the dialectic between the Eucharist as both sign of unity and means toward it?”¹⁴⁷

Thomas O’Loughlin, professor of historical theology in Nottingham, has published a book in response to Pope Francis’ remarks to the Lutheran congregation in Rome. Addressing the issue of Eucharistic hospitality as both a “theological minefield” and a “pastoral minefield,”¹⁴⁸ – tellingly illustrating the delicacy of the matter - O’Loughlin aims to promote “not more theological discussion but a change in mindset about the Eucharistic *mysterium* that then manifests itself in a renewed practice.”¹⁴⁹ Fully aware that the Eucharist transcends these concepts and involves many other notions, O’Loughlin does not hesitate to reflect critically on current Eucharistic practice and theology starting from anthropological categories such as ‘meal’, ‘family’, and ‘hospitality’. He observes that our everyday experiences with these categories in which we are defined as a species, often contrast with the dynamics of our Eucharistic practices. In part, this can be explained by the otherness of the sacrament, but O’Loughlin challenges us to contemplate the possible implications for revising our understanding of the Eucharist. In addition, he poses some fundamental questions as he confronts current exclusivist practices with the theology of Baptism, the Eucharist as *viaticum*, and, perhaps most importantly, a theology of Divine acceptance.

Dutch contributions

In my own Dutch context, the national Council of Churches had addressed the issue of Eucharistic sharing during the ecumenical heydays following the Second Vatican Council, erecting a special working group called Intercommunion and Ministry (Intercommunie en ambt) in 1970. However, when the Old- and Roman Catholic Churches rejected its report in 1975, the

¹⁴⁷ Rausch, 411.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas O’Loughlin, *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking up Pope Francis’s Call to Theologians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2019), 2–14.

¹⁴⁹ O’Loughlin, xiv.

Council's entire Section Theological Questions (Sectie theologische vragen) collapsed. It was revived as Section Faith Questions (Sectie geloofsvragen) but this group would not comprehensibly address the issue.¹⁵⁰ In the 1980s, new efforts were made, this time by comparing liturgical texts of the respective traditions. Instead of promoting Eucharistic sharing, however, the Dutch bishops rather discontinued existing initiatives in the country. In general, the Roman Catholic Church has shifted its focus from questions of Eucharistic theology towards ecclesiology and the theology of ministry as areas representing remaining hurdles towards Eucharistic communion of any kind.

Ton van Eijk, in his comparative study of liturgical texts, likewise points at the difficulties posed by differences in the theology of ministry in general and by the question of ordination of women in particular. Although he mentions the practice of Eucharistic hospitality only in passing – encouraging a generous application of current guidelines, especially in the case of mixed marriages – Van Eijk promotes further conceptual and theological integration of word and sacrament, of Scripture and the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine. Both form one Eucharist and the spiritual consumption of both can offer a (temporary) way out of the liturgical impasse. Van Eijk concludes: “we should choose another direction, in which not the sacramental eating and drinking of bread and wine come first, but the *manducare Christum* as consuming the Word that He is. Christians can unite in that.”¹⁵¹ “This eating,” Van Eijk explains, “consists of the unification with Christ in faith and love, in spiritual communion or in personal communication. It is independent from receiving the sacrament.”¹⁵² Acknowledging that his proposal might come across as a solution for lack of anything better, Van Eijk thus promotes a rediscovery of the practice of spiritual Communion as a theologically sound alternative to

¹⁵⁰ A.H.C. (Ton) van Eijk and Martien Brinkman, “De eenheid die wij zoeken. Een weg van spannende vragen,” in *Waakvlam van de Geest: 40 Jaar Raad van Kerken in Nederland*, ed. Anton Houtepen, Herman Noordegraaf, and Mijne Bosman-Huizinga (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2008), 43.

¹⁵¹ A.H.C. (Ton) van Eijk, *Eucharistie. Het woord en het brood* (Bergambacht: ZVM, 2010), 164 (italics in original). Original text in Dutch: “Daarom moeten we een andere weg gaan, waarbij niet het sacramentele eten en drinken van brood en wijn als lichaam en bloed van Christus voorop staat, maar het *manducare Christum* als het eten van het Woord dat Hij is. Daarin kunnen christenen zich verenigen” (translation: FW).

¹⁵² Van Eijk, 160. Original text in Dutch: “Dit eten bestaat in de vereniging met Christus in geloof en liefde, in geestelijke gemeenschap of persoonlijke communicatie. Het is onafhankelijk van het ontvangen van het sacrament” (translation: FW).

physically partaking of the Eucharist in acts of Eucharistic hospitality, arguing that “*manducare Christum*, that is, ultimately, what the sacrament is all about.”¹⁵³

The most recent attempt of the Dutch Council of Churches to promote dialogue about sharing the Eucharist took place in 2016 when it presented its inquiry amongst parishioners exploring how they experience and perceive the celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Supper in their respective congregations.¹⁵⁴ However, conducted as an exploratory survey aimed at encouraging discussion amongst churchgoers, the study did not have any academic aspirations and lacked scholarly rigor. Methodologically, it actually inquired into what extent theological categories formulated by the World Council of Churches in the Lima Report¹⁵⁵ have been received as proper expressions of the respondents’ beliefs, leaving little room for their own articulation of their experiences. Still, it is quite interesting to see the differences and similarities between members of the respective denominations. More importantly, as far as the current study is concerned, the Dutch Council’s inquiry sought to open a new perspective on the question: that of personal experience.

The current study, then, aims to substantiate this voice in the academic debate. A voice that has not yet received sufficient attention: the voice of experience with Eucharistic sharing in the pastoral reality of the church. Although several of the above-mentioned contributions refer to the actual practice that can be encountered in the church, none of them explores this experience using empirical methods. This study hopes to contribute to this lacuna.

¹⁵³ Van Eijk, 165 (italics in original). Original text in Dutch: “Want *manducare Christum*, dat is waar het in het sacrament uiteindelijk om gaat” (translation: FW).

¹⁵⁴ Raad van Kerken in Nederland, *Beleving eucharistie en avondmaal*, Oecumenische Bezinning 50 (Amersfoort: Raad van Kerken in Nederland, 2016), <https://www.raadvankerken.nl/files/2016/03/Bezinning%2050%20web.pdf>.

¹⁵⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, secs. II, 2–26. These categories are the Eucharist as a) thanksgiving to the Father, b) anamnesis or memorial of Christ, c) invocation of the Spirit, d) communion of the faithful, and e) meal of the Kingdom.

2

A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY: ARTICULATING PRACTICES, EXPERIENCES, AND IMPLICATIONS

The ecumenical “intermediate situation between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’”¹⁵⁶ as described in Chapter 1, the liminal phase in which the practice of Eucharistic hospitality takes place, comes with its own challenges, but certainly also with opportunities and potential. This study focuses on the latter, following the observation of Dillen and Gärtner (already mentioned above):

Places or periods in between two things are places or phases of uncertainty and transition, but they can also be places where creativity emerges, where new ideas are given scope to develop, where experiments can happen with other visions and practices.¹⁵⁷

The exceptional practice of Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé and Bose (communities that find themselves in such a liminal situation) can be reviewed from various angles. It can be addressed from a canonical point of view: is this practice in line with canon law and other ecclesial regulations and should it therefore be encouraged or discouraged by church leadership? Another perspective would be that of “blueprint” ecclesiology, as Nicholas Healy calls it: the theoretical and idealistic thinking about the church that can offer a critical reflection on the concrete and historical manifestation of the church.¹⁵⁸ This research, however, takes yet another perspective. In accordance with Healy’s criticism of blueprint ecclesiology, this study starts from an actual practice in the church. Healy writes: “in general ecclesiology in our period has become highly systematic and theoretical, focused more upon discerning the right

¹⁵⁶ Kasper, “Present Situation.”

¹⁵⁷ Dillen and Gärtner, *Discovering Practical Theology: Exploring Boundaries*, 4.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36–38.

things to think about the church rather than orientated to the living, rather messy, confused and confusing body that the church actually is.”¹⁵⁹ This study, indeed, starts from a messy and confusing reality in the life of the church.

Section 2.1 introduces this reality by briefly characterizing the communities and practices involved in this research. Section 2.2 provides a methodological framework, using the lenses of contextual theology, practical ecclesiology, and the model of Four Voices of Theology to zoom in on this study’s research question. A description of the concrete methods is presented in section 2.3, with section 2.4 offering a detailed account of how the research was eventually executed. The chapter concludes by reiterating the aims, scope, and methods of this study.

2.1 STARTING POINT: THE OBJECT OF THIS STUDY

From the very start, this study was intended as a response to Cardinal Kasper’s remark that Brother Roger’s personal charism, which he acknowledges to have radiated upon the community and far beyond, “is a discreet indication by the Holy Spirit for the future ecumenical path.”¹⁶⁰ He arrives at this conclusion arguing that “the personal charism of the founders of orders or religious congregations is not just a private charism, but a charism that with the consent of the Church becomes foundational for their community and for the whole Church.”¹⁶¹ In response to this logic, the current study addresses questions that follow from my earlier research in which I have investigated the Eucharistic practice of the Taizé community.¹⁶² The central question of that research was how it is possible (canonically and theologically), in the first place, that the brothers are permitted to receive Communion together considering the conditions regulating the admission to Communion in ecumenical contexts. I concluded that the local bishops of Autun (the diocese in which Taizé is located), starting with Msgr. Le Bourgeois when the first Catholic joined the community in the early 1970s, have used the space offered by the 1967 *Ecumenical Directory* to distinguish which cases meet the requirements for

¹⁵⁹ Healy, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Kasper, “Mercy and the Ecumenical Journey of Brother Roger,” 294.

¹⁶¹ Kasper, 294.

¹⁶² Fokke Wouda, “Communion in Taizé: Theological Interpretation of a Eucharistic Practice in an Ecumenical Context,” *Perspectief*, no. 25 (2014): 3–42, <http://www.oecumene.nl/files/Books/Perspectief/25/index.html>.

admission to Communion.¹⁶³ The ecumenical optimism of the post-conciliar era, the spiritual integrity of Taizé's founder and first prior Brother Roger, the community's close contacts with (local and universal) church leaders, and its relevance for ecumenism and evangelization all contributed to this development. Yet, the question remained what this practice 'means' theologically and what its implications are for Roman Catholic thinking about the place of the Eucharist in the ecumenical process. These questions are the focus of the current study.

It was clear that the Taizé community would be part of the current project. The community, however, insisted that it is not unique in its practice and wished not to be the sole focus of the study. Responding to this request, I have searched for additional research locations. I encountered Bose, which offers a similar context to study the phenomenon of a durable practice of Eucharistic hospitality sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church. This phenomenon itself is the fundamental interest of this study, which departs from the theological and epistemological presupposition that a concrete reality contains theological truth for the magisterium and theologians to discover and to contemplate the implications. The object of this study, therefore, is defined as *the theological rationale embedded in the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as articulated by members of Taizé and Bose, in which the Roman Catholic Church extends Eucharistic hospitality towards the non-Catholic monastics, at least partially inspired by ecumenical motives.*

The remainder of this chapter elaborates on the methodological presuppositions and introduces the methods used, offering a detailed account of the empirical process. Part Two of this study describes the communities and their practice of Eucharistic hospitality in past and present and presents the results of the interviews with some of their members as entry-points to the theological rationale embedded in this phenomenon.

2.2 A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

Matching question and methods

The theme of this thesis was defined in Chapter 1 as the place of Eucharistic sharing, as part of lived ecumenism and as a particular act of spiritual

¹⁶³ Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of the Decisions of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican Concerning Ecumenical Matters, May 14, 1967, Part I* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1967), sec. 55.

ecumenism in the ongoing ecumenical process. Section 2.1 has defined the object of this study as the theological rationale embedded in the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as encountered in the ecumenical monastic communities of Taizé and Bose and, therefore, the practice itself and the experiences of the monastics engaging in it as the points of departure. Such an endeavor is typically the field of practical or pastoral theology. As I have already indicated in section 1.4, pastoral research is needed to ‘disclose’ these insights and to make them accessible for the theological debate. This research, therefore, intends to articulate the practices, experiences, and insights of members of ecumenical monastic communities, as the subtitle of this chapter suggests.

The discipline of practical theology provides the methodology for a research question which starts from practice – even though the discipline initially emerged as a way to implement theological insights in ecclesial practice. As such, it focused on theological assessment of practices from an academic theological perspective and on training ministers. However, Vatican II acknowledged a strand of theology based on principles expressed by theologians belonging to or associated with the *Nouvelle Théologie*, such as Henri de Lubac, Henri Bouillard, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Jean Daniélou, and also Edward Schillebeeckx and Karl Rahner. They overcame the neo-Thomistic dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural by stressing the concepts of creation and incarnation. Their argumentations differed yet they arrived at similar conclusions: a reconciliation between theology and life and a rehabilitation of everyday reality as a source for theology. Hans Boersma explains:

De Lubac and Bouillard tended to draw on the Greek Church Fathers and the neo-Platonic tradition; so, they highlighted the sacramental link in its upward direction: nature pointed upward to the supernatural, thus making it present. Balthasar and Chenu tended to be a great deal more critical of the Platonic tradition and were fearful of an idealism that undermined the goodness of creation; as a result, they accentuated the sacramental connection in its downward direction: the Incarnation valued the created order and thereby gave it its sacramental character.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Hans Boersma, “Nature and the Supernatural in La Nouvelle Théologie: The Recovery of a Sacramental Mindset,” *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1043 (January 1, 2012): 35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2011.01434.x>.

These insights have generally been adopted by theology in the broader sense, for instance, in liberation theology and other contextual theologies. Stephen Bevans argues: “The more inductive approach recommended by Vatican II allows the witness of Scripture, the wisdom of the tradition, and the reality of human experience to take the lead in theological reflection.”¹⁶⁵ Moreover, theologians have since come to acknowledge that “the only kind of theology that exists is ‘contextual theology’- theology, in other words, that is specific to a particular place, a particular time, a particular culture.”¹⁶⁶ This implies that the classical sources of theology – Scripture and tradition – are complemented by adding present-day experience as a genuine *locus theologicus*.¹⁶⁷ This does not, of course, downplay the significance of Scripture and tradition, but it implies “that *our* experience in the present – interpreting and interpreted by our biblical and doctrinal tradition – is what ultimately validates *that* experience of the past.”¹⁶⁸

Annemarie Dillen recognizes this dynamic in certain approaches to empirical theology, two of which acknowledge the generative nature of human experience as genuine contribution to theological thought. She notes that the experience of non-theologians can contribute to the development of theology, noting that “the underlying theological view contains an open and ongoing concept of revelation. New experiences can criticize classical theological views. Theology does not refer to a fixed body of truth that cannot change or be questioned.”¹⁶⁹

Even though contextual theology as way of doing theology is generally accepted nowadays, many argue that, in reality, this additional source still lacks proper recognition and is not sufficiently consulted. German theologians Heinz-Günther Schöttler and Johannes Först, following Hans Joas, argue that at some point “philosophical idealism has become one of the basic

¹⁶⁵ Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, Theology in Global Perspective Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 139.

¹⁶⁶ Bevans, 165.

¹⁶⁷ Already in his influential posthumously published book *De Locis Theologicis Libri Duodecim* (1563), Melchior Cano added three *loci* traditionally alien to theology: reason, philosophy, and history. Bevans acknowledges that the contribution of the *Nouvelle* theologians and Vatican II is not so much innovative, but a rehabilitation of principles that can be traced back to theologians like St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Thomas Aquinas, cf. Bevans, 139.

¹⁶⁸ Bevans, 165.

¹⁶⁹ Dillen, “Lived Religion,” sec. 21.

methodological-epistemological paradigms for theology”¹⁷⁰ and that this paradigm is still very much alive among theologians today. Facing the complex field of ecumenical theology, Catholic theologians still tend to draw on this paradigm: the arguments against Eucharistic hospitality listed in section 1.3 demonstrate that practice is often perceived as the implementation of theological thought and therefore should unilaterally follow church teaching and discipline.

In contrast, Johannes Först, building on the work of Hans Joas, argues that:

[T]he church’s actions are fully-fledged realizations of the church and not only the application of theological thoughts. Pastoral work, which is the action aspect of the church, is not merely the application of theological thought, but rather a creative process which proceeds from and is provoked by people’s situations.¹⁷¹

Nicholas Healy agrees when he writes:

It is thus not unreasonable to describe the concrete church, at least initially, more in terms of agency rather than in terms of being. Its identity is constituted by action. That identity is thoroughly theological, for it is constituted by the activity of the Holy Spirit, without which it cannot exist. But it is also constituted by the activity of its members as they live out their lives of discipleship.¹⁷²

Both find themselves in Karl Rahner’s train of thought, summarized by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza as follows:

Rahner reformulates pastoral theology as the actualization of the Church in practice and conceives of it in a way that underscores the integrity of praxis and influence of practical reason. Theoretical

¹⁷⁰ Johannes Först and Heinz-Günther Schöttler, “Erzählen: erinnern und entwerfen. Ein nachmetaphysischer Diskurs über Gott und die Menschen,” in *Heiligkeit und Menschenwürde: Hans Joas’ neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte im theologischen Gespräch*, ed. Bernhard Laux (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2013), 184. Original text in German: “[d]er philosophische Idealismus ist zu einem methodisch-erkenntnistheoretischen Grundparadigma der Theologie geworden” (translation: FW).

¹⁷¹ Johannes Först, “Action and Church: Pastoral Work as the Focal Point of a Liberating Ecclesiology,” in *Catholic Approaches in Practical Theology: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Claire E. Wolfteich and Annemarie Dillen, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 286 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 83.

¹⁷² Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, 5.

reason has lost its previous primacy; instead, practical reason has taken its place.¹⁷³

If this is the case, the still apparent dominant theoretical or intellectual theology (or blueprint theology, in the words of Nicholas Healy¹⁷⁴) should be complemented by pastoral or practical theology. The core of Healy's critique of blueprint ecclesiologies is the conviction that the 'empirical church' is just as real, or even more so, as the eschatological ideal. To underline this point, Healy contrasts the church triumphant and the church militant:

The pilgrim church is concrete in quite a different way from the heavenly church. It exists in a particular time and place, and is prone to error and sin as it struggles, often confusedly, on its way. If these characteristics are ignored, or relegated to a secondary concern, the temptation arises to set up false goals that cannot be realized, which may lead to depression for those who try to realize them, and cynicism in those who compare the ideal vision with the reality.¹⁷⁵

Indeed, such depression and cynicism are very much present in ecumenical circles, leading people to speak of an 'ecumenical winter'. A contrasting interpretation of the current situation is provided when the complexity of the reality of the church in this particular time and context is acknowledged and when the progress made is the measure of success rather than the work still pending. Cardinal Kasper, taking this position, therefore rejects the term ecumenical winter.

This implies that the relationship between the sources of theological thought (theoretical and practical, idealistic and realistic) should be recognized as mutual and dialectical, and the implications should be properly thought through – also in the field of ecumenical theology. This requires taking seriously the *locus* of human experience, as is done in contextual theologies. As a consequence, this means that theologians or clergy are not the only agents of theology. Both elements are discussed in the following sections.

¹⁷³ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Method in Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 79, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521832888>.

¹⁷⁴ Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, esp. 36-38.

¹⁷⁵ Healy, 37.

A dialogue between loci

In ecumenical circles, the questions concerning the *loci* of theology are being raised, too. In this field, practice (especially when joint (liturgical) action is involved) is usually still expected to follow theory. Apparently, the insights underpinning contextual theology have not (yet) sufficiently penetrated this particular theological field. Theologians and other ecumenically committed faithful, for example, struggle with the relationship between the official theological dialogues and the everyday reality they encounter, especially those engaging in forms of shared life and lived ecumenism, that is, a life that confronts the official teaching of their respective churches with serious questions. In a lengthy quote, worth citing in full, theologians of the European ecumenical academic society *Societas Oecumenica* address this issue:

If 'ecumenism of life' does not mean to call upon the Christian communities to 'finally' do what they are 'already' allowed to do, and if it also does not lead to a tacit toleration of 'informal ecumenism', then 'ecumenism of life' clearly poses a decisive theological challenge for the ongoing ecumenical movement. If this be the case, then practice is no longer to be considered the (mere) application of various aspects of ecumenical consensus. Practice itself, rather, must become a *locus theologicus*. Experiences mutually exchanged (not 'made') in ecumenical relations, must be questioned with respect to their theological implications. In as much as they reveal explicit theological insights, these are to be incorporated into the 'trialogue' of lived faith ('basic ecumenism'), taught faith (magisterium) and reflected faith (academic theology as a service to both grass roots theology and the magisterium, be it Episcopal or synodal). Academic theology thus faces the considerable challenge of reversing the (still) common methodology, which can be characterized succinctly as the transition from a hermeneutics of application to a hermeneutics of experience. From our theological perspective, ecumenism of life then becomes communicative theology.¹⁷⁶

Johanna Rahner, one of these theologians, adds:

¹⁷⁶ Bernd Jochen Hilberath et al., eds., *Ökumene des Lebens als Herausforderung der wissenschaftlichen Theologie: Tagungsbericht Der 14. wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica = Ecumenism of Life as a Challenge for Academic Theology: Proceedings of the 14th Academic Consultation*, Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008), 12.

The local ecumenical interaction, the shared life of Christians, plays a central role in theological truth-finding. What is recognized, acknowledged, and practiced as ‘true’ in concrete encounters cannot simply be ‘false’ theologically; even though practice should always critically prove itself.¹⁷⁷

These theologians refer to the different *loci* (here expressed in threefold) and the question of their interconnectedness and the authoritative implications towards one another. Specifically, in their considerations about lived ecumenism (part of spiritual ecumenism rather than consensus ecumenism), the authors show their concern that the relationship between practice and (academic) theology often still lacks reciprocity. In other words: practice, experience, and the insights acquired through them still await proper integration into the academic theological debate in order for theological action and theory (or “theoretical and practical reasoning”¹⁷⁸) to act as complementing dimensions of theology. Herbert Haslinger concludes:

Practical theology surely has to include the truths generated in Scripture, in history and in the traditional doctrines of the Church. But by perceiving of the realities it draws from an independent source of Christian truth and theological awareness. Just like other theological disciplines refer to Scripture or traditional doctrine, practical theology constitutes its genuine status as theology by referring to the realities of humankind.¹⁷⁹

John Swinton, confronted with idealistic theologies and with the everyday experience of a disappointed churchgoer who offers contrasting accounts of what church is, adds: “Both descriptions contain truth, but both descriptions

¹⁷⁷ *Ökumene des Lebens als Herausforderung der wissenschaftlichen Theologie: Tagungsbericht Der 14. wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica = Ecumenism of Life as a Challenge for Academic Theology: Proceedings of the 14th Academic Consultation*, ed. Bernd Jochen Hilberath et al., Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008), 67. Original text in German: “Das ökumenische Miteinander vor Ort, das geteilte Leben von Christinnen und Christen hat zentralen Anteil an der theologische Wahrheitsfindung. Was im praktischen Miteinander als ‚wahr‘ erkannt, anerkannt und praktiziert wird, kann theologisch nicht einfach ‚falsch‘ sein; auch wenn sich die Praxis immer wieder kritisch bewähren muss” (translation: FW).

¹⁷⁸ Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*, 36.

¹⁷⁹ Herbert Haslinger, “Vatican II and the Legacy of Rahner and Catholic Distinctives in Catholic Theology,” in *Catholic Approaches in Practical Theology: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Claire E. Wolfeich and Annemie Dillen (Leuven/Paris/Bristol: Peeters, 2013), 264.

are at the same time lacking if they are not brought into conversation.”¹⁸⁰ Stephen Bevans refers to this very conversation when he writes:

What is new, therefore, about contextual theology is that theology is conceived as a dialogue – or as David Tracey would put it, a mutually critical dialogue – between the experiences of the past and the experiences of the present. Both kinds of experience are normative, and theology is done by allowing our experience today to be measured, judged, interpreted, and critiqued by the wisdom found in the classical sources, the ‘classics’ of the Christian tradition, and by allowing those ‘classics’ to be measured, judged, interpreted, and critiqued by the happenstances in our lives, by our cultural values, by our struggles and by the epochal changes that are shaping our world.¹⁸¹

Bevans presents six models of doing contextual theology, addressing the question of “how the context functions as a theological source.”¹⁸² He seems to struggle with settling the question of authority within the dynamics of the *loci*: “Not only is experience understood as equal to Scripture and Tradition; in a certain sense it has priority over them. Scripture and Tradition, of course, are absolutely normative for Christian faith and theology.”¹⁸³ The models that he then presents all address this question in different ways. For Bevans, “each of these models represents a valid way of doing contextual theology. The question might be raised, however, of the adequacy of any of them in a particular context.”¹⁸⁴ In short, Bevans situates the models on a continuum, representing the scale to which they emphasize the experience of the present (the *loci* of human experience, etcetera) over against the experience of the past (the *loci* of Scripture and tradition), as displayed in Figure 1.

As said before, the question of ‘which practice should be promoted’ (the sub question of the research program this study contributes to, see the Introduction) can be addressed from each of these perspectives. Yet, by inquiring specifically after the *theological meaning or significance* of the particular Eucharistic practice of two ecumenical communities, this study positions itself in the left-hand side of the continuum of Figure 1. Even though

¹⁸⁰ John Swinton, “‘Where Is Your Church?’ Moving toward a Hospitable and Sanctified Ethnography,” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward, Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography (Grand Rapids, MN/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 72.

¹⁸¹ Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology*, 166.

¹⁸² Bevans, 168.

¹⁸³ Bevans, 165.

¹⁸⁴ Bevans, 170 (*italics in original*).

the models focus predominantly on the relation between the church and (secular) society, the principles can be applied to the dynamics in this research, too. Concerning the anthropological model, Bevens states: “We await no further revelation, for all has been given to us in Jesus of Nazareth, but we still have to mine the meaning of what that revelation means, and to do that will take all the riches that the cultures of the world and human experience can offer”¹⁸⁵ and “[i]t is able to provide fresh perspectives on Christianity, because it starts where people are.”¹⁸⁶

As reflected in the model’s name, the praxis model engages in a hermeneutical circle, which aims “to begin from a concrete committed action, then to analyze that action from a socioscientific perspective and a rereading of the tradition in light of that action, and then to formulate a new plan of action as a consequence of that analysis and reflection.”¹⁸⁷ Practical theology is particularly suited to do theology according to this model, since it is equipped with the tools and methods to provide such a “socioscientific perspective.”

A recent effort by the International Theological Commission firmly acknowledges the *sensus fidei* as *locus theologicus* and as a voice in the development of doctrine. Exploring the meaning and implications of this notion – which plays an important part in the thinking of the Second Vatican Council – the commission states:

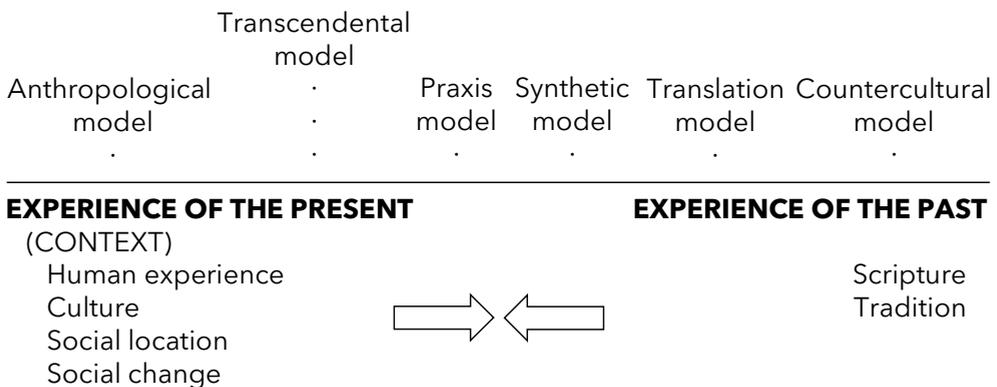


Figure 1: A Map of the Models of Contextual Theology.
Bevens, *An Introduction to Theology*, 171.

¹⁸⁵ Bevens, 175.

¹⁸⁶ Bevens, 176.

¹⁸⁷ Bevens, 178.

[S]*sensus fidei* in this sense is reflected in the convergence of the baptised in a lived adhesion to a doctrine of faith or to an element of Christian *praxis*. This convergence (*consensus*) plays a vital role in the Church: the *consensus fidelium* is a sure criterion for determining whether a particular doctrine or practice belongs to the apostolic faith.¹⁸⁸

Responding to the concerns outlined in this section and to the commission's observation that "theologians depend on the *sensus fidei* because the faith that they study and articulate lives in the people of God,"¹⁸⁹ the current interdisciplinary research aims to articulate the practice and experience of Taizé and Bose and their possible theological implications as potentially valid expressions of the *sensus fidei*, using methods developed in the humanities as contributions: to the dialogue between the different *loci*.

A dialogue between 'voices'

A helpful model for interpreting the conversation between *loci*, which consists of complex interactive dynamics between the different dimensions and agents of theology, is provided by the theologians collaborating in the British Action Research: Church and Society (ARCS) project as they explain their methodology of Theological Action Research (TAR). They arrange several authoritative contributors to theology in four segments or 'voices' (see Figure 2).¹⁹⁰ The ecumenical collective has developed this model specifically to promote the position of practice and experience, and their articulation (operant and espoused theologies), in order for them to become genuine dialogue partners within the theological constellation. They do so, because:

[They] consider all the material – written and unwritten, textual and practical – as (potentially) 'theology', as 'faith seeking understanding'. [...] Practice is its own proper 'articulation' of theological conviction and insight. Practices of faithful Christians are themselves already the bearers of theology; they express the contemporary living tradition of the Christian faith.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ International Theological Commission, "Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church," 2014, sec. 3, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

¹⁸⁹ International Theological Commission, sec. 81.

¹⁹⁰ Helen Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

¹⁹¹ Cameron et al., 51.

The objective of my research aligns with one of the goals of Theological Action Research in the sense that it intends to highlight the voices depicted in the lower half of Figure 2 in order to grant them their proper place in the broader theological debate. This objective is part of the bigger aim: finding ways to promote a fruitful dialogue between theological voices in order for them to mutually inform and correct each other. The current study, therefore, is explicitly meant as an addition to, and enrichment of, the debate about the place of the Eucharist within the ecumenical process. It is by no means an effort to downplay the significance of the other voices. As such, the current study intends to ‘give voice’ to the theologies embedded in the practice of Taizé and Bose (operant theology) and, especially, the articulation of their beliefs, as expressed by some of the members of these communities in the conducted interviews (espoused theology).¹⁹² In line with the ambition of TAR, this study intends the following:

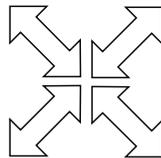
[T]o glimpse the unfolding reality of church in the faithful discipleship of its members, and make this a formative and consistent ‘voice’ within the ecclesiological debates that, too often, abstract and idealize church in ways difficult to connect with ongoing church life.¹⁹³

NORMATIVE THEOLOGY

Scriptures
The creeds
Official church teaching
Liturgies

FORMAL THEOLOGY

The theology of theologians
Dialogue with other disciplines



The theology embedded within
a group’s articulation of its beliefs
ESPOUSED THEOLOGY

The theology embedded within
the actual practices of a group
OPERANT THEOLOGY

Figure 2: Four Voices of Theology.
Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 54.

¹⁹² Annemarie Dillen notes that “the two last voices, especially ‘operant theology’, relate to what others would call ‘lived religion.’” Dillen, “Lived Religion,” 23.

¹⁹³ Cameron et al., 151 (drawing on Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*).

Johannes Först speaks in this regard about a “*theology of practice*, which either reconstructs the expressions of meaning that inhabit action, or which creates such expressions purposefully and true to tradition.”¹⁹⁴

It is important to note that the voices cannot be separated as strictly as the model suggests at first sight. The authors speak of “a dynamic of distinct, but interrelated and overlapping ‘voices’ [...] in the conviction that there is, in all this diverse articulation, a certain coherence - a coherence of faith, of the truth being revealed to faith in the Spirit.”¹⁹⁵ Each voice is, implicitly or explicitly, informed and inspired by the others. For example, the voice of espoused theology is just as much informed by the actual practice as by the contributions of theologians and by church teaching and regulations. At the same time, it is possible for one voice to contradict another. Indeed, the relationships between the voices are complex, making it hard to explicate the ‘coherence’ of which the authors speak. Yet, they state that “[i]t is, if our theological reading is right, only in the conversation between voices, carefully attended to, that an authentic practical-theological insight can be disclosed.”¹⁹⁶

Formulating the implications of the presupposition that the relationships between the voices are mutual, the authors write: “TAR claims not only to effect change of practice through theology, but also to effect change *through* practice of theology,”¹⁹⁷ which means that “the formal and even normative ‘voices’ (or at least, the interpretation of them) is quite properly to be formed by the voices that arise from faith practice as a complex locus for theological understanding.”¹⁹⁸

In spite of the remaining questions, the model remains helpful “as a device for making this complexity manageable as a heuristic and hermeneutic framework within which to understand the TAR processes,”¹⁹⁹ according to the intention of Cameron and her co-authors. My research has a different focus than classical TAR, which studies the interaction between the four voices *within* a particular faith community in order to (re-)align the operant and espoused

¹⁹⁴ Johannes Först, *Versöhnung mit der Moderne: Rekonstruktionen kirchlicher Praxis, Beiträge zur Gegenwartsbedeutung jüdischer und christlicher Überlieferungen*, vol. 3 (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag GmbH, 2017), 13–14. Original text in German: “*Theologie der Praxis*, die die dem Handeln innewohnenden Sinnbezüge rekonstruiert beziehungsweise sie ‘Lebensdienlich und Überlieferungsgerecht’ entwirft.” (translation: FW, italics in original).

¹⁹⁵ Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 53–54.

¹⁹⁶ Cameron et al., 56.

¹⁹⁷ Cameron et al., 59 (italics in original).

¹⁹⁸ Cameron et al., 150.

¹⁹⁹ Cameron et al., 54.

voices of a group as a means to improve their practice. Even though I do not identify my own research as TAR (it does not aim to evaluate a practice in order to improve it in that particular context), the model helps to situate the current research in the whole of the theological conversation about the topic of Eucharistic hospitality.

2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: EMPIRICAL METHODS

The research design of this study is defined by its explorative nature, inductive approach, use of qualitative methods, and interest in biographic narratives. These characteristics are discussed in the following sections, after which the method of analysis is explained.

Explorative-explanatory research

This research is explorative since it investigates a perspective that has not been studied before. To my knowledge, no proper reflection on the experiences of ecumenical monastic communities with regard to their practice of Eucharistic hospitality has been conducted in order to enrich the debate on this topic. Since the current study is the first to contribute to this lacuna, it needs to employ an explorative attitude and ethnographic methods. A first step in investigating the field is to describe the practices involved and to explore the experiences and insights gained by participating in them. This first, fundamental perspective determines the other strategic choices made in this research design.

Several sources contribute to the description of the practices involved. I present accounts of guests and researchers through literary review, complemented by my observations during my visits and the testimonies of members of the communities, as expressed in interviews. Obviously, the justification of the practices is a topic in the scope of this research (mainly because participants discuss it), yet it is not the purpose of this study to evaluate them extensively from a canonical perspective. The intention is to explore the theological implications of the practices: what is their significance in rethinking the place of the Eucharist in the ecumenical process?

Therefore, the core of this research is formed by the accounts or testimonies of the interviewees, who express their own ecumenical process in which the practice of Eucharistic hospitality plays a significant role, and in which they reflect on their experiences, articulating theological insights. The main goal of this study is to explore these insights, in order to articulate an initial understanding of the theological implications of this practice. As such,

the study is inductive in nature and aims to interpret this phenomenon. This is in line with the call for a shift towards a hermeneutic of experience as described above. The empirical segment of the research (Part Two) can be defined as explorative-explanatory research.²⁰⁰ This perspective enables a deeper understanding of the phenomenon encountered, without, however, claiming to be representative for the communities as a whole or for practitioners of this practice in other contexts. This is something that needs to be kept in mind while engaging with the data and conclusions produced in this study. This would require a quantitative follow-up study verifying the categories established through the qualitative methods employed in this study. Still, this study opens up a new horizon in a meaningful way by articulating the theological constructs designed by the respondents in their own particular context. These constructs have relevance for the way in which church and theology as a whole discuss the issue of Eucharistic hospitality.

Qualitative methods

John Swinton and Harriet Mowat refer to the type of truth or understanding aimed at in this study as *ideographic* knowledge, which distinguishes itself from *nomothetic* truth based on the principles of falsifiability, replicability, and generalizability.²⁰¹ In contrast, ideographic knowledge “presumes that meaningful knowledge can be discovered in unique, non-replicable experiences.”²⁰² They claim that qualitative methods are more suitable and therefore more often employed in ideographic research, over against a preference for quantitative methods in nomothetic research. Qualitative methods focus on description, interpretation, and understanding.²⁰³

Addressing the question of generalization, Swinton and Mowat claim that “[w]hile the findings of qualitative research studies may not be immediately transferable to other contexts, there is a sense in which qualitative research should resonate with the experiences of others in similar circumstances.”²⁰⁴ This is of special significance for the debate on Eucharistic sharing as both supporters and opponents of the practice claim that current exceptional cases

²⁰⁰ Cf. Van der Ven, *Practical Theology*, 125–27.

²⁰¹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 40–43.

²⁰² Swinton and Mowat, 43.

²⁰³ Swinton and Mowat, 46.

²⁰⁴ Swinton and Mowat, 47; Cf. Jeanine Evers on generalisation in qualitative research: Jeanine Evers, *Kwalitatieve analyse. Kunst én kunde* (Amsterdam: Boom Lemma, 2015), 141–43.

could act as canonical precedents (respectively perceived as a good or a bad thing). This study will not make such canonical claims. Based on the presuppositions expressed by Swinton and Mowat, it can only speak of a “potentially *transformative resonance*”²⁰⁵ of this practice, or, more specifically: of the theology embedded in this practice.

This study collects accounts of the experiences of monastic communities practicing Eucharistic hospitality, as well as their own interpretation of these experiences, by interviewing some of the monastics. As such, it can be labeled as ethnographic research. James Spickard, critical of Swinton’s broad use of the term, defines ethnography as follows:

It does gather people’s beliefs, identities, reports of acts, etc. on a deep level, but it is not interested in them as markers of those people’s individuality. Instead, it is interested in the extent to which they are shared in whatever socio-cultural scene those people inhabit. Ethnography is also interested in those scenes’ hidden social patterns: the things that typically go unremarked but that structure the social lives of people living together.²⁰⁶

This study, indeed, is not so much interested in the respondents’ narratives as reconstructions of their respective identities, but intends, rather, to explore their experiences related to the phenomenon of Eucharistic sharing within their collective context. The biographies of the respondents act as access points to these experiences and the theology embedded in them, disclosing this perspective for the ongoing dialogue.

Biographic narratives

The qualitative interviews conducted in this research aim at articulating the interviewees’ biographic narratives, following the insights of Johannes Först and Heinz-Günther Schöttler. They argue that “[t]oday, recollection and narration can potentially open up something like a view on the

²⁰⁵ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 47 (italics in original).

²⁰⁶ James V. Spickard, “The Porcupine Tango: What Ethnography Can and Cannot Do for Theologians,” *Ecclesial Practices* 3, no. 2 (November 21, 2016): 174, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22144471-00302003>.

transcendent,”²⁰⁷ now that “in modernity, a firm historical awareness replaces idealistic, timeless reasoning.”²⁰⁸ They continue:

‘Narration’ is a way of substantiating the transcendence through ‘recollection’ and ‘construction’. ‘To narrate’ means to interpret the present through it, resulting in a community or an individual ‘narrating’ their origins so that in the thus-and-not-otherwise ‘recollected’ past a future is unclosed.²⁰⁹

This view represents the ‘narrative turn’ in empirical research, building on the insights of Hans Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.²¹⁰ Ruard Ganzevoort seems hesitant to fully agree with the epistemological capacity attributed to the narrative approach by Schöttler and Först but nonetheless acknowledges its potential: “narrative research is limited in its capacity to unveil external facts, but it has high potential to uncover the processes of giving meaning to life experiences through life stories.”²¹¹ Addressing the question of normativity in relation to other theological voices, he adds: “a narrative analysis of practices can – and should – uncover the hidden normativity within these practices and in relation to the tradition in which they are embedded.”²¹²

The interviews conducted in the scope of this study aim at facilitating the (re)construction and articulation of meaning through biographic narratives. Unstructured interviews seemed to fit that end best as they enable respondents to control the content and layout of their own narrative. Thus, they articulate their own understanding of their experiences and attribute meaning to them. According to Först and Schöttler, such recollection and (re)construction of the past in the present opens up outlooks on the future as it produces insight and,

²⁰⁷ Först and Schöttler, “Erzählen: erinnern und entwerfen,” 191. Original text in German: “Erinnern und Erzählen können heute möglicherweise so etwas wie einen Transzendenzbezug für den Menschen eröffnen,” (translation: FW).

²⁰⁸ Först and Schöttler, 189. Original text in German: “in der Moderne ein starkes geschichtliches Bewusstsein das idealistisch überzeitliche Denken [verdrängt]” (translation: FW).

²⁰⁹ Först and Schöttler, 192. Original text in German: “‘Erzählen’ ist eine Form, Transzendenz durch ‘erinnern’ und ‘konstruieren’ zu realisieren. ‘Erzählen’ heißt, die Gegenwart dadurch zu deuten, dass eine Gemeinschaft oder ein Individuum ihre bzw. seine Herkunft ‘erzählt’ und in der so und nicht anders ‘erinnerten’ Vergangenheit sich Zukunft eröffnet” (translation: FW).

²¹⁰ R. Ruard Ganzevoort, “Narrative Approaches,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2012), 215, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315210223-11>.

²¹¹ Ganzevoort, 220.

²¹² Ganzevoort, 222.

at least potentially, a deeper understanding of the transcendent. As such, biographic narratives offer interesting and viable entry-points for exploring practice as *locus theologicus*. That is why this study takes biographic narratives as its point of departure.

Inherent to this type of research is that narratives are told in a particular moment in time and so are the meanings constructed within them. As such, narrative research is not timeless but rather particularly contextual. In the case of this study, that is exactly the point: to articulate the way in which respondents today make sense of their experiences of years of engaging in Eucharistic hospitality. Narrative research, then, helps not only to map current convictions and insights but also enables tracking the impulses for them: the experiences out of which they were born.

Analysis: Grounded theology

Epistemologically, qualitative research in practical theology closely relates to grounded theory in the humanities. Helen Cameron and her co-authors assert that this is justified when they discuss the normativity of Theological Action Research. Even though my study is not TAR in all aspects, the argument applies to this study as well. They write:

The authority such empirically grounded insights can claim is closely related to the nature of Christian truth. This is much more than a quality of conceptual knowledge. Ultimately, theological truth-claims rest on Christ's claim 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life' – truth embodied in a Person. This is truth to be grasped through the practice of the Christian life.²¹³

The notion of “empirically grounded insights” - or “found theologies”²¹⁴ – is at the core of the analytical method of this study. It can also be termed “grounded theology,” as suggested by Australian practical theologian Bruce A. Stevens:

Qualitative research can do more than provide a ‘thick description’. However, most applications of qualitative research to theological research have been exploratory and the results descriptive. But the challenge is to go beyond being descriptive to being *generative*. This more ambitious approach is what grounded theology tries to achieve.

²¹³ Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 17.

²¹⁴ Gerardo Marti, “Found Theologies versus Imposed Theologies: Remarks on Theology and Ethnography from a Sociological Perspective,” *Ecclesial Practices* 3, no. 2 (2016): 157–72, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22144471-00302002>.

The methodology from grounded theory is used to try to create theological concepts and applied insights.²¹⁵

Stevens thus makes a case for the hermeneutics of experience as outlined earlier and encourages us to use the principles of grounded theory in practical theology.²¹⁶ Applying those principles in this study, the analysis of the data is inductive in nature: it aims at collecting individually and collectively expressed concepts and insights from the interviews through a thematic analysis of the data in order to generate new theory. However, in order to interpret these themes properly, they need to consider the biographic narratives in which they function. The use of qualitative content analysis methods with their focus on meaning enables this and results in theological insights grounded in the biographic experiences of the monastics.²¹⁷

2.4 THE EMPIRICAL PROCESS

Having laid out my methodology above, I will proceed by giving an account of the actual empirical process. Together with the use of mixed methods (literary review and ethnography in describing the phenomenon, and in-depth interviews and content analysis to establish a grounded theology), this is part of enhancing this study's validity and reliability.

Even though the person of the researcher plays a role in any kind of research, this is particularly true for qualitative research such as this. One's observations of, and interactions with, the research objects are highly subjective in many regards. By providing a detailed account of his/her activities, choices, observations, and interventions, the researcher gives insight into

²¹⁵ Bruce A. Stevens, "Grounded Theology? A Call for a Community of Practice," *Practical Theology* 10, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 204, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2017.1308455> (italics in original).

²¹⁶ Stevens himself has used this method to explore the notion of 'luck': Bruce A. Stevens, "Grounded Theology: A New Method to Explore Luck," *Theology Today* 73, no. 2 (2016): 117–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573616650140>.

²¹⁷ Ji Young Cho and Eun Hee Lee explore the relationship between classic grounded theory and qualitative content analysis, describing their origins, similarities, and differences. The latter might be a more precise definition of my research methods, with the former being the more well-known tradition or methodological family referred to in previous quotes. See Ji Young Cho and Eun Hee Lee, "Reducing Confusion about Grounded Theory and Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences," *Qualitative Report* 19, no. 32 (2014): 1–20; Philipp Mayring, "Qualitative Content Analysis," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum Qualitative Social Research* 1, no. 2 (2000): Art. 20, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.2.1089>.

his/her method of working, allowing the reader to evaluate the process. This section offers such an account by reflecting on various aspects of the role of the researcher and the interaction with the research objects and by presenting the actions and choices made throughout the research process.

Gatekeepers and preconditions

Throughout the process, the role of so-called gatekeepers has been rather substantial. A gatekeeper, in empirical research, is a person who can grant or deny access to a particular community (be it religious or societal), because of his or her position within the group. He or she has the responsibility for protecting the group, the mandate to grant access to a target group, or at least the possibility to negotiate between the group's interests and those of the researcher.

I was confronted with gatekeepers in both communities, assigned by the priors. The priors themselves were the actual decision makers, relying on the discretion of their gatekeepers. In Taizé, this was the same person I encountered during the research for my master's thesis into the community. He communicated my plans and requests to Brother Alois, who gave me permission to access community members in order to interview them. However, the access was conditional: Brother Alois assigned three members whom I could interview. He did not communicate the specific considerations for assigning these particular brothers, but the reasoning is quite clear. The first is the gatekeeper and senior member of the community (38 years in Taizé), coming from the Swiss Reformed tradition. The second is a Roman Catholic, who has spent over forty years in the community and who wrote a book about Yves Congar: Congar's influence on the theology of the Taizé community is obvious. The third brother is Dutch and relatively young, coming from the Dutch Calvinistic tradition.

Apart from appointing designated interviewees, the gatekeeper communicated that Brother Alois insisted that I add another community to my research. This was to protect internal community life: the community obviously needs to secure its own coherence and integrity amidst the missions it has committed itself to; by welcoming all the young visitors, the community's inner dynamic is tested and challenged. It is also tested by the impact of the interaction with so many churches and church leaders from different confessions. In addition, although the Eucharistic practice of Taizé is exceptional in the sense that its legitimation is based on an exception to general ecclesial regulations, Eucharistic hospitality itself is quite common in the daily

life of the church. Many monasteries, old and new, Catholic and ecumenical, as well as many parishes, offer Eucharistic hospitality to non-Catholic Christians. However, not all of the suggested communities meet the criteria for formal dispensation. Monastero di Bose is one that does, which led me to approach that community.

A first introduction to Monastero di Bose took place during my visit in February 2017. Email correspondence throughout the first year of my PhD had not been sufficient for me to understand the community adequately, nor for the community to get familiar with my project and to commit to it. My initial contact person introduced me to the eventual gatekeeper, a brother who spent over 45 years in the community and who is close to founder Enzo Bianchi and current prior Luciano Manicardi. My request to include the community in my research was met with consent, subject to similar conditions as in the case of Taizé. Initially, I was given permission to interview the contact person and the gatekeeper; later, upon my request, I was permitted to interview a sister as well.

From a general scientific perspective, the substantial role of gatekeepers and the dependence on permission by the communities' priors can be reviewed as problematic, a necessary evil at best. However, their involvement has been indispensable for accessing the communities – and thus their experiences and insights - in the first place. Obviously, their respective roles have impacted the course and content of my research; I have been compelled to make adjustments in order to gain trust and to acquire permission and cooperation. To a certain extent, this is inevitable in empirical research.

Positionality of the researcher

All interview sessions except one took place in simple and small reception rooms, used by the communities for private conversations with guests. Interestingly, these rooms (in both monasteries) are located on the borders between the private space of the community and the space reserved for guests: the grey area between monastics and visitors. They find themselves near the respective reception areas. The three rooms used all contained a simple interior: tile floor, white walls, a couple of chairs around a (coffee) table, an occasional plant. One interview was conducted in a sheltered corner of the courtyard adjacent to one of the rooms. The location reveals my own position as a researcher *vis-à-vis* the community: despite my earlier research and familiarity with the community (I have visited Taizé and joined a stage of its Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth without any research interest in the past as well), I remain, of course, an outsider to the actual monastic communities. However,

the interview locations do symbolize the process of ‘merging of horizons’ between researcher and interviewee in particular and, in more general terms, between the voices of formal theology on the one hand and operant and espoused theology on the other.

Although within rather strict limits, I was given access to the communities in a way most regular visitors would not experience. In Bose, I was taken on a sight-seeing tour through (certain) otherwise restricted areas: the courtyards, novice classrooms, chapels, the fields where they grow their crops, the different workshops, and the publishing house. In Taizé, I was invited to share lunch with the brothers (an invitation usually extended to personal guests and youth who stay for a longer in Taizé as ‘permanents’). These experiences gave me limited but significant insight in the life of the communities, a ‘peek over the fence’ (quite literally so in the case of Taizé). As such, these visits contributed to familiarizing myself with the communities, in addition to the interview sessions.

Even though my own limited knowledge of Italian and French (the main languages in the communities) restricted my options to speak with the brothers and sisters – their capacity to speak English (or Dutch, in the case of Brother TA of Taizé) was part of the selection criteria for interviewees – as a Catholic theologian with Reformed roots, I am familiar with the theological language employed by the communities and their members. In fact, in two interviews, monastics referred to my own ecclesial biography. These conditions allowed me to adopt a predominantly emic perspective especially in the early stages of the research. The emic perspective focuses on the research object, articulating their world view and meaning construction, and adopting the local terminology and language. In contrast, the etic perspective focuses on the observation of the researcher and on the intended readership of the research. This usually implies a more detached or distanced attitude, which, according to some, enables a more ‘objective’ perspective. However, the theological language of the communities of Taizé and Bose shows significant resemblance with the intended readership of this study (primarily Catholic theologians and church leaders). On the plus side, this requires little translation and enabled me to remain close to the (shared) emic language. On the downside, however, this does require a careful interpretation of the respondents’ words: do they indeed coincide with the meaning and connotations that the reader has in mind when he or she uses the same terminology? Additionally, the fact that the respondents enjoyed a certain theological training and, as a consequence, share the emic language with the researcher, meant they were inclined to focus on

theological/theoretical concepts during the interviews rather than on practices and experiences.

As already argued with the help of the model of four voices, the perspective of the community members themselves is central to this study. While presenting my research to fellow PhD candidates, one of them asked me: “Whose theology will you present in the end?” This question touches on the emic/etic debate and made me reflect on my own positionality in this research. The main intention of this study is to articulate the theological insights of the community members – I cannot claim to represent the theology of the entire communities given the limits of this research – but, in the end, I am the one composing the testimonies into a coherent theological rationale. In that sense, one could argue that it is *my* theology, informed by the experiences of the community members. Inevitably, this entails a hermeneutic moment in which I interpret the data, bringing along my own bias. As John Swinton remarks:

[T]he task of the researcher is not to bracket off her prejudices, but to fuse her horizon with the horizon of the research participants in a way that will deepen and clarify the meaning of the experience being explored. (...) Thus, the task of the reader/researcher is to enter into a constructive, critical dialogue with the text within which a fusion of the two horizons is brought about. That being so, all ethnographic data is seen to be co-construction; a mutually constructed narrative that emerges from the merging of the researcher’s horizon and the horizon of the text.²¹⁸

In this process, I had to come to an understanding of what the interviewees were saying. Even though the theological language, certainly at first sight, shows resemblance with the language of the intended Catholic readership, the question always remains if the same meaning is attached to this language. In order to do justice to the differences that may occur in this regard, I have tried *not* to adopt a conceptual terminology that is too strict beforehand. I did, however, consult literature on the subject matter prior and parallel to the empirical inquiry. My research strategy therefore integrates the principles of what is called informed grounded theory: a bottom-up approach that builds a theory from empirical data by inductive reasoning, aware of existing literature but without imposing theoretical frameworks acquired through literary review

²¹⁸ Swinton, “Where Is Your Church?,” 82–83.

on the data.²¹⁹ This study intends to formulate hypotheses and a theological theory based on observations of a particular reality and to articulate implications for the debate.

Data collection: Interviews and transcripts

The observations which form the basis of the theological theory of this study were mainly done through interviews. The interviews were conducted during visits to Taizé (July 2017) and Bose (October 2017), which also enabled me to immerse myself in the daily rhythm and spirituality of the communities and to witness the practice with which the interviews were concerned. My description of this practice is partly based on participant observation in the monasteries: to that end, I have participated in the prayer services and Eucharistic liturgies of the communities.²²⁰ As expressed in section 2.3, the interviews were designed to explore the field in a qualitative way using narrative and biographic approaches. Concretely, I have conducted individual interviews. A first round of interviews was planned upon arrival, leaving time for additional sessions if necessary. Indeed, after an initial evaluation of the interviews, I felt that it would be worthwhile to initiate a second cycle of interviews to dig deeper into a number of the themes, to double-check some of the statements made, and to give the interviewees a chance to let the first session ‘sink in’ and to reflect on it once again after several days.

Each interview was preceded by a short introduction about the research and then started with an open invitation to recall one’s own life history, with special focus on his or her personal ecumenical development and experiences with Eucharistic hospitality. Subsequent questions aimed at encouraging the interviewee to continue his or her story or to ask for clarification. The interviewees thus narrated their personal experience with ecumenism in general and with Eucharistic hospitality (or a lack thereof), typically followed by a more theoretical reflection on these. When a point of saturation was

²¹⁹ In an explorative study like this, it is rather tempting to adopt an uninformed approach since that would minimize ‘contamination’ of the data with existing theories. Discussing the various options, however, Robert Thornberg has convincingly argued that a strictly uninformed position is neither possible nor desirable. See Robert Thornberg, “Informed Grounded Theory,” *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 56, no. 3 (2012): 243–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2011.581686>. Cf. Ven, *Practical Theology*, 121.

²²⁰ I have visited both monasteries several times in order to get acquainted and to observe the communities and their practices. These visits, one or two weeks each, took place in July 2017 (Taizé, after earlier visits independent of this research project) and in February/March 2017, October 2017, and March 2019 (Bose).

reached and the topics of the topic list were addressed, or when the agreed time was over (for example, because it was time for the next prayer service), the interview was concluded by the interviewer. In most cases, we agreed on making an appointment for an additional interview session. The interview guide used is provided in Appendix 1, which also lists the symbols used in the transcriptions (ellipses, asterisks, etcetera).

The interview as a research method, especially a semi-structured and open-ended one as used in this study, enables the researcher to respond to what the interviewee says. This requires skill and sensitivity on the part of the researcher: he needs to listen carefully to what the interviewee says (or does not say), keep control over the conversation without limiting the interviewee while also securing data collection in the scope of the research, and discern the right moment for a question, to name just a few. Obviously, in retrospect, the researcher at times wishes that he had acted differently during the interviews. For me, one such moment was when I asked Brother BE of Bose whether he felt in communion with the Roman Catholic Church. He responded: "... What does it mean?"²²¹ and laughed. In retrospect, I see a perfect opportunity to discover how he would interpret the term communion (a key term in contemporary Catholic ecclesiology). Yet, instead of waiting for him to continue or to repeat the exact same question as an open invitation for him to respond to his own rhetorical question, I chose to explicate my own view on communion that underpinned my question in the first place. Luckily, Brother BE engaged in a reflection on communion regardless, but the example shows that my research, too, may have its flaws.

All sessions were recorded using a recording device. Afterwards, I transcribed all of the recordings verbatim. By doing this myself, I became intimately familiar with each of the interviews, reliving them time and again. On some occasions, I struggled with understanding clearly what was being said. In some cases, I have consulted the interviewees (by email) about specific words or names. If the exact formulation was still unclear, I have marked this in the transcriptions, with or without suggesting a possible interpretation. Bracketed ellipses indicate that a word, phrase, or section has been omitted. Sequences of ellipses without brackets indicate silences with each ellipse representing one second. See Appendix 1 for the meaning of other symbols. I have included them because I have interpreted several of these silences as moments of hesitation or contemplation. On some occasions, respondents clearly struggled to express their intended meaning properly, or to formulate

²²¹ BE-2,38.

their thoughts in a cohesive way. The verbatim transcripts of the interviews have acted as the source for the analysis and can be considered as the primary data for this study. Quotes included in this thesis have not been stylized as to avoid an additional hermeneutical layer to its interpretation.

All interviewees have signed an informed consent form to safeguard their voluntary participation (see Appendix 2) and gave permission to use their names in this publication. Nevertheless, given the standard procedures in scientific research and the sensitivity of the subject matter, I have pseudonymized quotations from the interviews. The data (recordings and transcripts) will be available at Tilburg University (TiU) Dataverse for ten years for future consultation in accordance with Tilburg University's data management policy. Considering the biographic nature of the interviews (which makes them unfit for adequate anonymization), the data are archived with restricted access for secondary analysis.

