

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast

George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Eucharist and Ecumenism

The theology of the eucharist has long been the subject of heated debate, particularly since the Reformation. George Hunsinger's book explores ways in which Christians might resolve their differences in this area. With the aim of fostering ecumenical convergence, he tackles three key issues dividing the churches about the eucharist: real presence, eucharistic sacrifice, and ordained ministry.

Hunsinger, a Protestant theologian in the Reformed tradition, brings Eastern Orthodox views more systematically into the discussion than has been common in the West. He also discusses the social significance of the eucharist. His detailed conclusion summarizes and clarifies the argument as a whole with an eye to explaining how the views proposed in the book could lead the churches, beginning with the Reformed church, closer to the day when obstacles to eucharistic sharing are overcome.

GEORGE HUNSINGER is Hazel Thompson McCord Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is author of *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (2000) and *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (1991).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast

George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CURRENT ISSUES IN THEOLOGY

General Editor:

Iain Torrance

President and Professor of Patristics, Princeton Theological Seminary

Editorial Advisory Board:

David Ford *University of Cambridge*

Bryan Spinks *Yale University*

Kathryn Tanner *University of Chicago*

John Webster *University of Aberdeen*

There is a need among upper-undergraduate and graduate students of theology, as well as among Christian teachers and church professionals, for a series of short, focused studies of particular key topics in theology written by prominent theologians. *Current Issues in Theology* meets this need.

The books in the series are designed to provide a “state-of-the-art” statement on the topic in question, engaging with contemporary thinking as well as providing original insights. The aim is to publish books which stand between the static monograph genre and the more immediate statement of a journal article, by authors who are questioning existing paradigms or rethinking perspectives.

Other titles in the series:

Holy Scripture John Webster

The Just War Revisited Oliver O’Donovan

Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies? Nancey Murphy

Christ and Horrors Marilyn McCord Adams

Divinity and Humanity Oliver D. Crisp

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast

George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

GEORGE HUNSINGER

The Eucharist and Ecumenism

Let us Keep the Feast



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast

George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521719179

© George Hunsinger 2008

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Hunsinger, George.

The Eucharist and ecumenism: let us keep the feast / George Hunsinger.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-89486-9 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-71917-9 (pbk.)

1. Lord's Supper and Christian union. I. Title.

BX9 .5 .S2H86 2008

234'.163–dc22 2008012864

ISBN 978-0-521-89486-9 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-71917-9 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Unless otherwise stated, the scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast

George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast.

The Book of Common Prayer

(1 Cor. 5:7–8)

In memoriam

Thomas F. Torrance

doctor ecclesiae

honoris causa ad gradum

with heartfelt thanks for his life and work

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page viii</i>
Introduction: Ecumenical theology	1
Part I Real presence	19
1. The bread that we break: controversies	21
2. The iron in the fire: a proposal	47
Part II Eucharistic sacrifice	93
3. The sacrifice we offer: controversies	95
4. Christ our Passover: a proposal	128
Part III Eucharist and ministry	187
5. Eucharistic ministry: controversies	189
6. Eucharistic ministry: an impending impasse?	220
Part IV Eucharist and social ethics	245
7. The eucharistic transformation of culture	247
8. Nicene Christianity, the eucharist, and peace	279
Conclusion: Let us keep the feast	313
<i>Index</i>	333

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast

George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

As an undergraduate I took a course on the Ecumenical Movement from Robert McAfee Brown, who had been an observer in Rome during Vatican II. It was Brown who first made me see that a divided church was intolerable, though I remained skeptical about solutions. When I went to seminary, the Jesuits saved my theological education. Frs. Gerald O'Collins and George W. MacCrae of the Weston School of Theology combined piety and learning in a way that often seemed lacking in the ethos across the commons at the divinity school where I was enrolled. For a young Presbyterian ministerial student, it was an exercise in practical ecumenism. Then during my doctoral studies, by the sheer force of his example and teaching, another former observer in Rome, George A. Lindbeck, made the ecumenical agenda seem inescapable, though for me it remained a matter of peripheral vision, as I was more preoccupied in those days with the sorrows and outrages of an unconscionable war.

The virtues of Mercersberg theology for the Reformed tradition, with its effort to retrieve a more catholic understanding of the eucharist through the work of John Nevin, were kept before my eyes by Howard G. Hageman, president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, where I obtained my first academic post. Of course I had no idea at the time that these influences might be leading anywhere. Looking back, it seems that the turning point came in 1995 during a Lenten Bible study in my local congregation. Feeling that my New Testament Greek, never very good, was getting ever more rusty by the day, I took an interlinear volume with me to one of the sessions. To my surprise the word *koinonia*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast
George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

showed up in 1 Cor. 10:16. Could it be, I wondered, that the relationship between the bread and Christ's body might be one of mutual indwelling? Over time my hunch was reinforced by Luther, confirmed by Vermigli, and validated by Käsemann. I was headed down the trail that led to this book.

Through the kind invitation of Iain R. Torrance, later to become president at Princeton Theological Seminary, where I had joined the faculty, I was asked to lecture on the eucharist to the School of Divinity at the University of Aberdeen in 2003. Those lectures became the core of this volume. Great kindness was shown to my wife and me during our visit to the campus. I would especially like to thank John Webster, along with all the others, as well as Nicholas Thompson, whose guidance on the vexed matter of eucharistic sacrifice was most valuable. For assistance at various stages I would also like to thank my colleagues Sr. M. Paracleta Amrich, Brian Daley, Ralph Del Colle, Dawn De Vries, Theodor Dieter, George Parsenios, Michael Root, Bryan Spinks, Geoffrey Wainwright, Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, Randall Zachman, Philip Ziegler, and members of the Duodecim Theological Society. Kate Brett and Gillian Dadd, my savvy editors, oversaw the publication process with grace and seasoned judgment. Kathy Whalen aided greatly in the preparation of the diagrams. Finally, this work could never have been completed without the loving support and encouragement of my friend and colleague Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, with whom I enjoy the added blessing of being married.

Three special influences stand out for me. Though I have remained only on the periphery of their work, the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology served to concentrate my mind. The interventions of Carl Braaten in particular helped me to see that Christian worship is essentially eucharistic worship or it is not Christian worship at all.

The Episcopal Church at Yale, through the innovative ministries of Richard Fabian and Donald Schell, enhanced my

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-89486-9 - The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let us Keep the Feast

George Hunsinger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

love for *The Book of Common Prayer* while also expanding my horizons about what a liturgy could be. The work they began in those days later morphed into San Francisco's St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church, where I was happy to rediscover them after a lapse of many years. Their insights, which have graced me with the richest eucharistic experiences of my life, are described in the conclusion.

Finally, towering in my mind above all others is Thomas F. Torrance. Without him I suspect that as a Reformed theologian, I might never have seen how to get from there to here regarding the eucharist, namely, from Karl Barth to something like the ecumenical center. Many of the leading themes in this book – *koinonia* relations, their formal structuring by the Chalcedonian pattern, transelementation, eucharistic sacrifice as the exclusive work of Christ, the dimension of depth, the imperative of women's ordination, the paschal mystery, the preeminence of Eastern Orthodoxy, and more – all have their roots in his work. The book is dedicated to his memory.