

**SYSTEMATIC
THEOLOGY
502
DISTANCE**

EUCHARIST

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EUCCHARIST

The word Eucharist comes from the Greek word εὐχαριστία meaning thanksgiving and the verb εὐχαριστέω meaning to give thanks.

- The Eucharist as it first appears in the gospels is Christ's reformation of the Paschal (Passover) Supper celebrating the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Jesus changes this paschal feast, implying that his body and blood are that of the paschal lamb that covers humankind and removes them from God's judgment.
- The Eucharistic Words of Jesus
 - The Eucharistic words of Jesus show at least two distinct traditions concerning the words of Jesus
 - The first is the Matthew and Mark tradition
 - The second line of traditions stems from Luke and Paul
 - The Johannine understanding of the Eucharist is found in "The Bread of Life Discourse" of John 6
- Agape to Eucharist
 - Scholars generally agree that one of the most significant facets of early eucharistic theology was the separation of the agape meal from what we now know as the Eucharist
 - The factions at Corinth caused a division over the Lord's Supper, according to St Paul, because 'each on goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk.' (1 Cor 1:11-21)
 - St admonishes the Corinthian to eat and drink at home before coming to the Lord's Supper (v. 22).
 - This problem is most likely what led to the separation of the *agape* meal or love feast from that of the Eucharist.
 - So already in the New Testament we see the Passover transformed into a love feast and this then transformed into something akin to what we know as the Eucharist (i.e., a meal of bread and wine in small quantities).



EUCCHARIST AS MEMORIAL

In the Eucharist there is a recalling, memorializing, and remembrance or (*anamnēsis*) of Christ's death and resurrection.

- The phrases 'Do this . . . in remembrance (ἀνάμνησιν) of me' (1 Cor 11:25)
 - The word 'remembrance' (*anamnēsin*) is the bringing into the present of a past event.
 - This is not merely a bringing to mind of what once has happened but a recalling of Christ as he is personally active and present among the congregation of the baptized
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- Eucharist as Gospel Act
 - 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).
 - In this recalling of Christ death and resurrection, there was also a looking forward to the second resurrection of the dead with the coming of the Messiah
 - In this sense, the Eucharist was both backward looking and forward looking
 - It looked back to the death and resurrection of Christ, yet it look forward to his coming again.



EUCCHARIST AS PARTICIPATION

The Eucharist is viewed by Paul as a participation (κοινωνία) in Christ.

- Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (κοινωνία) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation (κοινωνία) in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread. Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?' (1 Cor 10:14-18.)
 - As the pagans who sacrificed to their gods participate in that sacrifice, so too a Christian who participates in the sacrifice of the altar participates in that sacrifice
 - For Christians this means that anyone who participates in the eucharistic feast, participates in Christ himself AND the fellow body of Christians who are the body of Christ
 - The Eucharist is understood as participating in that spiritual communion that exists between God and human beings in Jesus Christ
- The Nature of Eucharistic Participation in Christ
 1. There is a participation in the fleshly body of Christ through the Eucharist
 2. Since there is a participation in the very fleshly body of Christ, there is also a participation in the mystical body of Christ called the Church
 3. Paul warns that profaning the Eucharist can result in bodily sickness and death.
 - As Paul says, 'Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.'" (1 Cor 11:27-30)
- Christ's Real Presence
 - Christ is really present in the Eucharist according to St. Paul.
 - There are also real effects mediated by the Eucharist; it is a sharing in Christ's resurrected humanity, his flesh
 - For St Paul one either receives Christ as judge or savior



THE EUCHARIST IN HISTORY

- On the basis of the writings of St. Paul the early Church considered Christ to be present in the Eucharist. The wine was Christ's blood, the bread was Christ's body. However, what was not so clear was the mode of Christ's presence.
 - The Didache (c. 70ad) calls the Eucharist 'spiritual food and drink' (1.380),
 - Ignatius (112 ad) calls it the 'medicine of immortality' (Eph 20),
 - Justin (c. 100–165) says 'We receive the elements not as common bread and common drink' (Apol. 1.66),
 - Gregory of Nyssa says that Christ, 'tranelements the natural quality of these visible things to that immortal thing' (Cathe. Or. 7).
 - It can be concluded based upon their teachings that early Church Fathers taught the real presence of Christ
- Mode of Transformation
 - The mode of transformation remains a mystery in the early Church
- Moment of Transformation as Words of Institution (Western Church)
 - Tertullian states, "Taking bread and distributing it to his disciples he made it his own body by saying, "This is my body." On the other hand, there would not have been a figure unless there was a true body." (Against Marcion IV.40)
 - Cyprian says, "When Christ says, "I am the true vine," the blood of Christ is certainly not water but wine. Neither is it possible to see that his blood by which we are redeemed and made alive is in the cup when there is absent from the cup the wine by which the blood of Christ is shown forth. (Epistle 62[63]:2).
 - Ambrose states, "But this bread is bread before the words of the sacraments. When consecration has been added, from bread it becomes the body of Christ. Let us, therefore, prove his. How is it possible for that which is bread to be the body of Christ? By consecration. In whose words then is the consecration? Those of the Lord Jesus. [Ambrose then quotes the words of consecration and says] "Before the words of Christ the cup is full of wine and water. When the words of Christ have operated, then is made the blood which redeems the people. (On the Sacraments 4.4.14–5.23)
- Moment of Transformation as Epiclesis (Eastern Church)
 - St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, "We beseech the loving God to send forth the Holy Spirit upon what is offered in order that he may make the bread the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ. For whatever the Holy Spirit touches he sanctifies and changes." (Catechetical Lectures 23:7)