The interviewees have been anonymized by referring to them as Brothers TA, TB, and TC for the respondents from Taizé and Brothers BE and BF, and Sister BG for the respondents from Bose. These pseudonyms are also used in the footnotes to refer to quotations from their interviews, followed by the sequence number of the interview and a section number. A section includes everything the interviewer or the interviewee has said uninterrupted by the other. Questions and remarks by the interviewer have uneven numbers, responses by the interviewee have even numbers. Long responses have been split up into subsections, marked by subsequent letters of the alphabet. Hence, the reference TA-1,4b refers to a response by Brother TA (in Taizé) and can be found in the second subsection of the fourth section of his first interview.

Analysis and conclusions

As is customary in qualitative text analysis, transcribing the interviews and reading them several times has been essential engagement for understanding them. Familiarizing myself with the texts has been an important step in gaining insight into their content and meaning. It was indispensable to continue doing this throughout the process. As such, the process of analysis is not strictly demarcated from the phases of collecting and preparing the data. The analysis included coding, writing of memos, and theory building.

The two interests mentioned in section 2.3 – collecting emerging categories and discovering their rootedness in the biographic experiences of the interviewees – have made me struggle to find a clear method that would serve both ends. Several attempts to do justice to the biographic nature of the interviews resulted in overanalyzing this aspect of the data through elaborate narrative analysis.

Although valuable insights were gained, the process seemed too complex. Therefore, a clearer path was chosen by executing a content analysis enabling me to code the data properly. Philipp Mayring explains: “within the framework of qualitative approaches it would be of central interest, to develop the aspects of interpretation, the categories, as near as possible to the material, to formulate them in terms of the material.”²²² Transcribing and rereading the interviews had made me familiar with their content already. Going through them again, I highlighted all passages relevant to the research question, noting keywords in the margins. These keywords formed the basis for codes on a more abstract level. Doing this with two interviews left me with a substantial and already quite coherent list of codes, which I used to code the other interviews, while remaining open to the possibility of new themes to emerge. In this phase, some codes were added or combined. These codes and the list of quotes produced through this analysis formed the basic structure and content of Chapters 4-8. Hence, the content and line of reasoning of these chapters emerged from the data through the inductive hermeneutical tool of the content analysis. The different sections of the chapters thus present the ‘grounded theologies’ as articulated by the monastics themselves.

This approach produced some unanticipated insights. For example, I had expected intentions of ecumenical rapprochement to have played a more prominent role in the motivation of the monastics to join these particular communities. Instead, their narratives focus on the monastic common life itself, as section 4.1 makes clear. They also articulate far more nuanced and ambivalent views on the question of Eucharistic hospitality than anticipated. This illustrates the added value of qualitative research for the debate on this particular issue.

The introductions to each of the Chapters 4-8 help the reader to grasp the content and coherence of the quotes and analysis that follow. In addition, a synthesis was added at the end of each chapter, connecting the established categories in a subsequent hermeneutic step. These syntheses, in turn, formed the basis for formulating the implications presented in part three, chapters 9 and 10, thereby taking the insights beyond the particular contexts of Bose and Taizé to the wider debate within Catholic theology about the place of Eucharistic sharing in the ecumenical process.

²²² Mayring, “Qualitative Content Analysis.”

2.5 SYNOPSIS: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, METHODS

The most important contribution of this study to the debate is to disclose and articulate the theology implicitly present in the practice of Taizé and Bose, an effort that finds itself at the crossroads of systematic theology (questions), practical theology (methodology), and the humanities (methods). The concluding chapters initiate the dialogue with other voices by relating the encountered presuppositions and insights to the *status quaestionis* as discussed in Chapter 1. Several considerations underpin this goal.

With regard to the origins of Christian division, Cardinal Walter Kasper states that “Christians did not diverge primarily because of debate and controversy about different doctrines, but through the way they lived,”²²³ indicating that Christians have long since been alienated from one another in practice before this was inevitably and irresolvably reflected in theological disputes. The question is: if division was caused primarily by *diverging* practices, what role can *converging* practices play in restoring unity? And, consequentially, as Ivana Noble suggests: “can the fire of the Eucharist burn away our differences?”²²⁴ Likewise, Jeffrey Vanderwilt somewhat provocatively remarks:

Cardinal Augustin Bea, one of the leading figures of Vatican II, urged Catholics to trust in the power of the Eucharist. Perhaps in our day, the reluctance to understand the Eucharist as a cause of unity represents a lack of trust in its power for good.²²⁵

This study intends to contribute to these questions, acknowledging that a definitive answer cannot be provided after evaluating one or two case studies.

In a way, like Theological Action Research, this research overemphasizes the voices of operant and espoused theology – not in order to downplay the significance of formal and normative theology, but for the theological insights gained in practices and the reflection thereof to be emancipated in the theological debate. Such is also the purpose of the current study: to articulate the experiences exchanged and insights acquired through the practice of

²²³ Kasper, *That They May All Be One*, 158.

²²⁴ Ivana Noble, “Response to René Beupère: Grace and Challenges of Interconfessional Marriages,” in *Ökumene des Lebens als Herausforderung der wissenschaftlichen Theologie: Tagungsbericht Der 14. wissenschaftlichen Konsultation der Societas Oecumenica = Ecumenism of Life as a Challenge for Academic Theology: Proceedings of the 14th Academic Consultation*, ed. Bernd Jochen Hilberath et al., Beihefte zur ökumenischen Rundschau (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008), 321.

²²⁵ Jeffrey Vanderwilt, “Eucharistic Sharing,” 832.

Eucharistic hospitality in the monastic communities of Taizé and Bose in order for them to be heard and engaged with in the broader theological debate.

Unlike action research (including strands of TAR),²²⁶ this study is not primarily interested in transforming the practice it encounters. It is concerned with presenting insights that emerge while practicing Eucharistic hospitality to theology, which, eventually, may affect theological consensus on this point. Therefore, this research takes the practices of Taizé and Bose as a starting point and does not aim at transforming the liturgies of these particular communities or their arrangements with ecclesial authorities. Yet, like all practical theological research, it reflects on practice and theology in order to promote the life of the church. Only in this sense can it affect other ecclesial practices: the existence of the (extraordinary) practices of Taizé and Bose should not be considered as precedents in the canonical sense. However, theologically speaking, they can be looked to as examples in the sense of Swinton and Mowat's "potentially *transformative resonance*"²²⁷ introduced in section 2.3. The theological rationale embedded in the communities' practice of Eucharistic hospitality can be conceived as unprecedented spiritual and theological insights, setting the stage for future theological reasoning and ecclesial practice – as Cardinal Kasper suggested.

This study, by its methods and content, contributes to receptive ecumenism as developed by Paul Murray and others. In addition, this study addresses the issue in light of the research program 'The Transformation of Religion in Late Modernity: The Case of New Catholicism' at Tilburg University's School of Catholic Theology, which focuses on the "transformation of Catholicism: the new ways in which the Catholic church is manifesting itself, the new forms of Catholic religiosity and spirituality."²²⁸ Given that the Roman Catholic Church has only committed itself, irrevocably, to ecumenism in the past century, the process of the restoration of Christian unity is (or should be) a main theme in the transformation of Catholicism and the study thereof. Against this background, my research contributes to answering one question posed by the program: "What kinds of theology, what practices and what forms of spirituality are being advanced or should be advanced?"²²⁹ That question

²²⁶ Cf. Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 261–63.

²²⁷ Swinton and Mowat, 47 (*italics in original*). Cf. the section *Qualitative methods* in section 2.3.

²²⁸ Tilburg School of Catholic Theology, "The Transformation of Religion in Late Modernity: The Case of New Catholicism," Tilburg University website, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/research/theology/programs/remaking>.

²²⁹ Tilburg School of Catholic Theology.

echoes those of Cardinal Kasper, who, identifying the current ecumenical situation as an intermediate stage, urges us to ask similar questions in the ecumenical context: “Where are we? What has been achieved? What has still to be done? Where *can* we, and where *should* we, move ahead?”²³⁰ The theological implications formulated in part three contribute to these questions. By investigating the actual practice of Eucharistic hospitality empirically and reflecting on the theological discourse from that perspective, this study aims to help church officials discern whether this form of ecumenical spirituality indeed should be enabled and encouraged in order to promote Christian unity.

To this end, my study aims to empower the voice of operant theology *vis-à-vis* the other voices in the debate by engaging in the strand of practical theology that operationalizes empirical research methods for addressing systematic theological questions. This study thus employs several methods from the humanities as outlined in section 2.3 (ethnographic research and in-depth interviews with biographic focus) to answer the main research question as formulated in the Introduction. Given the developments in the debate on this controversial issue in the last few years, this study offers a relevant and innovative perspective on the question of Eucharistic hospitality in ecumenical contexts.

²³⁰ Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits : Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue*, 3.

PART TWO

AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT: MONASTIC EXPERIENCES DOCUMENTED

This part contributes to two major objectives of the research. It describes the practices encountered in Taizé and Bose through ethnographic accounts complemented with literary reviews (Chapter 3). In addition, it articulates the individual and shared experiences of the monastics through a content analysis of the interviews conducted in the communities (chapters 4-8).*

* References to these interviews include the pseudonym of the respondent (TA, TB, TC for respondents from Taizé and BE, BF, and BG for respondents from Bose), followed by interview number, section number and, if applicable, a letter indicating the subsection. The section 'Data collection: Interviews and transcripts' in section 2.4 provides more details.

3

EUCHARIST IN ECUMENICAL MONASTERIES: DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICES

Eucharistic hospitality is far more than the mere acts of giving and receiving Communion in ecumenical settings. This is evidently the case in the monastic communities of Taizé and Bose, where sharing the Eucharist is inherently and explicitly part of the ecumenical journey of the monastics. This chapter, therefore, describes the contexts in which those acts are embedded. Section 3.1 introduces the common context of the monasteries as New Monastic Communities. The subsequent sections introduce the histories, characteristics, and practices of Taizé (3.2) and Bose (3.3).

3.1 CONTEXT: NEW MONASTIC COMMUNITIES

Italian sociologist Stefania Palmisano helpfully defines both Taizé and Bose as ‘New Monastic Communities’ (NMCs) in her study *Exploring New Monastic Communities: The (Re)invention of Tradition*.²³¹ Mapping the field of monasticism, Palmisano distinguishes between “Old Monasticism,” the traditional congregations established before the Second Vatican Council, and “New Monasticism,” forms of monastic life that emerged after and in response to the Council. Within Old Monasticism, she differentiates between innovational congregations that actively renewed themselves in response to the Council’s outcomes; traditionalists who, although accepting the Council, maintained their status quo; and ultra-traditionalists who reject the Council’s innovations and find themselves in a tense relationship with the post-conciliar Roman Catholic Church. Palmisano categorizes the communities emerging in

²³¹ Stefania Palmisano, *Exploring New Monastic Communities: The (Re) Invention of Tradition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

the wake of the Council along similar lines, ranging, however, from traditionalist via innovational to ultra-innovational. The latter has a problematic relationship with church hierarchy similar to the ultra-traditionalists, which results, in the eyes of the magisterium, from an overly liberal interpretation of Vatican II rather than a conservative rejection of it. Both ends of the spectrum risk losing appreciation and (formal) recognition.²³²

Palmisano situates Bose, which has a prominent place in her research, as well as Taizé in the category of innovational New Monastic Communities.²³³ Even though Taizé was founded as an exclusively Protestant community, it was built on similar ideals as the other NMCs and emerged in the run-up to the Council. The young community had already reached out to the Roman Catholic Church early in its history, culminating in Brother Roger and Brother Max attending the Council as ecumenical observers. With Catholics joining the community as full members from the late 1960s onwards, the community would become part of the Catholic monastic landscape, too.

Palmisano contests the idea that tradition and innovation oppose each other. Rather, she notes: “Monasticism is an exemplary case to demonstrate that tradition cannot help being something re-invented to correspond to the understanding of a specific group at an exact historical moment.”²³⁴ She concludes: “In a nutshell, identity and metamorphosis are an integral part of monastic dialectics.”²³⁵ Still, she admits that NMCs constitute a significant breach with the classical *ordo monasticus*, placing themselves outside that paradigm. They “freely approach the ‘great tradition’ by choosing which elements to keep, adapt, transform, substitute or reject.”²³⁶ This makes the new communities hard to position *vis-à-vis* traditional monasteries. Palmisano rightfully devotes an entire chapter to this question entitled: “Between ‘Pretenders’ and ‘Heirs’: The (Re)invention of Tradition in New Monasticism.”²³⁷ She concludes:

By using [the expression] ‘(re)invention of tradition’ I mean to propose that NMCs – situating themselves so disruptively outside the *Ordo monasticus* – insert the heritage of monasticism into a new interpretative framework, attributing to that heritage a cultural significance which is relevant to the present, plausible and credible

²³² Palmisano, 13–17.

²³³ Palmisano, 14.

²³⁴ Palmisano, 27.

²³⁵ Palmisano, 28.

²³⁶ Palmisano, 28.

²³⁷ Palmisano, 97–128 (Chapter 4).

to the world of today. This framework is developed by the monks and nuns themselves, and reflects typical experiences of modernity as they themselves experience them.²³⁸

Continuity and discontinuity both characterize New Monastic Communities, resulting in limited canonical recognition compared to classical monasteries. They do not fit the canonical framework for congregations and orders. Bose, for example, strategically maintains its peripheral position *vis-à-vis* ecclesiastical structures. Stefania Palmisano argues that the community could have acquired recognition as an institute of consecrated life but has settled for the status of private association for the faithful, which it has had since 2001. Higher levels of recognition – implying assimilation to the traditional monastic frame – would have had its repercussions for the organization and composition of the community. Palmisano analyzes that, in particular, the necessity of excluding the non-Catholic members from the community would have been problematic for the ecumenical community.²³⁹ Other NMCs do not even acquire this lowest level of canonical recognition, or do not actively seek it. In the case of Taizé, its Reformed origins, composition, and unique ecumenical position make it virtually impossible, and probably equally undesirable, to fit the canonical structures of the Roman Catholic Church.

Still, both communities are inspired by the monastic tradition and have adopted fundamental characteristics like a rule, the taking of religious vows, wearing habits in church, and, although in a reduced form compared to the traditional liturgy of the hours, fixed prayer times. Therefore, it seems appropriate to acknowledge their rootedness in the monastic tradition by referring to them as monastic communities. Referring explicitly to new monastic communities, the Roman Catholic Church heralds and encourages the contribution of consecrated life, old and new, to ecumenism:

Consecrated life, which is rooted in the common tradition of the undivided Church, undoubtedly has a particular vocation in promoting unity. Established monastic and religious communities as well as new communities and ecclesial movements can be privileged places of ecumenical hospitality, of prayer for unity and for the ‘exchange of gifts’ among Christians.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Palmisano, 126.

²³⁹ Palmisano, 149-150. In addition, Palmisano points at the spirituality of the community and its wish to maintain a peripheral relation to the Roman Catholic Church, allowing a prophetic presence and voice. Palmisano further lists (economic) autonomy as a third reason.

²⁴⁰ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *The Bishop and Christian Unity*, sec. 23.

3.2 TAIZÉ: REFORMED AND ECUMENICAL

This section very briefly introduces the history of Taizé by articulating some characteristics of the community and its founder, Roger Schutz-Marsauche. In addition, a description of Taizé's life and liturgical practice is provided based on my observations during the research visits to the community.

The community is very popular among youths: over 100,000 of them visit Taizé annually. Even though it has its critics, the community is also highly esteemed by church leaders, many of whom have visited Taizé throughout the years. The current prior and successor of founder Brother Roger, Brother Alois, summarized the appreciation of Brother Roger by the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodoxy, and the churches assembled in the World Council of Churches during a lecture at the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, 2012:

Five years after his death, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, 'May his witness to an ecumenism of holiness inspire us in our march towards unity.' Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople added: 'This search for unity, in joy, humility, love and truth, both in relation to others, 'sacrament of the brother' as well as in the relationship with God, 'sacrament of the altar', sums up the essence of this approach, the path of Taizé.' 'Combining fidelity to the teaching of the Holy Fathers with creative adaptation to the needs of today, in a missionary ministry among youth, characterized the path of Brother Roger and that of the community founded by him,' commented the Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill. And the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, Olav Fykse Tveit, recalled that what Brother Roger has done 'has inspired churches throughout the world.'²⁴¹

*Roger Schutz-Marsauche and his community: Some characteristics*²⁴²

Roger Louis Schutz-Marsauche, the founder of the Taizé community, was born in 1915 in the little village of Provence, Switzerland. The son of a Reformed

²⁴¹ Brother Alois, "A Passion for the Unity of Christ's Body," Lecture at the 50th International Eucharistic Congress, 2012, <https://saltandlighttv.org/blogfeed/getpost.php?id=37049>.

²⁴² Since this is not a historical but an ethnographic study focusing on Taizé's current practice, I only very briefly sketch the history of the Taizé community for the reader to understand its origins and development in light of the interests of this research. For comprehensive accounts of the community's history, I refer to Silvia Scatena, *Taizé, una parabola di unità. Storia della comunità dalle origini al concilio dei giovani* (Bologna: Il Molino, 2018); Nancy Sanders Gower, "Reformed and Ecumenical: The Foundations of the

pastor, he was the youngest of nine children. His mother and grandmother had a profound impact on him. His grandmother in particular inspired him to seek reconciliation with the Roman Catholic Church. Having witnessed the horrors of Christian nations fighting each other in WWI, she started praying in Catholic churches as an act of reconciliation. She inspired Roger's ecumenical path, as he himself explains:

Can I recall here that my maternal grandmother discovered intuitively a sort of key to the ecumenical vocation, and that she opened for me a way which I then tried to put into practice? (...) Impressed by the testimony of her life, when I was still very young, I found my own Christian identity in her steps by reconciling within myself the faith of my origins with the mystery of the Catholic faith, without breaking fellowship with anyone.²⁴³

As a theology student, Roger Schutz was interested in monasticism and the lack thereof in the Reformed tradition. With fellow students, he organized weekly meetings that would foreshadow the prayerful community life of Taizé. Roger finished his studies in 1943, when he defended his thesis on the (in)compatibility of the Gospel and monastic life. Reformed theologian Nancy Sanders Gower argues that this thesis was not properly received by most (Catholic) writers, who, in her view, only refer to Brother Roger's appreciation of monasticism while ignoring his aim "to critique western monasticism's nonconformity to the Gospel and to suggest a better, reformed way of living out community."²⁴⁴

As World War II broke out, Roger felt that his place was not in the relatively safe context of neutral Switzerland. He desired not to be on the sidelines, but wanted to share in the difficulties of those who suffered most. He decided to leave for Burgundy, the region of his mother's origins. After several failed attempts, Roger managed to purchase a house in the small village of Taizé. Located in Vichy, France and close to the border between the free and occupied

Community of Taizé" (Fuller Theological Seminary, 2010); Jason Brian Santos, *A Community Called Taizé: A Story of Prayer, Worship and Reconciliation* (IVP Books, 2008); Sabine Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé: avec presque rien ...* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2015). My descriptions draw on these sources and on the accounts of the brothers with whom I spoke during my visits.

²⁴³ Brother Roger, "Brother Roger's Unfinished Letter," Taizé website, 2005, https://www.taize.fr/en_article2964.html.

²⁴⁴ Gower, "Reformed and Ecumenical: The Foundations of the Community of Taizé," 300. Cf. 300-303 about Frère Roger's thesis "The Monastic Ideal up to St. Benedict and its Conformity to the Gospel."

territories, Roger welcomed many refugees, including Jews fleeing the Nazis. His sister Geneviève joined him in Taizé to assist in matters of hospitality. They urged their guests, among whom were Christians, Jews, and atheists, to pray in the seclusion of their own quarters so that no-one would feel ill-at-ease.²⁴⁵ In 1942, Roger was warned that the Germans had learned about his activities. In fear of raids, he left for Geneva. It was in Geneva that several others joined him to form a community. By the end of the war in 1944, they returned to Taizé.

The early history of the community already shows some fundamental characteristics of Taizé. First of all, the centrality of the person of Roger Schutz is apparent. Symbolically, Taizé has adopted 1940 as its founding date even though one cannot yet really speak of a community at that point since Roger lived in solitude, nurturing his intuitions, ideas, and plans for a future monastic community. He thought and wrote about this idea as the “*Communauté de Cluny*,”²⁴⁶ a community dwelling in the spiritual treasures and reform zeal of the famous and influential Benedictine Cluny Abbey, the ruins of which remain just ten kilometers from the village of Taizé. Brother Roger remained the spiritual and practical driving force behind the community for the rest of his life. However, the community has grown to maturity and not only survived Brother Roger’s violent death – he was attacked with a knife by a mentally ill woman during the evening prayer on 16 August 2005 – but still thrives and dares to take new initiatives.

Secondly, Brother Roger’s way is marked by a combination of a profound idealism and a deeply lived concern for the ordinary. This attitude is still characteristic for the community’s lifestyle – including its ecumenical commitment and Eucharistic practice.

Thirdly, Brother Roger never chose the easy way. He actively sought the most difficult of circumstances when he left the safety of Switzerland. During the war, he hosted political refugees and Jews. Yet, after the war, he once again asked himself who were the most vulnerable of his time. As a result, he agreed to take care of war orphans (assisted by his sister Geneviève) but at the same time he visited German prisoners of war incarcerated in a nearby concentration camp. Understandably, this sparked mixed reactions in his surroundings. It once more shows that Brother Roger was prepared to do what he believed to be right and, if necessary, to swim against the stream.

²⁴⁵ Taizé, “A Bit of History: The Beginnings,” accessed February 15, 2019, https://www.taize.fr/en_article6526.html.

²⁴⁶ Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé*, 122.

In addition, fourthly, he was willing to revise his plans or customs due to changing circumstances. He coined this attitude or method “the dynamic of the provisional,” claiming that “those who live provisionally find their journey towards unity reinvigorated, since its biggest threat is for us to become self-sufficient, to confine ourselves with a treasure that we have discovered, for example a liturgy, and then to institute, for centuries, structures which soon foster isolation.”²⁴⁷ But he also insists that “what will have to disappear are, of course, the particularities of a family and not the things all have in common.”²⁴⁸ Brother Roger counts his own community’s rule and liturgy among these particularities when he says that both “are instruments which allow us to persevere in the hope for unity. To a certain extent, are they not provisional things, destined to disappear on the day visible unity is established?”²⁴⁹

Many decisions in the community’s life can be traced to this principle, most notably, the openness to host the young visitors that started flocking to Taizé in the 1960s. It was not easy for the community to find a way to engage with them amidst the social and political turmoil of 1968. They could not send them away, however. The current village of wooden barracks and the extensive camping grounds accommodating tens of thousands of youths annually are the direct result of that decision, fueled by faith in the power of the provisional.

At the start of the same decade, the community’s iconic Church of Reconciliation was built (which I will describe later in detail since it is the scenery of the practice of Eucharistic sharing in Taizé). On the one hand, it was to accommodate the ever-growing flow of church leaders and other guests finding their way to Taizé. It was a remarkable project to erect such a vast church building at the edge of a tiny village in Burgundy’s countryside. On the other hand, however, Brother Roger was somewhat shocked when he first saw it, fearing that it would act like an anchor obstructing the maneuverability of the community – and thus contradicting the principle of the provisional. To his surprise, the building soon proved too small. The building also proved to be

²⁴⁷ Brother Roger, *Dynamique du provisoire* (Taizé: Les Presses de Taizé, 1965), 151. Original text in French: “Celui qui vit dans le provisoire voit sa marche vers l’unité réactivée, car la menace par excellence serait de nous suffire à nous-mêmes, de refermer la boucle sur un trésor découvert, sur une liturgie par exemple, et d’instituer alors, pour des siècles, des structures qui bien vite seraient facteurs d’isolement” (translation: FW).

²⁴⁸ Brother Roger, 152. Original text in French: “Ce qui devra disparaître, ce sont bien sûr les particularismes de la famille et non les données communes à tous” (translation: FW).

²⁴⁹ Brother Roger, 151. Original text in French: “(...) sont des instruments qui nous permettent de tenir dans l’espérance de l’unité. A certains égards, ne sont-elles pas des données provisoires, appelées à disparaître au jour de l’unité visible?” (translation: FW).

provisional for the brothers: the west wall was demolished and a circus tent was placed to accommodate everyone.²⁵⁰

Fifthly, and intimately related to the previous point, the community has always found itself suspended between “identity and metamorphosis,”²⁵¹ as Stefania Palmisano characterized NMCs in general. The brief history of Taizé on the community’s website recalls how Brother Roger withdrew from the house to sing when non-Christians had found refuge with him and how his sister asked their guests to pray in private if they so desired in order to make everyone feel at ease. Brother Roger’s life shows the struggle to remain faithful to the faith of his origins, while enriching it with elements from other traditions and simultaneously respecting the customs and identity of his guests. Somehow, Brother Roger felt he succeeded in integrating or reconciling the Reformed tradition and the Catholic faith. One can often hear Protestant visitors say that Taizé ‘feels’ Catholic while Catholics experience the monastery as rather Protestant. The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 inaugurated a new flow of visitors from behind the former Iron Curtain. In order for them feel welcome, several onion-shaped domes, so typical of Orthodox church architecture, were erected on the roof of the Church of Reconciliation. The adjacent Orthodox chapel, which had already been consecrated in 1965, accommodated Orthodox worship.

The brothers live off the income generated by their pottery and wood working workshops and their publishing house, Presses de Taizé. They explicitly state that they do not accept gifts and personal inheritances. All guests pay for their stay upon arrival, with minimum fees indicated per country, taking the economic circumstances of each context into account. Boarding and lodging are austere: a camping site or barracks with several bunk beds and very simple food, which is distributed three times a day after showing the food vouchers each guest receives upon registration.

1973: A turning point in Taizé’s Eucharistic practice

The practice of Eucharistic hospitality from the side of the Roman Catholic Church towards Taizé’s non-Catholic members started in 1972 but was prepared

²⁵⁰ In an interview, Brother Roger recalls how, after witnessing a rainbow after the building was inaugurated, he exclaimed in relief: “Fabulous! It’s a promise that our church will not immobilize us!” Ateliers et Presses de Taizé and Peter Pál Tóth, directors, *Moments in the Life of Frère Roger*, Documentary on DVD (Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 2016), chap. 9 (40:47). Cf. Laplane, 251.

²⁵¹ Palmisano, *Exploring New Monastic Communities*, 28.

in previous years. In her biography of Brother Roger, Sabine Laplane elaborately describes the events leading up to this first occasion. She notes the first opportunity that presented itself when Cardinal Augustin Bea, president of the SPCU, visited Brother Roger in Rome towards the closure of the Second Vatican Council in November 1965:

He then pulls the booklet *Dynamique du provisoire* out of his pocket, opens it and reads aloud: 'Only the Eucharist, at the same time means for and result of unity, is capable of providing the supernatural strength and power to accomplish on earth our unity between the baptized. This contains an existential truth. As sacrament of unity, she has been given to us to dissolve in and around us all ferments of separation. In her, all who have despised one another out of ignorance are united. The ecumenical momentum will fade, should the day not come in which all unite around the same table who, although separated confessionally, believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.' The old man wholeheartedly agrees with these words. He believes that, should he propose so, the pope might be willing to grant to the brothers this much awaited Eucharistic hospitality. However, the prior remembers having reacted on the spot and without the slightest hesitation: 'No, no privileges for us alone!' (...) [H]e will cherish the memory of this conversation as 'one of the great moments in the ecumenical life of Taizé' and even believes that he has missed a chance that evening.²⁵²

Indeed, the next opportunity only came when a Catholic joined the community permanently. In the meantime, Brother Roger's intuition was undoubtedly strengthened by a remark from Patriarch Athenagoras when

²⁵² Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé*, 297–98. Original text in French: "Et voici qu'il tire le petit *Dynamique du provisoire* de la poche; il l'ouvre et lit tout haut: 'L'Eucharistie, à la fois moyen et aboutissement de l'unité, est seule capable de nous donner la force surnaturelle et le pouvoir d'accomplir sur la terre notre unité entre baptisés. Il y a là une vérité existentielle. Sacrement d'unité, elle nous est offerte pour que se dissolvent, en nous et autour de nous, tous les ferments de séparation. En elle sont reliés ceux qui se méprisaient par ignorance. La vague œcuménique retombera, s'il ne vient pas bientôt le jour où se réuniront autour de la même table tous ceux qui, séparés confessionnellement, croient en la présence réelle du Christ dans l'Eucharistie'. Le vieil homme acquiesce profondément à ces mots. Il pense qu'il pourrait demander au pape et que celui-ci accorderait aux frères cette hospitalité eucharistique si attendue. Or, le prieur se rappelle avoir réagi sur le champ et sans la moindre hésitation: 'Non, pas de privilèges pour nous tout seuls!' (...) [I]l gardera le souvenir de cet entretien comme d'une des grandes heures de la vie œcuménique de Taizé' et pensera même que ce soir-là, il a laissé passer une occasion" (translation: FW).

Brother Roger visited him in March 1970. Brother Roger recalled: “Until my last hour, I shall see him again at the moment of our departure. He raised his hands as if he were presenting the Eucharistic cup and once again repeated: ‘The cup and the breaking of bread, there is no other solution; remember.’”²⁵³

According to Brother Roger, the community enjoyed the approval of the bishop of Rome, Pope Paul VI, from the outset. Sabine Laplane cites a letter by Brother Roger, in which he describes his visit to the pope in December 1972. Referring to occasions in which non-Catholics receive Communion at a Catholic Mass, Brother Roger quotes the pope as having said: “It is Christ who calls them.”²⁵⁴ The community took this as the pope’s encouragement to continue on the path towards a practice of Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé.

Several theological and ecclesial developments accompanied the road towards Eucharistic sharing. In 1970, Brother Roger articulated his view on the role and significance of the papacy for all of Christianity, which Sabine Laplane relates directly to his wish for Eucharistic hospitality.²⁵⁵ Brother Roger translated his personal experience of reconciliation with other Christians without breaking with his roots into a proposal for formal belonging to several ecclesial bodies at once in a 1972 article in *Le Monde*. He suggested: “Even with the eye on a more universal communion we cannot break with our original communion. To deny is not the dynamic of modern man. For the hinge generation, will we be able, then, to puzzle out a possibility for double membership?”²⁵⁶ Later that year, the ecumenical theological think tank *Groupe des Dombes* had its report on the Eucharist published in Taizé, in which Catholic and Protestant theologians (Brother of Taizé Max Thurian among the latter) presented a common Eucharistic faith, providing a doctrinal and pastoral

²⁵³ English translation by Marguerite Léna, “Living the Unhoped-for: Hope in Action,” in *Brother Roger’s Contribution to Theological Thought: Acts of the International Colloquium, Taizé, August 31 - September 5, 2015*. (Taizé: Les Presses de Taizé, 2016), 149. Original French as cited by Sabine Laplane: “La coupe et la fraction du pain, il n’y a pas d’autre solution ; rappelez-vous,” Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé*, 349.

²⁵⁴ Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé*, 377. Original text in French: “C’est le Christ qui les appelle” (translation: FW).

²⁵⁵ Laplane, 358–60.

²⁵⁶ Frère Roger, “L’Église, un feu qui nous brûle,” *Le Monde*, January 20, 1972, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1972/01/20/temoignage-l-eglise-un-feu-qui-nous-brule_3033528_1819218.html, cited in Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé*, 368. Original text in French: “même en vue d’une communion plus universelle, nous ne pouvons pas rompre avec notre communion d’origine. Renier n’est pas dans la dynamique de l’homme moderne. Pour la génération, trouverons-nous alors la possibilité d’une double appartenance ?” (translation: FW).

foundation for the practice of Eucharistic hospitality and calling upon churches to consider offering such hospitality.²⁵⁷ The report incorporated the preparatory work of Faith and Order and, as such, shows significant resemblance with the section on the Eucharist in the 1982 Faith and Order paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.

These three developments – acknowledgment of the universal significance of the ministry of the pope, expression of converging Eucharistic theologies, and contemplating the option of multiple ecclesial belonging – formed important building blocks for the practice of Eucharistic hospitality that would be established in 1973.

After the Council, Brother Roger intended to find ways to fully incorporate Catholics into the community. Until then, Catholic participation in the life of the community had been limited to the presence of Catholic orders (both male and female) in and around Taizé.²⁵⁸ A Belgian Catholic doctor, the later Brother Ghislain, was convinced that he should join the Taizé community rather than the Franciscans who had settled in Taizé in 1964. Canonical challenges aside, this raised the question of Eucharistic communion in all seriousness. The community prepared a formal request to Pope Paul VI and the Roman institutions, asking for permission to receive Communion in Roman Catholic Eucharistic celebrations.²⁵⁹ They enjoyed the support of the local Catholic bishop, Msgr. Le Bourgeois, who celebrated the Eucharist with Brother Roger, Brother Ghislain, and several others, all of whom received Communion.²⁶⁰

Karim Schelkens, biographer of Cardinal Willebrands (President of the SPCU since 1969 after serving as Secretary under Cardinal Augustin Bea) demonstrates how the quest for Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé coincided with similar initiatives elsewhere. These included the search for adequate solutions for the growing number of mixed marriages and, most notably, the three high-level ‘incidents’ with Roman Catholic officials extending or enjoying Eucharistic hospitality in Paris (France), Uppsala (Sweden), and Medellín

²⁵⁷ For the English translation of this text, see Catherine E. Clifford, ed., *For the Communion of the Churches: The Contribution of the Groupe Des Dombes* (Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge U.K.: Eerdmans, 2010), 13–23.

²⁵⁸ Today, the Taizé community is still accompanied by sisters from several Catholic congregations. They assist the brothers of Taizé in welcoming their guests, accompany the female guests who spend a week in silence, and function as confidential counselors for female guests.

²⁵⁹ Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé*, 340.

²⁶⁰ Laplane, 375.

(Colombia) in 1968.²⁶¹ Willebrands, although a fervent protagonist of ecumenism long before Vatican II, never considered Eucharistic sharing a viable way towards unity in the West. He issued several statements which still form the basis for the definition of exceptional circumstances listed in the *Ecumenical Directory* of 1967, sec. 55 (and the new edition of 1993, sec. 131).²⁶² This explains why he attempted to prevent acts of Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé to the point of calling on Msgr. Le Bourgeois of Autun not to visit the community on 2 February 1973, when he planned to celebrate the Eucharist there.

Sabine Laplane notes that the bishop soon regretted his decision to yield to Cardinal Willebrands and that he initiated a new visit to Taizé. On 5 April 1973, he celebrated Mass in the community, inviting all brothers to receive Communion. This was the starting point for an enduring practice: “for the first time, on 11 June, Sunday of Pentecost, all brothers of the community can receive communion in public during Mass. A practice that continues until today.”²⁶³ From that moment onward, the brothers would receive Communion from the Holy Reserve on weekdays – a tabernacle had been installed in the Church of Reconciliation the previous Winter – with Mass celebrated every Sunday, presided over by a Catholic priest. This implied that most Protestant ordained brothers stopped presiding over Eucharistic liturgies, following the example of Brother Roger himself.²⁶⁴

Somewhat surprisingly, Schelkens directly relates Willebrands’ final clarifications regarding the discretion of local bishops to decide which cases met the requirements for Eucharistic hospitality, issued in October 1973,²⁶⁵ to the events in Taizé. Schelkens notes:

It was not said in so many words, but this accommodated the wishes of local bishops and of Schutz, who had requested Pope Paul VI

²⁶¹ Schelkens, *Johannes Willebrands: een leven in gesprek*, 331; cf. Casadei and Wouda, “Eucharistic Hospitality: Reconsidering the Terminology,” 51.

²⁶² Schelkens, *Johannes Willebrands: een leven in gesprek*, 334.

²⁶³ Laplane, *Frère Roger de Taizé*, 376. Original text in French: “Et, pour la première fois, le 11 juin, Dimanche de la Pentecôte, tous les frères de la communauté peuvent communier publiquement lors de la messe. Pratique qui se prolonge jusqu’aujourd’hui” (translation: FW).

²⁶⁴ Laplane, 376.

²⁶⁵ Johannes Willebrands and Charles Moeller, “A Note About Certain Interpretations of the ‘Instruction Concerning Particular Cases When Other Christians May Be Admitted to Eucharistic Communion in the Catholic Church,’” *Information Service*, no. 23 (1974): 25–26, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/acta-oecumenica/information-service-/information-service-23.html>.

already since 1971 to ‘allow non-Catholic baptized to receive Catholic Communion occasionally without having to break with their own community’.²⁶⁶

Nevertheless, ten years later, the French Bishops’ Conference would interpret Willebrands’ requirement of ‘grave spiritual need’ to include the “‘real need’ or an experienced spiritual desire in the circumstance of deep and continuous bonds of fraternal communion with Catholics (as they are experienced in some mixed marriages and in some durable ecumenical groups)”²⁶⁷ – a clear reference to Taizé. Still, it is clear that the situation in Taizé (and in Bose, for that matter), only through a benevolent interpretation on the part of the local bishop or bishop’s conference, meets the requirements listed in the *Ecumenical Directory*. In particular, the durable nature of the circumstances – including the practice of Eucharistic hospitality – and the role the practice plays as a means for promoting Christian unity are not unequivocally in line with the norms and regulations. Still, the monastics interviewed for the current study stress that their primary motivation for joining the communities has been their individual desire for the monastic common life (see section 4.1 in particular). The practice of Eucharistic hospitality addresses the challenges of this context for their own spiritual well-being since they lack access to the sacramental resources of their own churches (in case this is not the Roman Catholic Church). From that point of view, their situation rather easily reflects the conditions and apparently the local bishops share this interpretation. But as I will argue, the situation in Taizé and Bose simultaneously transcends this incidental, individual aspect and implies a structural, ecclesiological dimension.

Taizé clearly tries to respect the norms and regulations of the churches concerning Eucharistic hospitality within the community. At the same time, the community often mentions its current practice and promotes the conversation

²⁶⁶ Schelkens, *Johannes Willebrands: Een leven in gesprek*, 336. Original text in Dutch: “Het werd niet met zoveel woorden gezegd, maar dit kwam tegemoet aan de wensen van plaatselijke bisschoppen en van Schutz, die al sinds januari 1971 aan Paulus VI vroeg om ‘af en toe niet-katholieke gedoopten toe te staan om de katholieke communie te ontvangen, zonder daarbij te moeten breken met hun eigen gemeenschap” (translation: FW)

²⁶⁷ Commission épiscopale pour l’Unité des Chrétiens, “L’hospitalité eucharistique avec les chrétiens des églises issues de La Réforme en France,” 1983, <https://archivesweb.cef.fr/public/historique.cef.fr/historique.cef.fr/catho/vieglise/oecumenisme/note.html>. Original text in French: “réel besoin’ ou un désir spirituel ‘éprouvé des liens de communion fraternelle profonds et continus avec des catholiques (tels qu’ils sont vécus dans certains foyers mixtes et dans quelques groupes oecuméniques durables)” (translation: FW).

about this topic, encouraging churches to extend Eucharistic hospitality to one another. In a letter to church leaders in the context of the 2017 commemoration of the Reformation, for example, Brother Alois asked:

Should not the Churches which emphasize that unity in faith and an agreement on ministry are necessary in order to receive communion together give equal weight to the harmony of mutual love? Could they not offer a broader Eucharistic hospitality to those who show their desire for unity and who believe in the real presence of Christ? The Eucharist is not only the culmination of unity; it is also the road that leads to it.²⁶⁸

The Church of Reconciliation

The Church of Reconciliation is the focal point of Taizé's perimeters and activities. In the early days, Brother Roger used to have a small chapel in the house that he had bought in the village. As the community grew and attracted more and more guests, the chapel proved too small to accommodate them all. A request was sent to the bishop of Autun to allow the community to pray in the abandoned Romanesque (and Roman Catholic) church in the village. At the time, Catholics were not yet permitted to pray with Protestants, let alone share their holy space with them. After withdrawing his initial approval, the bishop referred the matter to the nuncio in Paris – who happened to be Cardinal Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII. He gave final permission to use the village church. The community's contacts with Cardinal Roncalli would prove of vital significance for Taizé. Brother Roger's viewpoints resonated with the future pope, who would grant him an annual audience, leaving the community with an influential patron.

One decade later, the community outgrew the village church as well. One of the brothers, an architect, designed a church building which was erected just outside the village with the help of the German youth organization *Aktion Sühnezeichen*. It was completed and inaugurated in 1962. Although Brother Roger initially regretted the project for being too massive, this church also failed to accommodate the ever-growing flow of (young) visitors. Some years later, the west wall with its stained-glass windows was torn down and a circus tent was erected just behind it. Over the years, the wooden extensions as they exist today were added for a more permanent solution. However, during one of my visits on the occasion of Easter, several hundred people had to join the

²⁶⁸ Brother Alois, "A Call to Church Leaders for 2017," Taizé website, 2017, https://www.taize.fr/en_article21331.html.

prayers via loudspeakers in one of the tents adjacent to the church building because the number of guests once again exceeded the capacity of the Church of Reconciliation.

Entering the Church of Reconciliation through one of its many entrances, one passes by young people holding signs reading ‘silence’ and distributing the famous Taizé songbooks and several additional sheets. Most entrances give access to narrow hallways containing storage cabinets with more of the songbooks and leaflets. Announcements, a map of the church, and a sign explaining the Communion policy in French, English, and German cover the wall above. The English translation reads in full:

On weekdays, communion is distributed by the brothers at the end of morning prayer. It is offered to the baptized who trust that it is Christ who gives himself and whom we receive, and who desire the visible unity of all who love Christ. Those who would like to receive communion but who are not accustomed to doing so can speak with a brother.

The blessed bread, given out by young people in various parts of the church, is for everyone, for those who have received communion and for those who do not receive communion. It is a sign that Christ rejects no one but welcomes everyone, just as he welcomed the crowd in the desert and gave them bread.

The Eucharist, presided over by Catholic priests, is celebrated on Sunday morning at 10 am in the Church of Reconciliation and each weekday morning at 7:30 am at point M (or in the crypt). During some weeks there are other Eucharistic celebrations, Protestant or Orthodox, held in the Orthodox chapel or in the village church.²⁶⁹

Passing through a second door, one enters the actual church. It is quite an overwhelming experience as a vast space able to host some five thousand people opens up, which it does, at least, during the prayers in high seasons, when the entire church is in use. In between services, and during the winter season in a permanent fashion, garage door-like systems divide the church into smaller spaces in order to enable alternative use of the space (for example, to host workshops) or to accommodate a smaller number of visitors. The light is gentle, especially in the evening when no daylight comes in through the small

²⁶⁹ This text is displayed in French and German as well.

stained-glass windows which frame the ceiling to complement the dim artificial lighting.²⁷⁰

The interior is austere. There is an intended lack of chairs, so people simply sit on the industrial carpet or the steps on the south side, or use prayer stools. Yet, the orangish walls, the wooden structure, the stained-glass, the icons, and the decorations in the apse give the space a warm, safe, and even cozy atmosphere. The altar, located in the apse (properly oriented towards the East), is the obvious focal point of the interior. Not only is it the brightest and most decorated part of the church, but one seems to be physically drawn towards it since the floor follows the natural slope of the hill against which the church is built: from the altar in the East upslope towards the main entrance in the West. The altar is flanked by the tabernacle (with an icon of Mary over it) on the North side and an icon of the cross on the South side. The latter hides the entrance to the downstairs sacristy from view. The apse and choir are separated from the rest of the church by means of small boxwood hedges. In the center, this space extends all the way up to about halfway through the building, so that it includes the area in which the brothers in their white robes are seated during the prayers, leaving space on either side for guests. In this way, the Taizé community itself is separated from the visitors. While enabling the brothers to be amidst their guests, the reserved area helps to preserve the communitarian identity. This division within the assembly, to me, reaffirms that there is a distinction between community and guests: a distinction significant to this study.

The description of the history and interior of the Church of Reconciliation was included to introduce the environment in which the Eucharist is celebrated in Taizé, but also to indicate the significance of the community to young people around the world who flock to the remote hilltop in Burgundy. However, the main focus is on the brotherhood itself, secluded in their boxwood perimeter: they, after all, form the permanent community living Christian reconciliation amidst the dividedness of the church. And they are the ones with dispensation to share the Eucharist.

The boxwood-framed 'choir' also includes the ambo: the second focal point of the church and Taizé's liturgy. It is placed at the very back of the choir, roughly at the center of the church. This is not only convenient as it enables almost everyone to see the ambo, but it is also theologically significant as the

²⁷⁰ The community's website hosts several impressive panorama pictures showing the church interior with changing sizes of crowds and light intensity. See http://taize.fr/en_article12734.html to engage with the interactive map (flash player required).

entire assembly ‘gathers around the Word of God’ quite literally so, since the brothers as well as the guests who find themselves adjacent to or East of the ambo turn around during the Gospel reading. This is an impressive rite in itself, especially when performed by hundreds of people.

The community produces its own ever-evolving songbook: a new edition is published annually, usually with several new hymns added and some old ones removed. The typical and famous repetitive Taizé songs are mostly polyphonic yet easy to learn, enabling most of the congregation to join the choir (which is newly composed every week with both permanent members and short-term guests). The singing is supported by the church’s organ, or by the keyboard complemented with whatever instruments guests have brought along.

Eucharist, morning prayer, and Communion

A typical day in Taizé revolves around the three common prayers: morning (8:15 am), midday (12:20 pm), and evening (20:30 pm). The brothers gather in the Church of Reconciliation for each of these prayers, and all guests are invited to join them. In fact, guests, predominantly youth with a high percentage of minors, are expected to participate in the prayers as a fixed component of the Taizé-routine. This routine further includes Bible studies, participation in so-called small groups (on Mondays, groups of about twenty youths are composed to meet on a daily basis to discuss the Bible studies), choirs, meals, and facultative workshops.

However – and this is of special importance for the current study – the Eucharist is celebrated prior to the morning prayer. Celebration starts at 7:30 am and takes place while most guests are waking up and getting dressed as they prepare themselves for morning prayer (followed by breakfast). Many of the guests appear to be altogether unaware of this early morning Mass. It is usually celebrated in the crypt or the temporary chapel created by lowering the walls of the rear end ‘compartment’ of the church (section M). During my visit in Summer 2017, an estimated 150 out of 2500 guests attended the morning Mass, concelebrated by eleven priests: Taizé’s Catholic priests (one ordained brother resides in Taizé, the other in the small community in Brazil) and visiting Roman Catholic clergy. Most attendees seemed familiar with Mass according to the Roman rite, knowing exactly how to respond to the liturgical acts. The songs were Taizé’s and the homily was replaced by a time of silent contemplation. I noticed that most attendees received Communion. A far greater number of hosts was consecrated and those not administered during Mass were stored in Taizé-made vessels. The same applied to the wine. By the end of the service, the

vessels were taken in procession and placed in the tabernacle near the apse. The temporary chapel dissolved as the walls were removed, making it again part of the main church. Some attendees remained at their place, preparing themselves for morning prayer. Many others found themselves new places in other sections of the church alongside peers who had already flocked to the church, while some left the building altogether (temporarily or perhaps permanently).

The morning prayer revolves around singing the Taizé songs, readings from the Old and New Testaments – as indicated with special reverence while the Gospel of the day is read – and intercessions. The songs are composed in different languages and chosen to fit the time of the year as well as to accommodate the nationalities represented. The readings, too, take place in several languages: they are read aloud in full, for example, in French and English, followed by key sentences in other languages. Similarly, intercessions are read in different languages and pay attention to the respective contexts of the visitors. The prayer culminates in the Communion rite.

The Communion rite starts with chants while a good number of brothers collect bread and wine from the tabernacle. They position themselves throughout the church, in pairs. Facing the altar, they stand amidst the crowd. One of the brothers thanks God for the gifts consecrated in the Eucharist. He then utters the words from the missal: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” Those familiar with the Roman rite respond (many in their own language): “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” The brothers carrying the consecrated elements of bread and wine turn towards the people and administer to all who ask for it. They give blessings instead if so requested (if, for example, people cross their arms in front of their chests). Most people present seem to receive Communion. The guests in the direct perimeter of the administering brothers make some space to enable others to reach them. The Communion rite takes about ten to fifteen minutes (depending on the ratio of administerers to guests, of course). When the brothers are finished administering to guests, they return the remaining hosts and wine to the tabernacle, where the *ciboria* and chalices are stored or purified by two brothers. The administerers receive Communion from a brother as well, just like the rest of the community.

During the Communion rite, several permanents position themselves throughout the church, distributing blessed bread. This Orthodox custom is meant to include those who do not partake in Communion for whatever reason

and to offer them a sign of hospitality. Therefore, it is not an alternative equal to Communion, as is also indicated on the sign at the entrances.

During an earlier visit to Taizé, I noticed yet another custom which has now been abandoned by the community. Previously, simultaneous to early morning Mass, a Protestant Eucharistic liturgy was celebrated in the Orthodox chapel or elsewhere (as Brother TB told me). However, the community increasingly considered this solution to be inadequate as it caused confusion amongst the guests. I, too, was somewhat confused the first times I visited Taizé. In the course of my research, I understood more clearly what happened. Still, it was a painful reminder of Christian division to run into people (quite literary so) finding my way through the church in order to reach the ‘correct’ Communion row. On the one hand, this experience vividly and painfully represents the drama of Christian division. From that point of view, it can create awareness and revitalize the desire for unity. This, of course, is a major argument *against* Eucharistic sharing. On the other hand, however, the experience contradicts the very essence of the Eucharist, as the interviewed monastics have also pointed out. I will dwell on this theme when discussing the interviews, especially in section 8.2.

For now, suffice it to say that the brothers desired to eliminate the confusion and to express that the Eucharist is a sacrament of unity, leading them to abandon their former practice of administering bread and wine from separate Catholic and Protestant celebrations during the morning prayer. Instead, they agreed to prioritize the ministry of Catholic clergy for the sake of unity and for the benefit of the guests. I struggle to find language here, since I am convinced that this is both pragmatic and deeply spiritual. ‘Prioritizing’ here does not mean evaluating the ministry of the Catholic Church as more valuable, real, authentic, or valid; rather, it simply means resorting to a solution for a deeply spiritual problem that fits the complex situation best and that tries to balance the interests and convictions of all involved (which also implies taking into account as well as possible the requirements and limitations of the respective ecclesial laws and regulations) and, ultimately, in faithful obedience to God. The way the monastics address this issue is conceptually rich and theologically complex. It is discussed in several sections in the empirical chapters and analyzed as part of the conclusions in section 9.3.

Eucharist on Sundays

Each week in Taizé culminates in the Sunday morning Eucharist. Of course, this idea is embedded in the understanding of Sunday as the Day of the Lord in

which his resurrection is celebrated. Yet, in Taizé, this practice has extra pragmatic and spiritual relevance, as the young guests typically spend one whole week in the community. The brothers intend to introduce them into the Christian faith and spirituality, knowing that many of them have only received basic, if any, Christian education. The weekly program with its Bible introductions is designed to introduce youth to fundamental (yet not too complicated) parts of Scripture and to accompany them in their questions, struggles, and prayers.

Focusing especially on the person of Jesus and his suffering, death, and resurrection, each Sunday is 'a little Easter' in Taizé. Thus, every week resembles holy week. Following the Friday evening prayer, the icon of the cross is taken from its upright position in the apse and placed on the floor in the center of the boxwood-framed choir. When the brothers leave the church during the final songs, some of the boxwoods are removed, allowing the youths to enter the space in order to venerate the cross and pray alongside it. As many of them choose to do so, the choir section behind the cross fills with young people, while many others await their turn in the church. During high seasons, this ceremony can take hours, while a brother accompanies them, positioned on a prayer stool close to the icon. Saturday evening's prayer resembles the Easter Vigil, culminating in the rite of lights, in which all present pass along the flame of the Easter candle using votive candles. Thus, the whole week is preparation for the Sunday morning 'little Easter' Mass. Therefore, guests are encouraged to spend a whole week in the community, arriving on one Sunday or Monday and leaving the next.²⁷¹

The Sunday Eucharist, starting at 10:00 am, replaces the regular early morning Mass and morning prayer. It is presided, again, by one of Taizé's Catholic ordained brothers or by visiting Roman Catholic priests or bishops, with the other Catholic clergy concelebrating. These differences compared to the prayer services – especially the fact that the altar is now actively involved as the focal point of the liturgy and that there is one clear presider – add to the sense of solemnity of the Eucharist. It follows the Roman rite and diverges from the usual habits of the Taizé prayers. For example, in accordance with Roman Catholic custom, the faithful stand up while listening to the Gospel instead of remaining seated. The brothers and the many Catholic faithful lead by example.

²⁷¹ However, some will leave before Mass (especially those who have a long travel ahead) as Sundays and Mondays are the exchange days in which people are encouraged to arrive or leave. Many may want to return home on Sundays as they face the new study or work week on Monday.

Two things are missing for pragmatic reasons: the offering of gifts by the faithful and the exchange of a sign of peace. In the past, the latter resulted in elaborate good-bye wishes amongst the guests, many of whom would depart straight after Mass. The Communion rite proceeds similar to the morning prayer with brothers assisting in administering Communion to their peers and the guests. Again, the non-Catholic brothers partake of Communion.

The community has chosen always to have a Roman Catholic priest preside over the Sunday morning Mass as part of the routine of the community and the guests. However, they also provide ample opportunity for visiting clergy from other churches to celebrate the sacrament with the group that they accompany at other moments.

3.3 BOSE: ROMAN CATHOLIC AND ECUMENICAL

The mission of Bose is described by Bose monk Adalberto Mainardi, when he writes: “This ‘ecumenical’ ministry of the community of Bose is rooted in the local church, and it carries out an ecclesial service both within its own diocese and in other local churches.”²⁷² This ministry has been widely acknowledged and appreciated. The ecumenical significance of the community is illustrated by the appointment of Brother Enzo as consultor of the PCPCU in 2014. The pope also wrote the community on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 2018:

Its simple beginning became a significant mission that has fostered the renewal of religious life, interpreted as Gospel lived in the great monastic tradition. Within this current of grace, your Community has distinguished itself in its commitment to preparing the way of unity of the Christian Churches, becoming a place of prayer, of encounter and of dialogue among Christians, in view of the communion of faith and of love for which Jesus prayed.²⁷³

Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople addressed the community in similar terms: “Faithful ‘to the monastic tradition of the Fathers’, the community of Bose ‘rightly enjoys international prestige and recognition for its multifaceted

²⁷² Adalberto Mainardi, “Monasticism and Ecumenism: The Monastic Community of Bose,” *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 12, no. 2 (2020): 261, <https://doi.org/10.2478/ress-2020-0017>.

²⁷³ “Letter of His Holiness to Enzo Bianchi to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the Founding of the Monastic Community of Bose (11 November 2018),” Vatican website, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20181111_lettera-enzobianchi-bose.html.

and ecumenical ministry in this world.”²⁷⁴ The recognition of the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches reflects the appreciation of the faithful. The community receives thousands of visitors annually, including large numbers of youths, who often camp on the grounds of the monastery.

In addition, the community has hosted ecumenical conferences and meetings of dialogue commissions, such as the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Coordination Group for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.²⁷⁵ During the pontificates of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, the community helped prepare papal liturgical celebrations. Amongst others, Pecklers mentions the liturgies for the Great Jubilee Year in 2000 and the Liturgy of Penitence, used to ask for forgiveness for the church’s sins in the past.²⁷⁶ These examples indicate the status and influence of the ecumenical community both within and outside the Roman Catholic Church.

Enzo Bianchi and his community: Some characteristics

Enzo Bianchi studied economics in Turin. He and other students envisioned a life of common prayer and Bible reading, and gathered regularly in Enzo’s apartment in Turin to engage in such activities. The group even imagined founding a community but, in the end, Enzo was the only one to pursue this dream. He rented a house, which the group in a final common act used to restore the nearby abandoned church of San Secondo. Enzo moved into the house on 8 December 1965, the closing day of the Second Vatican Council. He lived in solitude, receiving visitors but without permanent companions. It would take three years until he saw his ideal of communitarian life materialize: in 1968 three others joined him permanently, among whom were a Protestant pastor and a woman.²⁷⁷

This concise history of the origins of Bose shows some fundamental characteristics. First, the special significance of Brother Enzo for the community can hardly be underestimated. His desire, vision, and perseverance laid the foundations for the community. He used his time in solitude to

²⁷⁴ Mainardi, “Monasticism and Ecumenism,” 261.

²⁷⁵ Mainardi, 264.

²⁷⁶ Keith F. Pecklers, “Worship at the Ecumenical Monastery of Bose,” *Studia Liturgica* 38 (2008): 215,

<https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/pdf/10.1177/003932070803800207>.

²⁷⁷ Pecklers, 206–8.

contemplate the essence and shape of the community that he envisioned by visiting various Catholic (Trappists of Tamié, France), Orthodox (at Mount Athos, Greece), and Reformed (Taizé, France) monasteries and communities.

Bianchi wished to implement the results of the Second Vatican Council, especially its reforms of the liturgy and monasticism, and its ecumenical commitment. Significantly, he chose the closing day of the Council as the founding date of his community, even though he spent the first years in solitude. These years were filled with challenges. Not only were the living conditions harsh – Brother Guido Dotti notes that there was no proper housing, no electricity, and that food was scarce in the early years of the community²⁷⁸ – but Brother Enzo also endured the disapproval of the local bishop of Biella. This bishop, Msgr. Carlo Rossi, prohibited celebration of the sacraments and public liturgy in 1967 mainly because of the many Protestants among Brother Enzo’s guests. Turin’s archbishop, Cardinal. Michele Pellegrino, lifted the interdict in June 1968 and offered to act as guarantor for the emerging community.²⁷⁹ Only in 1988 did the new bishop of Biella, Msgr. Massimo Giustetti, eventually accept the community again in his diocese. He even urged that canonical recognition was necessary. He approved the status of the community as a private association of the faithful in 2001 as mentioned earlier.

In 2017, Brother Enzo stepped down as prior of the community. His resignation had been prepared for several years and the community elected Brother Luciano Manicardi as its new prior. This major transition for the community was accompanied by several befriended experts and leaders of other monasteries. The community now reports that during this “fraternal visit, (...) [s]ome critical points emerged, but these did not impede the unfolding of events that culminated with the resignation of br Enzo.”²⁸⁰

In December 2019 and January 2020, however, the Vatican initiated an intervention of a different category. Having received indications of internal problems and struggles, pontifical delegate Fr. Amadeo Cencini visited and investigated the community. In a letter on their website, the community explains:

The apostolic visit was initiated by the Holy See because of various reports about profound suffering in the fraternal life in Bose and after

²⁷⁸ Guido Dotti, “Bose, an Ecumenical Monastery,” *One in Christ* 43, no. 1 (2009): 12.

