

# The Eucharist 4

## The Eucharist as Sacrifice

# **Sacrifice**

## **Meaning**

# Sacrifice

## Meaning

- Ancient and universal religious practice
  - Present in both pagan and ancient Jewish religious practice
- Associated in popular imagination with killing of animals, bloodshed
- Essence: the offering of something to God
  - Fruits of the earth
  - Praise and thanksgiving of a worshipper

# Sacrifice

## Meaning

- Sacrifice evinces the recognition of a human obligation to a reality beyond humankind (Walter Burkert)
- Fundamental purpose of a sacrifice is the bestowal, continuation, or renewal of life

# **Sacrifice**

## **The Sacrifices in the Eucharist**

# Sacrifice

## The Sacrifices in the Eucharist

- 1. Sacrifice / self-offering of Jesus
- 2. Sacrifices / offerings of the worshippers participating in the Eucharist

These two sacrifices are intimately related

**Sacrifices in the  
Eucharist:  
The Self-offering  
of Jesus**

# **Sacrifices in the Eucharist**

**The Self-offering of Jesus**

**The Last Supper and the Passover**



# The Self-offering of Jesus

## The Last Supper and the Passover

- The Last Supper occurred either
  - The day of Passover
  - The day before Passover (the day when the sacrificial lambs were killed)
- *Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke*: Last Supper a Passover Feast
- *Gospel of John*: Last Supper the day before Passover

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## The Last Supper and the Passover

- The original Passover (Exodus)
  - Lamb was killed and its blood placed on the lintel and doorposts of each house
  - The angel of the Lord sent to slay the firstborn of the Egyptians passed over houses displaying the blood
- The Rite of Passover must be observed in all future years

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## The Last Supper and the Passover

**“You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. When you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this observance,’ you shall say, ‘It is the passover sacrifice to the LORD. . . .’”**

**(NRSV Exodus 12:24-27)**

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## The Last Supper and the Passover

- The blood of the Passover lambs secured deliverance for the Israelites
- The early Church very soon saw Jesus' death as Jesus offering himself as the sacrificial lamb of the New Covenant
  - **“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”** (Mark 14:24, NRSV)

# **Sacrifices in the Eucharist:** **The Self-offering of Jesus**

**Remembrance =**

***Anamnesis* =**

**Re-presenting**

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Remembrance = *Anamnesis*

- In Paul and Matthew's account of the Last Super, Jesus says:

**“Do this in remembrance of me”**

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Remembrance = *Anamnesis*

- Remembrance = Greek *Anamnesis*
  - Word carried a strong meaning:
    - Not a simple remembering
    - But a **re-presenting**, a **making present again**
    - “The past event is recalled and experienced so that its significance and power are known and felt as if the event were present” (Macquarrie)

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## *Anamnesis = Re-presenting*

- The **re-presenting** in the Eucharist of the Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross is not intended to be a “psychological trick” to aid the worshippers



# The Self-offering of Jesus

## *Anamnesis = Re-presenting*

- The **re-presenting** in the Eucharist of the Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross reflects a metaphysical reality:
  - Calvary was not merely a historical reality in space-time, but an event “**slain from the foundation of the world.**” (Rev. 13:8)
  - All moments of space-time are eternally present to God, including Jesus' suffering and death at Calvary
  - Jesus' act of self-giving or self-emptying is an eternally present characteristic of God

# **Sacrifices in the Eucharist**

**The Self-offering of Jesus**

**Reasons for Jesus' Sacrifice**

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Reasons for Jesus' Sacrifice

- We believe that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross helps makes possible our salvation
  - Just as the sacrifice of the Passover lambs made possible the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt
- But how? How did / how does Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross make our salvation possible?

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Reasons for Jesus' Sacrifice

- **Victory Over the Devil Theory.** One of the “Christ the Victor” (*Christus Victor*) theories
  - Devil had gotten rights over fallen humanity
  - Rights could not be forfeited unless the devil exceeded his authority
  - God sent Jesus into the world, divine and sinless, but in the form of a sinful human being (“*bait*”)
  - Devil took the “*bait*” and tried to claim rights over the divine and sinless Jesus, thus exceeding his authority (the devil got caught on the “*hook*”)

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Reasons for Jesus' Sacrifice

- **Victory Over the Devil Theory** (a version of *Christus Victor*)
  - Problems:
    - How could the devil get rights over humanity?
    - Why would God be under any obligation to respect them?
    - God is righteous and would *never* deceive – not even the devil

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Reasons for Jesus' Sacrifice

### ■ Satisfaction Theory

- God's sense of justice demands some *satisfaction* or *penance* for the sins of humanity
- Jesus, both divine and human, stood in for us, accepted our guilt and our deserved punishment, and thus satisfied God's sense of justice
- *Problems:*
  - How could it be "just" for one human being to stand in and bear the penalties due another?
  - God is not beholden to any "law of justice" that is greater than God's self

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Reasons for Jesus' Sacrifice

- Peter Abelard (1079-1142) suggested Jesus' sacrifice was not *necessary*, but rather *illustrative*
  - Jesus' death on the cross *illustrates* for us God's love for us, and so moves us to love of God in return.
  - It is this love of God that we are moved to that saves us

# The Self-offering of Jesus

## Reasons for Jesus' Sacrifice

“Our redemption through the suffering of Christ is that deeper love within us which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but also secures for us the true liberty of the children of God, in order that we might do all things out of love rather than out of fear...”

- Peter Abelard



**Sacrifices in the  
Eucharist:  
The Offerings  
of the Worshipppers**

# Offerings of the Worshippers

## Basis

- Paul:

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1 NRSV)**

- Augustine:

- **The mystery of yourselves is laid upon the table of the Lord**

# Offerings of the Worshipers

## What we can offer

- The mystery of ourselves
- Our thanksgiving and praise

# Offerings of the Worshippers

## What we can offer

**“For first we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; then next we plead and represent before the Father the sacrifice of the cross, and by it we confidently entreat remission of sins and all other benefits of the Lord’s passion for all the whole church; and lastly we offer the sacrifice of ourselves to the creator of all things. . . .”**

- *Saepius Officio* (reply of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to Pope Leo XIII, who in 1897 condemned Anglican orders because Anglicans allegedly do not offer a sacrifice in the Eucharist)

# **Sacrifices in the Eucharist:**

**The Relationship  
between the Self-  
offering of Jesus and  
the offerings of the  
Worshippers**

# The Relationship Between the Sacrifices

- Eucharist as a Meal:
  - **“Horizontal” bond** between the participants
  - **“Vertical” bond** between the participants and Christ
- Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ
  - Christ is the **inward, spiritual grace** that comes to us in the sacrament, as well as “really present” in the **outward, visible signs** of bread and wine

# The Relationship Between the Sacrifices

- There is a **“mutual indwelling”** of Christ and the Eucharistic participants:
  - **“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.”** (John 6:56 NRSV)
  - Prayer of Humble Access: **“Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him and he is us ...”**

# The Relationship Between the Sacrifices

- Because of our **mutual indwelling**, our own sacrifices
  - are not separate offerings, but
  - are offerings made *in union with Jesus Christ*,
  - offerings in which we are part of the *Body of Christ* (= Christ and worshippers of all ages, mutually indwelling, with Christ as the “head”), and hence
  - are offerings which are interfused in some sense with Jesus’ own self-offering on the Cross



# References

- **A Guide to the Sacraments**, John Macquarrie, Chapter 13. Continuum Publishing, New York, 1997
- **Christian Theology, An Introduction, Third Edition**. Chapter 13, “The Doctrine of Salvation in Christ,” Alister E. McGrath, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2001.