REAL PRESENCE ROMAN

CATHOLIC

- The Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist is called Transubstantiation. As its name implies, transubstantiation refers to a transformation of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.
 - Thomas Aquinas held that the substance of the bread and wine changed
 - At the same time the accidents or appearance of the bread and wine remained
 - St Thomas thought it fitting that the whole substance of the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ and that none of the natural substance remained
 - The efficacy of the sacraments is *ex opere operato* or 'by the work preformed' meaning that grace is given when properly exercised
- St Thomas and Aristotle's Hylomorphic Theory (i.e., *hylo* meaning matter, *morph* meaning form in Greek)
 - St Thomas used ancient Aristotelian metaphysics to explain transubstantiation
 - Aristotle held that a Form + Matter = Substance
 - The form of the Eucharist was the words of institution (i.e., 'take eat this is my body', Hoc est corpus Meum)
 - The matter of the Eucharist was the bread and wine
 - The substance of the Eucharist was Christ's body and blood
- The Council of Trent
 - The Council of Trent (1545-63) adopted the Thomistic understanding as the faith of the Roman Catholic Church
 - 'If anyone says that in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denies that wonderful and singular change of the whole substance of the bread into the body and the whole substance of the wine into blood, the appearance only of bread and wine remaining, which change the Catholic Church most aptly calls transubstantiation, let him be anathema.' (Trent, 13.2)
 - Trent made it of the faith (de fide) to hold that nothing of the natural substances of the bread and wine remained



REAL PRESENCE LUTHERAN

The Lutheran understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is called consubstantiation. The word 'consubstantiation' did not originate with Luther but was a pejorative term that eventually became adopted by Lutherans. (It was pejorative because it implied that in the Eucharist Christ's body and blood became one with the bread and wine.)

- Luther preferred to speak of Christ 'in, with, and under' the bread and wine
- Visible Words
 - Luther adopted St Augustine's phrase of Sacraments as 'visible words'
 - By this Luther meant a Gospel word of promise (lit. as verse of Scripture) plus an outward sign made a sacrament (Word of Promise + Sign = Sacrament)
 - As Luther said, 'Note, well, therefore, that baptism is water with the Word of God, and not my faith. My faith does not make the baptism but receives the baptism, no matter whether the person being baptized believes or not; for baptism is not dependent upon my faith but upon God's Word.'
 - Ubiquity based on the *communicatio idiomatum* was how Luther explained Christ's presence at the right hand of God and on a thousand altars at once
- Effectual Promises of God
 - The promise contained in the Eucharist were Christ's words 'for the forgiveness of sins' (Matt 26:28)
 - God's promises are effective because God's Word cannot be broken
 - As Luther says, 'You see, therefore, that what we call the mass is a promise made by God for the remission of our sins; a promise which was confirmed by the death of the Son of God.'



REAL PRESENCE CALVINIST

- The Calvinist view of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is called virtualism. The word virtualism refers to Christ's presence by the power (virtus) of the Holy Spirit.
 - It is often called a spiritual presence meaning a presence through the power of the Holy Spirit
- The Substance of Christ
 - Calvin asserts that because the Spirit makes Christ present in his humanity there is a substantial (substantia) communication of Christ to the Christian.
 - 'When I say that the flesh and blood of Christ are substantially offered and exhibited to us in the Supper, I at the same time explain the mode, namely, that the flesh of Christ becomes vivifying to us, inasmuch as Christ, by incomprehensible virtue (*virtute*) of his Spirit, transfuses his own proper life into us from the substance of his flesh, so that he himself lives in us, and his life is common to us.'
- Modern Calvinists
 - Many modern Calvinist, such as Hodge, have taken Calvin to task for having too high a theology of Christ's presence in the Eucharist



REAL ABSENCE ANABAPTIST

The Anabaptist view of the Eucharist rejects any notion of Christ's real presence. Instead the Eucharist is a memorial in the sense that it reminds the believer of a past event of Christ's death for our sins upon the cross.

- Memorial
 - The memorial view holds that the sacraments are not sacraments at all, rather they are called ordinances. Baptism and the Eucharist are not means of grace. Instead Baptism and the Eucharist are to be carried out because Christ commanded us to do them.