²⁷⁹ Pecklers, “Worship at the Ecumenical Monastery of Bose,” 208.

²⁸⁰ Monastero di Bose, “We Are Not Better,” Bose website, June 19, 2020, <https://www.monasterodibose.it/en/community/news/community-life/13952-we-are-not-better>.

having verified that this was true. The Community received the visit in obedience, as a sign of the paternal attention of Pope Francis and as a help in discerning the profound causes of a grave unease regarding ‘the exercise of authority, the handling of governance, and the fraternal climate’ in Bose.²⁸¹

Four members of the community, including the founder and former prior Enzo Bianchi were summoned to leave the community for some time. The community stressed that no further impediments were imposed and that “the dispositions do not regard in any way questions of doctrinal orthodoxy.”²⁸² Furthermore, the decree signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin (Vatican Secretary of State) and approved by Pope Francis continues to acknowledge the ecumenical reality of the community through:

... [e]xplicit and repeated references to our most precious peculiar traits; the choice of monastic life in celibacy and common life, the presence of brothers and sisters in the same community, the ecumenical composition of its members and involvement in the ecumenical movement, an ecumenism not only spiritual and of intentions, but of a concrete daily life among brothers and sisters who belong to different Christian Churches.²⁸³

So far, it is uncertain when, and even whether, Brother Enzo or the other two brothers and one sister will return to Bose. It is a very painful experience for the community. As a side note with regard to the current study, it illustrates obviously that sharing the Eucharist within or across denominational boundaries never safeguards against communitarian struggles.

The community generates an income through its printing house Edizioni Qiqajon and several types of handicrafts including pottery, beekeeping, woodworking, and the manufacturing of icons. The fruits of this labor are being sold in the shop at the entrance of the monastery. In addition, the community grows its own crops and several monastics have paid occupations outside the monastery, for example, in a hospital. Apart from the lived ecumenism through living and praying together, the monastics contribute to the ecumenical mission by hosting conferences, mainly on Protestant spirituality and on church architecture. Guests reside in an apartment building designed just for this purpose, with simple but spacious rooms with ensuite bathrooms and a common breakfast room in the basement. They have lunch and supper in small

²⁸¹ Monastero di Bose.

²⁸² Monastero di Bose.

²⁸³ Monastero di Bose.

groups (up to ten or twelve persons) in small dining rooms, accompanied by two monastics each. This is an important aspect of the community's hospitality policy.

1972: The struggle for a common Eucharist

Similar to Taizé, the early 1970s were decisive for Bose's Eucharistic practice. Bose, too, has struggled to find a proper way of sharing the Eucharist acceptable to all traditions involved. Brother Enzo faced a temporary prohibition from any liturgical celebrations in his first years in Bose due to the ecumenical guests he received. This prohibition was lifted by Cardinal Pellegrino, archbishop of Turin, who agreed to act as patron of the emerging community.

According to the interview with Brother BF, the community deeply longed to partake of the Eucharist together, an opportunity they did not have within the Roman Catholic Church. No priests were present among the first monastics and the local parish priest did not approve of the new monastic community. Therefore, BF explains, the community agreed to partake of the Eucharist presided by their only ordained member: Brother Daniel, a Waldensian pastor. According to BF, the community informed both the Waldensian and Roman Catholic authorities but received no response from either. Encouraged by the lack of formal disapproval - which they took for implicit permission - the community engaged in this practice for several months, until controversy in a local newspaper urged Cardinal Pellegrino to intervene. A new opportunity was established when a Catholic priest joined the community several months later. This settled the question of a common Eucharistic liturgy as the non-Catholic members were allowed to receive Communion as well. This practice exists until today, even including the Orthodox who have lived in the community over the years.²⁸⁴

The community treasures its current solution, which it practices discretely. However, Brother Guido, monastic of Bose but writing in his capacity as Secretary of the Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of Piedmont - Val d'Aosta, suggests that the Italian church should reflect on the issue of Eucharistic hospitality, inspired by the documents of the

²⁸⁴ BF-1,10a-c. This episode plays an important role in the interview with brother BF. It will be discussed in detail in section 6.1.

WCC and by the experiences with interconfessional relations in other countries.²⁸⁵

Bose's church building

The community has used several spaces within their buildings as chapels over the years. In 1999, a new building was inaugurated to serve as the community's church, with sufficient capacity to accommodate the many guests. One enters the community premises by descending from Magnano's Eastern exit road. The first buildings one encounters are the hospitality building on the right-hand side and the church on the left-hand side of the parking lot. Guests are not supposed to proceed beyond these buildings where the living quarters and the workshops of the community are located. Guests can reach the guesthouse by walking down a dedicated path around the church. As such, the building is the center of the exchange between guests and community, both geographically and spiritually. Other places of contact are the reception area with its shop and conference rooms for individual and group meetings, and the rooms in and around the guest house where members of the community share meals with their guests.

The church itself is a spacious and austere building, oriented towards the North-West. It is a tranquil place: silent and dimly lit through the few windows over the choir and in the apse. This draws one's attention immediately towards the apse with its crucifix and altar on a three-step elevation. The aesthetically similar ambo is placed in one line with the altar, on the demarcation line between the choir and nave, on a one-step elevation. It holds an icon facing the nave, and two candles. The choir section is somewhat wider than the nave and contains two rows of three pillars supporting the roof. Both elements, combined with the raised ridge (with its windows), suggest the classical architectural concept of cross-basilica with nave and transepts. During the prayers and the Eucharistic liturgy, the monks are seated in three rows of chairs in the South-Western part of the choir, facing the nuns in the opposite North-Eastern end. The organ and entrance to the sacristy are located in the North-Eastern wall, behind the nuns. The monastics enter and exit the church through stairs on either side of the building, leading to the crypt under the choir. The daily community meetings following the morning prayers as well as the

²⁸⁵ Guido Dotti, "Impedita e raccomandata," in *Ospitalità eucaristica: in cammino verso l'unità dei cristiani*, ed. Margherita Riciutti and Pietro Urciuoli, Nostra Tempo 150 (Turin: Claudiana, 2020), 71–76. Dotti does not refer to the community of Bose in the chapter.

Saturday evening *lectio divina* take place in that crypt. It is also used as conference room.

The choir and apse drew my attention first but soon I discovered the water basin with running water in the very back of the church, on the left-hand side of the entrance. It has an icon of Mary hanging over it. On Sunday evenings, the monastics gather here at the end of the prayer service to sing their homage to the Virgin Mary, “Madre del Signore,” portraying Mary subsequently as mother of God, daughter of Israel, and mother of the faithful. This is an example of the “very discreet”²⁸⁶ Marian devotion which Brother BE mentions.

Prayers and Eucharist

In Bose, the monastics gather three times a day in the church: for the morning, midday, and evening prayers. The community uses its own lectionary for Bible readings, while observing the Roman Catholic lectionary on Sundays. During the midday prayer, spiritual readings from church fathers or great theologians from the distant or recent past and from different traditions (including, for example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer) are recited. The monastics sing songs from the Bose psalterium and hymn book, often antiphons with the men and women responding to each other (collectively or represented by cantors). Adalberto Mainardi writes about the prayer life of the community: “The liturgy of the hours and daily *lectio divina* are the central elements of the prayer of the community, and each brother and sister continues his or her own prayer in silence and solitude.”²⁸⁷ On Thursdays (and on another weekday in case of a solemnity), a celebration of the Eucharist replaces the midday prayer. This is the only Mass outside the Sunday morning Eucharist.²⁸⁸ The fact that Bose limits the Eucharistic celebrations to Sundays and Thursdays has been discussed in the interviews and will be addressed in several sections.

Apart from the particular setting and style of Bose, the liturgy does not seem to diverge significantly from the missal. It is presided over by one of Bose’s priests (without the other ordained brothers concelebrating).²⁸⁹ It does attract extra visitors from the village and beyond, in addition to those who stay

²⁸⁶ BE-1,22, cf. Pecklers, “Worship at the Ecumenical Monastery of Bose,” 213. The hymn can be found on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYnCJB-78xg>.

²⁸⁷ Mainardi, “Monasticism and Ecumenism,” 260.

²⁸⁸ Keith F. Pecklers S.J. presents a detailed account of Bose’s liturgical practice, including the prayer services and Eucharistic celebrations: Pecklers, “Worship at the Ecumenical Monastery of Bose.”

²⁸⁹ Pecklers, however, notes that the priest occasionally joins the congregation in facing towards the apse during the liturgy. Cf. Pecklers, 214–15.

in the guest house for a period of time. However, the community discourages their guests attending this liturgy as a permanent alternative to their own local parishes.²⁹⁰

When I participated in the Sunday Mass in March 2019, the building was completely packed with visitors who attended Brother Enzo's lecture later that afternoon. With all seats taken and all available spare rooms around them occupied by guests, many visitors had to find a place behind the monastics, filling the church all the way to the apse. This revealed to me the level of popularity the community and its founder enjoy in Italy and abroad. Several of the monastics assisted with the administration of Communion to their brothers and sisters – including the non-Catholic members – and the guests. All received both the consecrated bread and wine by way of intinction.

Pecklers notes that the ecumenical nature of the community has affected its way of celebrating the Eucharist:

following the ancient monastic tradition of ordaining only a sufficient number of presbyters to attend to the necessary pastoral ministrations. As a lay and ecumenical community founded on a common baptism, there is therefore no eucharistic concelebration among the presbyters. (...) The proclamation of the gospel and preaching of the homily, however, are shared by various brothers and sisters who have been tested and judged by the Bose community to be gifted in preaching.²⁹¹

Due to these characteristic customs, the Eucharist in Bose has its own atmosphere, without giving the impression that the community deviates significantly from the Roman rite.

²⁹⁰ Pecklers, 212.

²⁹¹ Pecklers, 212.

4

MONASTIC VOCATION WITH ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS

Speaking about their personal path towards joining either Taizé or Bose, it is surprising that all of the interviewees indicate that the ecumenical nature and mission of the communities did not define their primary motivation for joining them. Their level of familiarity with ecumenical affairs before encountering the communities differs, but for all of them the choice for the monastic life implies a new or renewed commitment to Christian unity. This surprised me since I had assumed that the choice to join either Bose or Taizé would be especially based on their ecumenical nature. The question of Eucharistic sharing, therefore, needs to be interpreted as part of the personal process towards (a growing) devotion to Christian unity, rather than as a fruit or consequence of such a process. The first two sections give insight into these processes.

In section 4.3, I have collected the interviewees' responses to liturgical, and especially Eucharistic, traditions that the monastics encounter within and outside their respective communities. It becomes clear that they all feel familiar with, or attracted to, Eucharistic liturgies shaped by the liturgical movement. This is a common ground for their understanding and recognition of Eucharistic celebrations in various traditions. Recognition in the sense of acknowledgment is, to a significant extent, based on the identification of such liturgies with the principles of the liturgical movement rather than on the denominational identity of the presiding minister. This, in turn, implies that, for the monastics, 'Eucharist' is not reserved to one or two particular ecclesial traditions. In fact, they struggle to identify the boundaries to 'Eucharist': they cannot clearly indicate which liturgies could not be identified as such. This indicates that, for them, Eucharist is not a clearly defined category. This

diffuses the boundaries between traditions and enables the monastics to participate across denominational borders, be it hypothetically or in reality.

Section 4.4 investigates how the monastics cope with the differences amongst themselves, within the community. On the one hand, they try to grow in sensitivity towards one another, resulting in discretion and even abnegation with regard to spiritual resources. On the other hand, they enthusiastically cultivate the ‘exchange of gifts.’ They are open towards the spiritual resources of other traditions and try to integrate this in their personal spirituality and, certainly in Taizé, into the routine of the common life. This, too, diffuses the ecclesial boundaries. Yet, this time, it results not so much in moving across borders towards other traditions, but in allowing other traditions and spiritual resources to affect one’s own tradition. In this way, the monastics live with the differences. They all indicate that they do not discuss the major ecumenical issues on a theological level. The affective and spiritual dimensions clearly have priority over intellectual articulation in the ecumenical process and mission of the communities.

4.1 COMMON LIFE AS PRIMARY MOTIVATION AND MISSION

Vocation to the common life

The monastics indicate that they stumbled upon the communities they now inhabit more or less by chance. They did not intentionally search for these particular communities in order to see if they could be part of them. Brother TA, for example, describes how he simply followed in his sister’s footsteps when he first visited Taizé (“my sister has been there, I should dare the same”²⁹²). He does not frame his original motivation in terms of spiritual need or ecumenical commitment. He simply took part in a trip organized by his local congregation, together with friends. Similar stories are told by BF (“I discovered by chance practically the Bose community”²⁹³), BG,²⁹⁴ and BE.²⁹⁵ TB elaborates on how he was attracted by Taizé’s emphasis on friendship and social action:

I was interested in the question of ecumenism, um, because that’s what I understood, that Taizé, it was to gather people from different churches, but, maybe it was even more the... this was in the seventies,

²⁹² TA-2,4. The original text in Dutch of all Brother TA’s quotes can be found in Appendix 3.

²⁹³ BF-1,2a.

²⁹⁴ BG-1,8.

²⁹⁵ BE-1,14.

so it was this, the commitment to... to... worldwide, sort of friendship, communion... commitment to justice. It was this, there were many Latin Americans in Taizé at that time um, and in the text, there was some kind of letter of Taizé already, it was news from... from... Latin America, Brother Roger went to India, to Calcutta, so it was all these questions of um, of church and society, which was maybe more important... um... and then, what was also more important than ecumenism as such was, was uh... the prayer, prayer and... Bible reading and silence, and....²⁹⁶

They recall how an initial trip with others inspired them to go back by themselves for days, weeks, or months in order to get to know the respective community better. TC's story is a little different, mainly due to his Canadian background. He first met two brothers from Taizé who visited Canada and the United States, after which he travelled to Europe in order to contemplate the sense of vocation that he experienced. TC sought and found in Taizé a place to overthink his options and to discover the nature of this vocation. At that point, he did not consider becoming a brother in Taizé itself: he merely found refuge in the prayer life of the community.

The ecumenical vision and ministry of the communities does not seem to play a vital role in the choice to join them. The monastic life, a life of common prayer, is far more prominent in the life stories of the interviewees. Brother BE states explicitly: "my first goal, for me at least, was really to... to try to live this monastic life, more than the ecumenical... uh... experience."²⁹⁷ In retrospect, he acknowledges that already during his studies and early career at a regional newspaper, he preferred a sober lifestyle, leading his friends to joke that his apartment resembled a monastic cell.

For the Protestant interviewees, the ecumenical nature of Taizé and Bose was, however, significant in the sense that it provided a place where they could live out the monastic life they craved. BE explains that he did not want to become Roman Catholic in order to be able to join a monastery. In Bose, he found a place where he could preserve his Reformed identity and combine it with monastic life.²⁹⁸ He had visited Taizé (as well as several Roman Catholic monasteries) and considered becoming a brother there but, in the end, he preferred the liturgical style of Bose.²⁹⁹ This is a theme I will discuss separately

²⁹⁶ TB-1,4c.

²⁹⁷ BE-2,18.

²⁹⁸ BE-2,22.

²⁹⁹ BE-1,24.

since it has significant implications for the relationships between the monastics in particular and the communities in general with the respective churches, as well as for their vision of ecumenism and Christian unity. For now, it is important to note that the wish for a shared life and common prayer is at the heart of the interviewees' motivation to join Bose and Taizé.

To a certain extent, this contradicts my own implicit assumption in the *Catholica* article (integrated in this dissertation as sections 1.3 and 1.4) that the ecumenical communities differ significantly from mixed couples with regard to their motivation for engaging in intimate relationships with Christians from other confessions. Since the communities explicitly highlight their ecumenical nature and mission, I had assumed that the motivation of individual members was primarily fueled by a similar intention. However, the interviews indicate that this is not necessarily the case: the monastics that I have interviewed stress the priority of their desire for communal life, leaving only a secondary role for ecumenical intentions. BE strikingly speaks in terms of falling in love when it comes to his motives to opt for the life in Bose.³⁰⁰ Concerning his reasons to seek religious life, he states:

I think, what attracted me to monastic or to religious life, uh, was just the fact that I saw communities of men and women, where um.... this form of life was lived... and was lived well {laughs}. Where people gave the impression to be glad and to be balanced persons, and to realize their life. And this witness gave me the impression, if they can be happy in this form of life, why not me?³⁰¹

As such, it was not an intellectual decision but an intuition that he followed, centered on the common life in itself rather than on the promotion of ecumenical progress.

The experiences of the interviewees resemble those of the founders. Both Brother Roger and Brother Enzo were driven by a desire for a communal life. In the case of Roger Schutz, this desire always had an ecumenical implication given that the Reformed tradition had abolished monastic life. He intended to restore monasticism, both by rooting his own community in the Catholic monastic tradition and by adapting it to Reformed insights and requirements. Concerning the former, it is symbolically highly significant that Taizé is located close to the ruins of the once so influential abbey of Cluny, a site so important for monastic reforms from the tenth century onward.

³⁰⁰ BE-2,20.

³⁰¹ BE-1,58.

The double principle of being rooted in the wider monastic tradition while at the same time reforming it from within is also characteristic for Enzo Bianchi's intentions. He wished to implement the reforms indicated by Vatican II in order to reinterpret monasticism in our time. He also desired to promote Christian unity. Both elements were already reflected in the ecumenical student community in Turin, and continued to inspire Bianchi's plans for a monastic community in Bose. The ecumenical nature of both communities can be seen as a result of the longing for communal life and collaboration in social action.

Ecumenical mission

Nevertheless, the primary motivation formed by the desire to engage in communal life does have its ecumenical significance, since it is lived out ecumenically. The very act of sharing all of life with Christians from other confessions is the most prominent ecumenical mission of the communities. Sister BG analyses this very concisely, summarizing what others say as well:

So, there are people [with us in Bose, which are very important] in churches, in the ecumenical dialogue, we organize congresses, okay, but uh, I think, if all of that stops, we are the same, okay? Because the true sign is to, to be um... a place open of the people. That's the sign. And we can do anything or nothing. If we have the possibility, it's a good thing. Of course, and we do it with pleasure and with passion, but it's not the [-] for our life.³⁰²

She thus indicates that the more explicit ecumenical efforts made by members of the community inside and outside its confines are not the core of the mission of Bose as she understands it. She stresses the importance of being able to host people from different churches in order to pray together: "and not only to pray, but can stay in the same place, and can feel that we believe the same God."³⁰³ She feels that the main mission of Bose is simply to live together, to pray together, and to accommodate the wish of others to do the same. BF agrees, saying: "we are going on testifying some things. So, in some aspects uh... our voice had a... find an audience, uh, in other things, no, no matter, we are not here to find an audience, but to live here what we think is authentic and asked to us."³⁰⁴ The things they now speak out on are cultural and social questions

³⁰² BG-1,54.

³⁰³ BG-1,58.

³⁰⁴ BF-1,16a.

(which he believes to be religious questions as well), like immigration. But the ecumenical mission of Bose ought, primarily, to be lived.

Reflecting on his own process towards becoming a Taizé monk, TA adds: “But indeed, after that it was a very gradual process of deepening an understanding of what... what the brothers live here... um... Through study, indeed, but still, first of all, for ninety-five percent just through, through daily life here,”³⁰⁵ indicating that, for him, the meaning of the community’s life only started to dawn on him when he actually engaged in it.

In this way, indeed, Taizé and Bose can be understood as an experiment and a sign, rather than a model: they do not pretend to have the solution for the problem of division. They only express a deep desire to live together, to pray together, to be followers of Christ together. As Brother TB states: “what we can do here in Taizé, it is to, to live like this together, to pray together, and to welcome each other.”³⁰⁶ He continues:

We can only welcome, and listen. But I think, this is the big advantage of monasteries in general, that um... in the history of monastic life um... monasteries have not been places where... um... where the... theological issues had to be decided, but it was rather... the life of prayer, of brotherhood, and... understanding and hearing all those questions, but... but... maybe helping people who have to reflect and who have to decide, to do that, but not... not being um... we, we are first here to welcome, no?³⁰⁷

Brother TB conceptualizes his community’s contribution as a limited but particular and distinct task. Taizé does not intend to provide a sound theological answer to the pressing questions of ecumenism and Eucharistic sharing; rather, it intends to welcome and listen and assist those who will have to decide through living their monastic vocation ecumenically.

Living the monastic vocation in an ecumenical context is certainly a challenging experiment given the centuries of hostility between denominations and the challenges posed by the respective canonical frameworks. It will become clear later on that the communities still struggle to cope with these things and that they are far from providing answers. Yet, their main intention is at the same time their mission: to *practice* Christian unity rather than to entertain it intellectually (even though Bose in particular contributes to the

³⁰⁵ TA-1,22.

³⁰⁶ TB-1,4f.

³⁰⁷ TB-1,16.

academic and ecclesiastical debates and dialogues). The themes of model and sign will be explored in more detail in section 6.4.

4.2 LIVED ECUMENISM AS CATALYST FOR ECUMENICAL COMMITMENT

The interviewees were not primarily attracted by the ecumenical mission of the communities they chose to join. Yet today, they fully participate in a mission they now consider of the utmost importance. With respect to their ecumenical awareness and commitment, their life stories are marked by either of two characteristic experiences. BF, TB, and TC express a radical change in their perspective when they encountered Bose and Taizé. All three of them indicate that they were not used to ecumenical contacts; they only recall very few and specific examples of ecumenical encounters prior to their introduction to the ecumenical communities. They grew up in rather exclusive Catholic or Protestant environments and experienced the confrontation with other Christians in the monasteries as something totally new. The other group, consisting of BE, BG, and TA, experienced more continuity between their youth and their life in the communities. Yet, for them too, the encounter with the communities they chose to join inaugurated a new phase in their ecumenical commitment.

“A new world:” Discovery of ecumenism

To start with the former group: BF, for instance, only brings up two examples of people he met in his youth whom he knew to belong to churches other than the Roman Catholic Church. He recalls:

We had a neighbor in our building, an Arminian lady who was probably Orthodox. But we never really knew her, it was not a question of discussion. And, with the youth group, we helped the poor of the parish by collecting wastepaper. One of the families we assisted was Waldensians, but again, we knew no more than to respect them in a different way and the relationship was with people in need, no matter of their belief or Christian belonging.³⁰⁸

His relationship with people of other confessions was not so much ecumenical in nature but rather diaconal. Non-Catholics were merely an odd exception in his context. BF's ecumenical awareness only awakened when he was introduced to Bose. That was the first time he actually got to know non-Catholic

³⁰⁸ BF-1,2b.

Christians and spoke with them at length. Here, he met Catholics and Reformed, both interested in Orthodoxy. BF describes this experience as “a sort of new world that was opening.”³⁰⁹ Especially in the small community in Switzerland, in which he was sent to live soon after joining Bose, he became aware of the similarities between his own Catholic Church and other Christians. Not only did they not answer to the polemic and caricatural descriptions he knew from books, but they encountered very similar ecclesial and pastoral struggles and problems:

I had a chance to have a sort of practical life to show you that Protestants are, uh, like us {laughs}. I mean, they are not the devil, they have not strange things, so, very simple and grassroots opportunity, to know really the other people and the problem~ the pastoral problem that they had, like uh, the priests.³¹⁰

It was only after spending two years in this context that it became “normal” to him to “consider uh... .. other Christians just as Christians.”³¹¹ He needed this practical experience, as well as the groundbreaking work of Vatican II which forced everyone to review their vision of ecumenism.³¹² He recognized their faith and efforts to live as Christians even though their journeys had differed so significantly from his own:

This was one of my also experiences in Switzerland, to know true, serious, and clever Christians, trying to live their life according to the Gospel, uh, being part of another church, who received another Christian education, having used another, while having another relationship with sacraments, with uh, but seeing how they can face everyday challenges with their own Christian faith, uh, not so different from mine. While the, the way, the roads through which we arrive there, are so different.³¹³

Brother TC recalls his youth in Canada, some seven hundred kilometers north of Toronto. He explains that in his area, most French-speakers like TC and his family descended from French Catholics. The other half of the population was English speaking, made up of Catholics and various types of Protestants. TC, however, had detached himself from the Church somewhat. When a religious sister invited some people over who had been to Taizé to speak

³⁰⁹ BF-1,2c.

³¹⁰ BF-1,2d.

³¹¹ BF-1,2e.

³¹² BF-1,2e.

³¹³ BF-2,8b.

about their experiences, TC was first introduced to the community. It would be a turning point for him: he decided to attend several other Taizé-meetings in the United States. This, he says, “corresponded to a rediscovery... what faith meant in a more personal way.”³¹⁴ Later that year, in 1974, he traveled with the sister and a group to the Taizé community in Europe for a one-week stay. He decided to return shortly after in order “to think about my future... maybe my call, I sensed some type of call, I wasn’t sure if it was the priesthood, or ministry, or....”³¹⁵ He continues: “when I came, of course, I discovered... the ecumenical movement more through... yeah, through a lived experience, through the beauty of the prayer and the hymns.”³¹⁶ In Taizé, he encountered for the first time the richness of the spiritual resources of other traditions. The encounter with Taizé, thus, meant a rediscovery of the faith of his youth, as well as a discovery of the spirituality of other Christians. As a side note, this double and mutually enriching experience may be representative for many of the youths visiting Taizé.

Brother TB, too, only mentions a few particular examples of ecumenical encounters, at least when it comes to Catholics. For example, he recalls as a significant connection (“the strongest contact with the Catholic Church”) the cargo train track that ran behind his house: his mother would sometimes chat with the Catholic train driver when he stopped the train there.³¹⁷ Yet, TB also speaks of his childhood intuition that churches ought not to be separated:

When I was in high school, I read a bit of theology already, sort of my interest... And, I, I was so, so... upset sometimes, that they would so much quarrel and not agree and... and... so many divisions in the Protestant world, particularly. Because you don't agree on that, then you make a new church... And I said, if ever I study theology, I want to talk with my friends as long.... that we can at least accept each other, and... and be together. So that for me was quite... even as a child, I remember, we had sometimes missionaries coming from different countries, um... .. and this sort of intuition, that, if Jesus is the savior of the world, then everybody has to... to belong to each other, that was a child intuition. That I remember clearly. And, but it had nothing to do with Protestant or Catholic, it had something to do with, if Jesus is... if God has so much loved the world, to give his only

³¹⁴ TC-1,2.

³¹⁵ TC-1,4b.

³¹⁶ TC-1,4b.

³¹⁷ TB-1,24 and 26.

son for the life of the world, then it means that everybody must belong to that.³¹⁸

From the outset, he felt that the separations between Christians contradicted the very essence of Jesus' ministry. Therefore, he continues by stating that he sought ways to live unity. He took the first steps by reading Orthodox theologian Anthony Bloom and visiting a Roman Catholic Church with the son of the train driver. Both experiences disclosed for him a reality of contemplative prayer that he cherished.³¹⁹ Finally, Taizé would be the place where he could live the unity that his intuition told him to be essential. The encounter with the community was for Brother TB a starting point for concrete ecumenical commitment. He states that, indeed, this was one of the reasons for him to join the community:

And I think that this was a sort of clear guideline for me to ask always, where, where does this happen? ... And that's maybe one thing also which kept me here in Taizé, or brought me here... um.... And then, when I understood what is behind, which theological discussions....³²⁰

Even though TB realized already early on in his life that Christian unity is essential to the Christian faith, he became only ecumenically active after encountering Taizé. Other members of the communities, however, were already ecumenically active prior to joining their respective monasteries.

Continuation and deepening of ecumenical commitment

Brother TA, analyzing his own ecumenical commitment, concludes that there is a kind of 'generation gap' between groups of brothers in Taizé. He says:

Surely, I belong to a different generation, indeed, than Brother um... Brother [TB], Brother [TC], indeed, well, they really are of the, of the generation of the Second Vatican Council, or just thereafter... um... so who have known a church that was way more conservative... and the enormous diligence, um of openness and, and ecumenism... um... and, and with me that's way less, you know.³²¹

Even though, in many regards, his own understanding of his Reformed belonging echoes that of Brother TB (both emphasize that they take no particular pride in this denominational identity), he was more concretely

³¹⁸ TB-1,38.

³¹⁹ TB-1,30-32.

³²⁰ TB-1,38.

³²¹ TA-2,6.

engaged in ecumenical contacts during the years before entering Taizé. Still, his early childhood was not particularly ecumenical. All Christian activities he participated in were organized by his own church. On the one occasion in which they resorted to the building of the Catholic parish for practical reasons, TA found himself very impressed but not yet inclined to seeking more contact with Catholics. Things changed during his philosophy studies in Groningen, The Netherlands. There, he engaged with the ecumenical university chaplaincy: “and when I was a student, I was active in the university chaplaincy in Groningen, then, that was rather rich, in that regard. There were, indeed, youths from almost all confessions...”³²²

It struck me that Brother TA used this word ‘rich’ to describe his experiences in Groningen, especially when he also used it to describe his time as a volunteer in Taizé and again when speaking of the value of receiving Communion in Taizé:

The fact that we have the right here in Taizé, one of their most beautiful things, you know, the Eucharist, to celebrate that every Sunday here, that is, that is a great good, and I realize... I realize, in a personal way, you know... how, how rich that is....³²³

I asked TA what he meant by this word ‘rich’ when speaking about the university chaplaincy. Searching for words and formulations, he replied:

I think uh, also... how should I put this, also on a very personal, on a personal level, the friendships that I’ve had there, or the conversations one has there, I mean, I think that we can... can see that in Taizé, too, you know. What if we would only have the prayers, or the Bible introductions, um, I think this place would become, would soon become a dead place, because everything is ro... rooted in a common life... um... .. it is, and that is maybe what I mean by rich, on many, many different levels... um, and that I am grateful for that time at the university chaplaincy, um... .. because all those levels were there, it was about faith, but also, indeed, to, um, to... show something of the church... um... .. um, in the area of friendship and, and living together, um, it is, I also lived in a dormitory, you know.³²⁴

The word ‘rich’ connects the different experiences, which obviously have had a significant impact on Brother TA. With the word ‘rich’, he expresses that it has

³²² TA-1,4c.

³²³ TA-1,30a.

³²⁴ TA-2,11.

enriched and shaped his own understanding of what it is to be Christian, especially together with other Christians. It also expresses the fullness of the experience: it is something that concerns and connects multiple levels or dimensions of life. Again, we can see the fundamental value of a shared common life as the basis for ecumenical encounter. Both in Groningen and in Taizé, TA experienced this dimension of essential significance for ecumenical contacts. In this way, his life in Taizé is a continuation and intensification of the ecumenical life he discovered during his studies in Groningen.

4.3 RESPONSES TO NEWLY ENCOUNTERED LITURGICAL TRADITIONS

The interviewees have encountered liturgical traditions other than their own within and outside the communities. When mentioning them, different types of responses can be identified. I distinguish three main reactions, characterized respectively as discovery, recognition, and alienation.

Discovery

In the first category, BF vividly recalls his earliest liturgical experiences, serving as an altar boy at the pre-conciliar Tridentine Mass. He consciously experienced the liturgical reforms following Vatican II. Under supervision of his parish priest, his youth group learned about the changes initiated by the Council.³²⁵ Analogous to his introduction to ecumenism, BF elaborates on this experience as a thrilling, promising new era. Thus, for BF, the discovery of Bose and the new liturgy were parallel experiences. In his interview, he distinguishes between the pre-conciliar Roman Catholic Church marked by the Tridentine liturgy and its rejection of ecumenism, and a post-conciliar church marked by ecumenical commitment and liturgical renewal. Bose, in that sense, is for him a manifestation of the latter, a ‘new world’ for him to discover.

Brothers TA and TB both come from ‘low-church’ Reformed congregations. They encountered more elaborate liturgies at Taizé. TA is the most outspoken about his discovery of the Catholic liturgy in Taizé. In his childhood, he did not perceive of the Holy Supper as something particularly important nor did he get the impression that others felt differently. In a somewhat fragile quote, trying to articulate his own experience, TA says:

I have said once: ‘but that is not at all important to us,’ and I have so offended someone with that, so I won’t say that anymore, because, I

³²⁵ BF-1,2a-b.

mean, one cannot say that that is correct, but if I remember correctly, well, I come from a tradition of celebrating Holy Supper four times a year... and of what I remember, there were always less people since it took half an hour longer, well, if you'd want to skip church anytime, than that time, because, uh... I mean, this is, this is, I am doing a lot of people wrong with this, you know, I realize that, but~....³²⁶

This articulates his own understanding at the time. He now knows that this is not representative for Protestants in general, but TA himself just did not have a special interest in the Holy Supper. He adds:

Well, I didn't really understand, you know, I mean, yes, that it is done, but... I mean, of course I knew that it had something to do with what Jesus had done, you know, but um, but it was very, a very shallow understanding of, of the Eucharist or Holy Supper, you know.³²⁷

Later on, he concludes: "I did not have a profound Holy Supper-identity, or a deep connection with it when I came here."³²⁸ Against that background, TA speaks about encountering the Taizé liturgy. Only in the community did he learn to appreciate the sacrament. He says: "so, really in Taizé I have discovered the beauty, the beauty of the Eucharist... Um, and for that I'm also thankful, in that sense..."³²⁹ TA gives insight in his own, now profound, appreciation of the Eucharist when he reflects on the practice of the community. Speaking about the custom of distributing Communion, consecrated in the early morning Eucharist, during the morning prayer, TA admits:

I question this, you know, whether we should do it like this but that is something every brother experiences... um... uh, and the funny thing is, and this is something not... not, not me as a Protestant {laughs}... but almost me as a Catholic in the sense that I understand, well, yes, to do it in this fashion, I do understand that it is very difficult for some traditional Catholics.³³⁰

TA reveals his own process from his initial lack of interest in the Eucharist to the point where he feels genuine empathy and pastoral sensitivity towards those who criticize Taizé's practice because he can intrinsically understand and share their objections. Moreover, TA now understands it to be one aspect of

³²⁶ TA-1,8.

³²⁷ TA-1,10.

³²⁸ TA-1,26.

³²⁹ TA-1,10.

³³⁰ TA-2,18a.

Taizé's mission to promote the Eucharist towards its guests: "we want to arouse interest for the Eucharist, indeed, both Protestants and Catholics. And that, to me, is a beautiful thing, indeed, that some Catholics who come here say: 'wow, thanks to Taizé I, I understand better what it is in me~ or what happens in my church suddenly interests me again {laughs}, every Sunday.' And that I find beautiful, that is wonderful."³³¹

For Brother TB, too, the liturgy of Taizé was something new. In a section in which he focuses on the similarities between the Reformed and Catholic liturgies celebrated at the time, he adds:

But the discovery was the Eucharistic liturgy as such, because in that Reformed church, at least in Switzerland um, in the French speaking part of Switzerland there is a bit more liturgical tradition, due to a renewal between the two World Wars... and in the German speaking Switzerland, it was less... And so, that was a kind of discovery, of the whole... Eucharistic liturgy here.³³²

TB thus gives witness to his discovery of the Eucharist but, at the same time, expresses another type of response: one of recognition.

Recognition

Indeed, Brother TB gives more attention to the notion that, at the time he arrived in Taizé, the Reformed and Catholic liturgies appeared quite similar. He could not quite differentiate between the two due to their textual and aesthetic similarities:

And then, at that time, when I came as a visitor, I didn't ask too many questions because... at that time there were celebrations on Sundays sometimes uh... presided by uh... a pastor, one of the brothers pastor, and sometimes by the brothers who were priests, or other guests, but um, the liturgy was practically the same, so, if you didn't know, you were not really... much aware of that, and, and then... for Communion, people were invited to go rather left or right, but also it was not so... if you really wanted to know, you could know, but if you didn't care too much, you weren't probably... always aware of what was going on... .. um... .. And then, and then, when I joined the community, of course it became more... understood more.³³³

³³¹ TA-1,46c.

³³² TB-1,4b.

³³³ TB-1,4b.

TB adds that this, indeed, caused confusion amongst the guests. At the same time, expectations were high that the ecumenical *momentum* would soon result in general Eucharistic sharing. The former issue urged the brothers to find a new solution while the latter made them expect such a solution to be quite temporary. Therefore, Brother TB explains, the brothers ordained in Protestant churches chose not to preside over the community's Eucharist any longer.³³⁴

Brother BE was also raised in a Reformed context. However, the liturgical movement had significant impact on his region of Switzerland. As a result, he was used to liturgical practices that resemble post-conciliar Roman Catholic liturgical renewal. He concludes:

What we celebrated, so, it's perhaps, somebody will call it sort of a high church, but anyway, the, the, some pastors, uh, at least one of the both, one of the two pastors, which was in my parish when I was a child, or even later, um... was really very... liturgically high church. Um... and so, I was used to that, and it's what I was looking for, when I was going to a celebration, uh, and in this sense what you said is true, uh, the catholic, Roman catholic liturgy didn't gave me the impression to be too organized, too uh... legalistic, or whatever you want to call it, uh... because I, yes, I was used to that, and I was looking for that when I... ... when I went to church.³³⁵

In Bose, he found what he had been looking for, liturgically speaking. As such, the Catholic liturgy in Bose sparked a feeling of home-coming rather than alienation. BE even prefers it over Reformed liturgies less influenced by the liturgical movement:

Sunday celebrations in which you only had one prayer and a reading along a homily or sermon, and then intercession, uh, our father and the end, for me, has, was never... enough, because in my parish uh, there were, yes, more organized liturgies, uh, which were celebrated, and I, I grew up with that. Here, I didn't feel it as something new, something strange to me, because it's what I always had, had experience in my previous life....³³⁶

Still, his main conviction is that Catholics and Reformed live out the same faith, just in different forms. For BE, the liturgies of different churches are not only similar in appearance but also in meaning and significance. Speaking of

³³⁴ TB-1,4d. This development will be addressed in more detail in section 0.

³³⁵ BE-1,76.

³³⁶ BE-1,74.

his relation to the Reformed and Catholic traditions and certainly referring to their respective liturgical practices, he uses the metaphor of language to illustrate this:

I knew always better, that the Christian life, which was lived, that we live in the Catholic Church, or in the Reformed is always the same life, just with other forms, or other words, and uh... I experienced it like this, so... coming here, I got to know... to know this new language, or this other language, which I didn't know from the inside, and uh, few by few I entered also in this tradition.³³⁷

With recognition in the sense of noticing the similarities comes a level of recognition in the sense of acknowledgement, so it seems. Brother BF, for instance, fully admits that he would partake of the Anglican Eucharist if scandal was avoided.³³⁸

Alienation

Brother TA and BE mention situations in which they do not feel at home. They refer to very low-church Protestant Eucharistic liturgies. BE speaks in this regard strictly about his own preferences and liturgies that he would actively seek or avoid.³³⁹ TA, on the other hand, takes it somewhat further when he contemplates if he would even partake of such liturgies. In his view, this does not only involve his personal preference but also the ecumenical mission of his community. He explicitly brings in the notion of *praesentia realis* as fundamental in the understanding of the Eucharist in Taizé, over against Christians who 'merely' see the sacrament as a symbol. Asked if he still participates in the sacramental life of the Protestant church of his origins, he answers:

No, pff, basically not but like I said, that takes place four times a year, so that would be, if you're only once a year in the Netherlands {laughs}, but, I, I, no, I would not... If I would be in the Netherlands, I would participate, I mean, it depends a little... But then, indeed, we have um... ... Taizé we have quite a... ... high... idea of Eucharist. For us it is really the body and blood of Christ. I mean, how that exactly, which uh {both laugh}, theological technical term you would

³³⁷ BE-1,70.

³³⁸ BF-1,24.

³³⁹ BE-1,72.

give to that presence, we could discuss for another fifteen days and we would still not uh....³⁴⁰

TA then speaks of congregations who have an understanding of the Eucharist where this notion of *praesentia realis* is absent. Surprisingly, even though he himself considers it as an essential (or even the most essential) aspect of the Eucharist, he would still consider participating. Without formulating a definitive answer, TA adds:

Don't we genuinely believe in Taizé that the only way is by celebrating together and living together, you know... um, so, if the only thing I say is: 'I'll come to you but only to discuss... because I genuinely disagree,' then, then I would, I would perhaps in the end betray... rather the very intention I depart from as Taizé community. So, what should I do in such a situation? Should I say: 'no, wait a minute... we as Taizé community have a high idea of, of Eucharist, so it is important to pose that and not to partake just like that, when you feel like, well, this is not what we as a community believe?' Or should one say: 'No, wait, we believe that only through celebrating together, we can come closer; therefore, I will partake, otherwise they will never understand that we'... ... Then the message of Taizé would be lost in any case... I really wouldn't know, what I would do, you know, that's hard, that's hard....³⁴¹

I have inserted this quote because it makes clear once again how extremely important the common life and common worship is for the Taizé community. TA's struggle may not be representative for all brothers but his line of thought, I think, is representative for the practice of the community as a whole. It does not choose an uncomplicated path when this could imply the loss of ecumenical contact. The presupposition seems to be that, even though a particular practice lacks the fullness in meaning as understood by the community itself, this does not entirely disqualify it. TA, even when he thinks a crucial dimension is lacking, acknowledges the valuable aspects he finds in them. Thus, he tries to appreciate the common ground that he encounters. It is one way of dealing with the differences that the monastics encounter. The next section explores their strategy of coping with differences within the communities in more detail.

³⁴⁰ TA-1,34.

³⁴¹ TA-1,38.

4.4 THE PRIMACY OF PRACTICE IN COPING WITH DIFFERENCES

Lived ecumenism, probably more than any other form of ecumenical contact, implies that people are confronted with the otherness of others. In the interviews, this theme was addressed substantially. How do the monastics cope with diversity within their communities?

On a larger scale and at first glance, there is a difference between the two communities, which, I think, is mainly due to their respective histories and compositions. From the descriptions of both places (see Chapter 3), it is already clear that each has its own distinct 'style'. Taizé, with its vibrant atmosphere and the colorful church interior, looks and feels very different from the quiet, remote, and austere appearance of Bose. Taizé has tried to accommodate all its guests and members from so many different countries and cultures by integrating traditions and spiritual resources. Bose, on the other hand, seems to focus on the essentials, the things all have in common.

Sensitivity and abnegation

Bose, with its predominantly Roman Catholic membership and its rootedness in the Roman Catholic Church, applies a strategy that, at first glance, looks like an ecumenism of the least common denominator. Brother BE, one of few non-Catholics in the community, indicates in a lengthy quote that, in his view, the Catholics in the community in fact give up more of the spiritual and liturgical practices typical for their tradition in the communal life than the non-Catholics:

I would say that what the community offers to those who enter here, don't ask... doesn't ask to me as a Protestant to renounce to something and not to be able to live my own, my own [spirituality]. Probably for Catholics who are used to some Catholic strict rules enter here, means almost more renouncing than, than what it asks to me. So, the simplicity of the, of the few ecclesial or institutional parts of our, of our life makes it perhaps more difficult for a Catholic brother or sister to be here, than uh, than, so, the fact that we don't have any adoration, Eucharistic adoration, or the devotion to the virgin, uh, is very discreet. Of course, we celebrate the feasts during the year, but it's part of also, of lit~ so, this liturgical calendar is also based on what the Bible says about the mother of Jesus, and so on, and so, in this sense, to go back to what I was saying before, before opening two or three brackets, um {laughs}, uh... it's probably more difficult, a Protestant

has probably less to renounce to than a Catholic, if he is used to some more Catholic, uh, traditional settings....³⁴²

The community opted for a monastic life in the rich Catholic tradition, which the founder, Brother Enzo, envisioned to rejuvenate from within. Nevertheless, the communal liturgical life is quite sober and, according to BE, easy for the Protestant members to adapt to without compromising their own background.

BG, a Roman Catholic sister, on the other hand, does not experience this as an impediment to engage with typically Catholic spiritual resources. In the context of her first visit to Bose with an ecumenical group of students, she articulates what she found attractive in the community:

Because, the students, we have many differences, but Jesus is the same for all of us. And so, that's why I feel well in a place like that. And uh, it's possible to pray together, each days, to live the same things. Belonging at our churches, but every people can pray with us and if I want to pray a specific Catholic way, I can do it by myself. That's nothing that I lose, so.³⁴³

She does not feel as if the community's routine constrains her in living the richness of the Catholic tradition. She does, however, discriminate between communal and private practices. On the one hand, she is willing to limit herself for the sake of others: "we have to grow up in sensibility*,"³⁴⁴ she says. Yet, on the other hand, BG feels free to engage with the spiritual resources dear to her in her own time and space. BE agrees:

I think what the community here allows is that everybody lives, we share what is essential to, to, for us all, uh, and then, perhaps, some richnesses, which are secondary, or which are just belonging to one of the different confessions, are just put into brackets in the common life. This doesn't mean that one cannot live them personally.³⁴⁵

Thus, both feel that they share the essentials, and they are happy to pray and worship together while reserving the practices typical for their respective denominations for their daily moments of private prayer.

Brother TB, in Taizé, recalls a decision made by the brothers shortly before he joined the community, and which has had a decisive impact on the liturgical course of the community. He explains that, for the sake of one common

³⁴² BE-1,22.

³⁴³ BG-1,8.

³⁴⁴ BG-1,64. *She seems to mean 'sensitivity' here.

³⁴⁵ BE-2,22.

Eucharist and in order to enable the entire community to partake of it together, the brothers who were ordained pastors in non-Catholic traditions chose to abstain from presiding over the community's Eucharistic liturgy. This was further inspired by the high hopes for an imminent restoration of full visible unity between the churches.

And then I understood uh, understood that the brothers~ and this was this quite original idea ... that they... most the brother who have, who are ordained pastors didn't celebrate anymore, when I came... they didn't preside anymore, because they had made a sort of choice to say, if... to renounce to celebrate for some time... waiting for things to be settled, could help, uh, that you don't have the situation of, of demands of each side, a kind of symmetric demands, but that is, we, we recognize that the Eucharist has been, more present in the Catholic Church, more central... that there are different forms in the Protestant churches, different traditions, and... and if, if that would help, to say, we recognize that we are... a bit younger brothers in that... in this regard, we would accept. And that is what I understood here, as a young brother. A sort of, not, not seeing the whole thing as a negotiation, and sort of positions, strength, and of... theological agreement only, but that there was something else. There was readiness also to yield to the others, to, to... to... say, yes... And it's in this context, and, and that was not so easy for everybody here. Maybe for some brothers, but mainly also for people, that then, in the seventies... no sorry, in the eighties um, it became more and more clear that would not happen like this, this agreement, not so quickly... ... and then it was very important, that, and that is what I understood also for the brothers to be able to receive Holy Communion together, and that was possible in the Catholic celebrations.³⁴⁶

This shows straight away that the Taizé-style is not only about integration and inclusion of different spiritual resources but also about sacrifice. The community's desire to celebrate the Eucharist together even outgrew the individual pastors' wish to preside over it. The gesture of the pastors is highly impactful: it sparked in TB the understanding that ecumenism is not about a negotiation of power. This does not mean that power is absent. TB and TC both indicate that the community took this turn because the preceding practice in which Protestant and Catholic ministers alternately presided over the Eucharist proved insufficient, since the Catholic Church would not accept that the

³⁴⁶ TB-1,4d.

Catholic brothers received Communion in a non-Catholic Eucharist. I think the community has beautifully and meaningfully reimagined this notion of power by adding the notion of sacrifice.

Likewise, BF recalls how in the small community in Switzerland, the Protestant pastors of the region contemplated their liturgical practices. Several of the pastors decided to adopt the Roman lectionary, enabling them to prepare their Sunday homilies together with the Roman Catholic priests of the group. In addition, they discussed the frequency of celebrating Holy Supper in their congregations:

The majority of them used to have only four times a year, once a month, uh, while a small group of these pastors, including some pastors that came to our group, they were convinced to introduce the weekly Eucharist in their parishes. Uh, but they were very carefully, uh, not to, um... .. let people think that it was just a Roman Catholic influence. So, we prepared also some, um, public sessions on the traditional~ the ancient church, the, how, when, and why, we arrived to, the Catholic, to an everyday Mass, or at least to a Mass every Sunday.³⁴⁷

The episode demonstrates a willingness to adapt and a certain pragmatism in light of the concrete conditions similar to the strategy of the communities themselves. It goes beyond mere pragmatism, though, as it also reflects the deeply spiritual concept of the exchange of gifts.

Exchange of gifts

In Brother TB's quote about adopting the Roman Catholic liturgy, he already indicated that the community acknowledged the special place of the Eucharist in the Roman Catholic tradition. Brother TC, too, states that different churches have preserved different gifts of the Spirit. Thus, the Catholic and Orthodox traditions have reserved a central place for the Eucharist.³⁴⁸ In a similar way, TA gratefully marvels:

To have the privilege here in Taizé to celebrate one of their most precious things, you know, the Eucharist, to celebrate that every Sunday, that is, that is a great good, and I understand... I understand on a personal level, you know... how, how rich that is....³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ BF-1,2d.

³⁴⁸ TC-2,6c.

³⁴⁹ TA-1,30a.

The exchange of gifts has become, of course, a fundamental concept in the ecumenical movement after Vatican II and especially Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*. The concept is present in the interviews, both explicitly and implicitly. BE, for example, says about his perception of the relation between his own childhood congregation and the nearby Catholic parish: "I always experienced always this dimension of complementarity, I would say, between my own church, or my church tradition, and, uh... the other one."³⁵⁰

Brother TC stresses that in Taizé, there is no competition between the churches. Ecumenism is not a negotiation with winners, losers, and compromises. Instead, TC stresses that the community can "rejoice"³⁵¹ in the gifts each tradition has to offer. He starts from faith in the resurrection, which allows competition and exclusion to be overcome by fullness:

And in the spirit of... the death and resurrection, it means that you are no longer on the defensive, no? That you don't need an enemy to exist, I think I used that, with Olivier Clement used to like to say that as well, some people need enemies to know that they exist. Otherwise, they're not sure they exist, no? So, they have this kind of adversarial identity, without an adversary they don't know they exist. And so, the spirit of resurrection liberates you from that, no? You don't need an adversary to exist, you don't need to. It's not a zero-sum game, doesn't have to be a winner and a loser, we can... work there to go towards fullness, which is something which Congar says also (...) that our only interest is fullness... It's not compromise, it's not negotiation between denominations. Some people think ecumenism is kind of a negotiation. But it's actually fullness that is... our aim. We want the fullness of the mystery, and so... so we, we open up to that fullness wherever it can be found... and so on... That means sometimes saying, oh, maybe I didn't keep uh?... this as much as the other church, and I can learn from that other church, and so on. And if there is that spirit, then... then you are more likely to allow that undivided church to... to arise, no?³⁵²

To TC, this is a very liberating thought. It replaces fear, protectionism, and exclusion with abundance. He is filled with hope that discovering the richness of other traditions will lead the church to fuller unity.

³⁵⁰ BE-1,12.

³⁵¹ TC-1,4e.

³⁵² TC-2,6d.

Both communities are open to the gifts of different churches. In Taizé, this is immediately visible in the Church of Reconciliation. The community stresses the significance of Holy Scripture by the habit of turning toward the Gospel when it is read from the ambo, a little rite in which all present turn around in their places in order to physically face in that direction. Again, it is present in the daily Bible introductions. Catholic Brother TC adds that he has learned a great deal from the gifts of the Reformation:

When I came of course, I discovered... .. the ecumenical movement more through... yeah, through a lived experience, through the beauty of the prayer and the hymns. I loved the Huguenot hymns... and the Lutheran hymns, the love of the word of God, that was very striking, and knowledge also of the word of God, that people... .. the brothers had this strong legacy from the Reformation, that... the Bible is very central, so that was... that was something that became important for me, and uh... .. the... bible, getting to know the Bible more, and getting... .. to ... into a relationship with Scripture, and Christ through Scripture. And the hymns, as I said the hymns were... very important.³⁵³

The gift of the Eucharist as found in the Catholic tradition is present through its daily celebration and through the central place of altar and tabernacle. Also, the many icons in the church indicate the community's efforts to integrate Orthodox elements in its spirituality, as does the distribution of blessed bread to those who cannot or wish not to receive Communion. And, of course, the music of Taizé shows the rich variety of Christian piety in the texts as well as in the melodies.

Bose receives the theological wisdom of various traditions through symposia and conferences on Protestant and Orthodox spirituality and on church architecture. During the midday prayers, texts of Church Fathers and saints, both from the East and the West, or of prominent (contemporary) theologians from different traditions, are read aloud. BG, for whom the possibility to pray together is very dear, says:

It's possible to pray together all the days. In our prayers we have many things taken by different churches. And all the Bible is common for all of us, it's not the problem. And yes, in taking also from the Orthodox Church text written here, taken by other things, texts of

³⁵³ TC-1,4b.

prayers that are taken by different churches. So... that's why we call our prayer book ecumenical prayer book.³⁵⁴

The monastics refer to the 'exchange of gifts' in many more instances, making it a core concept in their lives and thought. They display a deep desire to accept and integrate the richness of other traditions and a rejection of any form of fear or exclusion. This, I suggest, is also key in understanding the willingness of the non-Catholics to accept the Roman Catholic Eucharist. If it is not a matter of competitive exclusion, it can be an inclusive way to rejoice in the gift of one particular church, without denying its existence in other traditions.

No theological discussions: Building on essential consensus

The exchange of gifts is obviously intertwined with an exchange of ideas. However, these ideas are not discussed in any structural or institutional way amongst the monastics, as far as I have seen. They indicate that discussing theological and ecumenical issues is not part of their daily routine. One reason for this seems to be that things evolve rather organically in Taizé. In line with the ideals of Brother Roger (for instance, his principle of the dynamics of the provisional), things are not particularly planned and organized, and there is no overall strategy to move things forward. The community responds to the unfolding of events rather than on the basis of *a priori* principles and ideas:

If you look at the history of Taizé... .. there is no, no strategy... you read the first text of Brother Roger, and it's clear that it has something to do with common life, with searching Christ and following him... being available... .. strong emphasis on being a parable of community, of brotherly love, of the church, a sign... uh, but no, no... what would be tomorrow, or in five years or in ten years, no, no plan, no strategy really.³⁵⁵

In this sense, TB is impressed by the rule of Taizé, written by Brother Roger in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It does express some theological ideas and guidelines but did not need any adjustment when new brothers from non-Reformed traditions joined the community: "And... it was old Reformed, or maybe later some Lutheran brothers, and then the Catholic brothers, and he didn't have to change any word of that... .. because everything was there. It fits also now."³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ BG-1,36.

³⁵⁵ TB-2,12.

³⁵⁶ TB-2,20.

This touches on an important argument for the Taizé community not to engage with (academic) theology too much. Only in 2015 did the community organize a theological colloquium commemorating Brother Roger's death ten years earlier. Yet, there seems to be hesitance to articulate the faithful experiences. Brother TB further explains:

This is the big advantage of monasteries in general, that um... in the history of monastic life um... monasteries have not been places where... um... where th... theological issues had to be decided, but it was rather... the life of prayer, of brotherhood, and... understanding and hearing all those questions, but... but... .. maybe helping people who have to reflect and who have to decide, to do that, but not... not being um... we, we are first here to welcome, no?³⁵⁷

This resonates with what was said in section 4.1: the most important mission of the communities is to welcome, to live together, and to pray together. In these ecumenical communities, lived ecumenism is prioritized over theoretical or theological ecumenism, not only because most members are not trained theologians but also because they are convinced that their lifestyle offers an essential environment for ecumenical exchange on an existential and spiritual level. This conviction may be underpinned by another issue TB raises. Life and theology have their proper places. Theology tries to understand and articulate faith. Yet, the intellectual interpretation of faith serves the faithful life of Christians. Concerning the sacraments, he states:

The strength of the sacraments, is that... they are... it is more important to live them than to discuss them. ... I mean, that is in general, that's um... .. that's, the word, the words... we speak about it, we make bible studies or we... we share what, something. And ... and that's also something that I understood here. That, of course, you need a theology of Baptism, of Eucharist, of... maybe confession, but, but... they are sources, not because, not at measure you understand them... but they... in the measure you receive them {laughs}... And that's why, I think, there is a tradition in Taizé, not to discuss too much....³⁵⁸

He adds: “the reality of, of faith, God, the church, the sacraments, they, they're always beyond the formulations.”³⁵⁹ TB, therefore, is content with the essential

³⁵⁷ TB-1,16.

³⁵⁸ TB-1,66.

³⁵⁹ TB-1,4e.

theological consensus reached in Taizé. It suffices as a basis for the community's practice, without overcomplicating or obstructing it. Brother TC analyzes that this consensus is partly based on the convergence reached in ecumenical theology. When it comes to the Eucharist, the work of his fellow brother of Taizé, Max Thurian and others, showed that, in retrospect, the positions at the time of the Reformation did not diverge quite as much as was perceived at the time.³⁶⁰ It was Brother Max who made the most effort to theologically embed the liturgical and Eucharistic practice of the community.³⁶¹ TC also acknowledges the efforts of the liturgical movement and the Groupe des Dombes to rediscover the centrality of the Eucharist.³⁶² In general, it seems the Taizé community found a consensus during the early years of its existence on which it still relies. Similarly, BE says about the process in Bose:

We don't really discuss the... uh... theological points, uh... inside the community. I think most of us are aware of what is, what is, what are the questions and so on, but to really discuss them, as far as we have our own local solutions and how to solve them, not to solve, but anyway, to go across the difficulties, and living them....³⁶³

This is, in a way, the consequence of embracing the idea of the 'exchange of gifts': topics of discussion are not easily perceived as divisive. Instead, different views on a subject are regarded as multiple perspectives that may complement each other. Therefore, TB does not think that full consensus is possible or even desirable:

And so there is, there is for me certainly that hope that there would be a... I don't think agreement in terms of explanation, that this is possible. ... um... ... because there is multiplicity, if you read the old texts, the old liturgies, it's already so different ways to say things. And that is probably not what is also needed, um... And it's interesting that, that, um... ... *ja*, no, that would be more dogmatic so you don't {FW laughs} want to talk about that, but I don't think that that is not, but, what, what is important I think is to be able to... to... *ja*, to agree, today on the way we are called, to be the church, how we are called, to, to... ... to celebrate together, and to welcome each other....³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ TC-1,6.

