

Laurent Cleenerck. *His Broken Body: Understanding and Healing the Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches*. Washington, DC: Euclid University Consortium Press, 2008. 448 pp. Paperback \$26.

Can Eucharistic ecclesiology introduced by twentieth century Russian exiles be traced to Patristic sources and considered a framework capable of resolving interfaith issues? Does Eucharistic ecclesiology address the problem of the communion between churches and the relations of primacy and supremacy? Can it offer a workable solution to the unification of the divided “body of Christ”? While Laurent Cleenerck boldly attempts to answer these questions, his interpretations are not without their shortcomings.

The author renders Nicolai Afanasiev’s Eucharistic ecclesiology as a model for the ecumenical dialogue that aims to heal the schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Yet, he does so without attributing this notion to Afanasiev. Nevertheless, Cleenerck characterizes this model as “holographic,” following Michael Talbot’s definition of the nature of a hologram as “whole in every part.” Accordingly, the main thesis of Eucharistic ecclesiology—“where the Eucharist is, there is the Church” - locates the unity of the Church in the Eucharistic celebrations led by the bishop. Where the Eucharist is celebrated, the Church in its fullness (*kat’holon*) is manifested on earth. The Catholic Church, therefore, “is the local Eucharistic assembly gathered around its bishop.” Bishops are considered equal to one another as all inherit the chair of St. Peter. While this relation is ontological and pertaining to the very being of the Church, all superstructures are functional, and subject to change and development. The relationship of communion between local churches and various primacies of particular bishops are historically determined and subject to place, time, and context. The priority is thus given to Eucharist over the canon law. Under this model a “Universal church” is “not a Eucharistic assembly and therefore not ‘a Church’” but “a structure of communion among Churches.”

The author presents Eucharistic ecclesiology as authentic to Eastern Orthodoxy and juxtaposes it with the universal ecclesiology of the Latin Church. The latter defines the unity of the Church based on the universality of its historical manifestations sealed by the authority of the universal bishop, the one of Rome who is the only legitimate successor of St. Peter. The issue of ecclesiastical authority is thus a major point of disagreement between the churches.

In five sections Cleenewerck delineates the commonalities between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches as well the division lines that led them to the break of communion during the Great Schism of 1054 AD. The author analyzes the ecclesiological, historical, and theological traditions of the Churches, with ecclesiology being the main concern. Finally, the author puts forth a list of contentious issues as well as workable solutions to the reestablishment of the unity of the Church through the reestablishment of communion between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The key preliminary step seems to be the one associated with the possibility of adoption of Eucharistic ecclesiology by the Roman Catholic Church.

There are many unsubstantiated claims made by the author of this book. For instance, statements such as: “Eastern Orthodoxy is plagued by excessive nationalism, liturgical decay, and doctrinal fluctuations,” are negative stereotypes and offensive to the Orthodox mind. The quest for reestablishing communion between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches is included in the same discussion as the forthcoming break of communion between the patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople. This section raises some questions about the author’s purpose in juxtaposing these events. Is Cleenewerck attempting to portray the Eastern Church in a negative, schismatic light? This book should be read with caution and its statements should not be taken for granted.

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