

DOUBLE ACTION: EUCHARIST & MISSION

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This Thinksheet looks toward the Leaders' Oriestation session--9.15pm 5Oct87 in the Craigville Tabernacle--for

Craigville Theological Colloquy IV: "The Eucharist/Communion in the UCC"

This segment correlates the theme with the UCC-Synod-adopted "Statement of Mission," which appears here but also on the "Texts Sheet," p.9 of the precolloquy workbook:

1. How is the Mission Statement to serve during the Colloquy? On p.9 (my #2172), I say as REMINDER & as CONTEXT: "The Statement, though not formally on our agenda, provides (a) a reminder that the Colloquy seeks to serve our church's mission, and (2) a verbal CONTEXT

As people of the United Church of Christ, affirming our Statement of Faith, we seek within the Church Universal to participate in God's mission and to follow the way of the crucified and risen Christ.

- Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called and commit ourselves
1. to praise God, confess our sin, and joyfully accept God's forgiveness;
 2. to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our suffering world;
 3. to embody God's love for all people;
 4. to hear and give voice to Creation's cry for justice and peace;
 5. to name and confront the powers of evil within and among us;
 6. to repent our silence and complicity with the forces of chaos and death;
 7. to preach and teach with the power of the Living Word;
 8. to join oppressed and troubled people in the struggle for liberation;
 9. to work for justice, healing, and wholeness of life;
 10. to embrace the unity of Christ's church;
 11. to discern and celebrate the present and coming reign of God.

for interrelating our church's mission and the Colloquy's agenda." A warning: Your group would find it easy, too easy, to slip from creative wrestling with the theme over into discursive commentation on the Statement. While this Thinksheet is, proper to my assignment in the Leaders' Orientation, an ellipse with the theme as one focus & the Statement as the other, your group-work should be a circle, the theme in the center.

2. The biblical faith, in both its forms (the religions of Judaism and Christianity), is rooted in history & fruits in history-shaping action. Within or beyond our faith's institutions, we view as betrayal either of the alternative types, viz, (1) psychocentric (the agenda being the dealings & destiny of the soul), and (2) ecclesiocentric (the agenda being limited to self-referential benefits). Thus, correlating Eucharist & Mission is a given: "Do this" & "Go into all the world" are (as the Thinksheet's first two words suggest) not two actions but a continuous action, "double action" in the one Spirit at the behest of the one Lord. In this perspective, in the light of this essential doctrine, your group's operative question vis-a-vis the theme/Statement correlation should be something like this: Where in our Eucharist sources (NT, but also liturgical materials from our four UCC traditions) do we see latent what is patent in the Statement? And a Borkish chaser: For everything in Mission today, must there be warrant in our Eucharist sources? If so, why? If not, why not? And two critical-consciousness followups: (1) In light of our Eucharist sources, is anything wrong with the Statement? If so, what? (2) Can-should we use the Statement to improve our eucharistic liturgies, including those in the new UCC Book of Worship? If so, specifically how?

Now here are some INTERROGATIVE THOUGHT-STARTERS & some NOTES ON THE STATEMENT (ref. as "Preamble" or 1-11 actions).

3. Has anybody in your group made any public use of the Statement? If so, in connection with the celebration-interpretation of the Lord's Supper-Eucharist-Communion?

4. Bill Coffin's resignation sermon (19July87) had this: "Christian life is love in search of form." Does this bridge Eucharist/Mission?

5. Ask you group this: What themes are in the Statement's 11 actions?

Please respond with one word for each theme & state by number; eg, "justice" is in 4,5,6,8,9....In your opinion, does the Statement leave out any theme(s) you consider essential to Christian Mission? If so, does the theme or themes you suggest exist in our Eucharist sources?

6. As our UCC Book of Worship shows (p.161), joining a UCC church requires submission to "Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior" (as does baptism: p.149). Is getting people to make this sub-mission part of "God's mission" (Latin *missio*, ie, what God "sends" us to do)? If so, why does it appear neither in our Statement of Mission nor in the 1987 Synod-adopted Statement of Faith? If not, why do we require it both for baptism & for the reception of members? Something funny, & not funny, going on here in language--as also in the internal contradiction that the Statement of Mission, while challenging us "to follow the way of" Jesus, does not follow him (nor does the 1987 Statement of Faith!) in his favorite way of addressing God, viz, "Father." Which brings me to:

7. Does the Statement of Mission adequately describe--in light of our Eucharist sources--the action side of what it calls "the Gospel of Jesus Christ"? If not, what's (1) left out? (2) underplayed? (3) overplayed? (4) ideologically tilted? Eg, as to (4), note that the action #1 "confess our sin" (parallel with "repent" in action #6) is not carried over into preaching (actions #2 & #7; in #2, it could be carried over by some such phrase as "our SINNING AND suffering world"); and, in action #3, we are asked to "embody" lopsidedly, as though Mission functions to bring to "all people" an embodied tangency of only one aspect of the divine nature, viz, "love"--though the Prophets & our Lord Jesus, in calling upon the people(s) to repent, were embodying the holiness-righteousness-judgment of God as well as the divine love; and, in Action #5, we are not called on to "name and confront...evil" beyond the UCC ("us" being controled by the Statement's first phrase); and, in action #6, where our Christian tradition would have "sin and death," the Statement has "chaos and death" (& would we not, sometimes, be fighting against God in opposing certain "forces of chaos?"); and, in action #8, what's being said in addition to what's said, cumulatively, in #4, #6, & #9? (How do the code-words of #8 function in relation to the rest of the Statement: "oppressed and troubled" by what? "liberation" from what?)....My hermeneutics of suspicion vis-a-vis (4) raises some disturbing, challenging questions as we interconfront the Eucharist & the UCC. Eg: (a) How shall we shape & use the Eucharist so as to honor "God's mission" as it stands within, but also over against, our mission as persons, congregations, associations, the UCC, & the local-&-larger conciliar parallels? (b) How are we to use the Eucharist (as sources & traditions) to critique & redesign continuously our "participation in God's mission"?

8. Ask your group whether any have ever participated in a eucharistic mission or a mission eucharist (without yourself further detailing either). Together, how would you design such?

9. Mission confronts us with issues of eucharistic devotion (our UCC spirituality theme), discipline (whom should an "inclusive" church exclude?), & doctrine-formation (Greek *doxasis*, antonym of *praxis*: what's the intershaping of Eucharist & Mission as both of them the impression/expression of faith & the Faith?)....ACTION is both the process & the logic of the Supper (see Wm.Law's A SERIOUS CALL)....The Supper is the drama whose logic is the deed (mission)....Since the Supper's ORDER looks to FREEDOM for & in mission, to what extent should that function influence that form?....The Eucharist as covenant, con-tract, com-pact....The Supper is remembering Whose we are: Mission is reminding the world Whose it is. The eucharistic revolution includes confronting the world at points where it's under the illusion that it's its own.