³⁶¹ TB-2,22b.

³⁶² TC-1,18.

³⁶³ BE-2,58.

³⁶⁴ TB-1,4f.

Furthermore, by accepting new brothers from other confessional backgrounds, one also has to accept his church. Reflecting on the first Catholics joining the community in the early 1970s, TB concludes:

To accept, that now there is a Catholic brother and that he belongs to the Catholic Church, and the pope and the bishops, and we share... if we have all things in common, we have now the pope and the bishops also in common, and also the Word of God, and also the psalms from Geneva, from the Reforma~ we have all this in common... so, from that point of view, it was... something, sort of enlargement, *énergisant*, but in the way of life, it didn't change much.³⁶⁵

This is, of course, a bold thing to say. But it is also typical for Taizé to accept the ecclesial reality as it is and to try to find meaning in it in order to be enriched by it.

Finally, Brother TA points to the fact that in Taizé so many cultural, linguistic, and ecclesial backgrounds come together. This makes it difficult to engage in fruitful theological discussion.³⁶⁶ But he presents also more spiritual motives for the community to hold back from theological debate. He explains:

If you're all from the same context, then, then you can understand things quickly. But when we are unable... uh, but that there's also a truly spiritual aspect... because we say, wait a minute, many of the things that take place here are between Christ and this person, and, and that is good. That's not a problem, we don't have to figure it all out exactly.³⁶⁷

He also speaks about respecting the "mystery of each person"³⁶⁸ in this context. By referring the intimate questions to the individual conscience, Taizé creates space for different views and interpretations to coexist, not entirely without tension, but at least, it seems, in an ecumenically fruitful way.

4.5 SYNTHESIS

The biographic accounts of the monastics show that joining the ecumenical communities resulted in a first or renewed commitment to ecumenism. Even though the ecumenical nature of Taizé and Bose played only a secondary role

³⁶⁵ TB-2,20.

³⁶⁶ TA-2,22a.

³⁶⁷ TA-2,22b.

³⁶⁸ TA-2,22b.

in choosing these particular communities, they now fully embrace and advocate their ecumenical mission. There is no indication that sharing the Eucharist has reduced their ecumenical efforts, as is one of the main concerns of those opposing Eucharistic hospitality. On the contrary, life in Taizé and Bose has deepened and enriched the desire for and commitment to Christian unity. This conclusion will be further substantiated by the results presented in the following chapters.

The communities build on the essential theological and liturgical convergence achieved by the early ecumenical movement, the liturgical movement, and, at least in Taizé, by Brother Max Thurian and his fellow theologians of the Groupe de Dombes. Basic insights were expressed in the rule of Taizé by Brother Roger such that, despite years of expanding ecumenical variety within the community, there has been no need to rephrase it.

It is clear that for the monastics, these basic theological foundations suffice for living out Christian unity. Therefore, in Taizé as well as in Bose, there is no inclination to further discuss theological differences. This may come across as intellectual negligence or even relativism. However, in my understanding, this instead indicates that in the theological imagination of the monastics the lived reality precedes, and has priority over, intellectual theological frameworks. In other words, theological reflection is a derivative of lived reality rather than the other way around. Theologically and philosophically, the monastics thus find themselves in the tradition of Aristotle rather than Plato. Their point of departure echoes Pope Francis' remark mentioned in section 1.4: "Life is greater than explanations and interpretations."³⁶⁹ In today's context, in which the reception of classical consensus theology seems insufficient to restore Christian unity, the monastics offer an alternative route to theological theory-building. Their praxis-theology offers new insights into the question of the place and function of the Eucharist in the search for unity.

As such, the monastics experience the Christian unity as it is lived out concretely in their communities as significant and valuable for the ecumenical process. They embody and materialize the notion of the exchange of gifts in a very concrete way. In their common lives, this practice eliminates the sense of competition between Christian traditions. The communities differ in how they organize this element. Both offer space, be it individually or communally, to integrate the spiritual resources of each tradition. Indeed, the monastics feel enriched by this. But, especially in Bose, they also choose to abstain from

³⁶⁹ Francis, "Visit to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rome."

specific forms of spirituality in collective moments of worship in an effort to recognize personal sensibilities. The monasteries thus function as hubs or nodes in the network of Christian churches and traditions.

Various themes that have started to emerge in the current chapter will be reviewed in more detail in the next chapters. The dynamics of the common life, and especially its relation to sharing the Eucharist, is further discussed in Chapter 5. The monastics refuse to interpret their own life and Eucharistic practice as a model but rather speak of it as being a sign. The implications of this self-understanding will be explored in depth in Chapter 6. The fact that the monastics not only see the similarities between Roman Catholic and other Eucharistic liturgies but that they tend to acknowledge their validity beyond the Roman Catholic Church has significant implications for their understanding of ecclesial boundaries and belonging. These issues will be examined in Chapter 7. It is also an essential part of how they look at the Eucharist itself; one of the insights that the monastics articulate is that the Eucharist is a radically non- or super-denominational category. This, and other ways in which the monastics understand and position the Eucharist, will be presented in Chapter 8.

5

DYNAMICS OF COMMON LIFE AND COMMON EUCHARIST

A key theme in the interviews in light of the research question of this study is the relationship between the common life and sharing the Eucharist. In the debate about the topic, one can often find two positions: the Eucharist as the *completion and culmination* of the ecumenical way, or the Eucharist as *source* for ecumenical rapprochement. The interviewees mention both aspects. When examining how they function in their respective communities, an instance of circular reasoning seems to surface. It demonstrates how both characteristics of the Eucharist are interdependent in the life of Taizé and Bose. Therefore, it is quite impossible to distinguish which one serves as a precondition to the other. Rather, their relationship can be qualified as mutually dependent and dynamic. The experiences articulated in this chapter provide a deeper understanding of this dynamic and how it functions in the life of the ecumenical communities.

Section 5.1 introduces the experience of the Eucharist as a logical and necessary consequence of the Christian common life. The strongest witness to this logic, however, is the counter-narrative of a common life that is abruptly interrupted – and even contradicted – by the experience of separation at the table of the Lord. This counter-experience is, at the same time, the moment in which the Eucharist manifests itself as the basis for the common life, making the transition to section 5.2 rather fluid and natural. In that section, the monastics express the heart-felt conviction that the Eucharist, and the Easter mystery that it represents, is the very reason to live the monastic common life in the first place.

The relation between common life and Eucharist, then, appears to be a chicken-and-egg dilemma: it seems impossible to establish which one came first or should have priority. Yet, somehow, the communities as a whole and

the individual monastics have managed to enter this dynamic relationship. The priority of lived faith over reflected faith as expressed in section 4.4 seems to play a role in this. In addition, in section 5.3, the monastics speak about their ecumenical process as a process of growth, particularly in the sense of coalescence. Brother TA, for example, specifically accounts for how he ‘grew into’ the common life and Taizé’s Eucharistic practice. This shows his process of entering the dynamic relationship between common life and shared Eucharist.

Section 5.4, finally, articulates the basic attitude underpinning this process: trust. The monastics elaborate on multiple interconnected dimensions of trust: trust in God, the mystery of the Eucharist, the Christian tradition and the church, the communities, and the mystery of the individual and one’s personal relation to God. Trust, the monastics indicate, opens space for the Holy Spirit to reestablish unity. Trust and surrender to God, thus, is the very basis of the practice of sharing the Eucharist and of entering into the dynamic relationship described in the first sections.

5.1 COMMON LIFE RESULTS IN COMMON EUCHARIST

A counter-experience

In this section, I will focus on a very powerful story by Brother BF. Quotes from other interviews echo his experience. BF joined Bose in the Summer of 1972 at the age of eighteen. Just two months later, he was sent to Switzerland to start a small community with Brother Daniel, a Waldensian pastor. He lived for over two years in this intimate setting in a context that was completely new to him. Not only was he far from home, but the ecclesial reality was totally different from what he was used to. As mentioned in section 4.2, BF was raised in an almost exclusively Roman Catholic environment. In Switzerland, however, he found himself in “a total double confession reality,”³⁷⁰ with Catholics being the minority. BF elaborately describes his life in that context in the following excerpts:

Daniel was the pastor in charge of this whole village, and of the uh... youth program of a larger... Uh, and I lived with him, making the same life [-], so, a life of prayer, work, I was studying...

(...)

³⁷⁰ BF-1,2d.

So, um... and in that situation, of course, there were practically no opportunity to meet or to know something about Orthodoxy, at that time there was not so much Orthodox presence in Switzerland at all, especially not in this region, it was outside Neuchâtel, going towards France. Towards Montpellier, Besançon. Uh, but, on the other side were practically working every day with a Protestant pastor, parishes, people, uh, so we started organizing in our, in our brotherhood, a meeting every week for all the priests and bishop~ {laughs}, uh, the priests and pastors of the region, to prepare together the sermon on Sunday. So, they assumed the lectionary of the Roman Catholic Church, because priests were, uh, obliged to, the pastor had the choice to, to choose whatever they wish. So, they decided to adopt the lectionary. And we, we met every Thursday or something like that, for two hours, in our brotherhood, reading together the Gospel, and trying to make a Bible study, all together. And then, of course, every pastor and priest make his own sermon, there was not a, of course, a common sermon, I mean. But a sermon, that was um, prepared, well, um, the text was faced with an ecumenical insight.

(...)

And then, this moment was replied on Saturday morning for a time of prayer, together. So, a time of discussion, of study, and a time of prayer together, and then, on Sunday, everyone went in his own parish.

(...)

So, um, I had a chance to have a sort of practical life to show you that Protestants are, uh, like us {laughs}. I mean, they are not the devil, they have not strange things, so, very simple and grassroots opportunity, to know really the other people and the problem~ the pastoral problem that they had, like uh, the priests, or like the [witness]. So, how to announce the Gospel, how to grow up uh, the children in faith. How to combine the different tendencies inside the parish. At that time, they were discussing a lot about the frequency of the Eucharist. Uh, because the majority of them used to have only four time a year, once a month, uh, while a small group of these pastors, including some pastors that came to our group, they were convinced to introduce the weekly Eucharist in their parishes.³⁷¹

³⁷¹ BF-1,2d.

BF carefully reconstructs the situation in which he found himself. This episode in his life clearly is very dear to him and important in understanding his own ecumenical process. The precise depiction of the life in the small community is key to understanding the insights BF introduces soon after. He concludes:

So, after two years and a half, uh, for me it became normal to consider uh... ... other Christians just as Christians, I mean. But at the same time knowing the differences, the problems, and, tryi~ well, starting since Neuchâtel, starting to feel the scandal of the division.

(...)

And especially, the problem of the Eucharist um, was, what uh, was an evident contradiction to uh, everything we were living.³⁷²

BF expresses a core experience in this section: he understands the Eucharistic reality with which he is confronted to contradict the life he leads. This is a very strong expression: not only do the two realities not correspond, but the way BF experiences that the Eucharist in this period even contradicts the life shared with Christians from other denominations. He explains this further by elaborating on the Sunday routine:

So, on Sunday um, we were only two, only me and Daniel, on Sunday, I went to the Roman Catholic Mass in the village nearby, and Daniel was celebrating uh, the service in the Protestant temple. Uh, and for the rest we prayed three times a day together, we received the priests and pastors, pray with them, discuss with them, and then, the moment uh, as I told you the other time, in the moment in which you celebrate the only reason for which we are together, you have to separe, and to be divided. So, this grew up as a sort of uh... permanent, uh, a permanent aporia, permanent not reasonable wall, I mean.³⁷³

I will refer to these quotes again in section 6.1 about the notion of scandal. For now, I want to focus on the discontinuity that BF experiences between the intimate common life and close cooperation with the priests and pastors on the one hand, and the division at the Eucharist on the other. In Brother BF's understanding, the experience of a shared life is preceded by, and should logically result in, a common celebration of the Eucharist.

³⁷² BF-1,2e.

³⁷³ BF-1,2e

Whenever this logic is interrupted, something is very wrong, according to BF. He mentions this with regard to two other contexts. He recalls that he was invited by Rowan Williams to attend the Anglican Lambeth Conference as his personal guest. Again, he explains how he shared their life for the duration of the conference: “So, I stayed three weeks as an Anglican bishop {laughs}, I mean, taking part in all the discussion, all the groups, all the prayers. Uh, except, again, the celebration of the Eucharist.”³⁷⁴ Reflecting on this occasion later on, he continues:

So, we were six hundred uh, Anglican bishops plus their spouses, so, one thousand three hundred people, and two people do not communicate. It was totally absurd. But I was there officially as a Catholic, I did not go to the small Catholic Mass that was celebrated in a, in a corner in another church, because I was there for the Lambeth Conference, for this [kind of] for the Anglican Communion. But, uh, it was shocking.³⁷⁵

Both contexts represent the situation in the early days of Bose itself in which the brothers and sisters found themselves unable to communicate together:

The problem of sharing the Eucharist, here for me, uh... I had to learn, I was, I had no... um... uh, no criteria for my life before, to um, decide or to understand~ so, I assumed what the community already decided, in its history, in which at the beginning there was only a reformed pastor and no priest. So, with this absurdity that, again, like us in Switzerland, even as Daniel was here, there was a split on Sunday. So, the Catholic uh, celebrated Mass, if a priest from some friends came, and stay with us on Sunday. Or otherwise go to the parish church in the village. Where the parish priest didn't agree at all with the community. So, just going as normal... Christians {laughs}. Uh, and Daniel was celebrating in Turin for a Waldensian community. Uh, so, for me uh... ... this asked to... understand from inside, something that was totally new for me.³⁷⁶

The stories of Brother BF articulate one common concern: he experienced the divisions during the Eucharist as unnatural, “absurd,” and a “contradictory” discontinuation of the Christian life in common. Brother BE agrees. To my question of whether he could imagine living in an ecumenical monastic community without sharing the Eucharist, he replies:

³⁷⁴ BF-1,2g.

³⁷⁵ BF-1,22d.

³⁷⁶ BF-1,2h.

For me it would not be, it would make no sense. Because if we share all the life, the daily life, why couldn't we share also the sacrament of what is our unity, which means the sacrament of the Eucharist [-] of Christ. If we share everything, if we're not able to share what, the basis on which is groun~, the ground on which is based the, our common life, it would be~ for me, it would be a nonsense... ..³⁷⁷

Positive experiences

The same experience can, of course, be articulated in a positive sense. Apparently, BF would experience a shared Eucharist as corresponding with a shared life. Indeed, BF does remark that, if scandal was avoided, he would happily receive Communion in an Anglican service.³⁷⁸ This resonates with what TA says about the Eucharistic practice of Taizé. He says:

For me, it was something rather natural, but that may have been because here I... because I saw, indeed, that what happened here may certainly not be perfect, and I am sure of that now, I mean, that has been confirmed indeed that what we do here is not perfect... um... but it is... that the community is consistent, or that the community, indeed that it is coherent what we um... what we practice here....³⁷⁹

TA indicates that he experiences in the life of the Taizé community the continuity between common life and the Eucharist, which BF found lacking in his stories. Sister BG agrees, saying: "I feel it's right, because we had the life together, so, we are a communion of life."³⁸⁰ And Brother TB points to the desire of Brother Roger for a common celebration of the Eucharist when the first Catholics joined the Taizé community.

Finally, I want to present another quote from Brother TB's interview. He, too, speaks of this continuity. Yet, in his quote, we encounter the complexity of the relationship between the common life and the Eucharist. As such, it marks the transition to the other side of the coin: TB starts by indicating that the Eucharist is inevitably part of the Christian common life but then continues by arguing that the common life flows from the Eucharist. Speaking about the place and significance of the Eucharistic practice of Taizé for the ecumenical process at large, TB contemplates:

³⁷⁷ BE-1,90.

³⁷⁸ BF-1,24.

³⁷⁹ TA-1,16a.

³⁸⁰ BG-1,28.

The breaking of the bread, the celebration of the Eucharist, or, let's say, let's start before, no? That, that as Christians, we are meant to pray together, because we're meant to love each other~ we are meant love also the Muslims and the non-Christians and everybody, but, but, first to love each other as Jesus, as Christ has loved us, no, that is sort of, so... so that means a common life, that means a common prayer, um... and that means... a sort of... very central prayer, which is thanksgiving for, for Christ's death and resurrection, and which is also sharing in his death and resurrection, through the Baptism and in the Eucharist, and that is... is what brings us together... um... it's very central in Paul's texts, and that it's one bread we share, so we all form one body, no? It's not that because we are one body, now we merit also, we have the same bread, but it's really a bit the other way 'round, no, so in the letters of Paul, that it's Christ who brings us together, because he's one... and he cannot be divided....³⁸¹

In Brother TB's understanding, the common life indeed results in celebrating the Eucharist together. Yet, in his considerations, it is not a one-way road. The common life does not necessarily have temporal priority over the common Eucharist. The relationship is much more complex. In the next section, we will see that there is another side to the coin. On the one hand, the monastics experience sharing the Eucharist as a logical consequence of their common life. On the other hand, they experience the Eucharist just as much as the very basis for the same common life.

5.2 EUCHARIST AS A BASIS FOR THE COMMON LIFE

Brother TB's quote concluding the previous section already hints at the role of the Eucharist as the basis for the common life of the communities, which will be explored in the current section. Brother BE indicates that this is the reason for him to want to partake of the Eucharist whenever it is celebrated. For him, it is quite essential to share the Eucharist. After all, it is Christ whom we all have in common.

When you share everything in daily life, it would have made~ it would make no sense to, not to share, not to be able to share what is the heart, or whatever, the sacrament of what we try to live together, the sacrament of unity, so to say. So, it would make no sense to share everything, and not just what is, or what should be the heart, the

³⁸¹ TB-1,50.

center of what we live together. In this sense, yes, I think it would...
... I, yes, in my experience, so, I think, I would accept what Jürgen Moltmann writes in his biography, I, so he writes: 'I decided once that every time when the Eucharist is celebrated I go and ask for receive the Communion.' Uh, for me it would be the s~, so, it would make no sense for me, even to just be present, and not to be able to share what is celebrated, otherwise, I wouldn't understand why to share only the liturgy, why not be able to share what is the sign, or the more visible sign of what the liturgy celebrates, this sharing.... Not just because I think that it's a request to the other church to receive me, but, because if I take part in what is shared in the name of Christ, uh, I think we are all... yes, together {laughs} in his name, and I try to... yes, to share what is common, which means Christ, who is the one who makes us united....³⁸²

Interestingly, one could reinterpret the notion of 'an ecumenism of the lowest common denominator' as such: it is Christ whom we have in common, therefore, the least we could or should do is to share him in the sacramental signs of bread and wine. He is the "center of what we live together," as BE puts it here. This makes him pose the rhetorical question: "We do it because we feel that it's the way to live our life and if we don't share, what is the center of our life, of our life as a whole?"³⁸³

Brother TC stresses this connection with the everyday life. Inspired by Yves Congar and Charles Taylor, he searches for authenticity in the Eucharist. The sacramental ritual of the Eucharist can only be authentic when it touches our everyday life.

If the gestures, the gestures that we have in our liturgy are... appear artificial... and forced, uh... it will be a problem, no? So, we have to rediscover how they are réal gestures, no? And it's part of the challenge for the Eucharist, no? it's, when we say, peace be with you, or when we say uh... let's be reconciled, it has to be the place where something happens, no? That we see reconciliation, or when we share with the bread, or, when we share~ not here, but in churches you give money, people have to see what's going on.³⁸⁴

³⁸² BE-2,2.

³⁸³ BE-2,60.

³⁸⁴ TC-1,26.

TC observes that many of the youthful guests do not realize that the ritual and the lived reality are interconnected.³⁸⁵ A recent addition to the preparation of the altar during the Sunday Eucharist tries to overcome this difficulty. TC explains that he suggested that youth from different parts of the world should prepare the altar by covering it with the altar cloth. Such a symbolic act helps them realize that it is a table with a feast, something that resonates in their daily lives.³⁸⁶

TC also tells a story about a man he once met, who realized that he celebrated the Eucharist without any inclination to restore Christian unity:

If in Christianity we do use rituals... we have to see that the rituals make sense... .. because they're not just rituals, they are the symbolic expression of something... that is real in daily life, and... .. And of course, if you're not looking for unity, and you celebrate the Eucharist, it's a problem {laughs}... If you're not searching for unity, and uh... .. That happened to me in the United States, with uh... five years ago when I was in Chicago, there was a man, from an evangelical background, who contacted us, and... .. he wrote about his experience, he said he was... was praying the creed, the *credo*... and, I believe in the church, the one church, *one* church, and... and he said, I realized I was doing nothing for unity. And that kind of, was a moment where he felt the call very strongly to work towards unity and... so he started, he started to be interested in the gifts of other churches, the Orthodox Church, the Catholic, and uh...³⁸⁷

TC stresses this indissoluble connection between celebrating the Eucharist (in any tradition) and commitment to Christian unity. The above story is immediately followed by another narrative, about a pastor provoking a Catholic bishop to deny him Communion. With this story, TC indicates that unity and Communion are not linked in a mechanical way: the bishop challenges the pastor to contemplate the possibility rather than simply express disapproval:

This, this of course applies to the whole idea of intercommunion, or, receiving Communion, because... if you have this will to seek unity... no?... to seek reconciliation, you're doing something that the Eucharist is about. No? {laughs}. If you receive the Eucharist without any wish for unity, {laughs} it would be a kind of contradiction almost, no?... Of course, I want to continue to be separate, uh? not in

³⁸⁵ TC-2,16.

³⁸⁶ TC-2,16.

³⁸⁷ TC-1,28b.

communion. That I'm gonna receive Communion, no, it would be a kind of contradiction, and uh... I remember one bishop saying this at Taizé, there is a pastor asking, can I receive Communion? And he wanted the bishop to say no. {laughs} He wanted him to, because then... And the bishop said, well, why not you think about it, no? Do you want to be... and you feel that you want to work towards unity, now, and then... he wanted to leave the decision with him, no?... ..uh... If I receive the Eucharist [-] I want to show that I'm... [-] *not* in communion {laughs} no? It's kind of interesting that there's a truth of gestures... there's a truth of... .. The Eucharist makes sense really, when we enter into that life of... reconciliation and sharing and... ..³⁸⁸

To TC, the question of whether one is in formal communion is subordinate to the desire for unity, or lack thereof. Eucharist and reconciliation amongst Christians go hand in hand. This reconciliation, of course, originates in Christ's paschal mystery. TC recalls the comment of an African bishop, who referred to the resurrection as the reason for the Taizé community to be together in the first place:

I once made the, one of the first videos we made on Taizé, I made in 1989, was called 'Trust Is at Hand'. And it starts off with 'Surrexit Christus'* {laughs} And it ends, we put on the screen something that an African bishop said here once. He said to Brother Roger, I think Brother Roger quoted it in one of his books. He said, if Christ was not risen, you would not be here... if Christ was not risen, you would not be here....³⁸⁹

It is worth noting that the Eucharist is interpreted as the *raison d'être* of the communities. The paschal mystery, symbolized and celebrated in the Eucharist, is the reason to be together in the first place. Completing the circle, BF asks: "If we share the word of God, if we share charity [charges], why you have to stop when you celebrate the reason for which you do something together?"³⁹⁰

Brother TB agrees that the Eucharist is a source for the common life and the reconciliation that takes place in it, yet he adds that this should not be understood in a mechanical way. In a section in which I encouraged him to

³⁸⁸ TC-1,28b.

³⁸⁹ TC-1,36. *A song from Taizé.

³⁹⁰ BF-2,4.

explicate the relation between ecumenical convergence and growth within the community and sharing the Eucharist, he chooses his words carefully:

FW: And, and for the community to grow rather than, than being different parts fitting together... it needs to celebrate the Eucharist... is that what you're saying, or...?

TR: Yeah, it needs much more than that, this is one aspect. It needs a lot of patience with each other, it needs a lot of... uh... .. of listening, of forgiving, of being reconciled, so there are many aspects. But I think one... one aspect is celebrating the Eucharist, yes... .. But, I wouldn't formulate it exactly like this, it needs... maybe yes, I never thought like this, but... .. but one aspect of, for sure. And maybe even that it needs, yes... ..

FW: I don't want to force any quotations on you, or something {laughs}...

TR: No, but it's good to say it that way... .. I would... now I... I was a bit hesitant, because, all the statements which are a bit too... sort of affirmative, I don't like when it comes to a question like that, so... Taizé language would rather be, its common celebration of the Eucharist is a source of common life, and of growing, as a family and organism... and, and... the main source of that, but not sort of... with this needing, it's back to mechanics for me, it's you need that and then this works... but it's more... it's a source, of... of that mutual love, and brotherhood... .. that what was probably my hesitation.³⁹¹

Soon after that, TB concludes:

I think it would be very different. ... if, in the common prayer, and... there would not be also this sacramental aspect of um... .. because it's... it's a sign again, no, I mean, sacraments and signs are close anyway, so, it's a sign again, that there is something which comes from God, and which is not at our disposal... .. And like this it is so much a source, it's... .. it's, we receive. We receive, and... .. and so that the brothers said, it's the sacraments we cannot, or the Eucharist in particular, we cannot sort of... put it to the margins... but it needs to be in the center of common life of the brothers. And it needs to be in the center somehow also in the meetings. I think this has a very deep meaning... .. to give that depth to, to... to our life, first, and to our life commitment, and also, to give... at least to share something

³⁹¹ TB-1,57-60.

of that depth also with the others. Um... and because of the difficulty to put it... sort of... outside of, of what is common, it would be easier, for, under many aspects, but I think we would indeed lose a very important source... um... maybe more clear now what I mean... ...
....³⁹²

Brother TB's hesitance needs to be taken seriously. On the one hand, he affirms that in Taizé, the Eucharist is an important source for the community's common life and ecumenical process. In that sense, his experience encourages us to acknowledge this potential of the sacrament and could be used to argue in favor of Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts. Yet, on the other hand, TB warns against simplistic interpretations: sharing the Eucharist does not automatically increase ecumenical growth. In Taizé, its celebration is embedded in other spiritual resources and is part of the bigger processes within the community. The connection between the Eucharist and other resources will be discussed in more detail in section 8.1. The idea that the Eucharist is not at our disposal and that it is a category that transcends denominational identity is expressed by others as well and will be the focus of section 8.2. In the next section, we will examine the way in which the monastics, like Brother TB above, elaborate on the concept of 'growth'.

5.3 ORGANIC GROWTH

The mutual and dynamic relation between the common life and a shared Eucharist as presented in the previous sections is intrinsically part of the process of organic growth that the monastics describe. As indicated above, Brother TB refers to the ecumenical process of the community as growing, like a family or an organism. He makes clear that the process in Taizé is not a construct, carefully planned and executed. Therefore, he insists that the process in Taizé, and especially its Eucharistic practice, cannot be regarded as a model in a technical sense, or a scheme that can be copied to another context simply and effectively. I will discuss this aspect in more detail in section 6.4.

TB also stresses that 'growth' is not qualified in terms like better or worse. I asked him if he considered the changes made to the Eucharistic practice over the years an improvement. He prefers to compare the developments with the process of maturing:

³⁹² TB-1,62.

... no, I wouldn't use this word better or less good, because what I told you in the last time about something organic, you know, what is so important for our community. It's not putting pieces together somehow, but to grow together. *Zusammenwachsen, sagen die Deutsche...* to grow into one, and, and... so the history of the community is a process of growth... uh... ... and, is it better to be a five-years-old child, or to be ten years old, or a teenager or be adult, or to be wise old man, I think these categories they do not fit... And so... I, I wouldn't have a qualification of this kind, but...³⁹³

This understanding of the process of the community corresponds with a quote from Brother TC about the exchange of gifts, as discussed in section 4.4: any notion of competition is absent.³⁹⁴ Of course, the community revises its practice in order to adjust to changing circumstances, but this is not perceived as a process from worse to better. In line with Brother Roger's principle of the dynamics of the provisional (as discussed in section 3.2), any evolution of community life and practice is viewed as an attempt to match the ongoing ecumenical process.

Brother TA gives insight into his own process of growth and illustrates what this 'growth' can look like. Time and again he uses the term 'growth' in the same way Brother TB uses '*zusammenwachsen*,' expressing how he grew into the community life and Taizé's Eucharistic practice. He indicates that he finds it difficult to articulate this process, yet he tries to anyway. As mentioned earlier, he did not have a particular appreciation for the Holy Supper as celebrated in his Protestant congregation in The Netherlands.³⁹⁵ During his first visits to Taizé, he was not aware of the Eucharist celebrations in the early mornings and on Sundays. The morning Eucharist is not a 'mandatory' part of the daily routine for Taizé's guests, and TA always left on Saturdays rather than (as recommended by the community) on Sundays or Mondays. Looking back, he recalls that he did not receive Communion during the morning prayer at first. However, he did partake of the Eucharist later when he returned as a volunteer. In TA's understanding, active participation and partaking of the Eucharist was key to his integration in the community and fundamental for his ecumenical process. Some longer excerpts from his interview show this dynamic and TA's own interpretation:

³⁹³ TB-2,12.

³⁹⁴ Cf. TC-2,6d.

³⁹⁵ TA-1,10.

I remember, indeed, that I did not participate in the Communion which takes place, you know, in the morning, Communion is distributed, I don't think I participated in that when I was here for one week, because I thought, well, I don't really understand what this is, so it's better for me not to partake, you know, um... um, I never, indeed, discussed it with a brother, maybe things would have been different if I had, you don't know, but, for me it was something like, I know people value this much higher than I do, so it's better if I don't, out of respect for others, than to, um... ... when I was here, indeed, as a volunteer, you know, I did receive the Eucharist, um, Communion... (...) I had read about it, indeed, I knew more about it, and I knew better, indeed, what I consented to, but still, I could understand someone who's like: 'wait a minute, is that really the depth of faith required, indeed, to receive something that holy?'³⁹⁶

(...)

Then again, there are things in which one can only grow by participating, you know {laughs}... And that's what you see in a community, you know...³⁹⁷

(...)

It's impossible, indeed, to be a mere spectator, you know. You have, you have to participate, um... um... ... you cannot but participate, you know, not in a forced way, but by being here, you know, you are part of the community. (...) So, yes, by being part of a community in which it is done like this, one can grow into it, you know. (...) That you should give space, indeed~ well, no, let me speak on my own behalf, that I am grateful for having been given this space to um... to grow into that. And such growth is only possible by, well, by something active, you know. You cannot only do that by theological debates {laughs}, or by... You will have to start, yes, with prayer, to advance in that unity... ... And for me, that was something relatively natural, but that may have been because here... because I noticed, really, that what happened here may not be perfect, and I'm sure of that now, I mean, it has only been confirmed, indeed, that what we practice is not perfect... um... but that it is consistent, or that the community, indeed, it is coherent what we uh... what we do... um....³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ TA-1,12b.

³⁹⁷ TA-1,14.

³⁹⁸ TA-1,16a.

The main thing that I want to highlight here is how Brother TA qualifies the way in which integration into the community, ecumenical growth, and the practice of Eucharistic sharing are interconnected, which he defines as consistent or coherent. This has been very important in his own process towards becoming a monk at Taizé and for understanding what the essence of the community is: “it was a very gradual process of a deeper understanding of what, what here... the brothers live here... um... Indeed, both through study, but still, primarily, for ninety-five percent just through, through daily life here...”³⁹⁹

For TA, sharing the Eucharist has been essential for his own process of growth towards a deeper and more complete unity. Some knowledge is helpful or even necessary, but the socialization process within the community has taken place primarily through active participation. In TA’s experience, this does not exclude the Eucharist. TA indicates that he is grateful for the space that he was given to explore and discover the community life and the richness of the Eucharist, not only through studying it but especially and explicitly through participation. Reflecting on his own process of rapprochement to the Roman Catholic Church, TA adds:

I never was an anti-Catholic Protestant, you know, so that... that helps... um... .. It may be two things in particular, indeed, you know, that would be the first thing, one of the two, indeed, you know, to... .. um... to partake... of such a thing, you know, as the Eucharist... .. one can only start to love it, you know {laughs}. I mean, so, um and something, something this... important for the Catholic Church... then your love for that church increases as well, you know, or... your bond with that church, the respect for that church... (...) But has got to do with the second, too, that through the people with whom you live together here, I mean, some of my, of my brothers here is Catholic, and I love them as my brothers and I notice how much they received, you know, from the church they come from and how great their love is for the, so, you will, too, you share in that, that’s it.⁴⁰⁰

Brother TA’s experience is a consequence of Taizé’s lived reality of the exchange of gifts. In his case, the Eucharistic hospitality offered by the Roman Catholic Church has enabled him to gradually discover, understand, and appreciate the mystery of the Eucharist as preserved in the Roman Catholic tradition. His love of the sacrament, of his Catholic brothers, and of the Roman Catholic Church have been sparked and have grown in a mutually

³⁹⁹ TA-1,22.

⁴⁰⁰ TA-1,30a.

interdependent relationship. TA refers to this experience as coherent and consistent, terms that can easily be related to TC's notions of authenticity and the abundance model and to what TB says about organic growth. In TA's understanding, this is precisely what is needed in order to complement consensus ecumenism and to enable it to become fruitful. Therefore, he considers sharing the Eucharist to be essential for the future of ecumenism:

I think it is the only way for ecumenism... um... .. um, because we, each other, because I witness every day here in the community that, as soon~, if we would not live together, if we would not pray together, then... then all those theological discussions would be pointless, because, in the end, we wouldn't be able to understand each other....⁴⁰¹

One aspect of organic growth that surfaces in the interviews is the notion of trust. TB insisted that the community's process is not mechanical: the outcome of the process cannot be foreseen or predicted. This, indeed, requires trust. TA rightfully indicated that the Eucharist is very important for the Roman Catholic Church. To offer Eucharistic hospitality, therefore, is also a matter of trust. The monastics speak extensively about trust: in the Eucharist, in each other, and in the guests that they welcome. The next section explores this essential requirement.

5.4 TRUST

Trust in God and in the church

The monastics often refer to trust as an attitude underpinning their life and practice. The brothers of Taizé speak about it more explicitly, probably because it is a core principle in the writings of Brother Roger. It can be traced in the Bose interviews as well. The monastics speak of trust in God, in the Eucharist, in the church, in their communities, and in the guests they receive.

The interviews contain only few explicit references to God. Still, trust in God seems to underpin all other expressions of trust. Several times, trust is expressed in general terms. Brother TB, for example, points out that Brother Alois, the current prior of Taizé, often refers to the community's surrender to God. This trust prevents the community from making overly solid plans for the future:

⁴⁰¹ TA-1,42.

In the last years, Brother Alois often quoted this sentence of Isaiah, I will lead the blind on ways they do not know... ... {laughs} ... I think this, we have not, no much other choice than that... than to... ... to know, looking towards Christ and the coming kingdom of God and what we know about, about that unity of all, that we pray for, but that for the way, and... we can do our best, like everybody else, but I, I don't think that we can sort of make... a plan....⁴⁰²

Brother TA indicates that vulnerability is needed to overcome misunderstandings and differences in the community. Living and praying together enables the brothers to cultivate this vulnerability, which, in turn, allows the Holy Spirit to restore unity:

It has to do with, with that it is so much easier for the Holy Spirit to act when we, indeed, pray together and if we live together, you know {laughs}. But at the same time, it has to do with, with psychology. When you pray together with people... and if you live together, you'll have to make yourself vulnerable... it's only when you are vulnerable... that you can advance, in a debate, too, you know, um... if, indeed, you engage in a debate, or engage in a discussion uh, with the idea 'I should not end up losing...' well, better not do it, you know, I mean uh....⁴⁰³

Trust takes away this fear of losing. TA realizes that Christian unity is not negotiating a compromise that includes winners and losers. Again, this resembles the abundance model Brother TC spoke about (see section 4.4). If the fear of losing can be eliminated, a space opens up in which one can, indeed, be vulnerable. For TA, living and praying together does just this: it enables trust.

TC expresses a profound trust in the resurrection that enables him and the community to take risks:

I think, that's a little bit of what the experience is here, no? That, that if we, if the Easter mystery... Easter mystery also means... ... that you're not there to defend, no?... an artificial identity. You're there to go towards an authentic identity, no? You're not just, it's not the ideological identi~ I have everything {laughs}. But it's, if you're there to, to go into the deep mystery, into the deep identity, then you allow something of the undivided church to appear, because Christ is not divided... Christ is not divided. So, something of the unity can appear, the word used in French was *affleurer*, no? *Affleurer*, it comes to the

⁴⁰² TB-2,14.

⁴⁰³ TA-1,44.

surface. Something that is there, comes to the surface, and so maybe that's a little bit, in a way, something that happens here sometimes. That something of the undivided Christ appears, becomes visible, because some people are willing... to take that risk of living in the death and resurrection of Christ....⁴⁰⁴

For TC, faith and trust in the resurrection takes away the fear and enables him to embrace other traditions. This is how he experiences the fruits of the community's practice, including sharing the Eucharist:

That's how I think that's how I experience it, and.... and it would, that would be compromised... .. if we were to take sides, almost like, ah, my tradition has everything, my tradition has everything, uh? Then you would compromise that, you would lose that. You would lose it and uh... .. and it's uh... Because fear... is... .. the opposite, really, of resurrection, no? {laughs} When we're prisoners of fear, we're prisoners of death, in a way... uh? ... And one of the fruits of the resurrection is peace, right? The risen Christ says: 'peace to you' and, so one of the fruits of the resurrection is to find your identity in peace, not by being against, uh? Not by being against, so, it kind of make sense, no?⁴⁰⁵

In the experience of TA and TC, trust in God and in the resurrection make space for ecumenical growth and a genuine exchange of gifts as it frees one of fear of the other. TC observes that some of the Catholic guests, who may be worried about the practice of Eucharistic sharing, are reassured by the love of Christ that they recognize in the brothers.⁴⁰⁶

Brother TB speaks about trust in the Eucharist and the church based on trust in Christ. He paraphrases a question posed by Brother Roger: "who can define what happens?"⁴⁰⁷ He continues: "in, in the celebration of the Eucharist, and... .. it's a question of, of, that we trust the words of Christ, that we trust the faith of the church."⁴⁰⁸ This notion of faith of the church is important to Brother TB. He explains that, in Taizé, he has learned to understand the diachronic dimension of the church better. A key term is 'tradition', the notion that what is lived and believed today is handed down through history. The fact that this faith

⁴⁰⁴ TC-1,22b.

⁴⁰⁵ TC-1,24.

⁴⁰⁶ TC-1,16.

⁴⁰⁷ TB-1,36.

⁴⁰⁸ TB-1,36.

was expressed in different formulations and, as such, has known many different manifestations, again affirms the idea that lived faith precedes reflected faith.

More importantly to the theme at hand, though, TB mentions it to illustrate that, in faith, one has to rely on past generations: one has to trust the tradition, the church. He concludes:

... I remember once, Brother Roger, he liked this expression, the faith of the church... and, and then, of course, you can understand it like everything from completely different sides. Some people would say faith-of-the-church {adds emphasis by knocking on the table at each syllable}, that is what is defined in the book. But for him faith of the church it meant, the faith of the church, of, since, he often said in prayer, from Mary, the apostles... the witnesses of all times, until today, and then meant that there is, there is that... common, rootedness in God and, through Christ, through faith, through the practice of prayer, of Baptisms, of the sacraments, which, which is something which, which is so greater than we, that uh... we cannot comprehend it, we cannot sort of... and, so he this, for this... this may be strange expression, when he would say, um... when the pope came here, John Paul II, but it is, you can find it in the books also, he formulated the prayer... and maybe even the pope read it~ no, I'm not sure who read it... and it was about, to, to make ourselves ready day after day, to trust the mystery of faith. Together with all these witnesses. Which is a way to say, it's not because I have now a better understanding, or finally clear understanding of God, or of the church, or of the Eucharist, that I'm on the right place... but it's this more... humble attitude, to say, it's something which I didn't create, and my church didn't create, in Bern, or... the Catholic Church didn't create at Tridentium or I don't know, but it is something that has been handed over, you know, this long history... And that was extremely important for me, this kind of uh, leaving the individualistic problematic of how much do I understand, or agree, or not agree, and rather say, there is, there is something like this given, handed over.⁴⁰⁹

TB, thus, experiences the Eucharist as something that he receives without fully understanding it. He feels like he has to trust the tradition, the mystery of faith, which is beyond his comprehension. As expressed in Brother Roger's prayer,

⁴⁰⁹ TB-1,4e.

Taizé cultivates such trust: the monastics are encouraged to train themselves in it.

Trust in the community, fellow monastics, and guests

Trust in the tradition of the church goes hand in hand with trust in the concrete and local communities in which the monastics find themselves. Brother TA speaks about trust in his Taizé brothers most explicitly. When I asked him what made him receive Communion when he was a volunteer in Taizé, he responded:

... Well, I think, in the first place, because I... I was convinced that I found myself in a community of which I shared the essential values. Or, at least, the values, not really that, that's a bit of a static formulation, but, that I share faith in the risen Christ as it is being confessed here, that I share that. And that it is some kind of trust, you know, towards the, that it is trust towards the community in which you live. And I think it was something, an important discovery for me, you know. I'm from a society, of course, in which a person is regarded as an autonomous individual. And here, you know, you are a person because you are engaged in relationships. Um, and that it is a matter of trust. Gosh, I may not understand all of it, but what takes place here, um, we all come from different backgrounds, that's right... but I trust the people who make up this community and they do it like this and I will do the same to see where it leads me.⁴¹⁰

Trust in the community led TA to participate in the community's Eucharistic practice, which, as such, fits in the bigger process of ecumenical growth as described in the previous section. Trust is also the reason for him to accept the community's choice for celebrating the Eucharist in the Roman Catholic tradition: "I understand why we do it here... both for the historical reasons and, indeed, for the theology of daily life, to put it like that {laughs} here, of Taizé... uh, and, but, most essentially, indeed, because I *trust* my brothers, and it comes all down to that."⁴¹¹

Another thing TA mentions resonates with the broader process of growth as well. In the context of the question of whether the big theological themes are being discussed in Taizé, TA points out that one reason not to discuss everything in detail is trust or faith in the integrity of the mystery of each person. Concerning the Eucharist, he says:

⁴¹⁰ TA-1,14.

⁴¹¹ TA-1,26.

But also... um... that we always... try to respect the mystery of each person... ... um... And even that, if someone wants to become a brother here, of course we will discuss the Eucharist... but that we won't ask after something that is in one's most intimate depths of oneself, what, what exactly happens there in that very moment... that we say, well, that is something between God and that person, you know, and that, we don't have to... if we believe, that, that... that the Holy Spirit is active in our community, that we are part~ part of the church of Jesus Christ, then we don't have to dig into every detail of every brother. That is up to Jesus, it's up to the Holy Spirit {laughs} to do that, but um....⁴¹²

In a beautiful little narrative, TA recalls an encounter with the Anglican Archbishop Sentamu of York. The archbishop was on his way to Taizé with a group of youths, when one of them wished to return home. Msgr. Sentamu's response was to urge him to take five minutes to speak to God and then to inform him about his final decision. TA responds to this story:

That has moved me so, you know, because we could think, well, wait, but this archbishop, he should be able to find the words to preach the Gospel, to show someone like that, to make him feel what, what God is. But exactly the opposite, precisely because he is such a deeply religious and such an archbishop... he knows the power of Christ and he knows that he does not always need to find the right words himself {laughs}. And I think that this is something we, in Taizé, um, believe in deeply, you know. And that both... um, for the small things and the big questions, you know, that we don't have to find the words ourselves all the time... um... ... yes {laughs}. So, yes, speaking of the Eucharist, that we believe that it is in the hands of Christ, not in some kind of lazy~, easy way, but on a deeper way, which... ... um, that it is his Eucharist, you know, or the Eucharist that he gave us, um... ... we are such, such small elements in that, you know. That, uh... that gives us the liberty, I think, in Taizé... ... something like that {laughs}.⁴¹³

Once again, the intellectual articulation of faith appears as subordinate to lived faith. In addition, trust comes to the fore as a fundamental aspect of faith. Trust in the mystery of each person, and of his or her relationship with God, is fundamental in the communal practices and processes of Taizé. Thus, TA does

⁴¹² TA-2,22b.

⁴¹³ TA-2,22c.

not only acknowledge the responsibility of the individual conscience with regard to the brothers, but extends it to the guests of the community. TA expresses great trust in the temporary community that the guests form amongst each other, in which similar processes take place. Not only is it quite impossible in the context of Taizé to control systematically who partakes of the Eucharist, but, for TA, this would also be undesirable. For him, it is the responsibility to inform the guests of what happens in Taizé and of the meaning of the Eucharist, and to provide opportunities for the guests to discuss these matters with the brothers and amongst each other. He adds:

Because of the specific situation in Taizé, it comes down to the conscience of people, you know {laughs}. Um, that all we can do is to be honest about what we believe (...). that we must be clear that we'll always have to think, well, do we provide sufficient information? Um... ... but that it comes down to the conscience of people and that this has to do with the way in which we live together, like I told you from the start. That it is not a question of, well, we will take two days first, indeed, to get to the bottom of the matter, no, we just start something, we just start to live together and we will find out where things go from there, I mean, that sounds rather cynical, but um... ...
... but it is possible only because we profoundly believe that, that, despite, despite {laughs} everything we do here, as brothers, that the Holy Spirit is active, for that matter.⁴¹⁴

Again, in the end, all trust is based on the hope and faith that God acts in and through the community. This hope provides space for the community's alternative ecumenical process and Eucharistic practice.

5.5 SYNTHESIS

The monastics of Taizé and Bose clearly express a double understanding of the relationship between their monastic common life and the Eucharist. On the one hand, a shared life logically culminates in a shared Eucharist. On the other hand, the Eucharistic mystery has been the motivation to engage in that common life from the outset. As such, the Eucharist serves both as motivation and a driving force behind the common life, and as the climax and fulfilment of that common life. In the imagination of the monastics, these aspects are inevitably and inseparably connected. They acknowledge this reality most

⁴¹⁴ TA-1,40.

profoundly in the counter-experiences: regarding both aspects, they experience *not* sharing the Eucharist as a disruption of the inner logic, discontinuity, and, plainly, as “absurd,” to use the language of Brother BF.

Drawing this experience into the debate about the place of the Eucharist in the ecumenical process, it is, indeed, like critics of the practice indicate, fruitless to separate sharing the Eucharist from the goal of visible unity. Yet, at the same time, it is equally fruitless to focus solely on the role of the Eucharist as the climax or summit of Christian unity. In the experience of Taizé and Bose, both aspects exist in a fruitful tension which, in itself, offers space for the ecumenical process to unfold.

Both communities have inhabited this space for decades now. The testimonies from Taizé, in particular, show how this space enables growth within the community. The monastics experience their own ecumenical process as one of fusion, merging, or coalescing. It is not a logical process of action and reaction but one of gradual convergence. They also indicate that this process depends on trust, first and foremost in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and, as a consequence, in the Eucharist, the communities of which they are part, and in the guests they receive.

Clearly, the basis for sharing the Eucharist within the community is not primarily doctrinal agreement. Rather, the monastics tend to relativize the significance of intellectual reflection and articulation in relation to the lived reality of the common life and the Eucharist.

6

A TEMPORARY SOLUTION FOR A PERMANENT PROBLEM

Chapter 4 introduced the personal journey of the monastics towards ecumenical awareness and commitment in the communities they now inhabit. Chapter 5 explored the place of the Eucharist within the dynamic of their common life and their ecumenical process. One of the pivotal moments so far, in my opinion, has been the experience of the place and meaning of the Eucharist in the ecumenical process, precisely through the counter-experience of *not-sharing* the sacrament. Both communities have known episodes and occasions both within and outside the context of the monasteries in which partaking together has, or would have, caused scandal. Even though they use this word ‘scandal’ to describe the aftermath of such occasions, they are much more inclined to reserve the term ‘scandal’ for those moments in which they were separated during the Eucharist. In short, they consider not-sharing far more scandalous and problematic than sharing the Eucharist outside contexts of full and formal visible communion. This is the theme of section 6.1.

Section 6.2 focuses on the established practices of Eucharistic hospitality in the communities, which they consider far from problematic. They speak of a local, temporary solution for a permanent problem. Their own quest, especially in Taizé, has been guided, and continues to be guided by a sense of provisionality.

Still, on several occasions, the monastics indicate that they question their own practice. This is the focus of section 6.3. They understand that it is far from ideal and cannot be considered a substitute for full communion. At the same time, they consider it the best option available for their specific context, one that enables the monastics to bear the pain of division and to work towards fuller unity.

Therefore, all agree that the temporary solutions found in Taizé and Bose cannot be regarded as models. Section 6.4 examines what they mean by this and how they understand the place of their communities and the practice of Eucharistic sharing in the bigger scheme of things.

6.1 THE NOTION OF SCANDAL

Sharing the Eucharist as a default position

The current situation in Taizé and Bose allows the brothers to consider sharing the Eucharist as the norm for their daily practice. Brother BE recalls how he and his youth group had always departed from this position:

BE: We always considered it possible. Perhaps it was not, really. I think we knew quite well how things should happen, that Catholics should not come to receive the Communion when a pastor was celebrating, and the other way around. It was possible for us to go and receive Communion... at certain conditions and so on. I think we knew it quite well and quite quick, and at the same time, we practiced it in a very... in a very free way uh, without asking all the permissions of all the authorities... So, I can't remember to have had problems with uh... have had experienced sort of... to have be injured by somebody telling me, no, or the other way around, someone, my pastor saying, no, to some Catholics come... so... I [haven't had] the, I was lucky to live this... situation in a very open... condition...

FW: So, why would you call that lucky?

BE: Uh, because the goal {laughs}, because the goal of this dimension of unity, of the goal of ecumenism, was, was... being shared with those who [were] together.⁴¹⁵

The space BE encountered in Bose was not a liberating experience but, rather, one of continuity with his past. The motivation in his youth group and in Bose are similar: a shared goal of full visible unity, anticipated in sharing the Eucharist. Brother TC mentioned this as well, as we have already seen. He recalled a moment in which someone from an Evangelical background realized that, in the creed, he expressed faith in one church, without acting to restore Christian unity. After this discovery, this man started to research the gifts of other churches. Directly following this episode, TC refers to Irenaeus of Lyon:

⁴¹⁵ BE-1,84.

We say summary in English, but it's more than a summary, it's like the condensation, uh? of our entire faith is in the Eucharist, really. When you realize that, when you realize... why the Eucharist is such a great celebration... .. This, this of course applies to the whole idea of intercommunion, or, receiving Communion, because... if you have this will to seek unity... no?... to seek reconciliation, you're doing something that the Eucharist is about. No? {laughs}. If you receive the Eucharist without any wish for unity, {laughs} it would be a kind of contradiction almost, no...?⁴¹⁶

Both BE and TC place the desire for unity at the center of celebrating the Eucharist. Without this desire, something crucial is missing. Interestingly, this also takes the debate on Eucharistic sharing to 'regular', homogenous, intradenominational Eucharistic sharing. The experiences of Taizé and Bose do not only touch upon the meaning of sharing or not-sharing the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts, but they also pose questions relevant for any other occasion in which the Eucharist is celebrated. It is not only the case that a Eucharist shared in contexts of unresolved Christian division can be deficient. Celebrations fully in line with canonical requirements can also be deficient if they lack the intention to restore the unity of the churches.

Eucharistic hospitality and avoiding 'scandal'

Nevertheless, the monastics mention occasions and episodes in the histories of the communities in which sharing the Eucharist was avoided in order not to 'cause scandal.' Brother TB points to one occasion in which former Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, celebrated Mass in Taizé. Reflecting on this event, TB says:

The Catholics, they didn't go and receive Communion, but that the others did... Because it's a sort of question of loyalty maybe, to say... .. when we receive Holy Communion together if we can good, thanks to that common celebration in the... Catholic, by a Catholic priest or bishop. And in that very exceptional case... uh... there was a hesitation, to... because then, it's again the question of... of... how do people understand~ I think it's not so much a personal thing, of the brothers, but more... .. what happens now in Taizé, what kinds of celebrations are there, and that's why, this whole thing was a bit a unhappy moment, maybe, partly good and partly not. And this is, this

⁴¹⁶ TC-1,28b.

is, that's the only thing that I remember from the last... twenty years here, like this.⁴¹⁷

When traveling, too, the situation and the expected impact determine whether or not the Catholic brothers partake of a Eucharist in non-Catholic Eucharistic celebrations. TB adds that the prior, Brother Alois, is especially careful with this. In TB's understanding, these instances of not-sharing are not motivated by an unwillingness to partake or by confessional or ecclesiological reservations; rather, they depend on the likelihood that the actions of the community could be misinterpreted by witnesses, and, as a consequence, stir up controversy. It does not seem to bother Brother TB that, occasionally, he is unable to communicate together with his brothers, as long as the default situation is one of sharing the Eucharist within the community:

It, it doesn't bother me, no. Because it's... uh... .. no, no {laughs}. Because, then we are here again, together... (...) And that's why, to your question, when we cannot be together for some reason and certain circumstances, uh... .. {laughs} for me, why should I bother? We go on later....⁴¹⁸

Brother BF, too, speaks of avoiding scandal by abstaining from receiving Communion in certain circumstances. About his presence at the Anglican Lambeth Conference, he says:

I was with them for all the meal, the final prayer in the evening, and I could not share the, the Eucharist... .. because of a sort of faithfulness to my church. I mean, I personally, if I were there as a tourist, or when I am in London as a tourist and nobody knows me, I don't mind if it's a Roman Catholic church or an Anglican one. And if it's a, a service with the Holy Communion, I communicate, no problem. But, there is the problem of the scandal, there is the problem of the consequences of your decision....⁴¹⁹

Despite the usual practice of Eucharistic hospitality towards all members of the Bose community today, the non-Catholic members sometimes choose not to partake. BF attests that the community's current practice, which takes place with the consent of the local Roman Catholic bishop, is more or less in line with the rules for dispensation formulated in the *Code of Canon Law*. However, one additional precondition is added implicitly: scandal has to be avoided. BF says:

⁴¹⁷ TB-2,26.

⁴¹⁸ TB-2,28.

⁴¹⁹ BF-1,24.

But he knows here, normally, he has given a sort of uh... um... permission, accorded to our prior, to discern if it is the case or not. And the criteria is always um, he's not among the four, but is implicit and we um, apply it, is not to give scandal. Uh... this, we use also for the Orthodox. Our Orthodox sister has the blessing and the permission of his own bishop to uh, communicate with us. It's a totally exceptional this, personal, but only if there are no other Orthodox present. Because it's too complicated to explain why he allowed her to do this. And the same was with the novice that now left the community, a Coptic novice, we obtained the personal blessing of the patriarch, to him, to join us for the Holy Communion, only if a scandal is avoided.⁴²⁰

Interestingly, though, BF elaborates on what, in his opinion, constitutes the scandal. He continues:

This, of course, you cannot celebrate something uh... affirming Holy Communion, provoking in the same time a division in the same assembly. I mean, there are Coptic and orthodox present and so that uh... uh... one of them took the Holy Communion, you make the communion between the members of the community and you divided uh, [-] church.⁴²¹

According to BF, the practice of Eucharistic hospitality could cause a conflict and rupture within the communion of the person that is received as a guest. In this case, the practice of one Orthodox person partaking in a Roman Catholic Eucharistic celebration could stir conflict between that person and other Orthodox members who are present. It is common practice in Bose to avoid potential intra-Orthodox conflict by refraining from Eucharistic hospitality when Orthodox visitors are present. The usual practice of sharing the Eucharist, then, is interrupted for the sake of the integrity of the Orthodox community.

As BF analyses in another section of the interview, the Bose community does not (any longer) view its practice of Eucharistic hospitality as a prophetic provocation. In the last decades, Bose has evolved from a miniscule, experimental community that operated in the margins of the Catholic tradition to a balanced and widely accepted ecumenical partner. In the words of Brother BF: “now we are a credible and a trustable um, reali~ ecumenical reality.”⁴²²

⁴²⁰ BF-1,10c.

⁴²¹ BF-1,10c.

⁴²² BF-1,10e.

Lack of communion is the scandal

BF speaks about the early days of the community as well, before the current practice of Eucharistic hospitality from the side of the Roman Catholic Church was established. He recalls a short period in which no Catholic priest was present in Bose. A Waldensian pastor in the community (one of the first monastics to join Brother Enzo's initiative) would preside over the Eucharistic liturgy. BF says the community informed the authorities of both churches involved without receiving any (negative) response. When they continued on this path, a guest wrote about it to a Turin newspaper, which stirred controversy. Shortly after, the Roman Catholic bishop asked the community to cease this practice.

Interestingly, BF uses the word 'scandal' only once during this narrative. However, he does not use it refer to the controversy or the practice of Eucharistic sharing; rather he uses it to refer to the state of division, which caused the community great suffering – especially while celebrating the Eucharist. In the period preceding this short episode of Eucharistic hospitality in the Waldensian tradition, the community had known a practice of separation: the non-Catholics would celebrate a liturgy presided by the Waldensian pastor, while the Catholics joined the Roman Catholic parish in the village. Explaining the motivation behind the decision to initiate a practice of sharing the Eucharist within the community, BF says:

At the beginning, when I arrived, the practice was that normally, there was no uh, sharing of the Eucharist. Uh... but at a moment~ but we discussed every, uh... regularly, this absurdity. And we tried to find some solution. At a moment, I was just a novice, so, I know things a little bit from outside, I was not involved directly, but they wrote to the... authority of the two churches, so, the Waldensians, where Daniel was attached as pastor in Italy, because there are no reformed from Neuchâtel in Italy, and to the um... Cardinal Pellegrino in Turin, who was the bishop in Turin, responsible for our community, because the local bishop didn't agree at all, so, he knew, and so said, I will be the guarantee for the Roman Catholic part. And they wrote, saying that, since the beginning they had this problem, that we wish to remain faithful to our churches, in the same time, we cannot bare longer this, uh, scandal.⁴²³

⁴²³ BF-1,10a.

Note that the word ‘scandal’ refers to the fact that the monastics were separated during the Eucharist. In comparison, his use of the word in the context of possible public controversy following an act of sharing Communion sounds rather dutiful, almost insincere. He speaks of such occasions as compromising the goals of ecumenism, something that can only be considered as a secondary option, a bypass on the route towards these goals.

