

The Eucharist 3

The Eucharist as the Presence of Christ

Introduction

The Last Supper

...the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,

‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying

‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25 NRSV)

Introduction

Four Accounts

- Four accounts of the words of institution (earliest to latest):
 - **Paul:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-25
 - **Mark** (20 yrs. after Paul): Mark 14:22-25
 - **Matthew** (20+ yrs. After Mark): Matt. 26:26-29
 - **Luke** (20+ yrs. After Mark): Luke 22:14-20

Introduction

Four Accounts

- Words over the bread:
 - All four agree **“This is my body”**
 - only Matthew has an explicit command to eat
- Words over the wine
 - Mark and Matthew: **“this is my blood of the covenant”**
 - Paul and Luke: **“this cup is the new covenant in my blood.”**
 - More likely the original language

Introduction

John's Eucharistic Theology

“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.

Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:48-58

NRSV)

Introduction

Questions

- **“This is my body,” “This is my blood,”
“Those who eat my flesh and drink my
blood abide in me and I in them”**
- What do such statements mean?
 - We aren't cannibals. It's not “literally” what we are doing
 - It's not purely “symbolic.” Christ is “present” in some “real” way

Introduction

Questions

- The Eucharist as a **sacrament** involves:
 - an **“outward, visible sign”**
 - **Matter:** bread and wine
 - **Form:** broken, poured, eaten, drunk
 - that is a “door,” a “window” to
 - an **“inward and spiritual grace”** (*res*) = the presence of Christ within us
- In the Eucharist, we affirm the Christ is also “really present” in the **matter** of the **“outward, visible sign”**. But “really present” how?

Views in the Early Church

Cyril of Jerusalem, 350 AD

[Jesus Christ] by his own will once changed water into wine at Cana in Galilee. So why should we not believe that he can change wine into blood? . . .

We should therefore have full assurance that we are sharing in the body and blood of Christ. For in the type of bread, his body is given to you, and in the type of wine, his blood is given to you, so that by partaking of the body and blood of Christ you may become of one body and one blood with him.

From Catechetical Lectures given to those preparing for Baptism

Views in the Early Church

Augustine, 354-430 AD

That which you see is bread and the cup, which even your eyes declare to you; but as to that in which your faith demands instruction, the bread is the body of Christ, the cup is the blood of Christ...

... these things are called sacraments for this reason, that in them one thing is seen, another thing is understood.”

Sermon, 272

Views in the Early Church

John of Damascus, 665-749 AD

And now you ask how the bread becomes the body of Christ, and the wine and the water become the blood of Christ. I shall tell you. The Holy Spirit comes upon them, and achieves things which surpass every word and thought...

Let it be enough for you to understand that this takes place by the Holy Spirit.

When we affirm the “real
presence” of Jesus in the
bread and wine,
what do we mean by
“presence”
and
“real”?

“Presence”

- Local Presence
 - Presence in a particular place
- Temporal Presence
 - Presence at a particular time or moment
- Personal Presence
 - A presence in which a communication takes place between two persons
 - Does not necessarily require a meeting in time and space

“Presence”

- The multiple presence of Christ in the Eucharist:
 - There is a gospel reading, so **Christ is present in the Word**
 - Christ is the true presiding minister, so **Christ is present in the human minister** who stands in for him
 - Eucharistic community is made one body with Christ, so **Christ is present in the community**
 - After the words of institution, **Christ is present in the bread and wine**

“Presence”

- Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is a personal presence which may be *focused* in the bread and wine but is *not* localized to the bread and wine
- **“On any natural reading of the words ‘This is my body’ or ‘This is my blood’, the demonstrative pronoun must be taken as referring to the bread and wine. We must not, however, wrench the focus out of its context. The bread and wine are not to be taken out of the human, personal situation in which they have their being as the body and blood of Christ.”** (Macquarrie, p. 127)

“Real”

■ Physical Reality

- A thing is what it is because of its atomic and molecular structure
- No one claims that the molecular structure of bread and wine are changed to the molecular structure of flesh and blood
- Jesus is not “really present” in the sense of “physically really” “present”

“Real”

- Non-physical Reality = “Metaphysical” Reality
 - The “World of Ideas”
 - Love
 - “Good” and “Evil”
 - Mathematics
 - Meaning, Purpose

Real Presence

Theologies of the Real Presence

- **Transubstantiation**
- **Consubstantiation**
- **Transignification and Transfinalization**

Real Presence

Transubstantiation

- Thomas Aquinas, 1224-1274
- Based on Aristotle's view of reality: all matter has two qualities:
 - 1. **accidents**: its outward appearance, color, shape
 - 2. **substance**: its essential nature.
 - A horse is a horse because it partakes of the **substance** of "horseness"
 - A chair is a chair because it partakes of the **substance** of "chairness"
 - Bread is bread because it partakes of the **substance** of "breadness"
 - "Horseness", "chairness," "breadness" are metaphysical realities

Real Presence

Transubstantiation

- At the moment of consecration of the bread and wine, a miracle occurs:
 - The **substance** of the bread is changed to the **substance** of the body of Christ
 - The **accidents** of the bread remain unchanged
 - The **substance** of the wine is changed to the **substance** of the blood of Christ
 - The **accidents** of the wine remain unchanged

Real Presence

Consubstantiation

- Luther's view:
 - The **substance** of *both* bread and the body of Christ are present *together* in the bread (Christ is present "in, with, and under" the bread)
 - The **accidents** of the bread remain unchanged
 - How the **substance** of both bread and the body of Christ can be together is a mystery. Analogy (from Origen, 185-254)
 - A piece of iron placed in a fire begins to glow
 - In that glowing iron, both *iron* and *heat* are present together

Real Presence

Transsignification, Transfinalization

- Edward Schillebeeckx, 1960's
- Based on the view of reality that the identity of a thing is based on:
 - Its **atomic** and **molecular structure**
 - Its **meaning** or **significance** within the context in which it is used
 - Its **purpose** or **end goal** (“finality”) within the context in which it is used
- **Meaning / significance, purpose /end goal** of a thing have a metaphysical reality

Real Presence

Transsignification, Transfinalization

- At the moment of consecration of the bread and wine, a miracle occurs:
 - The **meaning / significance** of the bread and wine changes. They no longer **mean / signify food**, but they **mean / signify Christ**
 - The **end goal (“finality”) / purpose** of bread and wine changes. The **end goal / purpose** of *physical nourishment* is replaced by the **end goal / purpose** of *spiritual nourishment*

A Last Word

John of Damascus, 665-749 AD

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References

- **A Guide to the Sacraments**, John Macquarrie, Chapters 12. Continuum Publishing, New York, 1997
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