Brother TC expresses a similar line of thought when he concludes:

This, this of course applies to the whole idea of intercommunion, or, receiving Communion, because... if you have this will to seek unity... no?... to seek reconciliation, you're doing something that the Eucharist is about. No? {laughs}.⁴²⁴

(...)

what seemed normal, almost, was to be separate. That was the norm, no? And it was bizarre to look for unity, no? {laughs} And you are, are you, where are you, if you're looking for unity? And uh... .. whereas the scandal is not that people are looking for unity, the scandal is division, no? {laughs} The scandal is not that people are searching, maybe... awkwardly, no? In imperfect ways, for ways of being together and unity, but the scandal is division. And immobility in the face of division.⁴²⁵

In clear-cut terms, TC expresses the rationale of the practice of Eucharistic hospitality. It may be imperfect, but the alternative of being separated at the table is far worse. That is the real scandal.

BF adds that the reality of churches prohibiting other Christians to receive Communion in their Eucharistic liturgies acts like a stumbling block for people. As such, he considers it incompatible with the Gospel.⁴²⁶ He concludes: “we make the experience of the division, uh... through a sacrament that is the sacrament of unity, this is a scandal.”⁴²⁷ He learned this especially in his time in Switzerland with Brother Daniel when he lived in close contact with the Catholic and Protestant pastors of the region.⁴²⁸

Speaking from their own experience, the monastics indicate that they regard the inability of churches to share the Eucharist as the biggest problem or scandal. Facing the alternative of remaining divided at the altar, they

⁴²⁴ TC-1,28b.

⁴²⁵ TC-1,28c.

⁴²⁶ BF-2,4.

⁴²⁷ BF-2,14.

⁴²⁸ BF-1,2e.

struggle to accept this reality. They agree that, in fact, they occasionally choose to refrain from partaking, considering the ‘scandal’ that it might provoke. Still, they seem to disagree with defining such controversy as scandalous in the same way as Christian division itself. In their view, it is not-sharing the Eucharist that should be considered scandalous, contradictory to the inner logic of the Gospel, or a stumbling block to unity and evangelization. Therefore, confronted with this continuing reality in the life of the churches, BF speaks of a contradiction, a logical impasse, “a sort of uh... permanent uh, a permanent *aporia*, a permanent not reasonable wall, I mean.”⁴²⁹

6.2 A PROVISIONAL AND LOCAL SOLUTION

The monastics stress that they perceive of their practice of Eucharistic sharing as a provisional and local solution that helps them cope with the enduring problem of Christian division. Brother TB explains the circumstances under which Taizé’s current practice was initiated. I will elaborate on parts of the following quotations in the next section. For now, let me focus on the context of hope for imminent reciprocity in which the practice of unilateral Eucharistic hospitality seemed a temporary solution to the pressing issue of table fellowships with the first Roman Catholics who joined the community in the early 1970s. At first, the Eucharist was presided by a Protestant one week, and by a Catholic priest or bishop the next, as Brother TC points out:

The first time I came... in '74, I don't remember exactly how it went on Sundays, but... but as a permanent, it was like at one Sunday there was a Catholic, one Sunday was a Protestant Eucharist, and when there was a Protestant Eucharist, the brothers, the Catholic brothers... received from the blessed sacrament, no? the reserved sacrament... because the Catholic Church would not accept it...⁴³⁰

This solution proved to be too complicated and confusing for guests, especially since the two liturgies appeared so very similar. Brother TB explains with appreciation the next step taken by the brothers:

And then I understood uh, understood that the brothers~ and this was this quite original idea ... that they... most the brother who have, who are ordained pastors didn't celebrate anymore, when I came... they didn't preside anymore, because they had made a sort of choice to say,

⁴²⁹ BF-1,2e.

⁴³⁰ TC-1,4d, cf. TC-1,10a.

if... to renounce to celebrate for some time... waiting for things to be settled, could help (...). And it's in this context, and, and that was not so easy for everybody here. Maybe for some brothers, but mainly also for people, that then, in the seventies... no sorry, in the eighties um, it became more and more clear that would not happen like this, this agreement, not so quickly... .. and then it was very important, that, and that is what I understood also for the brothers to be able to receive Holy Communion together, and that was possible in the Catholic celebrations.⁴³¹

Taizé's current practice was initiated during the very optimistic heydays of the ecumenical movement following Vatican II. The widespread expectation that full visible unity was within grasp has certainly been a factor in the evolution of Taizé's Eucharistic practice, together with Brother Roger's insistence that the community must not be separated at the sacrament.

The solution of sharing the Eucharist in the Roman rite seems to be a rather pragmatic one. The interviewees do not express a solid doctrinal framework to justify this choice. Instead, TB points at the willingness of the Protestants in the community to acknowledge the rich Catholic tradition with its centrality of the Eucharist and to accept the limits set by the Roman Catholic Church:

We recognize that the Eucharist has been, more present in the Catholic Church, more central... that there are different forms in the protestant churches, different traditions, and... and if, if that would help, to say, we recognize that we are... a bit younger brothers in that... in this regard, we would accept.⁴³²

TC indicates that this practice was not the fruit of a solid theological argument but one further step in the community's search for a common Eucharist that would be acceptable to all traditions involved:

And uh, so that was, like I say, that was a provisional... temporary solution, just trying to be together, without knowing how exactly, to move forward, and uh... and there had been other attempts before, you know.... in the, some brothers may have told you, no, and before in the sixties, even up to seventy-, I'm not sure, '73 maybe... uh

⁴³¹ TB-1,4d.

⁴³² TB-1,4d.

because the Catholic Mass was downstairs in the crypt... and the Protestant Eucharist was upstairs in the big church.⁴³³

TB and TC both stress the provisionality of the evolving solutions. TB quotes from the community's Rule: "it's a continuous... search, no? And this is written in the rule never stay, *ne reste jamais sur place*, no, don't, never stay in place, but follow, follow Christ."⁴³⁴ TC adds, referring to Brother Roger's idea of provisionality:

There's not been one way of doing things, that's why it's a little bit difficult to put it into writing, because it's, it's part of our evolutionary process, that is not finished probably... it's not that it's written in stone as a theory, but it's more... .. the brothers tried to find ways of going forward... And Brother Roger... .. as one of the... titles of his books... illustrates, no? he believed in the provisional. *Dynamique du provisoir* is the title of one of his books, I think in '65 or '66, and uh... so there are maybe no perfect solutions... but the main sin... would be immobility {laughs}. A sin would be immobility, would be to be paralyzed, to say we can do nothing... so even if there are no perfect solutions, we must go forward and find provisional, temporary solutions, until something else... something better... presents itself, and uh... and that's not only true for the Eucharist, it's true for many aspects of life at Taizé, but... I think it's also true for the Eucharist, there was no... maybe uh, great theory, or great... vision, that we have to put this into practice, for those... it was trying to... be together and, and find ways in being together, uh, and go towards reconciliation, and, and uh... so that meant, seeing what's possible, and um... .. and uh, accepting that some solutions are, what we say in French *bancales*, there, they limp a little bit, they're not perfect solutions, no?... They're solutions that allow us to go forward...

In TC's view, it is more important to move forward in ecumenism than to postpone progress in order to avoid all imperfections. The bigger problem, in his perception, would be immobility. From many perspectives (for example, canon law, dogmatics, liturgical studies, etcetera) the practice of Taizé may, indeed, be flawed and imperfect. To the monastics, this is not entirely unproblematic, as we will see in section 6.3.

⁴³³ TC-1,10a.

⁴³⁴ TB-2,12.

Nevertheless, Brother TA indicates that the courage of the community to act and to experiment, as well as to admit mistakes, has been one of the attractive features of the community:

But that from the start it has been something, indeed, that, that touched me in this community, that it really is a community that tries to do something, which tries to live out something, very much aware which, which it is very fragile and that we make mistakes, no doubt, but that, nonetheless, yes, tries to just follow Christ in an authentic way, um... .. yes, and that's what I see here in the Eucharist as well, you know, well, that... .. we could have said: 'we won't do anything in that regard, it is too sensitive, too difficult, let's avoid it'... um... that we won't do anything, indeed, but, well, only say, well, we won't do anything, because they act in that way and that's not good, they act like that and that's not good, so, yes, we should, we better do nothing, you know, or else we will be criticized, too... .. but which... makes the more courageous choice to try something... to live together in a certain way, together... celebrating Christ... praying together, but which is very much aware that that's not evident to all....⁴³⁵

The community is willing to take risks in order to be able to advance in the search for unity. This does not mean that they consider their own path perfect or flawless. On the contrary, the next section shows that they doubt their own practice and struggle with the many questions that accompany them. Still, they prefer it over the alternative of avoiding the Eucharist or to be separated in celebrating it.

The interviewees from Bose express similar thoughts and convictions. BF says: "It's a specific, local, and personal, I mean uh, communitarian situation. We suffered a lot in finding a way out, uh, this is not a full way out, it's just a way to go through without too much suffering. Never, nothing more."⁴³⁶ Similarly, Brother BE says:

I think most of us are aware of what is, what is, what are the questions and so on, but to really discuss them, as far as we have our own local solutions and how to solve them, not to solve, but anyway, to go across the difficulties, and living them....⁴³⁷

The monastics primarily focus on their practice as a temporary solution to their own, specific problems. They stress its provisionality: it is always a

⁴³⁵ TA-1,24c.

⁴³⁶ BF-1,10e.

⁴³⁷ BE-2,58.

solution for lack of a better alternative. That implies that they dismiss two options: being separated at the altar and avoiding the Eucharistic liturgy altogether. Instead, they accept imperfect, 'limping' solutions as long as they safeguard the unity of the community; as long as it prevents the wounds of division to paralyze ecumenical progress; and as long as it enables the Eucharist to be their prime spiritual resource. The conviction that the current practice is a temporary way of coping with their specific, local situation makes the monastics very hesitant to present theirs as a solution for other contexts. I will discuss the reflections of the monastics regarding the place of these communities and their practice of Eucharistic sharing in the wider scheme of ecumenical relations in section 6.4.

6.3 A CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE

The struggle for a common Eucharist

As indicated already in the previous sections, the monastics neither consider their ecumenical process to be completed nor their own Eucharistic practice as the final solution. They highly appreciate the possibility of sharing the Eucharist, but critically examine this practice at the same time. They also point towards the struggle that accompanied the introduction of Eucharistic hospitality in the communities.

To start with the latter, I have already briefly mentioned the evolution of Taizé's practice and the short episode in Bose's history of Eucharistic hospitality in the Waldensian tradition. Brother TB recalls the decision of the ordained Reformed brothers of Taizé to give up presiding over the communal Eucharistic liturgy, hoping that temporary abstinence on their behalf would benefit the cause of ecumenism. He explains:

A sort of, not, not seeing the whole thing as a negotiation, and sort of positions, strength, and of... theological agreement only, but that there was something else. There was readiness also to yield to the others, to, to... to... say, yes.... And it's in this context, and, and that was not so easy for everybody here.⁴³⁸

After the brief period of sharing the Eucharist presided over by Waldensian pastor Brother Daniel, public uproar forced the Bose community to find a new way. Similar to Taizé, the community found a solution by resorting

⁴³⁸ TB-1,4d.

to Eucharistic hospitality provided by the Roman Catholic Church, when a Catholic priest joined them. As a consequence, the Waldensian liturgy was no longer celebrated. Here, too, there has been willingness to 'yield,' to use the expression of Brother TB. TC contemplates the struggle of Brother Roger, who always came across like he walked the ecumenical path effortlessly:

Godfried Hamann says something, I don't think he says that in the film, but he told me, during the interview something, uh... something that makes you kind of think anyway, and I think it's true, it's true to a large degree, uh... Brother Roger, he said, live this way... .. this reconciliation... .. but the way he did it... you were misled, to think it was easy... Uh? Because he did it with such joy, uh? And such simplicity, you thought, oh, it's easy for him... no? Whereas maybe there were more struggles than we think, uh? {laughs} [-] So I think he used the word *ludique*, *ludique*, it comes, it means... *ludis*, no? game, it's almost like it's pleasant to do, it's fun... it's fun to do it... and uh... and uh... whereas maybe some, or like Bonhoeffer or so, would have talked about, costly grace, no, something that costs you... and reconciliation does cost something, no? Reconciliation has a cost, in a way, no? Uh... and I think Brother Roger knew that, but it didn't come across in that way. It came across as, oh, it's easy to do, to recognize the ministry of the pope, or to, or to pray this prayer or [-] but it's good, but, and. Whereas maybe there was something inside, that... that had happened that was also the result of a great struggle.... the determination... to, to, no matter what the cost, we go to reconciliation...⁴³⁹

The monastics are careful to locate this cost in the framework of a theology of abundance instead of competition. Only then can an exchange of gifts be fruitful. Nevertheless, it remains necessary to contemplate the notions of power that come into play. Certainly, the pragmatic solutions found in Bose and Taizé are partly the consequence of the position of power in which the Roman Catholic Church finds itself in ecumenical relations. Brother BE concludes, rather pragmatically:

I know that the rules of the churches to which, of course, as Christians we try to be faithful, uh, tell me... that it's not, it's not possible for non-Catholics~ for Catholics to take part in the Protestant celebration, so, in this sense~ in this way it would make no sense to ask a Protestant pastor to celebrate, and all the others, not to take part, or to take part

⁴³⁹ TC-1,18b.

in a sort of uh, pseudo-prophetical way, uh, while it would, yes, it would not be understood, uh, so for this... And of course, the context makes so that we're only... very few protestants, and the majority of us is uh... is Catholic, so, of course, it's also natural to celebrate it in this way...⁴⁴⁰

The struggle remains

Indeed, the current context of Bose's ratio of Catholics versus non-Catholics speaks to the community's exclusive choice for a Catholic member to preside over the Eucharist. However, the situation was different in the community's early days. In Taizé, moreover, the situation was drastically different given its exclusively Reformed roots. There, the great majority of the community accepted the restrictions imposed by the Roman Catholic Church.

The monastics stress that the struggle is not over. TB, for example, does not think that Taizé's practice of Eucharistic sharing liberates the community from the struggles of the wider ecumenical process. On the contrary, the community actively invites ecumenical partners to visit Taizé:

It's not that we think, we have made it, but let the others continue in their trouble, because we have found of this brotherly love, and this communion, it would never be like this. That's why all the time the welcome of... of church leaders, of... ... I mean, welcoming also our history and our past and our heritage of churches, so... welcoming all this, not to, to... ... to set ourselves apart from that struggle and searching, all the difficulties which exist...⁴⁴¹

The individual monastics themselves, too, struggle with the solution they have adopted as a community. TA speaks about an encounter that exemplifies the struggle the community continues to go through even when, on the surface, a suitable solution has been found. At a meeting with some 150 Dutch guests in Taizé, TA has a conversation with a woman about the Eucharist:

Fine, this woman, well, she said: 'yes, I quite like it,' she was very positive, you know, 'yes, I quite like it, everyone is able to do whatever I likes, everything is permitted when it comes to the Eucharist.' I responded: 'No! Not at all, that's not what it's about. It rather is very problematic here, you know, I mean, it's very sensitive, it's very difficult, you know, because, because, that's how some look at it,

⁴⁴⁰ BE-1,88.

⁴⁴¹ TB-1,52.

that's how others look at it, uh, so both within the community and for those whom we receive, uh, here, well, you know, it is really quite problematic.' And then I concluded with something that I often say, indeed: 'but then, it is fitting that it hurts, because it makes us search for, for the thing, we realize that we should continue, that we still haven't reached the new Jerusalem.' She responded: 'well, yes, oh, yes, actually I am disappointed that you said that, for I thought it was rather simple, but it turns out to be very difficult {both laugh}.' So, I didn't know if I had done the right thing, or something bad. I didn't quite know, because, uh....⁴⁴²

From my own experiences in Taizé, the reaction of the woman to the situation in Taizé seems to be representative for a great number of guests. Many of them express a feeling of relief that things seem so uncomplicated and that the usual boundaries between churches seem to have vanished in Taizé. TA contradicts any such perception in this quote. Ecumenical sensitivities or even boundaries are not absent in Taizé. The fact that the community has found a temporary solution that allows them to share the Eucharist does not solve all problems. As TA expresses here, it does not take away the pain of division, nor do the brothers want it to.

Brother BF, in Bose, addresses this issue as well, saying:

So, it's not, you, you can't and we do not say, okay, everything is okay because we obtained this. I um, I think that we say, this is an open wound. And so, receiving something that, an oil, that make the open wound less hard to support is good, but I don't think that uh, the, uh, the tension, the desire to the full unity is weak because of this, hea~ not healed, but uh, comforted wound, I mean....⁴⁴³

Sharing the Eucharist, then, is not a final solution to the question of Christian division. In the experience of the monastics, though, it is helpful to comfort the pain and to enable them to pursue the goal of full visible unity.

Not only do the monastics continue to feel the pain of division themselves, but they also witness and share in the struggle of their guests. BF attests to the Eucharist in Bose: "it has been, and still, a question and a problem for the community, and for me personally."⁴⁴⁴ And TA expresses his doubts about Taizé's practice in the morning prayer in which Communion is distributed. He experiences discomfort explaining it to guests:

⁴⁴² TA-1,18a.

⁴⁴³ BF-2,6.

⁴⁴⁴ BF-1,18a.

I do question that, you know, whether we should do it like this, but every brother experiences that... (...) And every time that I do that introduction, I always feel a bit uncomfortable, you know. Because I think, well, I understand, I can't take two hours now... uh, for this to explain it, and cannot, when you have to speak in front of 300 people, respond to every pastoral situation, still, I have to address it and I am very much aware that what I say, for a number of people, they'll think: 'what, what does this man say? What's this?' you know. And I can't, I don't have the opportunity to... uh, comprehensively address it...⁴⁴⁵

He speaks of Taizé's practice as something beautiful and painful at the same time. TA is very much aware of the struggles it can cause the community's guests. Reflecting on the questions both Catholic and non-Catholic guests face, he says:

But that it has a very painful side to it, too, but well... ... that is inherent, I guess... ... So, a painful side to it, because we, we discussed this already, because it reminds us... how big the divisions between churches, um... ... and what a sensitive topic it is with the churches, and what a sensitive topic it can be for many of those who come here, who have to ask themselves: 'wait, what's this, how does it affect me? Where do I come from, um, can I and do I want to participate in this?'⁴⁴⁶

BF speaks in similar terms about the guests in Bose. They, too, struggle to make sense of the situation. This struggle does not leave the monastics unaffected. Even though they themselves are now familiar with Eucharistic sharing as a default situation – which, indeed, alleviates the pain of division without fully eliminating it – the guests confront them with the wounds of disunity:

I think that sometimes we need this. Uh... we need a shock that asks us to go deeper, to go back, to go at the main reason of the Eucharist. I... and this, in... with all the wound of limits that I've told you before, is what I felt sometimes when, especially when there are some um... um... non-Catholic, not from our community, because now for us it's normal, huh? But if you have people that you know uh, probably, you can even imagine the cost that it has for him or her, to have this, to receive the Communion. Because it's not so normal, well, we say, you are invited, you can come, but it's still a Catholic Mass. For instance,

⁴⁴⁵ TA-2,18a.

⁴⁴⁶ TA-2,14.

Lukas Visscher, the theologian of Geneva, he was a very good friend of us, he came several times, who has been a moderator of Faith and Order for a long time and so on, when he came here, he did not uh, take the Communion, and he told us: 'I am sorry, I am deeply grateful to you, to your offer, but until the day the reciprocity will not be possible, I can't take the Communion.' And it's, again, it's true. It's another way to face seriously the wound that remains. So, you can say, prophetically, in a special situation etcetera, I can go to the uh, to a Roman Catholic Mass, because they let me go, they ask me to go, they invite me to take part, but I know that this can be um, problematic for some of my brothers in the confession, or in any case, it's not, it's just a local solution of a bigger problem, and this remains. But when... when I see people that I know, how much it costs to go to them, to receive the Communion in this sense, I think that they are happy in any way, but what interior work they had to do with us for joining this time, is for me a joy, and not only a joy, a sort of pushing to go on and to face the difficulties, the doubts, the problems, the wounds of the, of sharing the Communion.⁴⁴⁷

The practice of Eucharistic hospitality, thus, does not erase the experience of pain caused by division. The monastics welcome and appreciate this experience because it fuels their desire for unity. This echoes, of course, one of the main arguments of *critics* of Eucharistic hospitality: the pain experienced through separation at the altar is a vital stimulus for ecumenical commitment. Taizé and Bose show that the practices of abstinence and Eucharistic sharing do not have to be mutually exclusive to be fruitful. If a community in which Eucharistic hospitality is practiced remains open to the wider ecumenical process, the result is both the unifying and comforting experience of sharing the Eucharist and the painful experience of the state of division the church continues to find itself in. The monastics experience both as valid and effective impulses for ecumenical commitment.

BF touches on an important point when he introduces the notion of reciprocity. The lack of reciprocity is a clear marker of imperfect communion. In the contexts of Taizé and Bose, this reciprocity has not been realized, at least not in a structural way. The Catholics indicate that they would consider receiving Communion in other traditions occasionally – or have actually done so in the past – but that this is not part of the established communal reality.

⁴⁴⁷ BF-1,22c.

The monastics clearly consider their personal and communal struggle unresolved and ongoing. They regard their practice of Eucharistic hospitality as beautiful and helpful but not as unproblematic. They express their doubts and hesitations about their 'local solution' and acknowledge that it cannot be anything other than a step along the way towards full visible unity.

6.4 A SIGN FOR THE CHURCHES

A meaningful, local practice...

The monastics have spoken at length about their understanding of the place, significance, and function of their communities' Eucharistic practice with regard to the wider ecumenical process of the churches. As depicted in the previous sections, they regard their own practice as a local and temporary solution, appropriate for their specific situation as ecumenical monastic communities. Yet, even though they consider it a valuable option for the current situation, they do not perceive it as flawless. BF concludes:

So, uh... this... for me... well, it's a sort of appeasement, a sort of... I don't call it a compromise, but it's a... the... only thing we can do, without contrasting several things that are all important for us. And it's not a... not a good solution, I mean, it's not a solution that you can propose to everybody, it's not, it's no more, because things change in our church, it's no more a sort of prophetic provocation, uh... It's a... a situation~ the Orthodox would call it a... a oikonomical situation. (...) Uh, it's a situation that takes into account who we are, which is our history, uh... in, where are our churches, things that would be possible in another time, uh... were not~ are no more possible now and vice versa."⁴⁴⁸

BF defines Bose's practice primarily as a local solution that takes the specific situation of the community into account. Solving an urgent spiritual need in the community first and foremost, it can be characterized as an answer to a particular pastoral problem. In this sense, it resonates with the considerations of the German Bishop's Conference, mentioned in section 1.3, which also focus on pastoral rather than ecumenical concerns.

However, the monastics also attribute another meaning to their practice, one transcending their local situation. TB states: "it's particular, and at the same

⁴⁴⁸ BF-1,10c-d. Cf. TA-1,16a-b, TB-1,4f.

time it's meant for all."⁴⁴⁹ The monastics consider their solution particular in the sense that it is the fruit of the specific journey of their founders and communities. This implies that the practice that evolved in that particular situation cannot simply be copied and applied to other contexts.

The monastics explain their views on the function of their practice within the ecumenical process in terms like 'sign' and 'parable.' These terms express a tension between the lived unity in their own communities and the ecumenical goal of full visible unity that is still pending. TA says:

In the historical context of Taizé, uh... that is... .. so it... .. Taizé which began as a Protestant, as a Reformed community. And where we can, now, *every* Sunday... celebrate the Catholic Eucharist... that is, as a sign, already something so big {laughs} um... so, that's what I mean with it, you know, that... um... .. looking at that, you know, what that means already, with regard to the progress we've gone through here, and the trust we get from... from the churches, and as... um... as sign that we can live together every week with the people who join us um... that is something huge in our context, you know {laughs}. It's not something that will change the world straight away, but on the small scale of this small hill or of Taizé... that is something *huge* and we should not forget that. (...) it is, of course, difficult to... to let that touch you on an emotional level each Sunday, you know. But still, that each brother should realize deep inside, how big a sign of reconciliation um... .. that is... that, we should not forget that.⁴⁵⁰

This quote contains two elements that I see reflected and explained in other parts of the interviews, which are constitutive of the way the monastics understand the place of their practice in the bigger picture of the ecumenical process. The first is the significance of actually and concretely living this reality of reconciliation. To the monastics, this is more fundamental than the theological concept or the scale of the impact their actions might have.

Discussing this with BG, she indicates that the purpose of the Bose community is simply to live together as Christians from different churches:

BG: we are very popular now, but we, we don't look for that, okay? So, there are people in [with us in Bose, which are really important] in churches, in the ecumenical dialogue, we organize congress, okay, but uh, I think, if all of that stop, we are the same, okay? Because the true sign is to, to be um... a place open of the people. That's the sign.

⁴⁴⁹ TB-1,52.

⁴⁵⁰ TA-2,14.

And we can do anything or nothing. If we have the possibility, it's a good thing. Of course, and we do it with pleasure and with passion, but it's not the [-] for our life... And yes, for a while, Bartholomeos came here and [-] everywhere and Matthias is in the Group of Dombes, and Matteus in the [-] interreligious and monastic dialogue group, okay, we can do anything, that is a gift that God give us. But that's not the... the thing that we needed to be what we are... ..

FW: It's not the purpose of your life here.

BG: No, no, no. It's uh, I think that it is uh, great things, really, and I'm happy to be here in this time, but I think that, till there is an Orthodox and a Reformed can pray with me in the church, that is all that I have to do. And if the community and many people can do more, yes, that's wonderful, but uh...⁴⁵¹

In a similar way, BG acknowledges the fact that Bose is inhabited by both male and female monastics to be of significance: "I think that we have to know and to live all the differences, with respect [for each other]. If I can~ I can't live with the most important different that we live on the day, men and women... how can I live the others {laughs}?" BG thus defines the purpose of the community as dealing with the differences on a daily basis, both between the sexes and between denominations. TB, too, stresses that this reality is inclusive. It attempts to reconcile diversity without erasing it:

And so, I would rather say that, what we can do here in Taizé, it is to, to live like this together, to pray together, to... make every effort to belong to that one church, as it is in God's intention, being from different backgrounds. Um, encouraging people who come here, and that's why we have these Orthodox liturgies, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, um, celebrations. Because it's very important to... for us, to say, what we live together as brothers... and with people who want to join for a week, it's, it is not a model, it's not a.... that we pretend to... to have a solution, but it is important for us to live a sign.⁴⁵²

TC refers to Taizé's practice as an immersion in the mystery of Easter, so that the obscured reality of the one church can emerge. He elaborates on some observations by Orthodox theologian Olivier Clement about Taizé:

When we immerse ourselves in the mystery of Christ, the Easter mystery of death and resurrection... when we go deep enough, then

⁴⁵¹ BG-1,54-56.

⁴⁵² TB-1,4f.

something of the undivided church can appear.... And I think, that's a little bit of what the experience is here, no? That, that if we, if the Easter mystery... Easter mystery also means... ... that you're not there to defend, no?... an artificial identity. You're there to go towards an authentic identity, no? You're not just, it's not the ideological identity~ I have everything {laughs}. But it's, if you're there to, to go into the deep mystery, into the deep identity, then you allow something of the undivided church to appear, because Christ is not divided... Christ is not divided. So, something of the unity can appear, the word used in French was *affleurer*, no? *Affleurer*, it comes to the surface. Something that is there, comes to the surface, and so maybe that's a little bit, in a way, something that happens here sometimes. That something of the undivided Christ appears, becomes visible, because some people are willing... to take that risk of living in the death and resurrection of Christ...."⁴⁵³

... transcending the individual situation

In short, the first and most important significance of the communities and their practice of Eucharistic sharing is that they exist. By living the unity of the church, by surrendering to the Easter mystery, by taking the risks of trust, they experience something of the undivided church. In a second instance, the monastics understand this concretely lived reality to act as a sign for the churches. The fact that it is possible to live in the reconciled way of Bose and Taizé is a statement and signal in the face of division that still marks the relationships between denominations. As shown before, the monastics understand that their situation is not perfect and does not represent full unity. However, they do understand it to point towards full unity and to demonstrate that it is possible. TB explains:

That brings me still to another topic, which is very important for Taizé in general, for everything, you have to see it I think through this lens, is that um... from the very beginning, in the text Brother Roger said, the community can be a parable... of communion, of brotherhood, of... um, or in the life commitment, which text he wrote in '49, he says, Christ has chosen you, in his mercy, to be a sign of brotherly love in the church... so, this, this thing of being a sign, or a parable... um, applies to everything and also to our practice of the sacraments, that it's not meant to be the whole thing, no, a sign is not reality, it's... it's

⁴⁵³ TC-1,22b.

a pointer to something, and that for us it is also the... .. a sort of living together, sharing in the source of the Eucharist, of the presence of Christ, in the sacrament, who gives himself to us, so this can be a sort of pointer to... to... to what we... to one very important element of the church.⁴⁵⁴

TC adds that Brother Roger's experience is not only an exception in order to accommodate the individual needs of these particular monastics. The community's way is one that can guide people towards a deeper unity. Thanks to its daily reality of sharing life and sharing the Eucharist, it can be a place where others discover that reconciliation is indeed possible:

I don't think there was any... any claim or pretention in that direction, no, Brother Roger didn't want Taizé to be understood in that way... [we don't need] very strong words, we're just a small community, and we... But at the same time, I don't think it would be right to say that Brother Roger's experience, and Taizé, is just an exception. That it has no role, or something {laughs}, because uh... what Brother Roger experienced, and what the community lived for... .. I think he kind of hoped also that other people would discover that you can be reconciled, that you can live as a reconciled Christian.⁴⁵⁵

When asked to elaborate on his own level of communion with the Roman Catholic Church, Brother BE connects the notions of imperfect communion, Eucharistic sharing, sign, and the Eucharist as sources of unity:

I feel in communion, in the fact that, because, I feel I'm able, as a Protestant brother to take part in this celebration, which is also a way to, to come near to what we both, Protestants and Catholics, desire, so, this wider unity. But at the same time, of course, this communion is not complete, it's uh... it's just a sign of a possible communion, which does not only depend on me, but also on decisions of churches and of church leaders....⁴⁵⁶

And he continues:

I think, at least it's a sign for the churches, uh... that it's a sign, that says, it's possible to live together even if we are brothers and sisters belonging to separated churches, uh, we still are brothers and sisters, and we find ways, uh... more or less according, main, most more

⁴⁵⁴ TB-1,4f.

⁴⁵⁵ TC-1,22a.

⁴⁵⁶ BE-2,40.

according to the rules, to the disciplines of the church, to live what is possible to live together, uh... And in this sense, I think, that we try to live together is a sign... for the churches that a way is possible... uh... also in more institutional... situations and conditions, to find a, a wider... .. agreement on how to... how to find a more reasonable unity, not just a recognized diversity~ a reconciled diversity, but also, to find a way to be one... as the community is one, even if brothers and sisters here belong to... to divided, to separated churches... But, of course, it's... it's incomplete, it's not perfect what we live here, because, of course, we celebra~ according to the rules of the churches and especially the Catholic one, we celebrate the Catholic Eucharist, to which others are just others and non-Catholic members of the community are just um... hosted, as you said the other day.⁴⁵⁷

BE, too, stresses that the situation in Bose is imperfect and that it does not represent the full communion the churches are searching for. Yet, to him, the reality in Bose can be a next step in ecumenical relations, which takes reciprocal recognition to a next level. Again, sharing the Eucharist is a sign that points towards a future reality without claiming to have already accomplished that common goal.

Finally, Brother TC considers the practice of Eucharistic sharing to be on pace with the ecumenical rapprochement reached. He contemplates that, today, the churches seem to realize that searching for unity, however imperfectly, is less of a scandal than immobility in the face of division. He therefore thinks that the churches need places like Taizé:

But I think... over the years I think the churches have recognized that there is a need for places where we search, hmm? And I sense that in Pope Francis also... there is a need, in some of his texts, he almost encourages people to search for new solutions.⁴⁵⁸

Finally, only Brother TA explicitly indicates that he believes the practice of Eucharistic sharing to be indispensable for the ecumenical process without, however, insisting that it should be done in the same way as in Taizé:

It might be my youthful arrogance, how would you say that, my youthful arrogance speaking: I think it's the only way for ecumenism... um... .. um, because we, because I witness everyday here in the community, well, as soon~ if we don't live together, if we

⁴⁵⁷ BE-2,42, cf. BE-1, 87.

⁴⁵⁸ TC-1,28b.

don't pray together, then... then all those theological discussions are pointless, because, in the end, we won't understand each other....⁴⁵⁹

I distinguish three elements that seem to be important in the way the monastics understand the role of their practice of Eucharistic sharing in the wider ecumenical process. First of all, it is important to them to engage with the reconciling power of the Gospel in a very concrete way: by living together and by partaking of the one Eucharist. To experience this in the concrete reality of their common life is a leap of faith and the primary purpose of the communities. Living this reality seems more important to the monastics than reflecting on it theologically, or advocating this way of life towards others.

Secondly, they stress the imperfect nature of their practice: it does not represent the full visible unity they hope for. It does, however, indicate that such a unity is not only possible, but that it already exists and can be allowed to surface. As such, it anticipates unity in order to achieve it. Only in this sense do the monastics consider their practice a sign: it contradicts the status quo of division and shows that the unity that all hope for is possible.

This, in a third instance, explains why the monastics refuse to define their own situation as a model. They consider it a temporary solution for their specific circumstances which cannot be copied. More importantly, what they live is an anticipated reality rather than a method. In other words, even though the consequence of their practice may be a deeper sense of unity, it is not a strategy that they seem to have purposefully employed. The monastics merely recognize this effect in retrospect.

6.5 SYNTHESIS

The monastics radically interpret the notion of 'scandal' to refer to Christian division and the unwillingness to promote unity. Therefore, they believe that any act that supports and promotes Christian unity, in particular an act of sharing the sacrament of the Eucharist, *cannot* be regarded as scandalous. They do use this term occasionally to describe situations in which they choose not to partake of the Eucharist in particular situations, for example, when traveling or when a non-Catholic minister presides over a Eucharistic liturgy in Taizé. However, they are rather reluctant to use the term 'scandal' for the controversy that might be stirred because of such situations. The only time they consider it proper to use this term is when an act of Eucharistic sharing evidently causes

⁴⁵⁹ TA-1,42.

division amongst Christians who all belong to one Eucharistic communion. This is, for example, the case when Orthodox guests visit Bose.

In Taizé and Bose, sharing the Eucharist is the default situation for the monastics. They obviously do not consider their own practice to be scandalous, as it effectively promotes unity amongst themselves. However, they are willing to abstain from partaking occasionally when sharing would potentially jeopardize full unity between community members and their churches of origin.

This makes the practice of sharing the Eucharist a viable solution in the specific situation of these ecumenical monasteries. This solution fits with the context of either of the monasteries. In Bose, given its vast majority of Catholic members and the community's embeddedness in the ecclesial structures of the Roman Catholic Church, it seems the logical choice to opt for a common Eucharist presided over by a Roman Catholic priest. Taizé has had its own process in which provisionality has played a significant role from the very start. The current practice fits with the desire of the community to celebrate the Eucharist together in obedient faithfulness towards all churches involved. As such, the choice for a Roman Catholic Eucharistic liturgy is somewhat pragmatic rather than dogmatic. It is clear that this choice does not imply that they regard Eucharistic liturgies in other traditions invalid. The beliefs of the monastics with regard to the relation between Eucharistic liturgies in different traditions will be explored in more detail in section 8.2.

Despite the fact that their practice seems to be the best solution available at present, and despite many positive reactions from guests, the monastics themselves continue to experience their situation as well as their solution as problematic. They would not agree with the conclusion that it makes their situation easy or uncomplicated. They understand sharing the Eucharist to be of vital importance for the dynamic of their common life (see Chapter 5), yet they also realize that it is not the final solution for the problem of division, either inside or outside their communities. The interviews show how they question their practice, its theological and ecclesiological rationale, and the practical implications. Although this practice enables the common life and the organic growth within the community, it does not solve the pressing ecumenical questions that still divide the churches. In addition, the monastics are deeply concerned for their guests. They witness the struggle some of them go through, either resulting in their decision to share in the Eucharist or in deliberately withholding themselves from doing so. Both options are accepted by the monastics as valid and valuable expressions of ecumenical commitment.

Therefore, the monastics do not believe their particular practice to be a model for all. Since they do not regard their practice as a final solution for the problem of Christian division, and because it merely is an intermediate step in their own process, the practice cannot be regarded as a universal solution for all contexts. However, the monastics do consider it to be a significant sign of hope amidst divisions. Most of all, it is a beacon for the churches pointing towards the future: it shows that it is possible for Christians from different denominations to live out reconciliation. Taizé and Bose show that the Eucharist can be both a means and a goal as it is the source and consequence of their common life.

The reluctance to present their practice as a model might be, at least partially, a church political statement. Both communities have established a delicate equilibrium with the churches involved. As Brother BF indicated, they do not regard their own charisma as a provocative prophecy, or at least not anymore. The monasteries would not want to jeopardize the solution to their own situation and the ecumenical progress they embody by presenting their practice as a model in the sense of a canonical precedent. However, they do understand it as a sign indicating future possibilities.

Taking it one step further, I think that the best way to interpret the significance of the examples set by Bose and Taizé is expressed in the above by Brother TC, who speaks of “places where we search.”⁴⁶⁰ One could think of contexts that resemble characteristics of Taizé and Bose, which could benefit from a similar arrangement, not only to settle the pressing problem of their experience of separation at the heart of Christian worship, but also to become more profound signs that, through anticipation, help realize full visible unity. The next chapter investigates in more detail how Eucharistic sharing affects the relationship between the monastics and the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and, in cases of other churches, their tradition of origin on the other hand.

⁴⁶⁰ TC-1,28b.

7

LIVING IN COMMUNION

The relationship of the monastics with the respective churches has been an important topic in the interviews. They struggle to live in faithfulness and obedience to the different denominations involved, which is a very complicated endeavor. Nevertheless, their desire to do so shows their commitment to full visible unity as a goal of ecumenism. This chapter explores how the monastics experience their relationships with different churches and the place of sharing the Eucharist in the context of incomplete ecclesial communion.

First of all, while expressing different attitudes towards their churches of origin, they appreciate their upbringing and the particular resources of their respective traditions. They speak about the way they (try to) relate their own denominations now that they find themselves in such profound ecumenical contexts. The monastics refer to notions like faithfulness, fidelity, and obedience towards their own and other denominations. As such, these notions are important in understanding their view on what church is.

The second section deals with an insight that has had significant impact on the way the monastics understand their ecumenical lifestyle and the relations between denominations: they have experienced a paradigm shift, from a denomination-centered ecclesiology to a fundamentally Baptismal one.

Section 7.3 focuses on parts of the interviews with TC (Taizé) and BE (Bose) in which they speak about their sense of belonging to two denominations at once. Even though the other monastics do not explicitly reflect on this particular theme, I think it is implied in their interviews, too, and a consequence of the former two sections.

These and the themes of the other chapters have made the monastics reconsider the concept of *communio*/communion, which is so dominant in contemporary ecclesiology, as we will see in section 7.4.

7.1 FAITHFULNESS

It has always been the intention of the individual monastics of both communities to remain members of their respective churches of origin. Brother TB notes that Brother Roger explicitly recommends this in Taizé's Rule. Breaking with one's origins so that one can adhere to one ecclesiastical body or communion has never been a viable option in the search for a common Eucharist:

It became more and more clear that this would be important, to... to, to keep that, as... as common source of life, in the sacrament um.... but without, and Brother Roger insisted very much on this, and, and, or insisted, he said it always clear, that it, it doesn't mean to... to deny something, to *renier ses origines*, or to deny one's origin, or, or to give up um, belonging, to... to a church.⁴⁶¹

This is fully in line with Brother Roger's interpretation of himself. His ecumenical path has become a blueprint for the community. TB continues:

And when he said, about having reconciled in himself, that was Brother Roger's words, he spoke for himself first... having reconciled the faith of his Protes~ or Evangelical, he said, *origine Evangelique*, with the mystery of faith of the Catholic Church... within himself, without breaking with anybody... um... ... this... this became a sort of guideline for the whole community also, to say... um, we are from different backgrounds and origins, and we understand that the church is one, in the, in the... ... in the intention of God. And that we can live in this communion, and find ways how this is possible, without... repeating the... the... ... this competition, who is wrong and who is right? and should everybody move there or move here?... um... ... yeah, and that is what I understood also, to be to be at the, at the... sort of the fundament of, of the practice and life here, also concerning the Eucharist.⁴⁶²

The will to remain faithful to his church of origin is expressed most vividly in the interviews with Brother BE. Raised in the Reformed Church of Switzerland, he searched for a way to live his monastic vocation. His attitude towards his own background may be quite representative for Reformed identity: he never felt particularly proud of being Reformed. At the same time,

⁴⁶¹ TB-1,4d.

⁴⁶² TB-1,4d.

he expresses a profound love and gratefulness towards his own tradition, which made it unthinkable to him to leave that church:

I have the impression... that the church in which I've grown up was the one which gave me what I need to live my faith, so, where I received the Baptism, uh, made me become so a Christian, and um... that if I received that from this church, if we want to use the church as the mother {laughs}, as Calvin would do, uh, anyway, uh, one cannot forget his own mother, so to, this dimension of fidelity, to, yes, to the personal, in this case not a person, but uh, the institution, which... gave me the first milk, and then made me grow up, um... I, I thought, for me, it would have been uh, un~, so I would not have felt well to, to go to... yes, I would have this impression that this transplantation, so to say, would have not been natural for me, so... I would have had the impression always to be a stranger, at least from... Not having done it, I think I would have thought that, but {laughs}....⁴⁶³

BE agrees that he might have joined a Reformed monastery in Germany had he known of their existence. He encountered Bose first, however, and compares his experience with falling in love: opting for Bose was not a rational decision against other communities but based on a sense of feeling at home in this particular monastery. The fact that BE did not have to give up his own ecclesial affiliation has played an important role in this process. In a similar fashion, TA says: "one thing that helped me was that I never had the impression like, wait a minute, this choice implies a renunciation of the tradition I come from."⁴⁶⁴ Instead, through his non-Reformed contacts, BE developed a new and deeper understanding of his own Reformed identity:

Strangely... the... first years of being here... I discovered {laughs} by the contact with, or the daily contact with not-Reformed, so with Roman Catholics, the fact, more and more the fact that I was belonging to that church, so, so, it was something, I discovered my being Reformed in contact with non-Reformed, so to say. Not as a reaction, or something, yes sometimes, of course, you have some initiate reactions in front of some words, or some behaviors, which you don't feel as... as yours, because you never had to, to, to, you never met them in your previous history, um... but, yes, but rather the

⁴⁶³ BE-1,28.

⁴⁶⁴ TA-1,22.

way how... yes, the life together with uh... Catholics made me discover that I was Reformed.⁴⁶⁵

Interestingly, both TB and TA indicate that they tend to be more critical of their own tradition than of the other traditions they encounter in Taizé. TB says: “of course, I see the shortcomings in that church, like I see shortcomings of other churches, and I see maybe better the shortcomings in that church, because I know more what is really going on.”⁴⁶⁶ TA adds that it is important to “have a healthy relationship with the tradition of one’s origin, both the ecclesiastical tradition, but also culturally,”⁴⁶⁷ in order to balance critical and affectional feelings towards the different denominations and to enable a genuine dialogue.

To the monastics, faithfulness is not exclusive. They value a sense of openness towards others. TA indicates:

Thankfulness indeed that I, both towards my parents and the church I come from, that there’s always been openness, for that matter, I mean, that it was always... um... explicitly or not, that there are people who think different than, than us, and that this is not a bad thing {laughs}, and that they might as well be right, you know, uh, which helps me a lot, here, you know, I mean, to focus on... um... the good in your, in your own identity than to prove that what others do, what those others do, is wrong, you know.... Um, and I think that that’s something we’ve always tried to do in Taizé~ what we always try to do in Taizé, you know.⁴⁶⁸

Similarly, referring to Godfried Hamann, TC says:

Faithfulness is not that we keep... ... the refusal of the other, you know, that characterized certain moments of our relationships, no? between churches and [there are moments when] we refuse~ that's not the fidelity that's asked of us, no? In that sense, we're not asked to find our identity by saying no to another church, so that's... that's, sometimes people think that that's fidelity. But it's, I think, that I say, no, we're asked to let go of things that were just distractive, [-] that were not unity, and uh... ... But people are entitled to be proud of the gifts of their churches. There they can see what their parents

⁴⁶⁵ BE-1,32.

⁴⁶⁶ TB-1,20.

⁴⁶⁷ TA-1,24a.

⁴⁶⁸ TA-1,24b.

gave them, what their tradition gave them, and it should have a part in their life of faith.⁴⁶⁹

Remembering the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1986, TC recalls his message to the brothers. He paraphrases the pope, highlighting the joint principle of being faithful to one's origins and immersing oneself deeper into the mystery of Christian unity:

It's quite powerful, in a sense, he says, by remaining faithful to your origins... the brothers were from different Christian traditions... you will help... huh?... the church... It's a good thing that... and at the same time, as you are faithful... to your origins, you always go deeper... into the mystery, huh? of Christ. Now, so you do both things, no? You remained faithful to~ and Brother Roger thought *that* was possible for, for himself, he thought it was possible for Taizé, that it's not impossible... to be faithful... and to go deeper.⁴⁷⁰

Describing his own relationship with his church of origin, BE indicates that he understands one of the purposes of his life in Bose is to promote ecumenical openness in that church. He tries to maintain contacts, partly to achieve just that:

At the same time, not being proud of, this belonging to this church, it's not, it's not, because I know that this church is better and that I want to remain here, that's because I received that tradition from that chu~, the Christian faith uh, through that tradition, but I had the impression that I had to be faithful to what I received, but without closing myself in this identity. But knowing that I come from here, but in... in a... with a goal of communion, of catholicity, or whatever you want to call it. Opening myself, perhaps my own tradition to other realities of other churches... ..⁴⁷¹

Finally, several monastics indicate ways in which they express their faithfulness by *not* partaking of the Eucharist in certain circumstances. Several examples of this have been listed in sections 6.1 and 6.3. The monastics indicate

⁴⁶⁹ TC-1,32.

⁴⁷⁰ TC-1,30. A translation of Pope John Paul II's speech is available at the Taizé website: "By desiring to be yourselves a 'parable of community', you will help all whom you meet to be faithful to their denominational ties, the fruit of their education and their choice in conscience, but also to enter more and more deeply into the mystery of communion that the Church is in God's plan." John Paul II, "One Passes through Taizé as One Passes Close to a Spring of Water," Taizé website, accessed March 9, 2020, http://taize.fr/en_article6718.html.

⁴⁷¹ BE-1,30.

that they usually respect the canonical regulations of the churches involved, even when their personal desire would dictate otherwise, especially if breaking the rules would stir controversy. At the same time, some indicate that they would break the rules, or have done so, occasionally. These testimonies indicate how the monastics try to balance obedience towards ecclesial authorities and their desire for Eucharistic communion with fellow Christians. From the above, it can be deduced that they would not interpret the latter necessarily as unfaithfulness, as it combines adherence to one's own tradition, which is a key element of the ecumenical communities, with openness towards another. The consequences of such a double interpretation of faithfulness will become clearer in section 7.3. However, in the next section I will focus on another issue first: the reinterpretation of the relationship between Baptism, denominational identity, and the church universal.

7.2 BAPTISM, CHURCH, AND THE DENOMINATIONS

A pivotal moment in the process of the monastics has been their reinterpretation of the relationship between the universal church and their own denominational tradition, inspired by their experiences in Taizé and Bose. As we have seen in the previous section, they do value the particularities of their own traditions, to which they try to remain faithful. Without discarding this identity as insignificant, they have come to prioritize a Baptismal identity and differentiate between church on a general level and on a denominational level. In their view, the denominational adherence is important as the concrete form in which one lives his Christian identity. Yet, as such, it only has relative and secondary relevance; the monastics stress the significance of the wider, more general Christian identity founded in the sacrament of Baptism.

In BF's life story, it is quite clear that he needed the ecumenical experience of Bose to reinterpret his relationship towards other Christians. Hardly aware of their presence in his own context, he drew only from books. Speaking of meeting other Christians in Bose, and especially in the small community in Neufchâtel, he says: "So, after two years and a half, uh, for me it became normal to consider uh... .. other Christians just as Christians."⁴⁷²

BE had a similar experience when he visited Taizé. To his surprise, he encountered a reality in which it seemed of secondary importance to which denomination one belongs:

⁴⁷² BF-1,2e.

But there also I experienced, to come back to the topic of ecumenism, the dimension of this... non-denominational {laughs}, or I don't know how to say, post-confessional dimension of the church, so sharing without ask~... so asking everybody to which church he's belonging, uh, this, yes, anyway, this ecumenical possibility of sharing uh... the faith, uh... ... in a bigger context than the one of the confessional church to which one belongs.⁴⁷³

This reflects the anticipatory-sign-function of the communities described in section 6.4: the communities as places where one can experience the reconciled church in full communion. For BE, it also meant a shift in understanding the relation between the notions of church and denomination. He finds it difficult to express it adequately but tries to articulate what this experience meant for his understanding of the church:

I was not aware of being Reformed, probably, before, so it was part of the natural context in which I was living, while here, having to i~... ask question to myself, about what I was experiencing, of course being in the midst of other, non-Reformed, it made come out the small differences, but I would say really secondary points, uh... and it made me also understand perhaps, uh, this idea of putting upside down our tradition, or natural way to understand our belonging to the church. So, we are not Reformed and because we are Reformed we are part of a wider church, but we are first of all Christian, all baptized, and so we are all Christians, and we lived our own Christian tradition, so our Christian life in a specific context, cultural, confessional, and so on, and this made us. And so... living here with Catholics made me understand what we share all, that the first identity is our Christian common uh, identity, more than uh... ... ah, it's difficult to say, all these things in English, but I hope it's more or less understandable.⁴⁷⁴

Later on in the interview, Brother BE explained how he and his ecumenical youth group did not hesitate to share the Eucharist, even if they knew the official rules. It had everything to do with the reevaluation mentioned above:

BE: I think we knew it quite well and quite quick, and at the same time, we practiced it in a very... in a very free way uh, without asking all the permissions of all the authorities.... So, I can't remember to have had problems with uh... have had experienced sort of... to have be injured

⁴⁷³ BE-1,14a.

⁴⁷⁴ BE-1,34.

by somebody telling me, no, or the other way around, someone, my pastor saying, no, to some Catholics come... so... I [haven't had] the, I was lucky to live this... situation in a very open... condition...

FW: So, why would you call that lucky?

BE: Uh, because the goal {laughs}, because the goal of this dimension of unity, of the goal of ecumenism, was, was... being shared with those who [were] together. So, we [-], had these experiences together, so it's lucky in the sense that... uh, yes, it's, this confessional divisions at a certain point are secondary, so, if you consider your Christian identity as the primary identity and the confessional way, uh, the confessional identity the way how this primary identity is expressed, uh... these limits between, or, between Catholics and Protestants and so on, are just... should be overcome by some wider... understanding of what is Christ, and Christ is wider than... and he's even wider than only protestants and Catholics, of course there are also Eastern churches and so on, but he probably also looks for communion between Christians and non-Christians. But perhaps now we're going to far, but um... uh... so, our small limits inside of the Christian churches are a bit ridiculous if we consider all the, yes, the goal of reuni~ {struggles with the word}, uniting all human beings... in one family, so to say... so, in this sense lucky, to having been able to experience this sharing uh, among Christians, which belong to different churches, uh, whose differences are at a certain point... very secondary...⁴⁷⁵

In BE's story, differentiating between a Christian identity and denominational identity, and prioritizing the former over the latter, has radical consequences. In his view, denominational differences should not intervene with a common identity in Christ. BE feels "lucky" to have encountered such a reality in Taizé and his youth group. In addition, he feels that restrictions within Christianity contradict the intention of Christ to reconcile all humanity: interestingly, BE refers to interreligious dialogue and mission. Clearly, he does not promote extending Eucharistic hospitality towards non-Christians in this quote, but he does refer to the Eucharist's inherent intention to reconcile all humanity. In section 7.3, we will review another episode in BE's interview in which he elaborates on one particular event of Eucharistic sharing in an ecumenical context.

⁴⁷⁵ BE-1,82-84.

Even stronger than BE, Brother TB indicates that he never regarded his Reformed denominational identity as particularly significant. He stresses the importance of belonging to the wide stream of Christianity:

TR: What I explained you before, this thing of discovering the church... it, it... means that I'm at home in *that* church, of, of... of the body of Christ, which is through all the history, all over the world... and so, this belonging, because I was born there, and raised there, it doesn't, it's not so important... ... because it's, it's, this is ac~ not accident, *Zufall*, um *Zufall*, um...

FW: Ah, *ja ja*, a chance, by chance, maybe

TR: ...it's occasion, I don't know. Of, of history, and there I [-] things, but um, but if I would have come to live to somewhere else, when I was nineteen, twenty, and not in Taizé, probably I would now be, I don't know, um, I would be... Catholic in Spain, and Orthodox in Russian and, I don't know, probably, because pff um... it's belonging to, to the church, no? which matters.⁴⁷⁶

TB then refers to the use of the word 'catholic' in the creed, in which it does not indicate one particular denomination. Therefore, he is very hesitant to resort to the denominational use of the word 'catholic', or any other denominational adjective for that matter, when speaking of the Eucharist: "I would be very careful to introduce confessional notions into realities of faith..."⁴⁷⁷

Brother TC speaks in similar terms, though in a more theoretical way, referring to theologians he appreciates as well as Brother Roger:

Godfried* says that in history... of the churches... we have come to put denominational identity as first, no? So, what denomination do you belong to? ... And then, we know that the church is somehow bigger than our denominations, no? So that is second place, the consciousness of the church is bigger than that. And then the last place is, of course, we're all baptized, no? We're all baptized {laughs} And according to Godfried... Brother Roger turned that around, no? And so, we are all baptized, that's our identity... we're all baptized. So, Brother used to talk like that sometimes, the baptized. And, and, because we are baptized, we're part of the church... and of course, we all have an origin {laughs}... you were born here, I was born there... Your family is this, my family is that, it's not what comes first, the

⁴⁷⁶ TB-1,20-22. Brother BF says something similar in BF-1,14b.

⁴⁷⁷ TB-1,36b.

denominational identity, no? And, it's the Baptismal that comes first, and so on.⁴⁷⁸

Again, the historical churches are not insignificant because they are the concrete manifestation through which one participates in the life of the church. As such, it does not strike me as if the monastics understand church membership as strictly spiritual. It does, however, affect the way they understand the relationships between denominations. BF thinks along similar lines, referring to the Lima Report: "I think we have not yet grasped, uh, in the full way, what does it mean that I recognize your Baptism?"⁴⁷⁹

Brother TC rather eloquently connects a number of themes that have emerged so far: the priority of a Baptismal identity, the complementarity of Christian traditions, a theology of abundance, trust in Christ and the resurrection, all culminating in the idea that in the exchange of gifts something of the undivided church can surface. Let me quote this part of his interview in full:

But it is of course a little bit of a surprising statement, hey, really to say that, the undivided church can become visible again, that's a... uh... But I think, if you studied um... the history of Vatican II... and the... the approach to the text on ecumenism based on Baptism, you would find something like that, no, that, that uh... and we talked about that last time too, our first identity is Baptismal, no? And then, and then of course we have, history, that has created denominations and created separations, but our first identity is there, you know, so... so in a way, it's not... ... it's not totally surprising to say that, no, that the undivided Christ can appear, no? If we... if we go... ... into the death and resurrection of Christ. And in the spirit of... the death and resurrection, it means that you are no longer on the defensive, no? That you don't need an enemy to exist, I think I used that, with Olivier Clement used to like to say that as well, some people need enemies to know that they exist. Otherwise, they're not sure they exist, no? So, they have this kind of adversarial identity, without an adversary they don't know they exist. And so, the spirit of resurrection liberates you from that, no? You don't need an adversary to exist, you don't need to. It's not a zero-sum game, doesn't have to be a winner and a loser, we can... work there to go towards fullness, which is something which Congar says also, I quoted that passage, that our only interest is

⁴⁷⁸ TC-1,8b.

*Godfried Hamann.

⁴⁷⁹ BF-2,8.

fullness... It's not compromise, it's not negotiation between denominations. Some people think ecumenism is kind of a negotiation. But it's actually fullness that is... our aim. We want the fullness of the mystery, and so... so we, we open up to that fullness wherever it can be found... and so on... That means sometimes saying, oh, maybe I didn't keep uh?... this as much as the other church, and I can learn from that other church, and so on. And if there is that spirit, then... then you are more likely to allow that undivided church to... to arise, no?... ..⁴⁸⁰

Brother BF shares a thought worth mentioning here. He agrees with prioritizing a Christian's Baptismal identity over his denominational belonging and ties this to a particular interpretation of representation in the celebration of the Eucharist:

Personally, I feel that when we can share the Eucharist, uh... we, I receive a sort of encouragement uh... a new hope that it could be possible in my lifetime to see full unity, full visible unity among the churches. Because uh... during the Eucharist we are um... we are made contemporary to the Christ offering his life for his disciples. But uh, in a double sense. Traditionally we think~ we think, we believe that the Christ came~ comes and is present in our celebration, uh, but there is also the other aspect that we are made present to the Last Supper. So, in a sort, it's, the Eucharist is outside the time. (...) That uh... Christ gives us this power that doing this in memory of him, means that also that we can, we can uh, anticipate this day, uh, and this uh, of course is true for any Eucharist, even if there are not non-Catholics at a Catholic Mass. This truth is the same, I mean. But when you can celebrate with concrete uh... Christian that are not of your own confession, this becomes more clear, more evident, more uh, challenging.⁴⁸¹

According to BF, anticipation of future full communion through sharing the Eucharist is not only possible thanks to eschatological hope, but is even more achievable because celebrating the Eucharist unites with Christ during the Paschal mystery two millennia ago, prior to any division. Anticipation, then, is not only looking forward to future full communion but is, rather, a falling back on past full unity. It stresses the notion of *restoring* unity rather than building it

⁴⁸⁰ TC-2,6b.

⁴⁸¹ BF-1,22a. He speaks of the community's attempt "to go back, before the divisions" in BF-1,18a as well.

from scratch. Combining the two elements of remembering a past condition and a future reality leads BF to speak of the Eucharist as being outside of time. Thus, Bose's search through its practice of Eucharistic hospitality is a qualitative rather than a temporal endeavor: it is neither nostalgia about a lost past nor dreaming of a future utopia; rather, it is a rediscovery of the contemporary presence of unity as a quality of the church.

The paradigm shift expressed by the monastics, in which the Christian identity bestowed in Baptism preconditions the concrete historical ecclesial community shaped by a denomination, has far-reaching consequences as the narratives show, especially TC's summary. This shift creates a fundamental openness and willingness to acknowledge other Christians without, however, magically resolving the pressing theological issues. Still, it encourages the monastics of Bose and Taizé to yield to one another, to accept each other as fellow Christians, and to strive for full unity.

7.3 *DE FACTO* DOUBLE BELONGING

Yearning for a joint faithfulness

Section 7.1 focused on the notion of faithfulness. Several of the interviewees stressed their love for their church of origin and their desire to be faithful to it. In addition, however, the monastics also articulated a desire to be concretely connected to, and faithful towards, another ecclesial tradition. During the interviews, I specifically inquired into their relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, since this research is, first and foremost, interested in the practice of Eucharistic hospitality from the side of that denomination and in the debate within Catholic theology. In this section, I will first present some more theoretical considerations by Brother TC. After that, I will focus mainly on the interviews with Brother BE from Bose because he illustrates his desire to belong to different traditions most explicitly. Elements of this desire can be traced in the other interviews as well and I believe this desire is implicit in them. As such, Brother BE's interview reflects insights and convictions transcending his individual experience.

Brother TC calls the 'creed' of Brother Roger to mind, which has been constitutive for the ecumenical path of Taizé. The experiences of the brothers today resemble Brother Roger's own experience. I think it is this summary of his own life that made Cardinal Kasper conclude: "Brother Roger's charism has radiated outward upon the community of Taizé brothers and, far beyond them, upon all Christendom. For this reason, it seems to me that Brother Roger's

personal journey, guided by the Holy Spirit, is a discreet indication by the Holy Spirit for the future ecumenical path.”⁴⁸² This section shows how one particular aspect of Brother Roger’s path has radiated upon the interviewees.

Brother TC speaks about the period when Brother Roger received Communion for the first time from the hands of the bishop of Autun. In that period, Brother Roger’s path was still so new and original that he struggled to articulate it, and even more to be understood properly:

He saw no problem to give Communion, and uh... ... for him it was the way of uh.... he didn't find the words for it right away I think, but he... he spoke in the seventies with something that Rome did not accept, the whole way of speaking, in his book about *double appartenance*, double belonging, we belong to both. We can belong to the church of the Reformation, but we belong to the Catholic Church as well, we can, and uh... and there was a strong reaction against this way of speaking in Rome uh... um... ... some cardinals were, one cardinal was very difficult man, he was very, very angry and, when Brother Roger spoke this way, and uh... and uh...⁴⁸³

TC continues by explaining that the formula which Brother Roger came to use often about his own identity was a reformulation of the principle of double belonging:

And then, later on, in 198~... I think maybe two, that's when he said this thing in Rome in St. Peter's, when he spoke about, I found my identity by reconciling inside myself my Protestant with the faith of the Cath~ without breaking off, no? That was a very compact way of saying things, and... very, very few people understood, I think, what he meant. There was one journalist from *Le Monde*, who understood. That was Henri Fesquet, who used to write... ... uh... the religious column for *Le Monde*, [-] and he was a man of culture, he was a, he was a, the journalist for *Le Monde*, for the Council Vatican II, so, he published his memoires of Vatican II, and all his papers... so he was a man of culture, and he was there in 1982 and I think he was the only one who understood {FW laughs}. He had a little column in *Le Monde*, saying that, I think the title was, “Un tour de force spirituelle”...* *tour de force*, *tour de force* is uh... it means something very powerful... that turns things around. He understood there was a new, something new in what Brother Roger was saying... that he could be reconciled

⁴⁸² Kasper, “Mercy and the Ecumenical Journey of Brother Roger,” 294.

⁴⁸³ TC-1,8a.

without breaking off... with his family, or his origin, and so he started, he kept on saying this for many, many years, until the end of his life he said this... And I don't think many people, not many people took it seriously, I don't think that people saw what it meant, really, it's... when there was that Communion and Cardinal Ratzinger gave Communion at the funeral of John Paul II, then I think people started to think, well, what's... what is he? No? What is he? And there were rumors going around, but this.... And then I think people started to realize, not maybe the, not maybe several months afterwards, maybe a couple of years, after a year or two after, we underestimated... what he was living. That he was really something living something very original, no? And so, Cardinal Kasper helped, when he wrote, you know, that text, you saw it. Cardinal Kasper helped to explain to a degree.⁴⁸⁴

In the end, by accepting that Brother Roger would receive Communion on a regular basis in Taizé as well as in Rome and other places, the Roman Catholic Church embraced the new path initiated by Brother Roger. It accepted that this particular man, by way of exception, would live in a double fidelity, a double belonging. Providing Eucharistic hospitality has played a crucial role in this process.

Brother BE, who has spent a significant period in Taizé and has found his home in Bose, speaks about his own experiences, which echo Brother Roger's history. It is worthwhile taking a closer look at his narrative. He starts with contrasting his own belief with the thoughts of a friend with whom he visited Taizé:

Now I remember also with one friend at the university, we, so he was very... .. he had the idea to become a Catholic, because of how Taizé was and if the Catholic Church is what one can experience in Taizé, one has to become a Catholic and enter in communion with this world, while I have the impression, one can live his own faith also in communion with this other church, while remaining part of, of, of uh, of the church, or of the tradition of the origin of the person, so....⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ TC-1,8a. *Henri Fesquet, "Une double appartenance catholique et protestante ? Le coup de force spirituelle de Frère Roger," *Le Monde*, January 5, 1981, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1981/01/05/une-double-appartenance-catholique-et-protestante-le-coup-de-force-spirituelle-de-frere-roger_3041075_1819218.html.

**Brother TC refers to the interview with Cardinal Kasper in Guenois, "Something That Was without Precedent."

⁴⁸⁵ BE-1,14a.

He then speaks of one or more occasions during Taizé's European Meetings (events at which Taizé brothers gather with tens of thousands of young people in a major European city between Christmas and New Year's Eve), when BE participated in Mass celebrated by the hosting city's Roman Catholic bishop. BE recalls how he deliberately choose the Communion row of the presiding bishop, intending to receive Communion from his hands:

BE: And I remember twice, I think in Paris and then in Munich, um, I went both times to the cathedral for the Christmas Mass, Eucharist {laughs} and tried to be in the row where I could receive the Communion from the bishop. So, I remember it now. It was not something {laughs}, I'm not going proud of it, it's just, I remember this idea of being in communion with this person, or with representative of the authority of...

FW: So, you deliberately chose the line of the bishop?

BE: Chose the row, the line, in order to receive Communion.

FW: And so, what happened?

BE: In Paris, I received it from, from Lustiger at that time. Um, in Munich I must admit, I can't remember what happened, but anyway, I was {laughs} ...

FW: So, but they didn't know you were?

BE: No, of course not.

FW: But why did you, why do you, why did you try it, do you remember?

BE: No. So, the idea that... one had to go to the top, or to the represen~ to the chief representative {laughs} so to say, [of this other church]. In a very naive way, I think, it was the idea to say... where the bishop is, the true church, or the, when you go to the... to the, what should I say, to the... uh... to the, yes, the wellspring, the... *Quelle* of uh, of this other church, but it was very... ... not very rational, so to say. Anyway, it just, it came to my mind now.⁴⁸⁶

Brother BE appeared quite hesitant to recount this episode from the start. After this dialogue, he dismissed it altogether as "not so important actually."⁴⁸⁷ But from the content and the fact that he had brought it up, however hesitantly, I

⁴⁸⁶ BE-1,14b-22.

⁴⁸⁷ BE-1,15-24.

sensed that there might be something significant about it. Therefore, I decided to follow up on it like I did in the above sample, as well as in the second interview with BE. At first, he is again reluctant to discuss it, yet in the end, he elaborates on it:

BE: {laughs} I shouldn't have told it.

FW: No? Why not?

BE: And what shall I, what is the question?

FW: Why shouldn't you have told it? Um, no, why, um, did it express a need to um... um, to, to, to be acknowledged or something?

BE: No, no, I think it was rather, um, no, no, no, not to be recognized, or acknowledged by, no, um... I think it was a way, perhaps very naive {laughs}, and in not conscious way, as I can read it now, uh, from my part, to try, yes, to be in communion with the institution, with the... bigger authority, or whatever, of the church, in which this celebration was, was done. So, just the way, yes, to be perhaps, not to be recognized, but me to be... to have more, more visible sign of this being able to take part, or to be part of this other church. It was not the idea to make publicity, or to, to be seen, because of course, I was not just alone {laughs} and nobody would know that I, uh...

(a door opens, a man interrupts with a question, then leaves)

Uh... yes, just the idea, my desire to be part of this communion more than to be recognized as a person, or...

FW: But is there a similarity in, in joining this community? And like the naive way which you acted back then?

BE: Perhaps, uh, of course, as here, the Eucharist is only celebrated in this language, or in this tradition, of course taking part in the celebration, or receiving Communion means the way also for me to say, uh, I want to be part of this communion, um... but I think, no, pfff... yes, of course there is this same desire, being part of this communion. Perhaps here, as it is more regular... I don't have this desire to be {laughs} exactly receiving Communion by this real, the person, the presiding person of the, of the liturgies, of course, uh, and anyway, as it is organized here, I don't have to choose were to go, but I go where, where it's the nearest. Um... yes, but probably, it expressed already at that time, uh... let's say, twenty, twenty-five years ago, uh, it expressed already what I try now to live in a more... in a more regular, and... ordinary way. So, this idea of being part... of

a wider community, a wider communion, uh, and uh, trying to... to make as if the limits between the churches were not existing anymore, or where it would be able to go over these, these fences...

....⁴⁸⁸

The desire to be in communion with the Catholic Church without abandoning the Reformed Church of his origins is deeply embedded in Brother BE's biography. The narrative and BE's own interpretation of the link with his life in Bose shed light on both the practice of Eucharistic hospitality in Bose and the spontaneous act of a young man during the European Meetings two decades ago. The regular practice of sharing the Eucharist in Bose has enabled him to articulate the meaning of his desire to receive Communion back then, while the experience of his youth illuminates the significance of the practice of the whole community today.

BE does not perceive of his own act as an adolescent as provocative: he insists no one knew that he was Protestant and was not supposed to receive Communion. To him, however, it meant quite a lot. It enabled him to substantiate in the most significant way his desire to overcome Christian division and to be united with both traditions he had grown to appreciate. This episode, more than any other in the interviews, has shown me as a researcher the significance of sharing the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts.

The struggle to maintain the original belonging

However, Brother BE struggles to materialize both fidelities at once. In his youth, he hardly ever visited a Roman Catholic Church, even when he felt attracted to it. He says:

I almost never went to the Catholic Church, in my city, in, in my region, uh, not because I didn't want, but I, I understood that my, my church life had to be, uh, founded in the church I was taking~ I was belonging to.⁴⁸⁹

Yet, today, he struggles to maintain contacts with the Reformed Church. When he joined Bose, the leadership of his parish and ecclesial region sent him letters to assure him that they would not forget him, saying that "you are still part of our reality."⁴⁹⁰ BE elaborates on his relationship to the Reformed Church in

⁴⁸⁸ BE-2,30-36.

⁴⁸⁹ BE-1,68.

⁴⁹⁰ BE-2,12.

Switzerland today. Officially, he is not a member since membership is defined geographically. He tries to maintain contacts, but states:

Normally I couldn't belong to this church, even if I continued to, so... at least, for the statistics of the church. So, I'm not officially member of this church, even if I would say that the Reformed understanding of belonging to the church is perhaps more spiritual... than only this dimension of being... uh... administratively {laughs} part of the, or member of the church. Um... ... so, I think, I dis~, yes, the feeling, the context, the relationships with the church are still... they increased, so to say, with the church, the regional church in general, because before, as all Reformed, I lived everything inside of my own parish, and the horizon was almost closed at the end of its limits, um... while from here, as far as I was not in a geographical parish, um... I had also... yes, I, I had the impression to be part of this wider regional... church. And I was also looking for some contacts with the authorities of the... of this *Landeskirche*, they would say in Germany, anyway, the regional church to which I was belonging, and uh, had contacts with this... the, how would you say it in English, the synod, not the synod, but the executive part of the synod, so the, the council, the synod council.⁴⁹¹

BE then explains why he considers it important to uphold such relationships. On the one hand, he feels the need to materialize the reality of his double belonging. On the other hand, he hopes to promote ecumenical awareness in the Reformed Church:

I think in order to main~... so, for two reasons, so to say, in order to maintain my own belonging to understand, to make me understand that I'm still belonging to that church, but at the same time also to help them to understand that if I am here, it's also a way to open the church where I come from to this reality, to this ecumenical, but also this monastic reality, which is surely not a tradition which is normally... uh, part of a Reformed Church, so... Yeah, the idea that my being here was also something for the church in a wider, in a wider sense....⁴⁹²

BE indicates that he tries to visit the Reformed Church whenever he is in Switzerland.⁴⁹³ TA, who still belongs to the Reformed Church in the

⁴⁹¹ BE-1,42.

⁴⁹² BE-1,44.

⁴⁹³ BE-1,72.

Netherlands, does the same when he visits family. However, he indicates that this rarely coincides with the celebration of Holy Supper because it is celebrated only four or five times a year.⁴⁹⁴ The other interviewees do not really address this issue. I can only note that the non-Catholic members seem to struggle with substantiating their belonging to their church of origin, even when they were never required to give up this ecclesial identity. It seems to me that this is an important aspect for the communities to contemplate.

BE summarizes the dynamics of what he himself defines as double belonging rather well in another elaborate quotation:

I, of course, I began to know much better, the mechanism {laughs}, also institutional of the Catholic Church, uh, and have the impression that, uh... .. so to say, I live both realities, so, I am part institutionally, or, of the, of the Reformed Church, but I live also in the Catholic one, at least for what regar~ what concerns the sacraments, or at least the Eucharist, um... and in this sense, yes, I am much more taking part in Catholic activities {laughs}, than before, as far as we practice, as you know, the, yes, the Eucharist, having the Catholic Mass celebrated, and... practicing the Eucharistic hospitality, so... um... It became perhaps more daily, my, my belonging, my belonging? My sharing activities, or, uh... moments with the Catholic Church have become more daily, um... and I, yes, I... .. I knew always better, that the Christian life, which was lived, that we live in the Catholic Church, or in the Reformed is always the same life, just with other forms, or other words, and uh... I experienced it like this, so... coming here, I got to know... to know this new language, or this other language, which I didn't know from the inside, and uh, few by few I entered also in this tradition, so I would say, I have thought of {laughs}, but... perhaps it's the first time I say it now. Uh, perhaps it's also the first time I can [imagine it], anyway, um... .. I would say how this double, to have this, this double belonging, so... truly, I belong to the one church, to the one of always, of before, uh, but at the same time, taking part in... in the celebrations, uh, inside the Catholic Church, uh... yes, I feel, when I go to the Eucharist... in the Protestant Church, or in the Catholic one, uh, for me, it's something like the same, uh... so, it's why I say this double belonging, belonging to both realities."⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁴ TA-1,34.

⁴⁹⁵ BE-1,70.

BE clearly experiences his participation in the lives of both denominations and, in particular, the practice of receiving Eucharistic hospitality as acknowledgment that both denominations are part of the one church. In the background, again, the paradigm shift towards prioritizing Baptismal identity plays a role. The different churches are, thus, historical manifestations of this church. One can belong to two or more churches at once in concrete and tangible ways.

The interviews with Brother BE show how the principle of double belonging can take shape in the life of a Christian. In fact, BE participates in the sacramental life of two traditions and, as such, he belongs to both. However, the interviews also show that it is a challenge to maintain both modes of belonging in concrete and meaningful ways and to balance them out. This is an issue that could benefit from further reflection. For now, it suffices to ascertain that such factual double belonging exists and, secondly, to entertain the questions that it sparks. The communities face the challenge to maintain (or to restore) tangible and meaningful relations with all churches involved, while the churches are challenged by this reality to facilitate possibilities for living such a double belonging – provided that they can accept it as a concept theologically. I think that this truly is a challenge for the Roman Catholic Church and one that it must face, not only with regard to these particular exceptional cases, but also more generally for the future of the ecumenical process.

7.4 WHAT DOES COMMUNION MEAN?

The previous section analyzed Brother BE's experiences at the receiving end of Eucharistic hospitality in Bose in relation to his desire for communion with the Roman Catholic Church. He told me about the structural way in which Bose's practice accommodates his desire to belong to both the Catholic and Reformed traditions. In response, I asked him if he experiences his connection with the Roman Catholic Church as full communion. His answer surprised me:

FW: So, do you feel in communion with the Roman Catholic Church right now?

BE: ... What does it mean? {laughs}⁴⁹⁶

Methodologically, I think I could have responded more adequately than I did. Instead of inviting Brother BE to elaborate on this question, I recited the

⁴⁹⁶ BE-2,37-38.

traditional view that sharing the Eucharist is considered an expression of full visible unity. Reflecting on this part of the interview, however, it struck me more and more as if Brother BE's question was not born out of ignorance concerning the theological meaning of the word. Instead, I now take it as a rhetorical question indicating that he was reluctant to frame his experience in this particular theological concept. His reaction to my response strengthens this feeling:

FW: Well, since uh... since um... ... celebrating the Eucharist is considered to be the, the sign of unity and of communion, um... and you're sharing uh, your whole life with your brothers and sisters here, do you feel like being in communion really, with, with also the institution, or just with the community?

BE: No, no, I think, uh, the community, or the brother~ the Roman Catholic brothers and sisters of the community are of course expression of this wider church, to which, uh... indirectly I'm, yes, I feel in communion. Even if I wouldn't say that um... um... perhaps I'm Protestant enough, not to understand the Eucharist as the goal, uh, or only as the goal, of course it is the goal, but only as the goal of the visible unity, but it is also, perhaps, a way to, to build this... this communion. So, to use uh, a more Catholic word {laughs} it's an incomplete communion {laughs}. (...) So, I would say yes and no to your question, so, I feel in communion, in the fact that, because, I feel I'm able, as a Protestant brother to take part in this celebration, which is also a way to, to come near to what we both, Protestants and Catholics, desire, so, this wider unity. But at the same time, of course, this communion is not complete, it's uh... it's just a sign of a possible communion, which does not only depend on me, but also on decisions of churches and of church leaders....⁴⁹⁷

The word 'indirectly' is essential here. It indicates a shift in BE's perception of communion, compared to his memory of receiving Communion at Taizé's European Meetings as recalled in the previous section. Back then, he desired to receive Communion directly from the hands of the presiding bishop as the chief representative of the Roman Catholic Church. This act resonates with the classic view on ecclesial communion, which is predominantly realized in communion between bishops. Through them, respective particular churches and the faithful are in communion with one another. In his current situation in Bose, however, BE experiences communion with the Roman Catholic Church

⁴⁹⁷ BE-1,39-40.

not primarily through concrete and direct communion with the bishop or even the presiding priest, but in Eucharistic sharing with his brothers and sisters.

Secondly, the notion of 'incomplete communion' is important in BE's interpretation. For BE, a proper basis for Eucharistic sharing is not only full unity but also partly realized communion. Eucharistic sharing, then, is both an expression of this incomplete communion and a means to allow it to grow towards more complete unity. For BE, in the end, full visible unity remains the goal of ecumenism.

Analogous to BE's question of what communion is, Brother TB asks what it means to be a community. The idea of growth has been explored already in depth in section 5.3. He explicitly connects the practice of Eucharistic sharing to the organic growth that takes place within the monastic community of Taizé:

No, again, now, what does it mean to be a community? We speak about our community, no? There are communities of course, where you can live together from different churches... praying together, and then... .. taking part in the Eucharist in different forms, according to circumstances. Again, this is, this not model character, I, I... because, this exists, this exists, so... um... .. but in that form of community Brother Roger um, started here, it was clear for him that this would not be possible... (...) Um... it's not just.... made up, by some ideas... it's something more organic... um... and I think that was so important also for Brother Roger and the brothers, that the community would grow like a family, or like an organism, or like um... microcosm~ there are different words in the history of the~ but not something that you could put together, pieces... fitting, it's not mechanics, it's not Meccano {laughs}, but it's gardening, it's growing, it's... .. and I think, for this, this is probably one of the reasons why for him it was very important to say, we, we... we need to be one.⁴⁹⁸

TB indicates that for the kind of community that Taizé is and the way in which it believes its ecumenical progress to occur, it is essential to be intimately one, especially in celebrating the one Eucharist together. The current practice of the community, in which one form of Eucharistic liturgy is the norm, responds to this conviction. At the same time, TB, as well as others, regard the communities to be signs for the churches, as we have seen in section 6.4. Therefore, the dynamics within the communities can be signs for the dynamics between churches when it comes to communion.

⁴⁹⁸ TB-1,56.

Brother BF recalls how his experiences have made him reconsider the meaning of communion. During his stay in the small community in Switzerland, he especially struggled to translate the concept to the concrete relationships with the Christians he met. On the one hand, he felt closely connected to the Protestant pastors with whom he prayed, studied, and exchanged ecclesial concerns. On the other hand, he felt detached from the Catholic parish. At the same time, however, he knows now on an intellectual level that he *is* in full communion with the latter and *not* with the former: “that scandal helped me to reflect on another level of being communion. Because, at that time I felt more in communion with Daniel and with some Protestant pastors, than with the local priest and Catholic community.”⁴⁹⁹ He continues:

This obliged me to think about a sort of sentimental or emotional communion, or intellectual communion. So, we are, we agree on a theological idea, we agree on uh... a kind of liturgy, or uh... things or something like that. And what is the real meaning of communion? Because I was in deeper real communion, uh, and full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, in which I was not at my~ at home, and I was not in communion with some of the um... ... Reformed communities or pastors, with which I was sentimental, emotionally, intellectually more in communion, mmm? So, this obliged me to have a sort of uh... re-, rereading of what I was supposed to think about communion in the church. What is church? What does mean the term church and communion? And Holy Communion, and Eucharist? Uh... of course, here, this kind of uh... tension, sometimes we [may], I mean, I feel more in communion with the uh... Anglican Church, than with the four cardinals who made the questions to the Pope Francis, so, the problem remains, but they're far {laughs}. Uh, while being there, I said, but why I have to go, to go to the Roman Catholic Church, where they are not yet Vatican I, but uh... in difficulties with Vatican II, and I find uh, with this pastor I discuss about the Gospel, I, I know their trouble concerning the every Sunday Eucharist, and a lot of things. And I was there, I mean.⁵⁰⁰

BF clearly struggles with the theological concept of communion, which clashes with his day-to-day experiences. During the period when Waldensian pastor Brother Daniel presided over the Eucharistic liturgies in Bose, when BF was supposed to join Mass in the Catholic parish church in the village of Magnano,

⁴⁹⁹ BF-1,12.

⁵⁰⁰ BF-1,14a.

BF felt very uncomfortable with the latter's faith community. His sense of communion with that community was rather abstract and intellectual, while his relationship with others felt more authentic. The discrepancies between his theological understanding of communion and the experiences in real life leave him puzzled as to how he should understand the concept as well as his own lived reality. BF is unable to provide a satisfying answer to this problem. His experience serves as a prime example of the challenge the ecumenical communities face in interpreting their relationships with the different faith traditions and the heart of the challenge presented to theology by lived ecumenism.

7.5 SYNTHESIS

This chapter reflects a deep sense of faithfulness the monastics have towards the Roman Catholic Church, as well as to other Christians or towards their denomination of origin in the cases of the non-Catholics. On the one hand, this fidelity, in combination with a sincere desire to be in communion with their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, urges them to remain members of their respective churches and to seek the fullest communion possible at the same time, especially in the form of sharing the Eucharist. They understand their participation in Eucharistic hospitality to be an expression of unity as a fundamental characteristic of the church. Eucharistic sharing while the ecumenical process is still not concluded is not only a form of anticipation of a restored fully visible unity between the denominations but also appeals to the unity that was established in the founding of the church and the sacrament of the table during the last supper, and, hence, to the extratemporal character of both the unity of the church and the Eucharist. In addition, participation in one tradition enriches the life of the other. In this sense, double belonging seems to enable the monastics to experience the riches of their own denominations even more.

On the other hand, it poses important questions to their understanding of Baptismal and denominational identities and the concepts of church membership and ecclesial communion. The monastics indicate that they have experienced a shift in their thinking about these topics parallel to their process of initiation in the ecumenical communities. They have come to value Baptismal identity over denominational belonging, understanding the former to express a more inclusive ecclesiology than the latter: Baptism, in their view, constitutes a level of communion that transcends denominational divisions. As

such, it enables and justifies faithfulness towards multiple ecclesial traditions. They also understand Eucharistic sharing to be a proper way to express and foster the level of unity that still exists, allowing it to grow further towards full communion.

Without reaching solid conclusions, Brother BF indicates that his experience of communion on an affectionate level interferes with his intellectual understanding of communion. In his interview, he seems unable to reconcile both elements. Yet, this confusing experience urges him to take efforts to substantiate the communion which he believes to be present without feeling it and, at the same time, to pursue formal and structural ecclesial communion with those from other ecclesial traditions with whom he already experiences a deep affectionate communion.

In short, the experiences and subsequent reflections of the monastics both enrich and disturb their original views on church membership and communion. The experience of a common life and a common Eucharist reinforces their Baptismal identity and their sense of belonging to the one body of Christ, regardless of denominational belonging. That very starting point questions the limits set by denominational membership and, instead, encourages them to pursue faithfulness to multiple ecclesial traditions. This desire is expressed most prominently in their membership of the ecumenical communities while they struggle to materialize it on other levels.

8

POSITIONING OF THE EUCHARIST

Finally, the respondents address the position of the Eucharist in their spiritual routine as well as in their theological and ecclesiological frameworks. This positioning uncovers their view on the fundamental questions underpinning the debate on Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts: How do the Eucharist as source for unity and its function of expressing unity relate to one another? And how does the Eucharist itself relate to the divided churches?

8.1 FOCAL POINT OF A WIDER LITURGY AND LIFE

Eucharist as the culmination of communal liturgical life

The monastics attribute a fundamental and central significance to the Eucharist in the life of the church. However, they point at two different ways in which this conviction takes shape. In a way, the diverging practices of Taizé and Bose represent two approaches. Brother TA summarizes: “some people celebrate it often, the Eucharist, because it is so precious to them, because it is so holy so you should do it often, others do it only now and then, because it is so holy, because it is something so important.”⁵⁰¹

TA himself attests that he was not used to celebrating the Lord’s Supper often in his childhood. His Protestant congregation in the Netherlands celebrated it only four or five times a year. For him, this proved to be too infrequent to grow an intimate familiarity with the sacrament, but he learned to appreciate the reasoning underpinning it while reading about the practice of American Mennonites. He realized that it demonstrates great respect for the

⁵⁰¹ TA-1,10.

sacrament if one takes weeks to prepare for celebrating it.⁵⁰² Still, TA felt he benefitted more from the more frequent practice of Taizé.

Brother BF similarly reflects:

There are two, even for a Roman Catholic, there are two ways to underline the central importance of the Eucharist in your life. One is saying, and that was the normal way, at least until a few decades ago, for every Roman Catholic faithful, it's so important to have the Eucharist, the Mass, it's so important that I cannot live one day without. And the other one is, it's so important that I cannot have the Mass as a... a daily activity, but I have to consecrate time, feeling, desires towards the central Eucharist on Sunday.⁵⁰³

Looking back at serving as an altar boy in the daily pre-conciliar liturgy, he says: "the danger of routine is always... is always there..."⁵⁰⁴ He appreciates the practice of the community of Bose, which has found a middle way by celebrating Mass on Thursdays and Sundays as a fruit of the ecumenical dialogue within the community. He did not perceive this as a negotiation of habits but as a common search for the meaning and significance of the Eucharist:

And it's not a question of saying, well, the Reformed celebrate four years~ four times a year, we celebrate 365 a year, so we can find a fifty-two, fifty~ {both laugh}. No, but, say, which is the meaning of celebrating the Eucharist. And which was at the beginning of the... Christian life, especially in a non-Christian situation, like it becomes to arrive in our Europe, um... what is the meaning to reserve to the Eucharist the central place in the week. And the, to consecrate to the Eucharist the whole um... day of the Lord.⁵⁰⁵

Brother BE adds that their rhythm resembles the practice of the early church:

The fact that the Eucharist is not celebrated each day, or, and so on, but we have it, together, once, so on Sunday, of course and once a week, in order to have also this more ecumenical rhythm and to remember this weekly rhythm, which is also the rhythm of the old, of the ancient church.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰² TA-1,10.

⁵⁰³ BF-1,18b.

⁵⁰⁴ BF-1,18c.

⁵⁰⁵ BF-1,18b.

⁵⁰⁶ BE-1,22.

The monastics of Bose prepare for the Sunday Eucharist through a Saturday evening *lectio divina* on the Sunday Scripture readings. As such, BF experiences the Sunday Eucharist as fulfilment of the community's daily prayers:

The fact that we were, and we are, an ecumenical community influenced also the kind of attention that we give to the celebration of the Eucharist. Not only the idea, or the *theoria* of the Eucharist, but also the practice, the, how we celebrate it. The fact that we on Saturday evening we have a *lectio divina* on the readings of Sunday. So, the first part of the Eucharist of the Sunday is already prepared by a common prayer, a common reflection on the gospel. The fact that we, we have in a sort all the daily prayers of the week, that final fulfillment in the Eucharist.⁵⁰⁷

The idea of Eucharist as fulfilment of other liturgical celebrations is also shared by other interviewees. BG analyses that it is an important focus of community life:

We have to celebrate the... the Jesus that we pray in the Bible. So, the same... word we pray, we need to celebrate. And if we can do it all together I feel we are [in depth] a community. It's not true that um, only the in the Eucharist we are a community, of course. But... there is the... ... the way that we feel more deep... All the week is um, organized till Sunday. It's beautiful if we can [live] Sundays with the others, with the others.⁵⁰⁸

And she continues:

We feel that the Easter is the center. And also, that the Sunday is the center of the week. And uh, also the Psalms are distributed in that way, that Saturday the Psalm [-] and the Friday, the Psalm that remembers the passion of Christ, okay, and Thursday the Psalm to creation. Each day, I feel I'm... yes, that the Sunday is the center, the real center. And uh, that's why, as a Catholic, I don't um, don't need the each days the Mass. That's quite uncommon in the [Catholic] sensibility. And that's why many people ask us, why do you do a thing like that? [-] okay. But it's the true center of the week, so, because it's

⁵⁰⁷ BF-1,18b.

⁵⁰⁸ BG-1,72.

so important, I can do that. And because my prayer each day is centered on the Bible.⁵⁰⁹

The monastics experience the Eucharist as the center and pinnacle of their prayers because it celebrates the Easter mystery. This aligns with the practice in Taizé, where the prayers and other liturgical celebrations (such as the rite of lights on Fridays) are designed to represent the holy week, culminating in the Sunday Eucharist. Thus, the liturgical rhythm is (partly) intended as mystagogic activity.⁵¹⁰ The monastics thus stress the importance and centrality of the Eucharist. TC refers to Irenaeus of Lyon: “in the French I had~ we say summary in English, but it's more than a summary, it's like the condensation, uh? of our entire faith is in the Eucharist, really. When you realize that, when you realize... why the Eucharist is such a great celebration.”⁵¹¹

Eucharist in the ecumenical dialogue

At the same time, however, Brother TA and Brother TB argue for a decrease in the isolated focus on the Eucharist in ecumenical relations and dialogue. TB, contemplating the occasions in which not all of the brothers can receive Communion, makes reference to spiritual Communion:

It happens also here, that some brothers don't receive Communion, that they for some personal reasons, and, and... .. even the council of Trient, Brother Roger liked this passage, where it says that if you cannot receive Communion for some reason, but you have the desire, then you have received it. It goes back to a text of saint Augustin, who says... believe and you have eaten... even Luther was quoting that text, I saw that recently.⁵¹²

Although he treasures the default situation of Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé, he also appreciates the possibility of receiving the blessed bread as it is offered in the community:

Brother Roger said... and the card~ and Ratzinger said that in the article, I can't quote it now directly, but, sort of, instead of making too big stories all the time, and getting into the sort of frustration, and fears and reproaches and uh... why not find ways first to live

⁵⁰⁹ BG-1,74.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. section 4.3.

⁵¹¹ TC-1,28b.

⁵¹² TB-2,28.

peacefully together, and with that... blessed bread offered to everyone, and then, then go on....⁵¹³

Sharing the Eucharist should not be at the forefront, especially not when it causes more problems than it solves. This, again, corresponds with the intention and practice of both monasteries to focus on living together and the dynamic between common life and common Eucharist described in sections 5.1 and 5.2. Brother TA takes it a step further, contemplating the place of the Eucharist in ecumenical dialogue. He argues that the Eucharist as an ecumenical topic needs to be decentralized in the sense that a narrow focus on the sacrament frustrates the process. At the same time, he resists an ecumenism of the lowest common denominator, in which hot topics like the Eucharist are avoided altogether.

How shall I put this... I feel somewhat schizophrenic {laughs}, but that is not the right word, but I'm so, so ambivalent in that, um... because on the one hand I think... .. that... .. the Eucharist has a central role in ecumenism... in the ecumenical process, right. We cannot say, well, hang on, that's out of the question up until the time that we agree on everything and to celebrate that we'll do it....⁵¹⁴

On the other hand, however, TA notices that many ecumenically minded people focus on the Eucharist, losing sight of other aspects of faith and ecclesial practice:

But at the same time, and that's why I said that I'm, that I'm almost schizophrenic, that I think that we need to decentralize the Eucharist in the... theological debate. Because it starts to become an um... .. as if that is the only thing, you know. And that's why I understand people, right, some people who say, well, hang on, let's do it straight away, but then, to say, but, as if it is the only thing in which we can be one, as if that's the only thing going on, the only way um... And that's difficult, at times.⁵¹⁵

The monastics have learned through the practices of their communities to acknowledge and appreciate the Eucharist as the center of their liturgical life

⁵¹³ TB-2,28.

⁵¹⁴ TA-1,46a.

⁵¹⁵ TA-1,46b. Coming from the same Dutch context, I recognize the eagerness of some ecumenically motivated Christians, especially those from Protestant backgrounds. Indeed, hardly any ecumenical meeting goes by without somebody asking the Roman Catholic representative why the Roman Catholic Church does not allow Protestants to receive communion.

and of their common life. This implies two things. On the one hand, they recognize the Eucharist as the focal point of their liturgical practices and communal life. The entire week's liturgy is directed towards the Eucharist in which it culminates. On the other hand, however, they do not want the sacrament to overshadow the other aspects of faith. This is reflected in the actual practice of the communities. In Bose, the Eucharist is celebrated on Sundays and on Thursdays or important feast days. This frequency was deliberately chosen, taking the needs and theological views of the members from different denominational backgrounds into account. In Taizé, the Eucharist may be celebrated each morning, but it is not part of the daily rhythm of the monastics, who receive Communion during the morning prayer alongside their guests.

8.2 "DO WE HAVE TWO EUCHARISTS?"

Brother TC formulates the pivotal question that I have used as the header for this section, inspired by Brother Roger's response to the first Catholic joining the community in the late 1960s. TC wonders: "Do we have two Eucharists? Are there two? We are one community, do we have two Eucharists...?"⁵¹⁶ When Brother Roger contemplated this question, the Catholic liturgy was the 'other', the 'additional' form of worship, complementing the community's Reformed celebration of Holy Supper. Today, the situation is the other way around. TC's question remains the same: are there two Eucharists, one Catholic, one Reformed? Even though it is mostly a rhetorical question, it is by no means irrelevant. It showcases the community's struggle to relate the two forms of Eucharist with which it is so deeply familiar and which, for so long, have excluded each other. It makes sense that this question is particularly urgent in Taizé, given its history and composition.

Brother TB comments on the same issue. For him, it is important to disentangle the two ways in which the term 'catholic' is used: to indicate a particular denominational or confessional entity on the one hand, and a dimension of faith on the other. He then argues:

So, when we say, when we use catholic as a confession, and not as, as the... the universal, all encompassing reality of the church, which includes everybody, then... um... then... it's not good to combine this with the Eucharist, for me. Because, because, Eucharist, it is the,

⁵¹⁶ TC-1,8a.

the... body and blood of Christ, which we receive~ I mean it's our thanksgiving, and, and it is also to offer ourselves, to receive the presence of Christ... um, which is, who is life for the world... and, and this reality of the Eucharist, it is not a confessional reality... um... it is because of history, and of ... of problems in history, of course celebrating in a concrete way, in a concrete church, but uh... but when you say, a Catholic Eucharist, a Protestant Eucharist... an Orthodox liturgy, of course, we use this language, because it's sort of ... [commod*], it's sort of... easy to speak like this, but um... but it hurts something. It's like... we don't speak about a catholic Christ. ... Or, or Catholic Holy Spirit... so, when it comes to the central realities of faith, I, I think that, that the confessional sort of... .. qualifications, they, they sound a bit like... they don't sound well {laughs}.⁵¹⁷

TB opposes the idea that the Eucharist in itself can be divided. Adding denominational adjectives to the Eucharist enhances this idea. TB, and the experience of the communities, strongly oppose this thought since it violates their understanding of an intrinsic Eucharistic truth: the fact that Jesus gave one Eucharist. Eucharistic liturgy and theology may be shaped by denominational differences, and this does not necessarily compromise the Eucharistic reality itself. Therefore, TB insists:

So it's better to say~ but I mean, we, it's [always fair] to say 'there is a celebration of the Eucharist, of the liturgy as the Orientals would say... Holy Communion, or *Abendmahl*, and then it's presided by a minister from a church, who is in charge to do that...' and there it's clear that it's from that church, or from the other church.⁵¹⁸

This brings to mind what I have already quoted from Brother TB earlier: "this became very important for me to understand that the... .. um... .. that the reality of, of faith, God, the church, the sacraments, they, they're always beyond the formulations."⁵¹⁹

One could say that through cultivating trust in this reality beyond formulations (see section 5.4), the community surrenders to this reality. They are hesitant to define the Eucharist theoretically, let alone denominationally. I have already mentioned something Brother TB said: "I would be very careful to introduce confessional notions into realities of faith...."⁵²⁰ With respect to the

⁵¹⁷ TB-1,36a. *Maybe short for commodity?

⁵¹⁸ TB-1,36a. Cf. TB-1,4d.

⁵¹⁹ TB-1,4e.

⁵²⁰ TB-1,36b.

Taizé practices in particular, there is a maximization of recognition: they acknowledge ‘Eucharist’ – a notion beyond full comprehension itself – as broadly as possible. Still, throughout the interviews, there are some traces of constituting elements. Ordained ministry, for example, is presupposed as a fundamental aspect. The definition of ordained ministry, though, diverts from the strict Roman Catholic understanding, extending to realities in the Protestant churches.

‘Do we have two Eucharists?’ is a very fundamental question. In Taizé, this question is answered with a clear ‘no’. This answer sparks two possible responses: either only one of the Eucharists is the true Eucharist and the other is a fraud, or both are distinct but legitimate manifestations of Eucharist. Even though, from the point of view of clarity, the first option is attractive, the community firmly believes in the latter. As we have seen in section 4.3, this implies uncertainty and hesitation when it comes to defining what can be considered Eucharist and what cannot. Nevertheless, the community opts to live with this uncertainty rather than to unjustly disregard other Christians and their practices and beliefs. In their effort to reunite Christians from various denominations, the community chooses to take a leap of faith rather than rely on definitions. Recognizing the Eucharist as a fundamentally universal category transcending denominational identity is the very basis for this choice.

8.3 EUCHARISTIC SHARING: SUMMIT OR SOURCE?

The monastics explicitly or implicitly contemplate the now classic differentiation between the Eucharist as “source and summit of the Christian life.”⁵²¹ They do not express an unambiguous vision on the relationship between unity and sharing the Eucharist. This is not surprising since this question has been at the core of the problem all along. Brother TC adequately explains: “it’s supposed to be about unity, the Eucharist. And so, it doesn’t make much that it becomes the source of division, or the... or the place where division is manifested, it doesn’t... it’s a kind of contradiction.”⁵²² The intrinsic incompatibility of Eucharist and division urges him to stress that any Eucharist, be it in ecumenical or intradenominational settings, should be celebrated with unifying intent. TC adds a rhetorical question: “If you receive the Eucharist without any wish for unity, {laughs} it would be a kind of contradiction almost,

⁵²¹ *LG*, sec. 11.

⁵²² *TC-1*, 18a.

no?”⁵²³ The practice of Eucharistic hospitality in places like Taizé and Bose, therefore, may be contested but, at the same time, they themselves challenge any undisputed form of Eucharistic liturgy that is not explicitly directed towards (the restoration of) Christian unity.

Brother TA and Brother BE both indicate that their participation in Eucharistic hospitality accompanies their growth in unity. TA reiterates the notion of the Eucharist as the source as well as the summit articulated by Vatican II when he says:

The eternal debate, indeed, is the Eucharist only the conclusion, indeed, of a trajectory, or is it as well a way towards something, you know. (...) I think that our... our position has always been, indeed, both for unity, you know, but that it is also the path towards unity.⁵²⁴

BE makes this more personal by explaining why he chose to receive Communion during one of the European Taizé meetings well before he joined the community. When asked, he contests that his primary intention was to be recognized as an individual by the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, he wanted to materialize his desire to be part of the communion of the Roman Catholic Church. This, BE concludes, is still on the basis of his membership in the Bose community where he can practice this in a more structural way:

Perhaps, uh, of course, as here, the Eucharist is only celebrated in this language, or in this tradition, of course taking part in the celebration, or receiving Communion means the way also for me to say, uh, I want to be part of this communion, um... but I think, no, pfff... yes, of course there is this same desire, being part of this communion. Perhaps here, as it is more regular... I don't have this desire to be {laughs} exactly receiving Communion by this real, the person, the presiding person of the, of the liturgies, of course, uh, and anyway, as it is organized here, I don't have to choose where to go, but I go where, where it's the nearest. Um... yes, but probably, it expressed already at that time, uh... let's say, twenty, twenty-five years ago, uh, it expressed already what I try now to live in a more... in a more regular, and... ordinary way. So, this idea of being part... of a wider community, a wider communion, uh, and uh, trying to... to make as if the limits between the churches were not existing anymore, or where it would be able to go over these, these fences... ..⁵²⁵

⁵²³ TC-1,28b.

⁵²⁴ TA-1,12a.

⁵²⁵ BE-2,36.

For BE, it is important to live out universal communion with other Christians (in this case, the Roman Catholic Church), even if things are not sorted out completely on a theological level. Still, as we have encountered throughout the material, the question of the place of the Eucharist in the ecumenical process is not unambiguously clear. Sister BG, in particular, articulates that, on the one hand, the community is able to receive Communion together while, on the other hand, she concludes: “if you will pray together, step by step, we also can do the ecumenical, and the Eucharist is the last step, not the first, we have to grow up in the others.”⁵²⁶ This is the tension in which the communities and the monastics find themselves. They have an exceptional position in this matter while the churches at large still feel unable to share the Eucharist.

Brother BF, as we have seen already in section 6.3, interprets the Eucharist as an oil, a salve that comforts the wound and soothes the pain of division. I want to highlight this again because it adds extra nuance to the concept of the Eucharist as a source for unity. BF stresses that the community has suffered because of the ecumenical questions within the community, especially with regard to the Eucharist. The local solution of sharing the Eucharist is not a way to bypass these difficulties: “We suffered a lot in finding a way out, uh, this is not a full way out, it's just a way to go through without too much suffering. Never, nothing more.”⁵²⁷ The wounds of division, felt in particular in intimate settings like the ecumenical monastery of Bose, cause suffering and pain. Explaining why they started sharing the Eucharist, BF says: “we cannot bear longer this, uh, scandal.”⁵²⁸ This took place only shortly after BF himself joined the community and he had only recently been introduced to ecumenism. He describes the pain and the role of the Eucharist in that process:

You cannot just say, okay, but [now] in Bose, we go outside all these problems. Uh, this creates, uh, a permanent um... suffer, and a permanent dynamic, I think. So, both things: it's like a wound that obliges you to find uh, to find uh... something to um... to appease the suffering, something to avoid the re-opening of the wound, something to uh, take care of the wound of the other. So, it's a painful situation, but in the same time, it's a very um... very... .. pushing situation, a very challenging situation, which you say, okay, we can't go, until the um, solution, final solution, without our churches, but in

⁵²⁶ BG-1,34.

⁵²⁷ BF-1,10e.

⁵²⁸ BF-1,10a.

the meantime, we can cry for this, we can appeal for this, we can uh, repeat and repeat that it's unsustainable, that it is not worth of the Gospel to do this.⁵²⁹

BF realizes that the Eucharist does not erase the problems or the wounds from the past. In his view, sharing the Eucharist does not solve the problem of division altogether. The wounds and the pain remain, yet in a bearable way. The oil or salve that is a shared Eucharist comforts the wounds without fully healing them. It keeps the pain of division from paralyzing ecumenical efforts, without taking away the pain stimulus that inspires further commitment.

This experience of the Eucharist as a comforting oil/salve, which is a distinct interpretation of the Eucharist as a medicine, indicates a particular role that the sacrament can play as a source for the restoration of unity. In the experience of Brother BF, it eases the pain, enabling further reconciliation and healing of wounds. Healing takes time and effort, for which a shared Eucharist provides nourishment.

Brother BF and Brother TC reflect on their experience theologically. TC does so by referring to Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément: “when we... when we immerse ourselves in the mystery of Christ, the Easter mystery of death and resurrection... when we go deep enough, then something of the undivided church can appear.... And I think, that's a little bit of what the experience is here, no?”⁵³⁰ Celebrating the mystery of the resurrection in the Eucharist allows the undivided church to appear. By celebrating the depths of unity embedded in the Gospel and the heart of the church itself, such unity is enabled to become manifest. This is what TC experiences in Taizé.

BF answered one of my questions in a similar spirit. Asked if he has experienced the Eucharist to help overcome divisions,⁵³¹ he contemplates:

Well, I hope so. I hope that it could offer, not a solution, but perhaps a, a support to Christian division, and personally I feel that when we can share the Eucharist, uh... we, I receive a sort of encouragement uh... a new hope that it could be possible in my lifetime to see full unity, full visible unity among the churches. Because uh... during the Eucharist we are um... we are made contemporary to the Christ offering his life for his disciples. But uh, in a double sense. Traditionally we think~ we think, we believe that the Christ came~ comes and is present in our celebration, uh, but there is also the other

⁵²⁹ BF-1,2h.

⁵³⁰ TC-1,22.

⁵³¹ BF-1,21.

aspect that we are made present to the Last Supper. So, in a sort, it's, the Eucharist is outside the time. Uh... is already projected towards the return of Christ, and linked to the Last Supper, who was the first supper, I mean {laughs} it was the first Last Supper {laughs}. And this, when I, I... I realize this, it gives me hope that it could be possible. That uh... Christ gives us this power that doing this in memory of him, means that also that we can, we can uh, anticipate this day, uh, and this uh, of course is true for any Eucharist, even if there are not non-Catholics at a Catholic Mass. This truth is the same, I mean. But when you can celebrate with concrete uh... Christian that are not of your own confession, this becomes more clear, more evident, more uh, challenging.⁵³²

BF mentions the three dimensions of time present in the celebration of the Eucharist (past, present, and future) with their respective modes: commemoration, representation, and anticipation. Brother BF argues that the unity of the Church, too, can be experienced in the present thanks to both commemoration and anticipation. Full unity may not be today's reality, but it has been in the beginning and will be so in the end. Therefore, any Eucharistic celebration bears this reality in it. This, in his view, legitimates Eucharistic sharing in the ecumenical context of Bose: the Eucharist is a means, source, and resource for recovering the unity that was lost over time but, at the same time, it celebrates and demonstrates the unity that is an inalienable characteristic of the church.

8.4 SYNTHESIS

Both communities position the Eucharist in a similar fashion theologically. In this chapter, we have encountered several essential characteristics that enrich the traditional scheme of source versus summit. I have encountered three ways to position the Eucharist in this chapter.

Firstly, section 8.1 depicted the Eucharist as the focal point of the liturgy. This resonates with the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist as the summit of the Christian life.⁵³³ Coming from different backgrounds, the monastics have (re)discovered this aspect in different ways. Some point at an emancipation of non-Eucharistic liturgical actions and rituals, while others have learned to appreciate the Eucharist is the focal point and culmination of other liturgical

⁵³² BG1-22a.

⁵³³ Cf. *LG*, sec. 11.

celebrations. Both processes have been nurtured by participating together in the Eucharist and through finding a frequency and liturgical form suitable for their ecumenical context. In Taizé, this has resulted in a discrete Eucharistic practice on weekdays and a public Mass on Sundays. In Bose, the celebration of the Eucharist was reduced to Sundays and Thursdays. Both practices, the monastics indicate, help them to experience the embeddedness of the Eucharist in the weekly liturgical rhythm. They appreciate this rhythm and feel that it accommodates the sensibilities of their respective denominational backgrounds.

At the same time, they urge the ecumenical dialogue not to focus too much on the Eucharist as an isolated topic. Without denying the centrality of the Eucharist, they feel that other aspects of the Christian life should be discussed and lived together just as much. The overall impression I get from the interviews and the experience of participating in the life of the communities is that the Eucharist plays a central and crucial role without being the focus of attention most of the time. Explicit ecumenical attention goes to the practice of hospitality, charity, and theological study, with the Eucharist itself being the source of peace and inspiration in the background. The monastics could clearly not do without the Eucharist. Nevertheless, it does not act as an ecumenical spearhead.

Secondly, the monastics position the Eucharist *vis-à-vis* the denominations they encounter. The fundamental point of departure is that there can only be one Eucharist. They experience and acknowledge the Eucharist to be a radically super-denominational category. Unable to define the sacrament denominationally, the monastics experience the Eucharist beyond the borders of the Roman Catholic Church in which they usually celebrate it. This experience urges a reevaluation of theological language and logic, which runs the risk of limiting Eucharist to one denominational definition, excluding valid expressions of Eucharist in other traditions. This implies a recognition of ministry in other traditions as well. The monastics display a far-reaching recognition of ministry in other denominations. On the one hand, this seems to resolve a tension within Roman Catholic theology, which hesitates to extend recognition of ministry beyond the borders of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox and Oriental Churches. On the other hand, the lack of a clear and univocal definition makes it hard for the monastics to designate what can still be understood as Eucharist and what cannot, as we have seen already in section 4.3. Again, the communities choose to live with this uncertainty rather than dismiss authentic expressions of Eucharist while defining the sacrament too strictly.

Thirdly, the Eucharist is positioned within the now classic scheme of source versus summit, as taken from *Lumen Gentium* 11 and applied to the question of Eucharistic sharing. The monastics' response to this scheme is not unambiguous and their practice does not seem to resolve all questions involved. However, they understand the Eucharist to address several issues at once.

I have reiterated the comments of Brother BF highlighting how he experiences sharing the Eucharist as a palliative medicine. Note that his interpretation of the Eucharist as palliative medicine clearly differs from the classical Ignatian understanding of the Eucharist as a medicine of immortality. When past hostility, misunderstandings, and mutual caricatures have been abandoned, the Eucharist can help to comfort the wounds caused by them. One could argue that this is a function of the Eucharist that precedes and accompanies its function as a source of unity, especially in ecumenical relations. In these communities, in which reconciliation and mutual learning takes place through practical exercise (see section 5.3), the relieving effect of sharing the Eucharist fosters the process of healing and growth. The experience of BF and both communities advocate sharing the Eucharist in relatively early stages of ecclesial reunion, especially when compared to the strict view on the Eucharist as the end of the ecumenical path. Thanks to the comforting effect, the wounds can start to heal, a process in which the Eucharist again plays an important role. BF's experience contests the idea that sharing the Eucharist is an expression of false irenism, as if unity is already fully established. Nor does it attribute exuberant qualities to the Eucharist with regard to the restoration of unity. Sharing the Eucharist plays different roles throughout the ecumenical process as this process gradually leads to restoration of full visible unity.

PART THREE

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This part contributes to the third objective of the research: formulating the theological implications of the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as encountered in Taizé and Bose (chapters 9 and 10). Finally, it lists some suggestions to the churches – the Roman Catholic Church in particular – and the communities, and offers recommendations with regard to future ecumenical and (practical) theological research (Chapter 11).

9

IMPLICATIONS I: PRIORITIES AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

After describing the (Eucharistic) life of the communities of Bose and Taizé in Chapter 3 and collecting the insights expressed in interviews with some of their members in chapters 4-8, it is now time to formulate some implications for Catholic theology and the Roman Catholic Church against the backdrop of the current situation in the ecumenical process as depicted in Chapter 1. Each section presents one such implication in the form of a thesis, substantiated by particular observations taken from the data and discussed with reference to the *status quaestionis*. The implications articulate my main conclusions based on the research. The observations recollect the summaries of the previous chapters and contain the reconstruction of theological rationale expressed by the monastics based on their experiences with the practice of Eucharistic hospitality. The discussion section connects these constructs with the wider context of the debate within Roman Catholic theology and ecclesial practice. Since the main intention of this study is to articulate the realities and experiences encountered in Bose and Taizé and to learn from them, I will only occasionally reflect critically on the communities themselves.

Chapter 9 formulates several implications with regard to the presuppositions at work in the communities and in the wider debate. Chapter 10 explores what the encountered experiences and insights could imply for the future of the ecumenical process and the place of sharing the Eucharist in it. As such, the two chapters combined formulate what Roman Catholic theology might learn from Taizé and Bose and their decades of experience with Eucharistic hospitality.

9.1 DIVISION IS THE SCANDAL, NOT SHARING THE EUCHARIST

Implication

Christian division is the scandal. Attempts to overcome this scandal, especially through Eucharistic hospitality, may be temporal and provisional solutions and, as such, indefinite and partly inadequate; yet, they rightfully express and foster the real but incomplete communion that exists in a shared Baptism. Mutual recognition of the sacrament of Baptism asks for Eucharistic communion. Only those initiatives that harm existing full visible communion *should* be considered as scandalous when they, in effect, promote division. Communion, then, is a process rather than a status to which the practice of Eucharistic sharing can contribute.

Observations

The interviewees use the term ‘scandal’ in two ways. They predominantly and with conviction speak of the divided state of the church as scandalous. Not only do they consider the lack of unity intrinsically problematic and contradictory to the Gospel and to the very being of the church, but they also acknowledge the harm it causes the mission of the church in the world. Only in a second instance, and with hesitation, do the monastics employ the term ‘scandal’ in relation to occasions of Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts. For example, they do speak in terms of ‘avoiding scandal’ as a reason for not sharing the Eucharist in certain circumstances, and when they refer to controversies in the aftermath of instances of Eucharistic hospitality. However, they only seem to choose this particular word because it is generally attributed to such occasions, not because they themselves consider such occasions as highly problematic or, in fact, as scandalous.

Moreover, to the communities, the practice of Eucharistic hospitality is actually a way to address the scandal of division. It is a strong conviction of the monastics that this scandal and, as a consequence, any lack of Eucharistic communion, is radically more problematic than attempts to restore unity and to live the imperfect unity, which, although obscured, remains present through Baptism. As such, they do consider the practice of Eucharistic hospitality without full visible unity as problematic but acceptable and even necessary in their specific ecumenical and monastic circumstances. From the start, these circumstances have emerged from a deep longing for the monastic common life with ecumenical openness. As such, as far as I can see, Taizé and Bose have never ‘operationalized’ Eucharistic sharing in a provocative way in order to

force ecumenical progress.⁵³⁴ Yet, within the communities, sharing has resulted in ‘organic growth’, as the monastics call it. The communities, as such, have had a decades-long history of coalescence of traditions to the point where they belong to all and are exclusive to none. Each individual member, however, needs to walk his or her own path in order to authentically reach that level. This can happen through participation: participation is the way to learn and to grow, not the final result of a theoretical dialogue or negotiation. The interviewees indicate that witnessing and partaking of the Eucharist in their communities has sparked or revitalized their interest in the sacrament. As such, their practices have served not only ecumenical and pastoral purposes, but also mystagogic or catechetical ends.

Discussion

‘Stagnation means decline’ may not be the typical theological formula, but it does relate to the experiences and convictions of the monastics. Radically identifying Christian division as a ‘scandal,’ the monastics regard any action – or lack of action – that obstructs or even reverses ecumenical progress as equally scandalous. In their view, this principle has concrete consequences when it comes to the practice of Eucharistic hospitality and the responses to it by others.

From this starting point, *not* sharing the Eucharist can be just as – or indeed even more – scandalous as Eucharistic sharing in the absence of full visible unity. Thus, the question, ‘is it valid or desirable that the Eucharist be shared in this phase of the ecumenical process?’ cannot be the only one. Reversing the logic of the question, the communities simultaneously wonder: ‘is it valid or desirable that the Eucharist is *not* being shared in this phase of the ecumenical process?’ The latter question resembles the eagerness to advance on the path of ecumenical rapprochement, while the former primarily defends theological, ecclesial, and denominational integrity. The monastics address both questions

⁵³⁴ Only the brief episode in 1972, when Waldensian pastor Brother Daniel presided over the Eucharistic liturgies in Bose, could be interpreted as provocative. However, Brother BF interprets the bishop’s initial reaction (or better: lack of response) as a policy of tolerance, and hence, as silent endorsement. It appears as if Eucharistic hospitality the other way around, initiated by the Roman Catholic Church, however, has always had support, though not equivocally. Taizé’s practice was initiated and promoted by the bishop of Autun and acquired the approval of the PCPCU later, while Bose found a patron in Cardinal Martini of Milan when the local bishop of Biella criticized the presence of non-Catholics in the community and imposed sanctions. Taizé has, however, promoted the practice of Eucharistic hospitality on multiple occasions.

in relation to the specific circumstances of Taizé and Bose. In my opinion, they thus resemble the type of learning that the strategy of receptive ecumenism envisions: acknowledging a deficit (in this case, of Christian unity and Eucharistic communion), while resorting to innovative resources for adequate solutions or answers (in this case, Eucharistic hospitality), with integrity (respecting the principles of Catholic theology and canon law). As such, their practice and its inherent theological rationale are deeply embedded in established (or recovered) Catholic theological traditions.

Brother BF remarked that the experience of being unable to share the Eucharist with people with whom he felt in deep communion, while at the same time actually sharing the Eucharist with others with whom he did not feel very familiar,⁵³⁵ had sparked a reevaluation of the notion of communion. Communion, one could say, is a verb rather than a noun. It starts in Baptism and is further developed in the life of Christians and churches. As such, one needs to acknowledge what is already present even if only potentially, just as much as what is still lacking. Eucharistic sharing does both, promoting the unity (implicitly) present and combatting the scandal of division.

9.2 CHALLENGING A COUNTER-ARGUMENT: THE 'PAIN STIMULUS'

Implication

Eucharistic sharing does not necessarily reduce ecumenical commitment but, rather, comforts the wounds of division. The pain stimulus is not dissolved altogether but is, instead, accompanied by a positive experience of incomplete but real communion, encouraging and enabling continuous efforts for full visible unity. This insight counters – or at least challenges – a key argument against Eucharistic hospitality.

Observations

Both communities are active and appreciated players in the ecumenical processes and dialogues. Both engage in activities directed at promoting Christian unity: they host visitors from various denominations (both prominent church leaders and lay faithful); organize ecumenical conferences; promote peace and reconciliation in places that suffer(ed) from (religious) conflict; participate in local ecumenical and pastoral initiatives, etcetera. Thus, both communities are significant and appreciated actors in local, national, and

⁵³⁵ Cf. BF-1,14a-b.

international ecumenical contexts. Most importantly, however, the members of these communities simply live together, share everyday life, pray, and worship in common, and, indeed, share the Eucharist. The monastics have clearly expressed this common life to be their first and most important inspiration towards joining the communities and consider it the primary mission of their communities.

The interviewees display a very interesting ambiguity when they speak of their communities' ability to share the Eucharist. On the one hand, they affirm and appreciate the possibility of sharing the Eucharist with their brothers and sisters within their respective communities. On the other hand, however, they speak of sharing the Eucharist as still a general impossibility. They are very much aware of the fact that their practice of Eucharistic sharing, to some extent, violates the sign-of-unity-dimension of the Eucharist and that, for the majority of Christians, this practice is still out of reach. Therefore, they do not regard their own situation as the end of the process. For them, sharing the Eucharist does not mean that the final goal has been realized. Instead, they regard their own lifestyle, including the practice of Eucharistic hospitality, as active engagement in, and full commitment to, the ecumenical process that should find its conclusion in full visible unity. They consider their sharing of the Christian common life and their joint effort to promote unity to mature as sufficient ground for Eucharistic sharing.

The monastics indicate that sharing the Eucharist has not obliterated the pain of division. They still regret, and suffer from, the lack of full visible unity. The interviewees express their doubts and discomfort with elements of the provisional solutions they have established. One aspect that they lament in particular is the lack of reciprocity in Eucharistic hospitality. To them, this is one of the clearest signs that their practice is provisional and only one step along the way towards unity and not yet the final stage of reconciliation. They also indicate that they share the struggles of their guests, all of whom must go through a process of discernment in order to evaluate the exceptional situation they encounter in Taizé and Bose. On some occasions, they can rejoice in a shared Eucharist, while, on other occasions, they suffer when guests cannot, or are not willing to, receive Communion with them. They do appreciate the latter occasions, however, acknowledging abstinence from Eucharistic sharing as authentic and valuable expressions of the same faithfulness and ecumenical commitment. Indeed, they do not consider Eucharistic sharing to be the *only* means to advance along the ecumenical path.

The monastics appreciate the temporal and contextual solution of Eucharistic hospitality as practiced in their communities. They speak of the

scandal and the pain of division, which they feel would be unbearable without this solution. They indicate that they cannot imagine being a community without sharing the Eucharist. They experience the sacrament as a way to treat and comfort the wounds. This helps them to carry on and to endure those occasions in which sharing is impossible. At the same time, they realize that the wounds have not yet healed completely and that the pain remains. The sense of communion nourished by sharing the Eucharist reinforces their desire for full visible unity. It inspires and challenges the monastics to strive for the realization of full visible unity. These experiences of pain, comfort, and desire for the realization of full communion act as joint stimuli for continuous ecumenical commitment. In their cases, Eucharistic sharing thus reinforces their ecumenical zeal instead of reducing it.

Discussion

Given the aforementioned observations, one important argument against Eucharistic sharing is invalidated, at least in these particular contexts: Eucharistic sharing does not necessarily imply a decrease in ecumenical commitment, as if the final goal had been reached. Rather, sharing the Eucharist nourishes the monastics' initial desire to share their entire lives with other Christians, even of other traditions. Moreover, it reaffirms the ultimate motivation underpinning this desire: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In addition, it acts as an oil or salve to make the wounds of division bearable. It is very clear to the monastics that these wounds are not yet healed completely, but sharing the Eucharist eases the pain that could otherwise be crippling, especially in the intimate context of a monastic community.

This particular experience should be taken into account when reviewing the discussion on Eucharistic sharing. In these specific circumstances, administering Communion to non-Catholics has not caused a standstill in ecumenical commitment, but rather helps to nourish the ecumenical energy of the communities. On the one hand, based on this research, a similar effect cannot evidently be expected in other contexts. On the other hand, bearing the concept of “potentially *transformative resonance*”⁵³⁶ (mentioned in sections 2.3 and 2.5) in mind, there is reason to hope for a similar dynamic in contexts that resemble the circumstances in Taizé and Bose. Bearing the experiences expressed in this study in mind, it is possible to list some criteria, for example that these contexts should be able to embrace the ambivalent character of the

⁵³⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 47 (italics in original).

practice including the pain and struggle that it involves; that they acknowledge the existential unity already realized in Baptism; that they have a durable and substantial form of common life at the basis of their spirituality; and that they are able to anticipate future full communion through joint effort to arrive at that goal. These contexts may include other ecumenical monastic communities, joint faith communities of different denominations on a parochial level, emerging (youth) movements, academic communities that meet regularly at conferences on ecumenical topics, married couples belonging to different confessions, and so on.

9.3 CULTIVATION OF TRUST AND THE MAXIMIZATION OF RECOGNITION

Implication

Taizé and Bose cultivate trust in the Triune God, the Easter mystery, the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and their fellow monastics in order to take a 'leap of faith' towards unity. Their practice of Eucharistic hospitality, together with the sacrifices made to enable it, express this trust. As a logical consequence of this trust, theology should not only ask whether it is possible to share the Eucharist but, perhaps more adequately, also if it is actually possible or desirable *not* to do so. In addition, the fundamental paradigm of the cultivation of trust enables a maximization of recognition of other traditions.

Observations

Trust is a proper *Leitmotiv* in the interviews. Not only do the monastics mention or reflect on it explicitly but it seems inherently present throughout the interviews. The interviewees express trust in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, in the church (in the non-denominational sense), in the communities they inhabit, in their fellow brothers and sisters, in their guests, and in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.

Focusing on the Eucharist, trust enables the monastics to recognize and acknowledge elements of the Eucharist to be present in many different ecclesiastical contexts, even when they feel uncomfortable with the realities they encounter. They seem to prefer the principle of 'the benefit of the doubt' over 'better safe than sorry.' This implies great hesitancy to discard, let alone reject, any manifestation of Eucharist in other traditions. Indeed, the monastics do not differentiate strongly between Eucharistic liturgies presided by Catholic clergy versus ministers from other traditions. That being said, they feel most at home with liturgies permeated by the insights of the liturgical movement.

Discussion

The communities cultivate trust: not only do they acknowledge trust to be a core theological value, but they choose to live the consequences of their leap of faith. This is especially true for their practice of Eucharistic sharing. The Catholics agree to entrust the most precious gift of their tradition – the Eucharist and in particular Holy Communion – to Christians not in full communion with them, and whose traditions may have rejected Roman Catholic teaching on the sacrament in the past. Non-Catholics, on the other hand, entrust themselves to the ministry of Roman Catholic clergy. Both groups place their trust in Christ, the presider, host of, and He who is present in the Eucharist.

In the reality of their daily lives, this implies that the non-Catholic monastics rely on the Catholic Church for their main source of sacramental spirituality: they engage in the sacramental lives of other traditions significantly less. For some non-Catholics, furthermore, this has come with a significant sacrifice, for example, when they agreed not to preside over Eucharistic liturgies as they had been entitled to do in their own congregations. It is valuable to acknowledge that in Taizé and Bose, living the consequences of Christian trust is accompanied by uncertainty, sacrifice, provisionality, and doubt, just as much as by experiences of enrichment, fulfilment, and enhanced relationships. Therefore, I would not interpret their intention or practice as cases of “false irenicism,”⁵³⁷ relativism, or indifferentism, which would fail to appreciate the struggle of the monastics to live in genuine accordance with Roman Catholic teaching and discipline.

The monastics specifically express trust in the sacrament of Baptism as the basis for the Christian life in general and the ecumenical process in particular. The rhetorical question of whether we have grasped fully the meaning of a common Baptism needs to be taken seriously. The interviewees consider their Eucharistic practice a logical consequence of their trust in the unifying potential of Baptism. Failing to respond adequately to the mission and promise of Baptism is, in itself, part of the scandal of division. In this light, posing the question of whether it is possible to share the Eucharist is, on its own, insufficient. It needs to be accompanied, or even preceded, by the question of whether it is possible *not* to share the Eucharist?

⁵³⁷ *LG*, sec. 11.

10

IMPLICATIONS II: A PATH TOWARDS UNITY?

Chapter 9 has presented some implications regarding the presuppositions and priorities concerning the practice of Eucharistic hospitality. This chapter explores possible implications for the future ecumenical process.

10.1 REGAINING MOMENTUM: TRANSCENDING THE RAHNER-FRIES PARADOX

Implication

Taizé and Bose have managed to enter into a dynamic relationship between common life and common Eucharist that, at the same time, celebrates imperfect unity and directs towards fuller communion. By participating in this dynamic, individual monastics are enabled to grow slowly but steadily towards a deeper ecumenical commitment and a more profound communion with one another and the churches involved. This dynamic has the potential to overcome the Rahner-Fries paradox and the impasse of the source versus summit debate. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider this dynamic as guiding principle for the question of Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts.

Observations

The interviewees indicated that their longing for a monastic common life was their primary motivation for joining the communities of Taizé and Bose. They have come to join these specific monasteries for a variety of reasons, one of which is the ecumenical nature of the communities. This ecumenical dimension enabled the non-Catholics to join monastic life without formally converting to Catholicism – a step they did not want to take out of faithfulness towards their churches of origin. However, the desire to restore communion

with the Roman Catholic Church seems to be an important impetus as well. This double loyalty plays an important role in understanding their practice of sharing the Eucharist. They experience the common life that they live – sharing their ordinary and liturgical lives – to provide a solid basis for Eucharistic sharing. If all of life is shared, why stop at the altar?

At the same time, they understand the Eucharist as the very core and foundation on which their common life is built. They cannot imagine a common life as a monastic community without a common Eucharist. After all, without the Eucharist and the Easter mystery that it represents, there would not be a monastic communal life to begin with.

The non-Catholic interviewees indicate that they have experienced growth in their understanding of the Eucharist by witnessing it and participating in it. The combination of joining the community and participating fully in the Eucharistic liturgy has been very important to some in order to grow a profound appreciation of the sacrament and their fellow monastics. The two dimensions seem to go together genuinely hand in hand. The monastics highly appreciate the fact that they have been given the opportunity to learn not only through theoretical transmission, but especially through participation.

The wish to be in concrete, tangible unity has been expressed several times, and most explicitly by Brother BE. He has come to understand his own presence and participation in Bose as a substantiation of his desire to belong to the Roman Catholic Church, while remaining faithful to the Reformed Church in which he was baptized and initiated. This motive is present in other interviews as well, though more implicitly.

The monastics do address the topic of the Eucharist and Eucharistic hospitality mainly because it has been the focus of my research and interview questions. Interestingly, though, the Eucharist has a rather modest position in their descriptions. Even though they attribute a prominent place to the Eucharist, there is a tangible field of tension between the different aspects of the Eucharist as mentioned above. They acknowledge the Eucharist to be a fundamental source for their common life as Christians yet, on some occasions, they explicitly question the prominence of the sacrament in the ecumenical dialogue. They seem especially critical of an isolated view on the Eucharist. They refer to the Eucharist as the culmination of the wider liturgical practice in which it is embedded and as a fundamental, but at the same time somewhat marginal, place in the common life. In Bose, for example, the Eucharist is ‘only’ celebrated on Thursdays and Sundays (and occasionally on other important feast days). In Taizé, the Eucharist is the main celebration on Sundays. On weekdays, it is celebrated prior to the morning prayer in which Communion is

administered. Therefore, even though all brothers receive Communion on a daily basis, they do not all participate in the entire celebration of the Eucharist. This is partly done for practical reasons and as the result of the process of ongoing negotiation and evolution that takes place within the community. On a deeper level, it resembles the role attributed to the Eucharist: mediating Christ. As such, it is fundamental but, at the same time, it is a modest support of the 'core business' of the community, which is living the Gospel values in service of the church and the world.

Discussion

Karl Rahner and Heinrich Fries formulated the paradox in which the question of Eucharistic hospitality finds itself. They note: "as long as no eucharistic fellowship exists, there will be no church fellowship, and as long as no church fellowship exists, there will be no eucharistic fellowship."⁵³⁸ It seems to me that the communities of Taizé and Bose have found a way out of this paradox by their unprecedented spiritual journey, which includes multiple ways of ecclesiastical belonging and Eucharistic sharing. The Roman Catholic Church, so far, has based its principles and regulations concerning Eucharistic sharing on the second premise of the paradox, arguing that sharing the Eucharist is an expression of full communion. The consequence of this line of argumentation is that one cannot celebrate unity by sharing the Eucharist if such unity has not yet been fully realized. Exceptions to this starting point are only permitted because of individual, pastoral reasons and not fueled by ecumenical motives, as I have argued in sections 1.3 and 1.4.

Even though the exceptional practices of Bose and Taizé have emerged in order to address profound pastoral questions in the history of the communities, my research has shown that an explicitly ecumenical desire equally fuels the motivation of the monastics to join in common worship and to receive Communion together. Moreover, the practice provides comfort to the wounds of division and inspires further ecumenical commitment. Overall, I would argue that the communities have indeed entered into an unprecedented dynamic in which imperfect but real communion through Baptism⁵³⁹ is celebrated in, and enabled to mature, by engaging in a shared life and Eucharistic sharing simultaneously. This dynamic presupposes a certain level of unity in faith and ecclesiastical unity, sufficiently reflecting the principle of expression of unity mentioned in *Unitatis Redintegratio* sec. 8, but at the same

⁵³⁸ Fries and Rahner, *Unity of the Churches*, 123.

⁵³⁹ Cf. *UR*, sec. 3; *LG*, sec. 15.

time allows the second principle, that of the Eucharist as channel of divine grace, to help this imperfect unity to mature. In this way, it breaks the vicious circle of the Fries-Rahner paradox and transforms it into a positive and constructive dynamic instead.

As mentioned already in Chapter 1, Cardinal Kasper said:

Brother Roger's charism has radiated outward upon the community of Taizé brothers and, far beyond them, upon all Christendom. For this reason, it seems to me that Brother Roger's personal journey, guided by the Holy Spirit, is a discreet indication by the Holy Spirit for the future ecumenical path.⁵⁴⁰

The cardinal did not refer explicitly to the Eucharistic hospitality that the Roman Catholic Church extended to Brother Roger. Rather, he insisted that this is not a part of Brother Roger's way that can easily be followed. Nevertheless, Cardinal Kasper, too, contemplates the implications of Brother Roger's example: "Such a personal journey cannot be copied. But, if I am not mistaken, a similar question arises today for many serious Christians. At this moment, the reconciliation between the Churches has reached a point where, with the grace of God, we must make a personal decision."⁵⁴¹ Given the above, it seems to me that Brother Roger's community, as well as the Bose community that has been inspired and affected by him, have continued his path in a deeply meaningful way. The life stories of the monastics resemble Brother Roger's "*coup de force spirituelle*,"⁵⁴² who explained that he himself followed the example of his grandmother: "Impressed by the testimony of her life, when I was still very young I found my own Christian identity in her steps by reconciling within myself the faith of my origins with the mystery of the Catholic faith, without breaking fellowship with anyone."⁵⁴³

It is worthwhile to appreciate the fact that the monastics of the communities of Taizé and Bose have internalized this core element of Brother Roger's personal spirituality and ecumenical path, or have found in Taizé and Bose the time, place, and company to cultivate similar impulses of their own. The question of Eucharistic hospitality, then, is not only a matter of dogmatic and canonical interest, but one of profound pastoral, ecumenical, and spiritual significance. The theology so concisely articulated in the self-understanding of Brother Roger, and substantiated by the stories of the interviewees in this

⁵⁴⁰ Kasper, "Mercy and the Ecumenical Journey of Brother Roger," 294.

⁵⁴¹ Kasper, 295.

⁵⁴² Fesquet, "Une Double Appartenance," referred to by Brother TC in TC-1,8a.

⁵⁴³ Brother Roger, "Brother Roger's Unfinished Letter."

research, designates a new and special place to the Eucharist in the ecumenical process: one that combines the two premises of the seemingly insoluble paradox of Fries and Rahner through a leap of faith and the willingness to maximize recognition and the exchange of gifts.

10.2 INCLUSIVE FAITHFULNESS FOSTERING ECCLESIASTICAL COALESCENCE

Implication

The communities act as ‘nodes’ in the network of confessional churches. The monastics express a growing, inclusive faithfulness towards multiple ecclesial traditions and a practical belonging to multiple denominations even when they continue to struggle to materialize this belonging properly. Still, their presence, including their Eucharistic practice, enables the different traditions to become ever more entangled so that denominational boundaries may continue to demarcate (liturgical) traditions but no longer divide the one body of Christ. Churches seeking reconciliation could benefit from this example by allowing more such places to emerge. This could include facilitating faithfulness towards multiple traditions through joint membership.

Observations

The interviews display a deep commitment to different ecclesial communities. With the main interest of my research question in mind, namely, the (in)ability of the Roman Catholic Church to offer Eucharistic hospitality towards non-Catholic Christians, I have focused on the relationships with the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the churches of origin of the non-Catholic members of the communities on the other. I have witnessed a profound faithfulness towards both. The monasteries of Taizé and Bose have enabled the communities to remain members of the churches that nurtured their faith, as well as to live in communion with the Roman Catholic Church that they have learned to appreciate and love in the course of their lives. It must be said that this research has been selective in this regard: the relationships between the monastics (Catholic and other) and the non-Catholic churches represented in these communities, for example, did not get as much attention as those of the monastics and the Roman Catholic Church. It would certainly be interesting to explore the former relationships in more depth. Nevertheless, from what the Catholic interviewees have expressed throughout their interviews, one can conclude that the inclusive understanding of faithfulness and church membership is reciprocal.

The monastics indicate that they have gone through a process, maybe even a paradigm shift, regarding their understanding of the relationships between the concepts of the church of Christ and of denominational identity. They acknowledge the former to include the latter and the latter to be the historical manifestation of the former. Since they believe this to be true for all denominations, denominational identity, in their understanding, can never be exclusive. In contrast, they feel that the unity given in Baptism is stronger than any division. In the communities, they substantiate and cultivate this conviction, especially through the practice of Eucharistic sharing.

Even though the monastics indicate that they remain faithful to multiple ecclesial traditions, they struggle to balance the concrete allegiances towards each of them. One reason for this difficulty is the technical inability to prolong the membership of a particular church and congregation due to the fact that their denomination does not exist in France or Italy, combined with their geographical organization. Another reason is the simple fact that the monastics share in the sacramental life of the Roman Catholic Church on a daily basis, while having access to the sacraments in their churches of origin only occasionally, if ever. They acknowledge that their adherence to their churches of origin runs the risk of becoming merely spiritual or symbolic. This makes for a challenging situation.

Discussion

The cases of Taizé and Bose substantiate Ivana Noble's claim that "[t]he problem of multiple belonging as related to the churches does not start at a speculative theoretical level, but at a practical one, and has implications for how we perceive and articulate our traditions concerning church belonging."⁵⁴⁴ The communities display the dynamics of double or multiple belonging at this practical level. Noble argues that belonging is based on love above anything else (for example, habit or duty).⁵⁴⁵ The interviewees indeed mention that love fuels their desire to belong to different traditions. BE especially speaks lovingly about his Reformed origins, while also referring to himself as a "*philo catholique*."⁵⁴⁶

It seems to me that the ecumenical process could benefit from communities like Taizé and Bose, that is, places that are in between the

⁵⁴⁴ Ivana Noble, *Essays in Ecumenical Theology 1: Aims, Methods, Themes, and Contexts* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2019), 199.

⁵⁴⁵ Noble, 201.

⁵⁴⁶ BE-1,12.

churches but not detached from them. They have the potential to provide several things given that they offer the following:

- 1) They are places that cultivate the unity in Baptism that has been damaged over time but cannot be lost completely and which ecumenism seeks to restore. Eucharistic sharing is possible thanks to anticipating unity in all its diachronic dimensions; the past unity at the foundation of the church by Jesus Christ that was damaged, the current real but imperfect unity in Baptism,⁵⁴⁷ and the restored (eschatological) unity. It immerses the participant deeper into the Paschal mystery and as such deepens ecumenical relations, based on Baptismal rather than denominational identity. Eucharistic sharing, as such, is practiced with ecumenical and mystagogic intent.
- 2) They are places of comfort and well-springs along the path towards unity as summarized in the famous phrase of Pope John Paul II about Taizé: “one passes through Taizé as one passes close to a spring of water.”⁵⁴⁸ It needs to be stressed that these communities do not regard their own position as canonical precedents, entitling others to engage in the same exceptional liturgical practice (in fact, in the interviews they hardly use any canonical language to describe their situation. They note that their situation differs from the general situation within the church and that their practice is in a sense exceptional, even though unofficial practices of Eucharistic hospitality are a widespread phenomenon). Nor are these places free of struggle: the monastics clearly articulate the difficulties that they encounter and the doubts that they have about their own practice. Still, they can be places where people can dwell in that unity for a moment in order to face the struggles of ecumenism in their daily lives and jobs.
- 3) Finally, they are places that ‘blur’ the lines between denominations as they belong in canonical and especially sacramental sense to different denominations. It seems vital to me, however, that the faithfulness towards one’s tradition is lived out very concretely and explicitly. In Taizé and Bose, such a connection is cherished as one remains a member of his or her church of origin. However, the monastics have also indicated that they struggle to materialize this connection. I would encourage Taizé and Bose to invest in these relationships and to find ways for the monastics to intensify their belonging to a certain

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. *UR*, sec. 3.

⁵⁴⁸ John Paul II, “One Passes through Taizé.”

tradition and a concrete faith community, especially when this is not the Roman Catholic Church, with which all members of the communities engage in a sacramental bond by partaking of the Eucharist.

I suggest that it could be very beneficial for the ecumenical process to encourage and enable the processes taking place in Taizé and Bose to resonate in more places. By redefining priorities between Baptismal and denominational identities and blurring the lines between traditions, they enable organic growth, as mentioned above. Such places can act as nodes in the network of churches that exist thanks to ecumenical dialogues and, for example, in the World Council of Churches. Sacramental sharing, in particular Eucharistic sharing, is crucial to this dynamic, as the monastics indicate. It forms both the source and the end of their life together and nourishes the communities, enabling them to take on this role.

By negotiating obedience towards canonical regulations and instructions together with faithfulness towards one's church of origin, the monastics engage in a sense of double belonging that prevents them from getting detached from the churches. This practice reflects the same commitment as interchurch couples, who, addressing their desire to share the Eucharist, claim: "Such sharing would not observe the norm that confines Eucharistic sharing of communion to ecclesial communion, but it would not jeopardize membership of their own church, nor be regarded as a denial of the faith of that church."⁵⁴⁹

In addition, the communities thus avoid the risk of becoming yet another alternative to the existing churches. This risk is real, especially in Taizé. The community hosts many youths who find themselves in the margins of faith communities or well beyond the confines of churches. For the community, it is important to remain rooted in the churches. Therefore, Taizé calls upon them to commit to a local faith community. Bose similarly struggles to accommodate all who want to spend time in the community and join the monastics in the celebration of the Eucharist, while avoiding becoming a permanent alternative to parishes.

However, the small sample of this research shows that for the non-Catholic monastics themselves it is also a struggle to remain in communion with their church of origin. They are connected through cherishing the treasures of their tradition, through spiritual belonging, and sometimes through administrative belonging. Yet, it seems difficult for them to substantiate and sustain this

⁵⁴⁹ Association of Interchurch Families, "Interchurch Families and Christian Unity: Rome 2003."

relationship. My suggestion, based on these observations and the convictions about communion and belonging expressed in the interviews, would be for the monasteries to reflect on this dimension of double belonging or faithfulness, and to search for means to reestablish or deepen the (sacramental) bonds with the churches of origins of the monastics, especially when these are not the Roman Catholic Church.

Still, in essence, the monastics show that double or multiple belonging can be lived in an inclusive and ecumenically fruitful way. Through their lives in Taizé and Bose, the monastics substantiate and cultivate the exchange of gifts, which is a fundamental aspect of spiritual ecumenism. Sacramental sharing, especially Eucharistic sharing, is at the core of their liturgical and spiritual practice, affected by and affecting the rest of their lives. The particular way in which this life has evolved over time may not necessarily be a model for others to follow, but the general direction of their path may indicate a way for others. Cardinal Kasper spoke of “a discreet indication by the Holy Spirit for the future ecumenical path.”⁵⁵⁰ I think that this opening up of denominational identity and the possibility of inclusive membership – membership that does not exclude the possibility of faithfulness and belonging to another denomination by definition – is an important factor of the life of the communities that may take the ecumenical movement further. It creates an environment in which the Baptismal identity is the starting point for encounter, common life, and a common liturgy. As such, the ecumenical communities act as nodes in the network of churches that have pledged to “move together.”⁵⁵¹

I do think that the examples and experiences of the two communities challenge churches to allow more of such nodes to exist and to facilitate them. One can think of other ecumenical communities, both monastic and parochial, interdenominational marriages (the Germans speak so beautifully of marriages that conjoin confessions: *Konfessions-verbindende Ehe*), ecumenical study groups and diaconal teams, co-workers, especially in Christian organizations, etcetera. What all these groups have in common is that they engage, to a certain extent, in a form of communal life, which is a fundamental factor in the narrative of the monastics. Bishops can evaluate whether they have the potential to engage

⁵⁵⁰ Kasper, “Mercy and the Ecumenical Journey of Brother Roger,” 294.

⁵⁵¹ Cf. World Council of Churches, “Message of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches,” in *Encountering the God of Life: Official Report of the 10th Assembly*, ed. Erlinda N. Senturias and Theodore A. Gill Jr. (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2014), 35–36, <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/10thAssemblyReport.pdf>.

with the creative tension between the principles of expression of unity and channel of grace in similarly fruitful ways as Taizé and Bose.

10.3 EUCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY AS A MEANS FOR THE RESTORATION OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Implication

Having established that sharing the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts does not necessarily reduce commitment to visible unity (to the contrary, it can help foster such commitment), and considering the particular role that Eucharistic hospitality can play in the ecumenical process, *communicatio in sacris* can indeed be perceived as a “means (...) for the restoration of Christian unity.”⁵⁵² In Taizé and Bose, sharing the Eucharist represents both principles mentioned by the Second Vatican Council (expression of unity and means for grace) in such a way that “each side relates intimately to the other in creative tension,”⁵⁵³ as advocated by George Tavard. In the communities, the Eucharist, as a means of grace, transcends the spiritual well-being of individual monastics and includes ecumenical reconciliation on an ecclesiological level, a dynamic which the current regulations fail to accommodate. It seems valid and valuable to complement current regulations concerning Eucharistic sharing so that they can enable Eucharistic hospitality on the basis of ecumenical reasons, too.

Observations

Although the monastics have indicated that their primary motivation for joining the communities was the desire to engage in monastic communal life rather than the ecumenical nature and mission of Taizé and Bose, they also give witness to a growing ecumenical commitment. Sharing the Eucharist has been both a prerequisite for and a result of this commitment. Even though the practice of Eucharistic hospitality comforts the wounds of division, it does not take away the pain stimulus that enhances their commitment to the promotion of Christian unity. On the contrary, this medicinal aspect of the Eucharist enables their efforts, which have been acknowledged by their many visitors as well as by high level church officials from different traditions. Most notably, they mention the Eucharist as both the *raison d'être* of their monastic common life and as the logical consequence or culmination of that common life.

⁵⁵² UR, sec. 8.

⁵⁵³ Wijlens, *Sharing the Eucharist*, 176. Cf. section 1.4.

The interviewees are very grateful for their local solutions. They understand their own practice to be very exceptional compared to the general situation, even though they are aware of the widespread yet unauthorized practice of Eucharistic hospitality in many other contexts. On the one hand, they seem confident that their practice corresponds with the exceptions listed in the Catholic Church's regulations concerning Eucharistic sharing; however, on the other hand, they understand that their dispensation depends on the interpretation of those regulations by their local bishops.

Discussion

As indicated in section 1.4, canon law and the regulations of the *Ecumenical Directory* do not consider ecumenical motives to provide a sufficient basis for Eucharistic sharing at this stage of the process towards unity in the West. In addition, exceptions to the general rejection of Eucharistic sharing only provide space for individual and occasional Eucharistic hospitality, presupposing a grave necessity – initially understood as the danger of death. In his 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II reiterated in clear terms that “the intention is to meet a grave spiritual need for the eternal salvation of an individual believer, not to bring about an *intercommunion* which remains impossible until the visible bonds of ecclesial communion are fully re-established.”⁵⁵⁴ I have reiterated Myriam Wijlens' conclusion that:

The legislation does not count for this dialectical and creative tension but only counts for the Eucharist as a means of grace, the challenge for further developments in legislation will be to adopt this dialectic relationship. Thus, in fact, this study has shown that the Catholic Church still has to face the challenge to provide for norms on sharing the Eucharist in which baptized non-Catholics are seen first as members of an Ecclesial Community or Church not in full communion with the Catholic Church.⁵⁵⁵

It can be argued that the solution of Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé and Bose primarily addresses the spiritual need of the individual monastics, and that current regulations, therefore, sufficiently cover their particular situation. This is, for instance, the opinion of Keith F. Pecklers, when considering the practice of Bose.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴ *EE*, sec. 45.

⁵⁵⁵ Wijlens, *Sharing the Eucharist*, 365.

⁵⁵⁶ Pecklers, “Worship at the Ecumenical Monastery of Bose,” 210–11.

However, given their ecumenical nature and mission, as well as the role Eucharistic hospitality plays in the ecumenical processes within the communities, it seems to me that there is more at stake here. The situation in the communities transcends the individual spiritual need and relates sharing the Eucharist to the promotion of unity. Therefore, it seems problematic to justify the practices encountered in Taizé and Bose with reference to canon 844 *CIC*/1983. Still, as already mentioned earlier, the French Bishop's Conference has defined grave spiritual need as a "real need' or an experienced spiritual desire in the circumstance of deep and continuous bonds of fraternal communion with Catholics (as they are experienced in some mixed marriages and in some durable ecumenical groups)"⁵⁵⁷ in their guidelines concerning Eucharistic hospitality. It provides a small opening towards an interpretation of the regulations that allows for continuous Eucharistic hospitality, but given the usual stress on the exceptional, individual, and occasional character of such hospitality, it seems hardly adequate to accommodate the practice of the ecumenical monasteries. Indeed, their practice, both in intention and in its consequences, exceeds the care for the 'eternal salvation of an individual believer' and includes the quest for Christian unity. Hence, the question inevitably arises as to whether the communities (or the local bishops, for that matter) should adhere to the current regulations more strictly, or if the regulations themselves are in need of an update to accommodate this extended goal.

I would argue that the practices of Taizé and Bose do justice to the considerations of the Second Vatican Council as defended by George Tavard, since the communities respect the dimension of expression of unity – which is imperfect but growing – as well as the dimension of means of grace – not only in an individual sense, but also benefitting the unity of the church. They do so in a way that inhabits the 'creative tension' of which George Tavard spoke, challenging his initial conclusion that sharing the Eucharist cannot be used to promote unity because of the inseparability of the principles of *UR* sec. 8 (the Eucharist as expression of unity and means of grace).

⁵⁵⁷ Commission épiscopale pour l'unité des chrétiens, "L'hospitalité eucharistique avec les chrétiens des églises issues de la Réforme en France." Original text in French: "réel besoin' ou un désir spirituel 'éprouvé des liens de communion fraternelle profonds et continus avec des catholiques (tels qu'ils sont vécus dans certains foyers mixtes et dans quelques groups oecuméniques durables)" (translation: FW).

10.4 GENERAL ECUMENICAL STRATEGY: EXAMPLES OF RECEPTIVE ECUMENISM

Implication

Taizé and Bose offer concrete, tangible, and grassroots examples of receptive ecumenism (often *avant la lettre*). The Roman Catholic Church can learn from them about the implementation of this promising strategy towards a more perfect unity. In the communities, learning is not only done cognitively, but even more so in a participatory sense and by engaging in the exchange of gifts that are so fundamental to spiritual ecumenism. The monastics do this in a critical yet faithful manner and with great openness to ‘creative integrity.’

Observations

The monastics speak of some preconditions or fundamental principles that attracted them to these communities and that they believe play key roles in their ecumenical process. They mention the exchange of gifts (especially in sharing the Eucharist), an open and receptive attitude with a keen eye for the riches of other traditions and the flaws of one’s own, the willingness to learn from this dynamic, and the focus on concrete but imperfect provisional solutions to the pressing problems of an ecumenical common life.

In contrast to what some might think, the practice of Eucharistic hospitality does not offer the monastics an unproblematic shortcut towards full unity. The interviewees experience their situation as complicated and highly problematic. Still, to them, it is the only way forward as it deepens the ecumenical process spiritually.

Taizé and Bose focus predominantly on learning rather than teaching, especially when it comes to Eucharistic sharing. The interviews depict a process of continuous individual and communal growth. Even though they do regard their practice of Eucharistic hospitality as indispensable for their own ecumenical process, they are very reluctant to impose their practice or conviction onto anyone else. Instead, they integrate the ‘gifts’ of all represented traditions in their lives (albeit in different ways in Taizé and Bose), trying to live them well. In this way, the monastics focus on their own change, conversion, and growth. They agree that ‘simply’ exercising this ecumenical strategy is their main purpose. At the same time, however, they also express their belief that this passive, humble, and self-critical way of practicing the exchange of gifts, including Eucharistic hospitality, is a sign for the churches and the ecumenical movement.

The monastics, especially the non-Catholics, have indicated that they have grown a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist. The participatory way of learning has strongly contributed to their process.

Discussion

Receptive ecumenism as a particular adaptation of spiritual ecumenism seems to be a promising emerging ecumenical strategy, only recently articulated by Paul Murray. This research itself departs from core principles of receptive ecumenism. Most importantly, it has adopted a benevolent attitude towards phenomena and subjects at and beyond the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church in order to explore what the Church can learn from them. As such, this research aims at enriching the Catholic Church's ecumenical reality in the current phase of ecumenism. It tries to contribute to the questions formulated by Paul Murray, which indicate the goal of receptive ecumenism: "What does it mean to anticipate in current conditions the call to configured communion? What is the appropriate ethic for life between the times in relation to this calling?"⁵⁵⁸

The monastic communities of Bose and Taizé also find themselves in the framework of receptive ecumenism. With their strong commitment to spiritual ecumenism and focus on an 'ethic for the time in between', the communities can be regarded as forerunners of this strategy *avant la lettre*. As such, even though they themselves explicitly avoid this term, the question should be asked to which extent the communities could, or even should, be regarded as models or examples to be followed. The hesitancy to define themselves as 'models' is surely partly generated by the fact that their practice is utterly contextual. This dimension should be taken very seriously when considering any imitation of the way these monasteries practice Eucharistic hospitality. They do not provide a blueprint of successful ecumenical endeavor, nor can or do they wish to act as canonical precedents entitling other initiatives to claim a similar arrangement regarding the Eucharist. They themselves experience their position as privileged: they are deeply thankful for being allowed and enabled to celebrate the Eucharist together.

However, their practice of Eucharistic sharing is a consequence of, and maybe even a prerequisite for, the specific ecumenical path of the communities. As monasteries, the communities find themselves at the crossroads of the individual and the communal or institutional with (at least

⁵⁵⁸ Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism - Establishing the Agenda," 12.

potentially) significant impact on both levels; this is the wide scope receptive ecumenism is aiming at. Therefore, the communities and practice of Eucharistic hospitality should be taken into consideration by anyone promoting spiritual or receptive ecumenism.

In addition, the practice of these communities contributes to a practical lacuna signaled by German ecumenical theologians in their document *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn*. They write that, “[m]any baptized persons are formed by their own confessional tradition and, therefore, they are hardly familiar with the way other churches celebrate Holy Supper/Eucharist.”⁵⁵⁹ The non-Catholic monastics have attested to the catechetical function that sharing the Eucharist has had for them, enhancing their liturgical and theological understanding of the sacrament from a Catholic perspective.

Receptive ecumenism stresses the priority of learning over teaching as a fundamental basic attitude for exercising this strategy. Significantly, Paul Murray insists that learning be done authentically and with integrity: “Receptive Ecumenism is concerned to place at the forefront of the Christian ecumenical agenda the self-critical question, ‘What, in any given situation, can one’s own tradition appropriately learn with integrity from other traditions?’”⁵⁶⁰

Integrity for Murray, however, is not static, he adds that it should be a “creative integrity.”⁵⁶¹ In this study, I present the practice and experiences of the communities of Bose and Taizé alongside the insights that the monastics articulate, supplemented by my reflections and attempts to formulate a theology of Eucharistic hospitality based on their experiences. It is the task of the wider theological debate and especially of the different levels of the magisterium to discern what the Roman Catholic Church can “learn with integrity” from these experiences and how these lessons should be received into the practice, theology, and discipline of the Church.

⁵⁵⁹ Sattler, *Gemeinsam am Tisch des Herrn*, sec. 8.5. Original text in German: “Viele getaufte Menschen sind durch die eigene konfessionelle Tradition geprägt und des-halb kaum damit vertraut, wie in anderen Kirchen Abendmahl/Eucharistie gefeiert wird“ (translation: FW).

⁵⁶⁰ Murray, “Receptive Ecumenism - Establishing the Agenda,” 12.

⁵⁶¹ Murray, 14.

11

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having laid out the theological implications in chapters 9 and 10, this final chapter offers some suggestions for the monastic communities and the churches involved, especially the Roman Catholic Church, as well as recommendations for further research into the topic of Eucharistic sharing and in practical theology in general. As such, it collects some concrete possible applications of the insights acquired as well as questions that remain open.

11.1 SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR CHURCHES AND THE COMMUNITIES

Based on the principles of the practical theological discipline in general and the findings of this study in particular, I encourage church leaders, first of all, to acknowledge the role that Eucharistic sharing already has in the life of the church. In the communities studied, Eucharistic hospitality as a means to promote unity is clearly an established practice. It is hardly a secret that such hospitality is extended to non-Catholic Christians in many monasteries and parishes, although this occurs in different circumstances and it often enjoys less canonical legitimation.

From canonical and theological perspectives, this may be reviewed as problematic considering church teaching and discipline and therefore dismissed as undesirable. However, it can just as well be interpreted as an expression of the *sensus fidei* and, therefore, as an authentic contribution to the mission of the church. Cardinal Kasper hints in this direction by referring to the ecumenical path of Brother Roger as a “discreet indication by the Holy Spirit for the future ecumenical path.”⁵⁶² He did not necessarily include the practice

⁵⁶² Kasper, “Mercy and the Ecumenical Journey of Brother Roger,” 294.

of Eucharistic hospitality. However, it seems to me that with regard to this practice, too, the communities meet the dispositions listed by the International Theological Commission to help identify authentic manifestations of the *sensus fidelium*: a) participation in the life of the church; b) listening to the word of God; c) openness to reason; d) adherence to the magisterium; e) holiness – humility, freedom and joy; f) seeking the edification of the church.⁵⁶³ Therefore, especially in the current liminal phase of the ecumenical process, I would argue that it is wise and valid to incorporate lessons that can be learned from the experiences with Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé and Bose into the theological framework and the regulations of the Roman Catholic Church.

Secondly, I would urge church leaders to seriously entertain the possibility that Eucharistic hospitality might indeed be an authentic expression of the *sensus fidei* and thus a viable path forward towards recovery of ecclesial unity. I prefer the word *recovery* here over terms like *restoration* or *promotion* as it aligns with the medicinal language of illness and health as employed in the interviews, while avoiding constructivist visions on Christian unity. The monastics speak of suffering, wounds, pain, and struggle with regard to Christian division while turning to the Eucharist as a comforting oil/salve and medicine. In this context, they diagnose Christian division to be the illness rather than the sharing of the Eucharist. At the same time, while trusting in the healing powers of the Eucharist, they do not regard it a panacea. They do, however, consider it a precondition for their communal life as Christians from different denominations in which their efforts for Christian unity can flourish. As such, sharing the Eucharist does not only have an incidental, individual significance (which has already been acknowledged in the preconditions listed in the regulations concerning *communicatio in sacris*) but also a substantial structural, ecclesiological dimension.

This study does not suggest that churches should allow for Eucharistic sharing *without* genuine efforts by all involved to promote ecumenical growth. Indeed, the principle of sharing the Eucharist as expression of unity remains highly important and needs to be substantially realized, even if the contexts studied consider their current situation of imperfect but maturing unity as answering to this aspect sufficiently. It simply suggests that the leap of faith required for Eucharistic sharing can actually reinvigorate the ecumenical momentum so desired in so far as it overcomes the paralyzing paradox of the classical source-versus-summit scheme and, instead, fuels the dynamics of

⁵⁶³ International Theological Commission, “Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church,” secs. 88–105.

ecclesial communion and Eucharistic communion as mutual preconditions propelled towards full visible unity. It seems appropriate not only to acknowledge this function of Eucharistic sharing, but also to appreciate it and even to accommodate it.

Another suggestion this study proposes is to overcome an exclusivist ecclesiology. The fundamentally supra-denominational nature of the Eucharist (parallel to Baptism) as expressed by the monastics primarily calls for a generous recognition of 'Eucharist' beyond the visible boundaries of any one denomination. The mystery of the Eucharist transcends the schemes of cause-and-effect that still seem to frustrate the ecumenical debates on Eucharist and ministry. Secondly, denominational belonging may be very helpful in nurturing (a specific manifestation of) Christian identity, but it should not reduce this identity to that denomination. In other words, denominational identities should not – or even *cannot* – be mutually exclusive. The ecumenical communities indicate that, and how, double belonging, whether formal/institutional or 'merely' sacramental, can function. Based on my research, I would encourage churches to enable such double belonging as a way to fully recognize other Christians, allowing the people and communities involved (which may include not only ecumenical monastic communities, but also interchurch families, ecumenical study groups, ecumenically engaged parishes, etcetera) to act as nodes in the network of assemblies of Christians that make up the church. This may be another step towards realizing the "post-confessional dimension of the church,"⁵⁶⁴ as one brother phrases his interpretation of the ecclesiological reality in Taizé.

Both elements – acknowledging Eucharistic sharing as a means for restoration of unity and enabling ecumenical communities to act as nodes through multiple belonging or fidelity – could be integrated into canon law. Current regulations do not facilitate either element. As a consequence, the Eucharistic practices of Taizé and Bose depend on the benevolence of the bishop in interpreting canon law. If, instead, the ecumenical motive for practicing Eucharistic hospitality were to be acknowledged and integrated into the regulations and guidelines, the commitment of the communities involved would be actively supported and the church would be enabled to benefit from their special circumstances even more. Indeed, this would recognize and promote what the communities already are: places where divided traditions can find reconciliation and grow towards a more perfect unity.

⁵⁶⁴ BE-1,14a.

Tied to this point, the communities of Bose and Taizé might be able to do more to substantiate and materialize their principle of preserving the original denominational memberships of their monastics. This is expressed in incorporating the richness of each tradition in the common life, but perhaps it is also possible to make the belonging of the individual monastic to his tradition of origin more concrete in order to substantiate the node function of the community. The data collected in this study suggest that this remains somewhat abstract in the current practices of both communities.

Such an effort might also be needed to counter a risk that both communities face: the risk of being absorbed by the Roman Catholic Church. This is most obvious in Bose, of which Brother BE feels the need to insist that it is an ecumenical, not a Roman Catholic community. Given the overwhelming Catholic presence at Bose and its embeddedness in the Roman Catholic canonical framework, the ecumenical nature of the community is indeed at stake. Taizé's choice to have the Eucharist presided over by (a) Roman Catholic member(s) has similar implications. On top of that, the community now has a Roman Catholic prior in the person of Brother Alois.

Renewed efforts on both sides – recognition and facilitation of joint faithfulness in canon law and an active participation in the life of multiple ecclesial traditions on the part of the monastics – would contribute to this issue as well as to the challenge articulated by Myriam Wijlens as discussed in section 1.4. Wijlens focuses on canon law and thus on the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church; however, her point appeals just as much to the self-understanding of the communities:

The Catholic Church still has to face the challenge to provide for norms on sharing the Eucharist in which baptized non-Catholics are seen first as members of an Ecclesial Community or Church not in full communion with the Catholic Church.⁵⁶⁵

It seems to me that this effort on both sides would constitute an important substantiation of Catholic principles for the promotion of unity in the current liminal, intermediate phase of the ecumenical process as it radically overcomes the ecumenism of return paradigm and enables a genuine, organic coalescence between faith communities. This requires the churches involved, as well as the communities, to consider the monastics not only as individual faithful, but also – or even especially – as members of the respective traditions that seek reconciliation.

⁵⁶⁵ Wijlens, *Sharing the Eucharist*, 365.

In short, I would suggest that the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as it functions to promote Christian unity in the ecumenical communities of Taizé and Bose be acknowledged by the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church and its fruits appreciated; that its embedded theological rationale be received; and that this practice be properly facilitated and encouraged in these particular contexts as well as in similar conditions elsewhere (considering the principle of ‘potential transformative resonance’) for the benefit of the common process towards Christian unity. However, careful consideration is needed to discern which contexts sufficiently resemble the situation, commitment, and spiritual disposition encountered in Taizé and Bose. I have suggested some criteria in section 9.2: that these contexts should be able to embrace the ambivalent character of the practice including the pain and struggle that it involves; that they acknowledge the existential unity already realized in Baptism; that they have a durable and substantial form of common life at the basis of their spirituality; and that they are able to anticipate future full communion through joint effort to arrive at that goal.

11.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH INTO THE EUCHARIST IN ECUMENICAL CONTEXTS

Before providing several recommendations, I want signal two ‘blind spots’ in the data collected for this research that would require attention in future research. The apparent lack of interest in these topics can be explained by the focus of this research on Eucharistic hospitality *offered by the Roman Catholic Church*.

Firstly, the issue of reciprocity in Eucharistic sharing has only been partially addressed in this research. The monastics have addressed the question in the interviews only in passing, expressing their desire for more reciprocity, and indicating that, sometimes, the lack of mutuality causes people to refrain from receiving Communion even when it is offered. The notions of the exchange of gifts, the supra-denominational nature of the Eucharist, the cultivation of trust, and of the maximization of recognition as encountered in this study all point in the direction of extending the possibilities of reciprocal Eucharistic hospitality. However, given the complex variety of non-Catholic theological and liturgical contexts involved, it would require a more contextual inquiry to address this point further.

Secondly, a particularly sensitive and urgent issue in the ecumenical dialogue has been left largely untouched in this study: the question of the

ordination of women. The only explicit reference to female pastors is made by Brother BF, explaining the dynamics within the study group of local Catholic and Protestant pastors in the small community in Switzerland. He recalls: "At that time there was in the reformed church no uh, women pastors. There was a woman pastor coming from France and uh, aggregated to the pastoral body of the church, but she did not come."⁵⁶⁶ My only memory of encountering an ordained woman in the scope of this research is from one of my visits to Taizé. As per usual, some of the brothers and visiting clergy positioned themselves throughout the church after the evening prayer so that anyone seeking pastoral council could approach them. On these occasions, one corner is reserved for Catholic clergy available to administer the sacrament of reconciliation, while the other brothers and clergy spread out throughout the rest of the building. On one such occasion, I noticed that the only woman pastor attracted much less attention than the brothers and male pastors. My observations possibly indicate that, apparently, the ordination of women is not as big a theme as in some other contexts. However, the current study has not been able to address this particular ecumenical challenge. Would (some of) the monastics extend their recognition of valid ordination to women pastors? Is this implied in their somewhat diffuse definition of what can and cannot be regarded as Eucharist? It is impossible to begin to answer these questions based on the data collected in this study.

Research in the specific field of this study – the Eucharist in ecumenical contexts – could benefit from further practical theological research. The practice of Eucharistic hospitality is widespread, but it would be interesting to discover *how* widespread and also to learn what its impulses and results are. Empirical research can provide more insight into these questions. As argued and demonstrated in this study, empirical research is also suited to articulate the (theological) meaning of such practices.

The current explorative qualitative-empirical study could act as a starting point for follow up research in several directions: for Theological Action Research within the communities should they wish to evaluate their own operant and/or espoused theologies; for quantitative research into the scope and nature of Eucharistic hospitality in other (monastic) faith communities; and for further exploring the 'effects' of sharing the Eucharist for the ecumenical process on individual and collective levels in similar or other contexts.

⁵⁶⁶ BF-1,2d.

Thomas O’Loughlin notices a lacuna in scholarly work, which urged him to write his book on sharing the Eucharist: “I could not think of a single book that presented the arguments in favor of a change in Catholic practice – the very sort of examination Pope Francis was calling for.”⁵⁶⁷ He presents several interrelated perspectives without, however, offering an exhaustive overview of the debate so far. I have presented some recent contributions in Chapter 1 in order to demonstrate the lack of empirical research in the field and to provide context for the current study. A comprehensive literary review and discourse analysis would make an interesting contribution to the debate, in which my own findings, articulating the operant theology of Taizé and Bose, could find their proper place and in which the dialogue of voices might fruitfully take place.

The dialogue clearly extends beyond the discipline of practical theology. This study has initiated the exploration of systematic theological implications of the encountered practice. A more elaborate systematic theological reflection based on the outcomes of this study is needed to promote the integration this expression of the *sensus fidelium* into the theological debate even further.

11.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN GENERAL

In recent decades, empirical methods have been widely adopted by practical theology. However, their use has mainly focused on describing practices in order to enable adequate theological reflection on them. Reflection or evaluation in the opposite direction is still a novelty, as I have indicated in Chapter 2. Adopting Bruce Steven’s idea of a “grounded theology,”⁵⁶⁸ this study has indeed used methodologies based on the principles of grounded theory to achieve the goal of generating theological ideas. In the language of the four voices (see section 2.2, Figure 2), this research has explored the possibility to turn what is often perceived as a monologue (theology dictating and evaluating practice) into a genuinely reciprocal dialogue. A systematic reimagination of this relation may also prove helpful, for example, by embedding it further in the notion of the *sensus fidei*. Valuable efforts in this direction are already made in the Ecclesiology and Ethnography Network.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁷ O’Loughlin, *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking up Pope Francis’s Call to Theologians*, ix.

⁵⁶⁸ Stevens, “Grounded Theology?”

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. e.g. Paul D. Murray and Mathew Guest, “On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church: Theological and Sociological Reflections on Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church,” in

In any case, this study is, in and of itself, an exercise in a strand of theology that contributes to systematic theological questions through practical theological means. I think that this reinforces the existing theological principle that any form of theology is essentially based on the Christ-experience, whether of the past or the present. The added value of the practical theological perspective is that it grounds such a theological endeavor in concrete and credible empirical data instead of relying on presumptions, thereby substantiating (potential) expressions of the *sensus fidei*. This can indeed enrich theology on all levels and topics as it contributes to a truly ‘listening church’ as advocated by Pope Francis:

A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum. (...) Even if she possesses the truth of the Gospel, this does not mean that she has completely understood it; rather, she is called to keep growing in her grasp of that inexhaustible treasure.⁵⁷⁰

In light of this goal of learning-through-listening and in the context of discerning the authentic *sensus fidei*, careful consideration of all (four) theological voices is required. Practical theology with its use of methods from the social sciences can indeed contribute through articulating ‘grounded theologies’ in order to complement the dialogical nature of theology that leads to a deeper understanding of the treasure of the Gospel. To this end, the current study has adapted the Theological Action Research model to a different research context to enable this dialogue. Thus, the model can not only be applied to study and improve a specific practice in a particular context on a micro level but can also facilitate the theological discourse on a macro level. Qualitative research methods, as this study has demonstrated, are particularly helpful not only in detecting and articulating (potential) expressions of the *sensus fidei*, but also in understanding them properly – in service of the development of doctrine by exploring the lived faith and through articulation of new categories to express this faith.

Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography, ed. Christian B. Scharen, *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), as well as other contributions to this series.

⁵⁷⁰ Francis, *Christus Vivit*, post-synodal apostolic exhortation (Loreto, 2019), sec. 41, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html. This is also the basis for the synodal process launched by Pope Francis in preparation of the postponed 2023 synod on synodality, originally scheduled for October 2022.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interviews were mostly unstructured in order to leave the initiative about the content and structure largely to the respondents. In the course of the interview, I gradually proceeded to more structured question in order to address the topics on my topic list, as far as they had not been addressed by the respondent. The preparation for the interviews included two phases: the opening phase with inviting introductory question and follow-up questions, and the concluding phase with a topic list. After introducing the procedure, the nature of the research and the interviews, and especially the main interest of the study (namely: Eucharistic hospitality), I invited respondents to reconstruct their ecumenical biography and their experiences with Eucharistic hospitality, within and outside the community, adapting the following formulations to the dynamic of the conversation.

Opening question and follow-up questions

Please tell me about your interest in ecumenical relations, how it started, what your sources of inspiration have been (for example persons, events, books), what kinds of experiences you encountered – good and perhaps bad – and how they affected your commitment to interchurch relations. I invite you to tell everything that you deem relevant. Can you, for example, start with your earliest encounter with other churches: How did it take place? What did the awareness of their existence mean to you at the time?

Some follow up questions may be:

- Can you remember how this interest in ecumenism started?
- Do you recall how the relation to other churches and Christians was in your childhood?
- Which experiences or persons inspired you to choose to engage in this ecumenical community?
- Can you share some of your experiences, good and bad, in your relation to other members of the community?

Topic list

- 1 Childhood experiences with Christian division and interchurch contacts
- 2 Inspiring personalities, books, and/or events
- 3 Driving convictions behind the commitment to ecumenism
- 4 Driving convictions behind the desire for Eucharistic sharing
- 5 First experience with Eucharistic hospitality from the side of the RCC
- 6 Evaluation/significance of the experience with Eucharistic hospitality
- 7 Conception of the relation between Eucharistic hospitality and the progress of the ecumenical process
- 8 Relation between Eucharistic hospitality and the fraternal bond within the community
- 9 Development of view on other churches/church division
- 10 Vision on the future of the ecumenical process
- 11 Vision on the future of Eucharistic sharing, especially Eucharistic hospitality from the side of the RCC

Transcriptions: explanation of symbols

- [-] inaudible word or phrase
- [text] inaudible word or phrase with plausible suggestion
- * comment by FW in the corresponding footnote
- ~ interrupted word or phrase
- (...) omitted word or phrase
- ... pause of approximately one second per ellipsis

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

Research details

School	Tilburg University, School of Catholic Theology
Researcher	Fokke Wouda (PhD student Tilburg University, f.wouda@uvt.nl)
Project	Source or Summit? Deriving New Perspectives for Eucharistic Theology from Ecumenical Practices
Supervisors	Prof. dr. Johannes Först (Tilburg University, j.r.forst@uvt.nl) and Prof. dr. Johanna Rahner (University Tübingen, johanna.rahner@uni-tuebingen.de)

Informed consent

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by (a) researcher(s) from Tilburg University. I allow the researcher(s) to take written notes during the interview. I also may allow the recording (by audio/video tape) of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation.
4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.
5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. In all cases subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies at Tilburg University.
6. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.
8. I do/do not* give permission to use my name in the publication.
9. I do/do not* give permission to use my name in the acknowledgements.

APPENDIX 3:

DUTCH TRANSCRIPTS (TA)

This section lists the original excerpts from Brother TA's interviews in Dutch. For ease of readability and layout, I have included my own English translations in the main text without adding the original quotations in the footnotes.

TA-1

TA-1,4c: "en toen ik student was, was ik actief bij het studentenpastoraat in Groningen, was het toen, en dat was toen wel erg rijk, wat dat betreft. Daar had je inderdaad jongeren vanuit bijna alle richtingen..."

TA-1,8: "ik heb ooit eens gezegd, maar dat is helemaal niet belangrijk bij ons, en daar heb ik iemand zo mee beledigd, dat ik dat niet meer zeg, want ik bedoel, dat kun je niet zeggen dat dat klopt, maar als ik mij goed herinner inderdaad van, want ik kom uit een traditie waar vier keer per jaar avondmaal is... en als ik me altijd herinner, er waren altijd minder mensen, want het duurde toch een halfuur langer, nou ja, goed, als je dan toch een keer niet naar de kerk gaat, dan ga je die keer, want dan eh... Ik bedoel, dit is een, dit is een, hier doe ik veel mensen onrecht mee, zeg maar, dat besef ik, maar~."

TA-1,10: "sommige mensen die vieren vaak het, de eucharistie omdat het zo belangrijk voor hen is, omdat het iets zo heiligs is dus dat moet je vaak doen, anderen doen het heel weinig, omdat het zoiets heiligs is, omdat het zoiets belangrijks is. (...)ja, ik begreep het niet echt, zeg maar, ik bedoel, ja dat het wel gedaan wordt, maar... ik bedoel, natuurlijk wist ik wel dat het er iets mee te maken had wat Jezus had gedaan zeg maar, ehm, maar het was erg, een erg oppervlakkig begrip van, van de eucharistie of het avondmaal zeg maar. (...) dus echt in Taizé dat ik hier de schoonheid, de schoonheid van de eucharistie heb ontdekt..."

TA-1,12a: “het eeuwige debat inderdaad is de eucharistie alleen het eind inderdaad van een traject, of is het ook de weg naar iets toe, zeg maar. (...) ik denk dat dat ons... onze houding daarin is altijd geweest inderdaad en zowel voor de eenheid zeg maar dat het ook de weg naar de eenheid toe is.”

TA-1,12b: “ik weet nog inderdaad dat ik niet met de communie die je zeg maar zo 's ochtends, de communie wordt uitgedeeld, ik geloof niet dat ik daar aan mee deed toen ik hier voor een week was inderdaad omdat ik dacht van goh, ik weet het niet echt wat dit precies is, dus ik kan er maar beter niet aan meedoen zeg maar, ehm... ehm, ik heb er nooit inderdaad met een broeder over gesproken, misschien als ik dat wel had gedaan had ik wat anders gedaan, dat weet ik nu niet, maar, voor mij was het inderdaad van goh, ik weet dat andere mensen hier meer waarde aan hechten dan ik, dus ik kan maar beter niet doen zeg maar, uit respect voor anderen, dan hier eh, toen ik hier inderdaad als vrijwilliger was zeg maar, toen heb ik wel de eucharistie, eh de communie ontvangen... (...) toen ik inderdaad, toen ik hier als vrijwilliger kwam, toen had ik er wel over gelezen inderdaad, toen wist ik er meer van, en toen wist ik ook meer inderdaad waar ik ja tegen zegde, maar toch kan ik iemand begrijpen die zegt van, wacht even maar, is het echt de diepheid van het geloof die nodig is inderdaad om zoiets heiligs te ontvangen?”

TA-1,14: “... Ja, ik denk om ten eerste, omdat ik... ervan overtuigd was dat ik in een gemeenschap was waar ik de essentiële waarden van deelde. Of in ieder geval, de waarden, dat is niet eens, dat is een beetje een te statisch woord, maar, dat ik het geloof in de opgestane Christus zoals dat hier beleden wordt, dat ik dat deel. En dat het ook een beetje een soort vertrouwen is zeg maar naar de, dat het ook vertrouwen is naar de gemeenschap toe waarin je leeft. En ik denk dat dat iets, een belangrijke ontdekking was voor mij inderdaad zeg maar. Ik kom uit een maatschappij waar natuurlijk een persoon wordt gezien als een autonoom individu. En dat hier zeg maar je persoon bent omdat je in relatie staat tot anderen. Ehm, en dat het ook iets van vertrouwen is. Goh, ik begrijp het misschien niet allemaal, wat hier gebeurt, ehm, we komen allemaal van een andere achtergrond, dat klopt... maar ik vertrouw de mensen die hier deze gemeenschap vormen... en die doen dat zo hier, en dan doe ik dat ook zo en dan zie ik waar dat me leidt. (...) maar dat er ook sommige dingen zijn waar je alleen in kan groeien door ze te doen, zeg maar {laughs}... en dat zie je heel erg in een gemeenschap, zeg maar”

TA-1,16a: “Je kan inderdaad niet toeschouwer hier zijn, zeg maar. Je moet, je moet meedoen, ehm... ehm... ..je kan niet anders dan meedoen zeg maar, niet op een gedwongen manier, maar door hier te zijn zeg maar ben je

onderdeel van de gemeenschap. (...) Dus inderdaad, door onderdeel van een gemeenschap te zijn waar dat zo gedaan wordt, dan groei je daar ook in, zeg maar. Dat je mensen de ruimte moet geven inderdaad~ tenminste nee, laat ik voor mijzelf spreken, dat ik dankbaar ben dat me hier de ruimte is gegeven om daar ehm... om daarin te groeien. En dat groeien dat kan je ook alleen maar doen zeg maar door, door iets actiefs zeg maar. Dat kan je niet alleen maar doen door theologisch debat {laughs}, of door een... je moet inderdaad beginnen met samen te bidden om, om verder te komen in die eenheid.... .. En voor mij was het iets redelijk natuurlijks, maar dat was misschien omdat ik hier... omdat ik zag inderdaad dat wat hier gebeurde misschien zeker niet perfect is, en dat weet ik ook nu zeker, ik bedoel dat is alleen maar bevestigd inderdaad dat wat we hier doen niet perfect is.... ehm... maar dat het... dat de gemeenschap consequent is, of dat de gemeenschap, inderdaad dat het coherent is wat we hier, wat we hier ehm... wat we hier doen... ehm...”.

TA-1,18a: “Goed, die mevrouw inderdaad die zei, ja, ik vind het zo mooi, die was heel positief zeg maar, ja, ik vind het zo mooi, iedereen kan hier maar alles doen wat hij wil, alles is toegestaan, als het om de eucharistie gaat. Ik zei, nee! Helemaal niet, daar gaat het helemaal niet in. Het is juist heel problematisch hier, zeg maar, ik bedoel, het is heel gevoelig, het is heel lastig zeg maar, want, want, zo kijken die er tegenaan, zo kijken die ertegenaan, eh, dus zowel inderdaad in de gemeenschap zelf, als voor allen die we hier eh ontvangen inderdaad zeg maar, is het allemaal heel problematisch. En toen sloot ik af inderdaad met wat ik vaak zeg inderdaad, ja maar, dat is ook goed dat het pijn doet, want daardoor blijven we inderdaad zoeken naar, naar dat, weten we dat we nog steeds verder moeten, dat we nog steeds niet in het nieuwe Jeruzalem zijn. Toen zei ze, nou ja, o ja, nou ik ben wel heel triest dat u dat gezegd had, want ik dacht al dat het zo eenvoudig is, maar nu blijkt het heel lastig te zijn {both laugh}. Dus ik wist niet of ik nou iets goeds had gedaan, of juist iets kwaads. Ik wist het niet meer, want het eh...”

TA-1,22: “Maar inderdaad, dat het daarna inderdaad, ja... .. een heel geleidelijk proces was van een dieper begrip van wat, wat hier... de broeders hier leven...ehm ... Zowel inderdaad door studie, maar toch ten eerste, voor vijftiennegentig procent gewoon door, door het dagelijks leven hier. (...) wat me wel geholpen heeft dat ik nooit het idee heb gehad van, wacht even, deze keuze is een verloochening van de traditie waar ik vandaan kom.”

TA-1,24a: “en ik denk dat, om hier broeder te zijn is het belangrijk om een gezonde verhouding te hebben tot de traditie waar je zelf vandaan komt, en dan gaat het kerkelijke traditie, maar ook cultureel.”

- TA-1,24b: “dankbaarheid inderdaad dat ik zowel inderdaad naar mijn ouders toe als naar de kerk waar ik toekom dat er altijd een openheid was, wat dat betreft, ik bedoel, dat het altijd was... ehm... expliciet of niet, dat er mensen zijn die anders denken dan, dan wij, en dat het niet erg is {laughs}, en dat die best eens gelijk zouden kunnen hebben zeg maar, eh, wat me veel nu helpt, hier, zeg maar, ik bedoel, meer aandacht besteden aan... ehm... het mooie in je in je eigen identiteit dan het bewijzen dat wat die anders doen, wat die anderen doen, fout is, zeg maar.. Ehm, en ik denk dat dat iets is wat we altijd ook in Taizé hebben pro~ wat we altijd in Taizé proberen te doen zeg maar.”
- TA-1,24c: “maar dat het dus vanaf het begin iets is inderdaad waar, wat mij geraakt heeft in deze gemeenschap inderdaad, dat het echt een gemeenschap is die iets probeert te doen, die iets probeert te leven, die terdege zich ervan bewust is dat, dat het heel breekbaar is en dat we daar fouten in maken, ongetwijfeld, maar die toch authentiek inderdaad gewoon Christus probeert te volgen, ehm... ... ja, en dat zie ik dus ook in de eucharistie hier zeg maar, inderdaad, dat... ... we hadden kunnen zeggen, we doen helemaal niks daar aan, het is té gevoelig, het is te moeilijk, laten we niets doen... ehm... dat we inderdaad niets doen inderdaad maar juist inderdaad zeggen, ja we doen niets, want zij doen dat en dat is niet goed, zij doen dat zo en dat is niet goed, dus ja, wij kunnen, wij kunnen maar beter niets doen zeg maar, want anders kunnen we ook bekritiseerd worden... ... maar die... de meer moedige keuze maakt om iets te proberen... om op een bepaalde manier samen te leven, samen... Christus te vieren... om samen te bidden, maar die zich er ook heel erg bewust van is dat dat niet evident is voor iedereen...”
- TA-1,26: “ik had niet een hele diepe avondmaals-identiteit, of een diepe verbondenheid daarmee toen ik hier kwam. (...) ik begrijp waarom we het hier doen... zowel voor de historische redenen als inderdaad voor de theologie van het dagelijks leven, om het zo maar te zeggen {laughs} hier, van in Taizé... eh, en, maar, ten diepste inderdaad omdat ik mijn broeders vertrouwen, en daar heeft het toch echt allemaal mee te maken”
- TA-1,30a: “ik was nooit een anti-katholieke protestant zeg maar, dus dat... dat helpt... ehm... ... het zijn misschien met name twee dingen inderdaad, zeg maar, dat is het eerste, dat is een van de twee inderdaad zeg maar, om ... ehm... aan zoiets... mee te doen, zeg maar, als de eucharistie... ... dan kan je er alleen maar van gaan houden, zeg maar {laughs} ik bedoel, dus, ehm en zoiets, wat zoiets... belangrijks is voor de katholieke kerk... dan groeit ook je liefde voor die kerk, zeg maar, of... je verbondenheid met die kerk, het respect voor die kerk... (...) Maar het heeft ook met het tweede te maken dat door de mensen waarmee je hier samenleeft, ik bedoel, een

deel van mijn, een deel van de broeders hier is katholiek, en ik hou van hen als mijn broeders en ik zie hoeveel zij ontvangen hebben zeg maar van de kerk waar zij vandaan komen en hoe groot de liefde is voor de, dus dan ga je dan ook, daar deel je dan ook in mee, dus dat. (...) dat we daar het recht hebben in Taizé om één van hun mooiste dingen zeg maar, de eucharistie, om dat elke zondag te vieren hier, dat is een, dat is een groot goed, en daarvan besef ik... besef ik, op een persoonlijke manier zeg maar... hoe, hoe rijk dat is..."

TA-1,34: "Nee, pff, eigenlijk niet, maar zoals ik heb gezegd, dat is vier keer per jaar, dus dat moet wel, als je één keer per jaar in Nederland bent {laughs}, maar, ik, ik, nee, ik zou daar geen... als ik in Nederland zou zijn, dan zou ik daaraan meedoen, ik bedoel, het hangt er een beetje... maar daar ook inderdaad het heeft ehm... ... in Taizé hebben we wel een... ... hoog... idee van de eucharistie. Voor ons is het werkelijk het lichaam en bloed van Christus. Ik bedoel, hoe dat precies, welke eh {both laugh}, theologotechnische term je aan die werkelijke aanwezigheid wilt geven, dat daar kunnen we nu nog 15 dagen over praten en dan hebben we nog niet eh..."

TA-1,38: "in Taizé geloven we toch oprecht dat het alleen kan door samen te vieren en samen te leven zeg maar... ehm, dus als ik alleen maar zeg van, ik kom naar jullie toe, maar alleen maar om te discussieren... want ik ben het zo niet met jullie eens, dan, dan ben ik, dan verraad ik misschien uiteindelijk... wel heel erg dat, waar ik vandaan kom als gemeenschap van Taizé. Dus wat moet ik dan doen, in zo'n situatie? Moet ik dan zeggen, nee, wacht even... wij als gemeenschap van Taizé, wij hebben een hoog idee van, van de eucharistie, dus het is belangrijk om aan te geven en dat niet zomaar iets aan mee te delen als je eigenlijk zoiets hebt van, ja maar, dit is niet wat wij als gemeenschap geloven? Of moet je zeggen, nee, wacht even, wat wij geloven is dat alleen door samen te vieren is dat, dat we samen komen, dus ik doe hier nu aan mee, want anders, anders dan zullen ze nooit begrijpen dat we... ... daar gaat de boodschap van Taizé in ieder geval verloren... ik weet het ook echt niet, wat ik dan zou doen zeg maar, dat is lastig, dat is lastig..."

TA-1,40: "dat door de specifieke situatie in Taizé, dat het ook op het geweten van de mensen zelf aankomt zeg maar {laughs}. Ehm, dat we alleen maar eerlijk kunnen zijn over wat wij hier geloven (...). Dat we er duidelijk in moeten zijn dat we altijd moeten na blijven denken inderdaad van, geven we mensen genoeg informatie, ehm... ... maar dat het op het geweten van de mensen zelf komt en dat het ook iets heeft met de manier waarop we hier samenleven, zoals ik het in het begin heb gezegd dat het niet zo hier is van goh, we gaan eerst twee dagen zitten inderdaad om het hele

onderwerp uit te pluizen, nee, we beginnen maar gewoon wat, we beginnen hier maar gewoon samen te leven en we zien wel waar het, waar het schip strand, ik bedoel, dat klinkt een beetje, wel erg cynisch nu, maar ehm... .. maar dat kan ook maar omdat we het diepe geloof hebben dat dat, ondanks, ondanks {laughs} alles wat wij als broeders hier doen, dat de Heilige Geest hier toch werkzaam is, wat betreft.”

TA-1,42: “misschien is het mijn jonge arrogantie, hoe zeggen ze dat, mijn jeugdige arrogantie die spreekt: volgens mij is het de enige weg voor de oecumene. ... ehm... .. ehm, omdat we elkaar, omdat ik elke dag zie hier in de gemeenschap inderdaad, zodr~ als we niet samenleven, als we niet samen bidden, dan... dan hebben al die theologische discussies geen zin, want dan begrijpen we elkaar uiteindelijk niet...”

TA-1,44: “dat heeft iets met, met dat het zoveel makkelijker is voor de Heilige Geest te werken als wij inderdaad samen bidden en als we samenleven zeg maar {laughs}. Maar tegelijkertijd heeft het ook iets, ook iets psychisch. Als je met mensen samen bidt... en als je met mensen samenleeft, dan moet je je kwetsbaar opstellen... alleen als je je kwetsbaar opstelt... dat je verder komt, ook in een debat, zeg maar ehm... als je inderdaad een debat aangaat, of een discussie aangaat eh, met het idee, ik mag hier niet als verliezer uitkomen... ja, doe het dan niet, zeg maar, ik bedoel eh...”

TA-1,46a: “hoe zal ik het zeggen... ik ben een beetje schizofreen, {laughs} maar dat is helemaal niet het woord, maar ik ben zo, zo ambivalent daarin, ehm... omdat aan de ene kant, ik denk... .. dat... .. de eucharistie een centrale rol heeft in de oecumene... in het oecumenisch proces inderdaad. We kunnen niet zeggen, oké wacht even, we hebben het daar niet over tot het moment dat we overal over eens zijn en dan inderdaad, om dat te vieren gaan we dat doen...”

TA-1,46b: “maar tegelijkertijd ook, en daarom zeg ik dat ik, dat ik bijna schizofreen ben, dat ik het idee heb dat we de eucharistie moeten decentraliseren in het... theologische debat. Want het begint een beetje ehm... .. alsof dat het enige zou zijn, zeg maar. En daarom begrijp ik ook wel mensen, inderdaad, sommige mensen die zeggen, oké, wacht even, laten het nu doen, maar, om te laten zeggen, maar, alsof dat het enige zijn waarin we één kunnen zijn, alsof dat het enige is wat er gebeurt, de enige manier ehm... En dat is soms lastig”

TA-1,46c: “we mensen willen interesseren voor de eucharistie, zowel protestantse als katholieke inderdaad. En dat is voor mij ook het mooie inderdaad, dat er katholieken hier komen en zeggen, goh, door Taizé heb ik, begrijp ik beter inderdaad wat er in mij~ of interesseert het mij opeens weer wat er in mijn kerk gebeurt zeg maar {laughs}, die ik elke zondag. En dat vind ik iets práchtigs, dat is gewéldig.”

TA-2,4: “mijn zus is er geweest, dus dan eh, moet ik het ook wel durven.”

TA-2,6: “Ik ben toch echt van een andere generatie dan inderdaad broeder ehm... broeder [TB], broeder [TC] inderdaad zeg maar, die toch echt van de, van de generatie van het Tweede Vaticaan Concilie zijn, of net daarna... ehm... dus die een kerk hebben gekend die veel behoudender was... en het enorme elan, ehm van openheid en, en oecumene... .. ehm... .. en, en bij mij is dat beide veel minder zeg maar.”

TA-2,11: (“Ik denk eh, ook op... .. hoe zal ik het zeggen, ook op heel menselijk, op menselijk niveau, vriendschappen die ik daar had, of gesprekken die je daar hebt, ik bedoel, ik denk dat we dat... ook in Taizé zien, zeg maar. Stel dat we alléén de gebeden zouden hebben, of alleen de bijbelinleidingen, ehm, volgens mij zou deze plaats dan een, snel een doodse plaats worden, zeg maar, maar omdat het heel ge... geworteld is in een gemeenschappelijk leven... ehm... .. is het op, en dat bedoel ik misschien met rijk, op heel veel verschillende niveau's... ehm, en dat ik dankbaar ben voor die tijd bij het studentenpastoraat, ehm... .. omdat al die niveau's er ook waren, het ging om geloofs niveau, maar ook inderdaad dan om, eh, om iets... van de kerk te laten zien... ehm... .. ehm, op het gebied van vriendschap en, en samenleven, ehm, het gaat, ik woonde ook in een studenten huis zeg maar”).

TA-2,14: “in de historische context van Taizé, eh... dat is... .. dus het... .. Taizé die begon als een protestantse, als een hervormd-gereformeerde gemeenschap. En waar we nu, we elke zondag... de katholieke eucharistie kunnen vieren... dat is als teken op zich al zo iets groots {laughs} ehm... dus dát bedoel ik er ook mee, zeg maar, dat... ehm... .. als je dat bekijkt, zeg maar, wat dat al betekent zeg maar van ontwikkeling die we hebben door hebben gemaakt, en vertrouwen dat we krijgen van.. van de kerken, en als... ehm... als teken dat we elke week hier kunnen leven met de mensen die hier bij ons zijn ehm... dat is iets op onze schaal enorm, zeg maar {laughs}. Dat is niet iets wat nou morgen de wereld verandert, maar op de kleine schaal van deze kleine heuvel of van Taizé... dat is iets enorms, en dat moeten we niet vergeten.”

TA-2,18a: “ik heb daar mijn vragen bij, zeg maar, of we dat zo moeten doen, maar dat heeft elke broeder... ehm... .. eh, maar daar is het grappige ook in, het heeft daar niks... niet, niet, ik als protestant {laughs}... maar bijna ik als katholiek in zoverre, dat ik begrijp, van ja, maar dat is, om het op die manier te doen, ik begrijp best dat het voor sommige traditionele katholieken dat, dat heel lastig is. (...) En elke keer dat ik die uitleg doen, dan voel ik me altijd een beetje ongemakkelijk bij, zeg maar. Omdat ik

denk van, ja, ik begrijp best, ik kan hier nu niet twee uur... eh, mee bezig zijn om dat uit te leggen, en ik kan ook niet, als je voor driehonderd mensen moet spreken, op iedere pastorale situatie ingaan, ik moet er toch iets van zeggen en ik ben me terdege ervan bewust dat wat ik nu zeg voor een aantal mensen, denken, wat, wat zegt die man? Wat gebeurt hier nu? zeg maar. En ik kan daar niet, ik heb nu niet de mogelijkheid om daar... eh, volledig verantwoording over af te leggen..."

TA-2,22b: "maar ook... ehm... dat we toch altijd... het mysterie die elke persoon is willen respecteren... .. ehm... .. En dat we zelfs, met iemand die hier broeder worden, natuurlijk zullen we het over de eucharistie hebben... maar dat we niet diegene gaan vragen maar wat in het meest intieme deel van jezelf, wat, wat gebeurt er dan precies op dat moment... dat we ook zoiets hebben, ja maar joh, dat is iets tussen God en die persoon zeg maar, en dat, daar hoeven we ons... als we geloven, dat, dat... dat de Heilige Geest werkzaam is in deze gemeenschap, dat we onderdeel maken~ uitmaken van de kerk van Jezus Christus, dan hoeven we ons ook niet met elk detail van elke broeder zelfs bezig te houden. Dat is aan Jezus, dat is aan de Heilige Geest {laughs} om dat te doen, maar ehm... (...) als je allemaal uit dezelfde context komt, dan, dan weet je dingen graag, snel te plaatsen. Maar dat het ons niet lukt... eh, maar dat het toch ook echt een spiritueel aspect aan zit... want dat we zeggen, maar wacht even, heel veel van de dingen die hier gebeuren, dat is tussen Christus en deze persoon, en, en dat is goed zo. Dat geeft niet, dat hoeven we ook niet helemaal precies uit te pluizen."

TA-2,22c: dat heeft me zo geraakt zeg maar, omdat we zouden kunnen denken, oké, wacht even, maar een aartsbisschop, die moet toch de woorden kunnen vinden om het evangelie te verkondigen, om diegene te laten zien, om hem te laten voelen wat, wat God is. Maar juist het omgekeerde, juist omdat hij zo'n diepgelovige is en zo'n aartsbisschop... weet hij wat de macht van Christus is en weet hij dat hij niet altijd zelf de woorden hoeft te vinden {laughs}. En ik denk dat dat iets is wat we in Taizé ook eh, diep geloven, zeg maar. En dat zowel... eh, voor de kleinste als de grotere vragen zeg maar, dat we ook niet altijd zelf de woorden hoeven te vinden... ehm... .. ja {laughs}. Dus ook inderdaad, als we het over de eucharistie hebben, dat we geloven dat het in de handen van Christus is, niet op een soort van gemaks~ gemakkelijke manier, maar op een diepe manier dat... .. ehm, dat het zijn eucharistie is zeg maar, of de eucharistie die hij gegeven heeft voor ons, ehm... .. dan zijn we er ook zulke, zulke kleine elementen maar in, zeg maar, dat eh... dat geeft ons zo vrijheid, geloof ik, in Taizé... zoiets {laughs}

ABSTRACT

This research takes as its starting point the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as encountered in the ecumenical monastic communities of Taizé (Burgundy, France) and Bose (Piemonte, Italy). In these contexts, the Roman Catholic Church allows monastics who are not in full communion with this church to inhabit the space offered by its norms and regulations to share the Eucharist when full, visible ecclesial unity is lacking. Taking a practical theological perspective, this study aims to describe the practice of Eucharist sharing and confronts the theological discourse about the sensitive question of Eucharistic hospitality in ecumenical contexts. It does so with the theological rationale embedded in the practice in order to learn from the experiences gained in these monastic communities. This abstract summarizes the answers to the main research question:

Which theological implications can be formulated based on the concrete experiences with Eucharistic hospitality in the ecumenical monastic communities of Taizé and Bose in order to complement the charged debate on this sensitive issue?

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON A SENSITIVE QUESTION

The Introduction briefly sketches the problem and the innovative interdisciplinary approach of this study and introduces the main research question as mentioned above, as well as the sub-questions as addressed in the different chapters. Chapter 1 inquires how the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as encountered in Taizé and Bose relates to the ongoing ecumenical

process and the debate on this sensitive topic. An overview of the history of the ecumenical movement to which the Roman Catholic Church has committed itself irrevocably since Vatican II (1.1) is followed by an analysis of the current intermediate stage in the process. From the perspectives of spiritual ecumenism and receptive ecumenism, the question of sharing the Eucharist becomes ever more urgent (1.2). Fierce international debate following an initiative of German bishops to extend Eucharistic hospitality more generously towards non-Catholic spouses in mixed marriages illustrates the *status quaestionis* of the discussion as well as the sensitive nature of the topic. Analyzing the proposal and its opposition make clear that sharing the Eucharist is often exclusively perceived as a pastoral solution to individual spiritual needs and not as a resource for the promotion of Christian unity (1.3). Referring to Taizé and Bose, I propose integrating empirical research studying actual experiences with Eucharistic hospitality into the debate (1.4). In addition to the German case study, the chapter briefly lists other recent contributions to the discussion, some of which also depart from practical theological presuppositions (1.5).

Having established the relevance of examining the practices of Taizé and Bose in the first chapter, Chapter 2 explores how this concrete reality can be studied and articulated to become a meaningful voice in the theological discourse. The research object is defined as *the theological rationale embedded in the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as articulated by members of Taizé and Bose, in which the Roman Catholic Church extends Eucharistic hospitality towards the non-Catholic monastics, inspired at least partially by ecumenical motives* (2.1) Departing from the concept of the *loci theologici* and the model of the four voices of theology, the argument is made that the implicit operant theology is under-represented in the debate about Eucharistic hospitality. Qualitative empirical research is needed to reconstruct this theological rationale, which is what the current study intends to provide (2.2). Based on these methodological presuppositions, specific qualitative methods (especially narrative interviewing as the backbone of this empirical study) are introduced (2.3), followed by a detailed account of the empirical process (2.4). The chapter is concluded by a synopsis of its aims, questions, and methods (2.5).

PART TWO

AN EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT: MONASTIC EXPERIENCES DOCUMENTED

Chapter 3 describes what the practice of Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé and Bose looks like today, and how and why it has emerged in these particular contexts. After introducing the monasteries' common context as New Monastic Communities (based on the analysis provided by Stefania Palmisano) (3.1), it employs literary review, ethnographic fieldwork, and the interview data to describe the respective histories and characteristics of Taizé (3.2) and Bose (3.3), with special attention to the evolution of their Eucharistic customs and their current practice of Eucharistic hospitality.

Chapters 4-8 explore how the monastics inhabiting these communities articulate their experiences with Eucharistic hospitality and what theological rationale is embedded in it. Each chapter clusters a number of categories that resulted from the content analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with six interviewees. Apart from the sections explicitly mentioned below, each chapter is concluded by an additional section summarizing and connecting the content of the chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the motivation articulated by the interviewees for the monastic life, for ecumenical engagement, and for Eucharistic sharing. They indicate that their desire for a monastic common life has been the primary motivation for joining their respective community, not the ecumenical nature of that community, let alone the practice of Eucharistic sharing (4.1). However, active participation in this common life in an ecumenical context – lived ecumenism – sparked or invigorated their ecumenical interest (4.2). Their responses to the differences they encountered varied, ranging from discovery to recognition and alienation (4.3). Yet, despite the ambiguous feelings caused by these differences, they prioritize the unity they experience in their liturgical practice and monastic common life, considering past convergence and consensus sufficient to sustain them (4.4).

Chapter 5 explores the relationship between common life and a common celebration of the Eucharist. On the one hand, sharing all aspects of life logically (at least for the monastics) results in a common Eucharist (5.1). On the other hand, the Eucharist and all that it embodies constitutes the very reason for engaging in a monastic common life to begin with (5.2). The monastics indicate that their way of life enables their ecumenical relations (both individual and communal) to grow organically, with 'learning by doing' being an important aspect (5.3). This is only possible through a deep sense of trust in God, their fellow monastics, the communities as a whole, and the sacraments

of Baptism and the Eucharist. This trust is both a prerequisite for and a result of the life in Taizé and Bose (5.4).

In Chapter 6, the monastics clearly envision their practice of Eucharistic hospitality as a local and temporary solution for their enduring particular circumstances. An important presupposition for their practice is the clear and unambiguous conviction that, in general, what is 'scandalous' is the fact that Christians are divided, not the attempts to overcome division, and especially not the desire to partake of the Eucharist together (6.1). This presupposition enables sharing the Eucharist to be a provisional solution to the particular situation of the ecumenical communities (6.2). The monastics do not regard this temporary arrangement as an adequate and definitive solution to the question of Christian division. On the contrary, they experience their own solution as highly problematic, both for themselves and for their guests. Therefore, it can only be an intermediate step along the ecumenical path, which they nevertheless treasure (6.3). In addition, they regard their practice and communal life as a sign for the churches that Eucharistic sharing at this point is possible and fruitful and as a prophetic testimony against Christian division (6.4).

Chapter 7 explores the significance of Eucharistic hospitality for the relationships of the monastics with the churches. The default position of both communities is that any member remains part of their church of origin and the monastics express a deep commitment and faithfulness towards that tradition. At the same time, the non-Catholic interviewees express a profound desire to be in concrete communion with the Roman Catholic Church (7.1). Their process has led the monastics to reinterpret the relationship between Baptismal and denominational identity. Ecumenical commitment and the experience of Eucharistic sharing has caused them to firmly prioritize the former over the latter (7.2). Through their continued commitment to their churches of origin and participation in the sacramental – Eucharistic – life of the Roman Catholic Church, the non-Catholic members of the communities *de facto* live in communion with both (7.3). This has caused not only them, but also the Catholic monastics, to rethink the meaning of theological concepts such as church, baptismal and denominational identity, and communion (7.4).

In Chapter 8, finally, the monastics articulate some key theological considerations about the Eucharist. The form of the Eucharistic liturgy, the balance between prayers and Masses that are part of the daily routine of the monastics (most of the brothers in Taizé do not attend the daily early morning prayer and only participate in the Communion rite during the morning prayer), and the way the Eucharist is embedded in the weekly rhythm (based on the holy

week in Taizé and with the Saturday evening *lectio divina*, preparing for Sunday Mass in Bose), cause the monastics to experience the Eucharist as a special moment and the highlight of their liturgical life (8.1). Reflecting on questions of recognition of other traditions, of reciprocity, and of their current solution of choosing a Roman Catholic presided liturgy, the monastics pose the very fundamental question: “do we have two Eucharists?” (8.2). Finally, they reflect on the now classic question of whether sharing the Eucharist is or should be the conclusion of, or a source for, the ecumenical process (8.3).

PART THREE

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapters 9 and 10 articulate possible implications of the theological rationale embedded in the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as encountered in Taizé and Bose and in the experiences of the monastics as listed in chapters 4-8, and how they affect the debate on Eucharistic sharing in ecumenical contexts. Each section formulates an implication and substantiates it by discussing relevant observations from the empirical study within the broader context – with reference to the *status quaestionis* described in Chapter 1. Chapter 9 focusses on priorities and preconditions; Chapter 10 addresses the future of the ecumenical process.

Christian division is the scandal. Attempts to overcome this scandal, especially through Eucharistic hospitality, may be temporal and provisional solutions and, as such, indefinite and partly inadequate yet they rightfully express and foster the real but incomplete communion that exists in Baptism (9.1). Eucharistic sharing does not necessarily reduce ecumenical commitment but comforts the wounds of division. This insight counters – or at least challenges – a key argument against Eucharistic hospitality (9.2). Taizé and Bose cultivate trust in the Triune God, the Easter mystery, the sacrament of Baptism, and their fellow monastics in order to take a ‘leap of faith’ towards unity. Their practice of Eucharistic hospitality expresses this trust. In addition, its cultivation enables a maximization of recognition of other traditions (9.3).

Taizé and Bose have managed to enter into a dynamic relationship between common life and common Eucharist that both celebrates imperfect unity and directs towards fuller communion. This dynamic has the potential to overcome the Rahner-Fries paradox and the impasse of the source-versus-summit debate (10.1). The communities act as ‘nodes’ in the network of confessional churches. The monastics express a growing, inclusive faithfulness towards multiple ecclesial traditions and a practical belonging to multiple

denominations even when they continue to struggle to materialize this belonging properly. Churches seeking reconciliation could benefit from this example by allowing more of such places to emerge (10.2). *Communicatio in sacris* can indeed be perceived as a “means (...) for the restoration of Christian unity.” In the communities, the Eucharist, as a means of grace, transcends the spiritual well-being of individual monastics and includes ecumenical reconciliation on an ecclesiological level, a dynamic which the current regulations fail to accommodate. It seems valid and valuable to complement current regulations concerning Eucharistic sharing so that they can enable Eucharistic hospitality on the basis of ecumenical reasons, too (10.3).

Taizé and Bose offer concrete, tangible, and grassroot examples of receptive ecumenism. In the communities, learning is not only done cognitively, but even more so in a practical, participatory sense, and by engaging in the exchange of gifts so fundamental to spiritual ecumenism. The monastics do this in a critical yet faithful manner and with great openness to ‘creative integrity’ (10.4).

Chapter 11, finally, lists some concrete suggestions for future policy of the communities and churches involved, as well as recommendations for future research. Noting that the communities could do more to substantiate the faithfulness of its members towards multiple ecclesial traditions, I suggest that the practice of Eucharistic hospitality as it functions to promote Christian unity in the ecumenical communities of Taizé and Bose be acknowledged and its fruits appreciated; that its embedded theological rationale be received; and that this practice be properly facilitated and encouraged in these particular contexts and beyond for the benefit of the common process towards Christian unity (11.1).

Signaling that this study does not contribute substantially to the ecumenically pressing questions of reciprocity with regard to Eucharistic hospitality and to the issue of the ordination of women, I recommend further quantitative and qualitative research into Eucharistic hospitality in these particular communities and especially in other contexts as well as further systematic theological reflection based on the outcomes of this study. In addition, a comprehensive literary review of all contributions to the debate about Eucharistic hospitality is desirable (11.2). (Practical) theological research might be directed at exploring further the methods to study the *sensus fidelium* adequately using empirical methods and at defining its place within the ‘dialogue of voices’ that theology is (11.3).

SAMENVATTING

Dit onderzoek vertrekt vanuit de praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid zoals aangetroffen in de oecumenische monastieke gemeenschappen van Taizé (Bourgondië, Frankrijk) en Bose (Piëmont, Italië). In deze contexten staat de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk de kloosterlingen die niet in volle gemeenschap met haar zijn toe de ruimte die haar regels bieden te benutten voor het delen van de Eucharistie wanneer volle, zichtbare kerkgemeenschap ontbreekt. Vanuit praktisch-theologisch perspectief beoogt deze studie deze praktijk te beschrijven en om het theologisch debat over dit gevoelige onderwerp te confronteren met de theologische logica die erin ingebed is, met als doel te leren van de ervaringen die door deze kloostergemeenschappen zijn opgedaan. Deze samenvatting geeft beknopt de antwoorden op de hoofdvraag van deze studie weer:

Welke theologische implicaties kunnen worden geformuleerd op basis van de concrete ervaringen met Eucharistische gastvrijheid in de oecumenische kloostergemeenschappen van Taizé en Bose, om het beladen debat over dit gevoelige onderwerp te complementeren?

DEEL ÉÉN

INTRODUCTIE: EEN NIEUW PERSPECTIEF OP EEN GEVOELIG VRAAGSTUK

De Introductie schetst kort het probleem en de innovatieve, interdisciplinaire aanpak van dit onderzoek en introduceert de onderzoeksvraag zoals hierboven genoemd, evenals de deelvragen die in de verschillende hoofdstukken behandeld worden. Hoofdstuk 1 onderzoekt hoe de praktijk van Eucharistische

gastvrijheid zoals waargenomen in Taizé en Bose zich verhoudt tot het doorgaande oecumenisch proces en het gesprek over dit gevoelige onderwerp. Een overzicht van de geschiedenis van de oecumenische beweging, waaraan de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk zich heeft onherroepelijk gecommitteerd heeft sinds het Tweede Vaticaans Concilie (1.1), wordt gevolgd door een analyse van de huidige tussenfase in het proces. Vanuit de perspectieven van de spirituele oecumene en de receptieve oecumene wordt de vraag naar het delen van de Eucharistie steeds urgenter (1.2). Het felle internationale debat volgend op een initiatief van Duitse bisschoppen om genereuzer Eucharistische gastvrijheid te bieden aan niet-katholieke partners in gemengde huwelijken illustreert zowel de *status quaestionis* van de discussie als de gevoelige aard van het onderwerp. Analyse van het voorstel en het verzet ertegen maakt duidelijk dat het delen van de Eucharistie vaak exclusief gezien wordt als een pastorale oplossing voor een individuele spirituele nood en niet als middel voor de bevordering van Christelijke eenheid (1.3). Met verwijzing naar Taizé en Bose stel ik voor om empirisch onderzoek naar de feitelijke ervaringen met Eucharistische gastvrijheid in het debat te integreren (1.4). In aanvulling op de Duitse casus benoemt het hoofdstuk ook kort andere recente bijdragen aan de discussie, waarvan sommige eveneens vertrekken vanuit praktisch-theologische vooronderstellingen (1.5).

Nadat de relevantie van het onderzoeken van de praktijk van Taizé en Bose in het eerste hoofdstuk is vastgesteld gaat Hoofdstuk 2 na hoe deze concrete realiteit bestudeerd en onder woorden gebracht kan worden, zodat het een betekenisvolle stem kan zijn in het theologisch gesprek. Het onderzoeksobject is gedefinieerd als “de theologische logica die is ingebed in de praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid, zoals die verwoord door leden van Taizé en Bose, waar de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk Eucharistische gastvrijheid verleent aan niet-katholieke kloosterlingen, geïnspireerd door oecumenische motieven” (2.1). Vertrekkend vanuit het concept van de *loci theologici* en het model van de vier stemmen van de theologie wordt beredeneerd dat de impliciete operante theologie onderbelicht is in het debat over Eucharistische gastvrijheid. Kwalitatief empirisch onderzoek is nodig om deze theologische rationaliteit te reconstrueren, iets wat dit onderzoek wil bieden (2.2). Gebaseerd op deze methodologische vooronderstellingen worden de specifieke methoden (met name het narratieve interview als ruggengraat van dit empirische onderzoek) geïntroduceerd (2.3), gevolgd door een gedetailleerde beschrijving van het empirische proces (2.4). Het hoofdstuk wordt afgesloten door een samenvatting van de doelen, vragen en methoden (2.5)

DEEL TWEE

EEN EMPIRISCH VERSLAG: MONASTIEKE ERVARINGEN VERWOORD

Hoofdstuk 3 beschrijft hoe de praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid er vandaag de dag uitziet in Taizé en Bose en hoe en waarom het in deze specifieke contexten is ontstaan. Na een introductie van de gezamenlijk context van beide kloosters als Nieuwe Monastieke Gemeenschappen (gebaseerd op de analyse van Stefania Palmisano) (3.1), benut het literatuuronderzoek, etnografisch veldwerk en de interviews om de geschiedenis en karakteristieken van respectievelijk Taizé (3.2) en Bose (3.3) te beschrijven, met speciale aandacht voor hun Eucharistische gewoonten en hun huidige praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid.

De hoofdstukken 4-8 exploreren hoe de kloosterlingen in deze gemeenschappen hun ervaringen met Eucharistische gastvrijheid verwoorden en welke theologische rationaliteit hierin verborgen ligt. Elk hoofdstuk clustert een aantal categorieën die het resultaat zijn van de analyse van diepte-interviews met zes van hen. Naast de paragrafen die hier expliciet genoemd worden wordt elk hoofdstuk afgesloten door een aanvullende paragraaf waarin de inhoud van het hoofdstuk samengevat en met elkaar in verband gebracht wordt.

Hoofdstuk 4 presenteert de motivatie voor het monastieke leven en voor het delen van de Eucharistie, zoals verwoord door de kloosterlingen. Ze geven aan dat hun verlangen naar het monastieke gezamenlijke leven de primaire motivatie is geweest om toe te treden en niet zozeer het oecumenisch karakter van de gemeenschap, laat staan de praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid (4.1). Echter, actieve participatie in het gemeenschapsleven in een oecumenische context – geleefde oecumene – heeft hun oecumenische interesse gewekt of nieuw leven ingeblazen (4.2). Hun reactie op de verschillen die zij ontmoeten liep uiteen, van ontdekking tot aanvaarding of juist vervreemding (4.3). Maar ondanks de soms ambigue gevoelens opgeroepen door deze verschillen geven ze prioriteit aan de eenheid die zij ervaren in hun liturgische praktijk en monastieke gemeenschapsleven, terwijl ze in het verleden bereikte convergentie en consensus als afdoende beschouwen om dat te (4.4).

Hoofdstuk 5 verkent de relatie tussen gemeenschapsleven en gezamenlijke viering van de Eucharistie. Enerzijds mondt het delen van alle aspecten van het leven logischerwijs (althans voor de kloosterlingen uit in een gedeelde Eucharistie (5.1). Anderzijds is de Eucharistie en alles waar zij voor staat juist de reden om in het gemeenschapsleven te participeren (5.2). De

kloosterlingen geven aan dat hun levenswijze organische groei mogelijk maakt in hun (individuele en collectieve) oecumenische relaties, waarbij leren-door-doen een belangrijk aspect is (5.3). Dit is alleen mogelijk dankzij een diepgevoeld vertrouwen in God, de andere kloosterlingen, de gemeenschappen als geheel en in de sacramenten van Doop en Eucharistie. Dit vertrouwen is zowel een vereiste voor als een resultaat van het leven in Taizé en Bose (5.4).

In Hoofdstuk 6 beschrijven de kloosterlingen hun praktijk heel helder als een lokale en tijdelijke oplossing voor hun blijvende, specifieke omstandigheden. Een belangrijke vooronderstelling voor hun praktijk is de duidelijke en ondubbelzinnige overtuiging dat, in het algemeen, alleen het feit dat christenen verdeeld zijn schandalig is en niet de pogingen om verdeeldheid te overwinnen en dan vooral niet het verlangen om samen te delen in de Eucharistie (6.1). Deze vooronderstelling maakt het delen van de Eucharistie als tijdelijke oplossing voor de specifieke situatie van oecumenische gemeenschappen mogelijk (6.2). The kloosterlingen beschouwen deze tijdelijk regeling niet als een toereikende en definitieve oplossing voor het vraagstuk van christelijke verdeeldheid. Integendeel, ze ervaren hun eigen oplossing als hoogst problematisch, zowel voor henzelf als voor hun gasten. Daarom kan het alleen een tussenstap zijn langs het oecumenische pad die zij echter toch zeer waarderen (6.3). Daarbij zien zij hun praktijk en gemeenschappelijk leven als teken voor de kerken dat het delen van de Eucharistie op dit punt in het proces mogelijk en vruchtbaar is en als profetische getuigenis tegen christelijke verdeeldheid (6.4).

Hoofdstuk 7 verkent de waarde van Eucharistische gastvrijheid voor de relaties van de kloosterlingen met de kerken. De uitgangspositie in beide gemeenschappen is dat elk lid deel blijft van zijn kerk van oorsprong en de kloosterlingen geven blijk van een diepe verbondenheid en grote trouw naar die traditie. Tegelijkertijd laten de niet-katholieke geïnterviewden een diepgevoeld verlangen zien om concreet in gemeenschap te treden met de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk (7.1). Hun proces heeft de kloosterlingen ertoe aangezet om de relatie tussen doopidentiteit en denominationele identiteit te herinterpreteren. Oecumenisch engagement en de ervaring van het delen van de Eucharistie heeft ze aanleiding gegeven om de eerste prioriteit te geven boven de laatste (7.2). Vanwege hun voortgezette toewijding aan hun kerk van oorsprong en participatie in het sacramentele – Eucharistische – leven van de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk leven de niet-katholieke leden feitelijk in gemeenschap met beide (7.3). Dit heeft niet alleen hen, maar ook de katholieke kloosterlingen aangezet tot het opnieuw doordenken van theologische concepten als kerk,

identiteit in het Doopsel en denominationele identiteit en *communio* of gemeenschap (7.4).

In Hoofdstuk 8, tenslotte, benoemen de kloosterlingen enkele belangrijke theologische overwegingen omtrent de Eucharistie. De vorm van de Eucharistische liturgie, de balans tussen gebedsvieringen en de Eucharistievieringen die deel uitmaken van de dagelijkse routine van de kloosterlingen (de meeste broeders in Taizé wonen de Eucharistie vroeg in de ochtend niet bij en ontvangen enkel de Communie tijdens het ochtendgebed) en de manier waarop de Eucharistie is ingebed in het weekritme (gebaseerd op de Goede Week in Taizé en met de *lectio divina* op zaterdagavond als voorbereiding op de zondag in Bose) zorgen ervoor dat de kloosterlingen de Eucharistie ervaren als een bijzonder moment en als het hoogtepunt van hun liturgische leven (8.1). Reflecterend op de kwestie van het erkennen van andere tradities stellen de kloosterlingen een zeer fundamentele vraag: “hebben we twee Eucharistieën?” (8.2). En tenslotte keren ze terug naar de inmiddels klassieke vraag of het delen van de Eucharistie de conclusie van het oecumenisch proces is of zou moeten zijn, of dat het een bron is voor dat proces (8.3).

DEEL DRIE

CONCLUSIE: IMPLICATIES, SUGGESTIES, AANBEVELINGEN

Hoofdstukken 9 en 10 verwoorden enkele mogelijke implicaties van de theologische rationaliteit die is ingebed in de praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid zoals aangetroffen in Taizé en Bose en in de ervaringen van de kloosterlingen zoals verwoord in de hoofdstukken 4-8 en hoe die implicaties raken aan het debat over het delen van de Eucharistie in oecumenische contexten. Elke paragraaf formuleert zo'n implicatie en onderbouwt het door relevante observaties uit de empirische studie te bespreken in relatie tot de bredere context – met verwijzing naar de *status quaestionis* zoals beschreven in Hoofdstuk 1. Hoofdstuk 9 richt zich daarbij op prioriteiten en vooronderstellingen terwijl Hoofdstuk 10 de toekomst van het oecumenisch proces bespreekt.

Christelijke verdeeldheid is het schandaal. Pogingen om dit schandaal te overwinnen, in het bijzonder door middel van Eucharistische gastvrijheid, mogen tijdelijke oplossingen zijn en als zodanig voorlopig en deels ontoereikend, ze geven ook legitiem uitdrukking aan de reële, maar incomplete gemeenschap die er bestaat in het Doopsel (9.1). Het delen van de Eucharistie vermindert niet noodzakelijkerwijs het oecumenisch engagement, maar

verzachten de wonden van de verdeeldheid. Dit inzicht weerspreekt een belangrijk argument tégen Eucharistische gastvrijheid – of trekt dat op zijn minst in twijfel (9.2). Taizé en Bose cultiveren het vertrouwen in de Drie-ene God, het Paasmysterie, het sacrament van het Doopsel en in de medekloosterling om een ‘sprong in het diepe’ naar eenheid mogelijk te maken. Hun praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid geeft blijk van dit vertrouwen. Ook legt het cultiveren van vertrouwen de basis voor het maximaliseren van erkenning van andere tradities (9.3).

Taizé en Bose zijn erin geslaagd in een dynamische relatie te stappen tussen gemeenschapsleven en een gemeenschappelijke Eucharistie die zowel de imperfecte eenheid viert als aanzet tot groeiende *communio*. Deze dynamiek heeft de potentie om de Rahner-Fries-paradox en de impasse in het bron-versus-hoogtepunt-debat te overwinnen (10.1). De gemeenschappen functioneren als ‘knooppunten’ in het netwerk van confessionele kerken. De kloosterlingen geven uiting aan een groeiende, inclusieve trouw aan meerdere kerkelijke tradities en een concreet behoren tot verschillende denominaties, zelfs als zij worstelen om dat gestalte te geven. Kerken die verzoening zoeken kunnen van dit voorbeeld profiteren door meer van zulke plaatsen te laten ontstaan (10.2). *Communicatio in sacris* kan inderdaad verstaan worden als “een middel dat men (...) kan aanwenden om de eenheid van de Christenen te herstellen.” In de gemeenschappen overstijgt de Eucharistie als middel van genade het geestelijk welzijn van de individuele kloosterlingen en omvat ook verzoening op kerkelijk niveau, een dynamiek waar de huidige regelgeving nog niet in voorziet. Het lijkt deugdelijk en waardevol om de huidige regels omtrent Eucharistische gastvrijheid aan te vullen uitgaande van oecumenische overwegingen (10.3).

Taizé en Bose bieden zo concrete, tastbare, *grassroots* voorbeelden van receptieve oecumene (*receptive ecumenism*). Leren geschiedt in de gemeenschappen niet alleen op cognitief vlak, maar juist ook in praktische, participerende zin en door deelname in de uitwisseling van gaven die zo fundamenteel is voor de spirituele oecumene. De kloosterlingen doen dit op een kritische, maar loyale manier en met grote openheid, in ‘creatieve integriteit’ (10.4).

Hoofdstuk 11, tenslotte, benoemt enkele concrete suggesties voor het toekomstige beleid van de betrokken gemeenschappen en kerken, alsmede aanbevelingen voor toekomstig onderzoek. Signalerend dat de gemeenschappen meer zouden kunnen doen om de verbondenheid van hun leden met meerdere kerkelijke tradities gestalte te geven, opper ik dat de praktijk van Eucharistische gastvrijheid zoals die in de oecumenische

gemeenschappen van Taizé en Bose functioneert erkend en gewaardeerd wordt; dat de theologische rationaliteit die daarin ingebed ligt ontvangen wordt; en dat die praktijk terdege gefaciliteerd en aangemoedigd wordt in deze specifieke context en daarbuiten (het principe van 'transformatieve resonantie' indachtig), om zo het gezamenlijke proces naar christelijke eenheid te bevorderen (11.1).

Constaterend dat deze studie niet substantieel bijdraagt aan de oecumenisch urgent vragen van wederkerigheid met betrekking tot Eucharistische gastvrijheid en het vraagstuk van de wijding van vrouwen beveel ik verder kwantitatief en kwalitatief onderzoek aan naar Eucharistische gastvrijheid in deze specifieke gemeenschappen en vooral ook in andere contexten. Daarnaast zou een omvattend literatuuronderzoek naar alle bijdragen aan het debat over Eucharistische gastvrijheid wenselijk zijn (11.2). (Praktisch) theologisch onderzoek zou gericht kunnen zijn op het verder verkennen van methoden om de *sensus fidelium* adequaat te onderzoeken met behulp van empirische methoden op om de plaats ervan binnen de 'dialogo van stemmen' die de theologie is te definiëren (11.3)

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INDEX

- Athenagoras, *103*
Balthasar, Hans Urs von, *64*
Bartholomew, *98, 115*
Bätzing, Georg, *55*
Bea, Augustin, *15, 89, 103, 105*
Benedict XV, *15*
Benedict XVI, *31, 48, 98, 116*
Bernardinis, Anke de, *43, 44*
Best, Thomas F., *51*
Bevans, Stephen B., *65, 70, 71*
Bianchi, Enzo (founding prior of Bose), *51, 52, 82, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 122, 126, 127, 141, 182*
Boersma, Hans, *64*
Bouillard, Henri, *64*
Bourgeois, Armand-François, *62, 105, 106*
Brendan, Daly, *31*
Cameron, Helen, *72, 73, 74, 79*
Casadei, Giulia, *37, 106*
Cencini, Amadeo, *117*
Chaput, Charles J., *42*
Chenu, Marie-Dominique, *64*
Clifford, Catherine, *22, 23, 29, 105*
Congar, Yves, *64, 81, 144, 160, 212*
Couturier, Paul, *25, 27*
Creemers, Jelle, *10, 11*
Daniélou, Jean, *64*
Dartel, Geert van, *22, 54, 55*
Daucourt, Gérard, *51*
Dillen, Annemarie, *5, 20, 21, 61, 65, 66, 69, 73*
Dotti, Guido, *117, 119, 120*
Eijk, Ton (A.H.C.) van, *54, 58*
Eijk, Willem Jacobus, *41, 45*
Evers, Jeanine, *76*
Fesquet, Henri, *215, 216, 256*
FitzGerald, Thomas E., *12*
Först, Johannes, *65, 66, 74, 77, 78*
Francis, Pope, *18, 33, 34, 35, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 57, 118, 150, 199, 225, 275, 276*
Fries, Heinrich, *3, 4, 253, 255, 257, 293, 300*
Ganzevoort, Ruard, *78*
Gärtner, Stefan, *20, 21, 61*
Ghislain (brother of Taizé), *105*
Giustetti, Massimo, *117*
Haslinger, Herbert, *69*
Healy, Nicholas M., *61, 62, 66, 67, 69, 73*

Heller, Dagmar, 11, 23, 24, 25, 305,
 308, 309, 312
 Hendriks, Johannes Willibrordus
 Maria, 40
 Hilberath, Bernd Jochen, 17, 23, 30,
 68, 69, 89
 Hoffmann, Veronika, 24, 29
 Joas, Hans, 65, 66
 John Paul II, 12, 18, 27, 39, 44, 48,
 49, 50, 116, 144, 171, 207, 216,
 259, 263
 John XXIII, 15, 18, 49, 52, 108
 Kasper, Walter, 3, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17,
 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 28, 29, 41, 42, 45,
 49, 50, 51, 61, 62, 67, 89, 90, 91,
 214, 215, 216, 256, 261, 269
 Kinnamon, Michael, 26
 Kirill, 98
 Koch, Kurt, 35, 55
 Ladaria, Luis, 34, 55
 Laplane, Sabine, 99, 100, 102, 103,
 104, 105, 106
 Léna, Marguerite, 104
 Leo XIII, 15
 Leppin, Volker, 55
 Löser, Alois (current prior of Taizé),
 49, 51, 81, 98, 108, 168, 169, 180,
 272
 Lubac, Henri de, 64
 Mainardi, Alberto (brother of
 Bose), 51, 52, 115, 116, 121
 Manicardi, Luciano (current prior
 of Bose), 82, 117
 Marti, Gerardo, 79
 Mayer, Annemarie C., 45
 Mayring, Philipp, 80, 88
 Meijers, Ton, 32
 Monet, Gabriel, 24, 25, 29
 Morrill, Bruce T., 13
 Mowat, Harriet, 76, 77, 90, 250
 Murray, Paul, 27, 28, 29, 33, 90, 266,
 267, 275
 Noble, Ivana, 30, 89, 258
 O'Loughlin, Thomas, 57, 275
 Palmisano, Stefania, 95, 96, 97, 102,
 291, 297
 Parolin, Pietro, 118
 Paul VI, 104, 105, 106
 Pecklers, Keith F., 116, 117, 121,
 122, 264
 Pellegrino, Michele, 117, 119, 182
 Peterson, William, 21
 Pius XI, 15
 Pius XII, 15
 Pizzey, Antonia, 26, 29
 Rahner, Johanna, 29, 30, 68
 Rahner, Karl, 3, 4, 64, 66, 67, 255
 Ratzinger, Joseph, 18, 36, 48, 49, 50,
 216, 232
 Rausch, Thomas P., 46, 56, 57
 Reardon, Ruth, 40, 41, 56
 Richard (brother of Taizé), 50
 Ricoeur, Paul, 78
 Rossi, Carlo, 117
 Sanders Gower, Nancy, 51, 98, 99
 Santos, Jason Brian, 99
 Sattler, Dorothea, 54, 267
 Scatena, Silvia, 98
 Schelkens, Karim, 15, 105, 106, 107
 Schillebeeckx, Edward, 64
 Schöttler, Heinz-Günther, 65, 66,
 77, 78
 Schüssler Fiorenza, Francis, 66, 67
 Schutz-Marsauche, Geneviève, 100
 Schutz-Marsauche, Roger Louis
 (founding prior of Taizé), 3, 25,
 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 62, 63, 96, 98, 99,
 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106,

108, 125, 126, 146, 147, 150, 158,
162, 165, 168, 170, 171, 185, 186,
189, 197, 198, 204, 207, 211, 214,
215, 216, 224, 232, 234, 256, 261,
269

Spickard, James, 77

Stevens, Bruce A., 79, 80, 275

Stransky, Thomas F., 16

Swinton, John, 69, 70, 76, 77, 84, 90,
250

Tavard, George H., 46, 47, 48, 262,
264

Thiessen, Gesa, 22, 29

Thijssen, Frans, 15

Thornberg, Robert, 85

Thurian, Max, 96, 104, 148, 150

Tjørhom, Ola, 20

Tveit, Olav Fykse, 98

Vanderwilt, Jeffrey, 32, 89

Ven, Johannes van der, 5, 76, 85

Visser 't Hooft, Willem Adolph, 13

Vries, Minke de, 51

Wijlens, Myriam, 17, 19, 31, 47, 48,
49, 262, 263, 272

Willebrands, Johannes, 15, 105,
106, 107, 314

Wirz, Matthias (brother of Bose),
51, 52

Witte, Henk, 46, 47

Woelki, Rainer Maria, 39, 40

Wouda, Fokke, 33, 37, 42, 62, 106

BIOGRAPHY

Fokke Wouda (1988) was born in Apeldoorn and currently lives in Deventer with his wife and two children. After taking classes in history and theology at universities of applied sciences (respectively at HU and CHE), he studied Reformed theology (BA) including preparatory classes in Greek and Roman cultures and languages at Theological University Kampen (Broederweg) and Catholic theology and religious studies (MA) at Tilburg University. His thesis completing the master's program 'Christianity and Society' already engaged with the topic of Eucharistic hospitality in Taizé. He currently works as curriculum coordinator at research school NOSTER (Netherlands Research School for Theology and Religious Studies). Nominated by the Dutch Bishops' Conference, he was appointed as representative of the Roman Catholic Church in the Committee on Faith and Ecclesial Community (Beraadgroep Geloof en Kerkelijke Gemeenschap) of the National Council of Churches in The Netherlands in 2021.

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This practical theological study explores Eucharistic hospitality in the ecumenical monastic communities of Taizé (Burgundy, France) and Bose (Piedmont, Italy). Tracing the theology embedded in this practice, it offers empirically grounded insights into the dynamics of Eucharistic hospitality and provides an innovative view on the *sensus fidei* on this point. As such, this study presents a relevant addition to the charged debate about this sensitive issue, challenging Roman Catholic theology to learn from the decades-long experience accumulated in the communities.

Fokke Wouda (1988) studied Reformed and Catholic theology and wrote this dissertation at Tilburg University, School of Catholic Theology. He participates in several ecumenical fora, including the Committee on Faith and Ecclesial Community (Beraadgroep Geloof en kerkelijke gemeenschap) of the National Council of Churches in The Netherlands

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