



# Instructed Eucharist—Part 2

## The Holy Communion

### Background of Holy Communion

#### The Last Supper

Accounts of the Last Supper occur in the 3 Gospels: Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-22 and in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. John's Gospel refers to the supper but does not describe what happens. All accounts are slightly different. Matthew and Mark agree almost word for word. Luke combines traditions and adds additional words.

#### A Passover meal?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke write as if the Last Supper was the Passover meal, but John the Supper happening the night before. But most theologians agree that the Passover is the theological background to the Last Supper.

A feature of the Passover Meal is that the host identifies some of the food with the Passover of the Lord which the Jewish people ate when they came out of Egypt.

At the Last Supper, this would have been on everyone's mind when Jesus took bread and made a different identification "This is my body...this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

From this point of view, The Last Supper is a sign of the kingdom of God.

#### Early Eucharists

Following the crucifixion, the risen Christ showed himself to his followers and on many of these occasions, he appeared at meals of the faithful. The disciples continued to eat their common meals together as Jewish religious fellowship meals or Chaburoth. As they did so, they recalled the many occasions when Jesus broke bread with them. They began to understand that through these common meals the risen Christ intended to give his disciples a sign of his presence and a foretaste of the kingdom of God. 'Do this in remembrance of me'. More than this because Christ is present in these meals. Through Christ, communion with God restored, therefore the death of Christ recognized as a sacrifice—once and for all sacrifice signifying the obedience of Jesus' life and death.

## **Move from full meal to ritualized sharing of bread and wine**

Biblical scholars also say the meal moved from a full meal to a ritualized sharing of bread and wine. Part of the reason may have been the divisions over the kinds of food that were brought to the full meals, as we see in 1 Corinthians 11.

## **Form of the Eucharistic Prayer**

We find evidence of this in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, an important third century Christian leader in Rome which provides us with some of the earliest evidence of the liturgical practices of the early church.

# **The 1979 Prayer Book**

**The Offertory** The popular medieval theology of the Eucharist made it a new offering of Christ himself, and each Mass came to be regarded as something offered to God for the sins of the people. The once-for-all character of Christ's dying, and the basic point that in the Eucharist that Christ is offered by God to us became obscure.

In the Reformation, the English Prayer Books after 1552 eliminated the Offering in order to help correct this understanding.

The new Prayer Books have restored the Offering with the bread, wine and money symbolizing the congregation offering itself and its world to God. This part symbolizes the sacrifice of "ourselves, our souls and bodies", or in other words we offer our lives, individually and corporately, to become Christ's body or presence in the world.

**The Opening Salutation** (The Lord be with you) found in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus. The *Sursum corda* ('Lift up your hearts') find their roots in the dialogue between the host and guests used in the liturgy of Jewish meals which would have been familiar to early Jewish Christians. We have evidence of these practices from the tractate "Berakoth" ("Blessings") These express the intention of the host and guests to bless the Lord.

**Praise and Thanksgiving** After the Opening Dialogue in the liturgy of Jewish meals, the host and guests then gave praise and thanksgiving to God for God's goodness and mercy in providing food through a generous creation, and in delivering God's people from their enemies. Scholars believe that Christian congregations took this outline and extended the thanksgiving to include the work of Christ in overcoming sin and death. This is evident in the Prayer of Blessing we find in *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus. Justin Martyr

writing in around 150AD, said that they ‘make a blessing to the Creator of all things, though his Son Jesus Christ and through his Holy Spirit’ and then ‘after we have finished the prayer, bread is presented and wine with water.’”

**Proper Prefaces** relate to the major seasons, for saints’ days and certain other occasions. The basic note of these Proper Prefaces is that of praise.

**The Sanctus** “Holy, Holy, Holy...” This is the song of the seraphim in Isaiah’s account of his vision of the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-3). The Jewish synagogue used the Sanctus and, as early the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it became an acclamation of the people in Christian Eucharistic worship. Historically it was the song of the people and not the choir.

**Benedictus qui venit** “Blessed is he...” The Apostolic Constitutions (c. 380 AD) is the first liturgical work to contain this text associated with our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9). Its use as an expansion of the Sanctus began in Gaul and spread to Rome and then into Eastern liturgies. Cranmer included it in the 1549 Book.

## **Standing and Kneeling**

Except in Prayer C of Rite II, the Benedictus is followed by a rubric which permits people to stand or kneel for the remainder of the Eucharistic Prayer. Standing was the universal posture for this prayer until the late Middle Ages and continues to be the posture in the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicea forbade kneeling for prayer on Sundays and during the Great 50 days of Easter. Late in the Middle Ages when the focus of the congregation had changed from participation in the Great Thanksgiving and receiving of communion to being present for adoration at ‘the moment of consecration,’ there is evidence that people began to kneel for the elevations. The 1549 Prayer Book assumed standing to be the posture for this prayer.

## **The Institution**

Similar to the account of the institution of the Last Supper in 1 Corinthians

“Taking bread and giving thanks to thee, he said: ‘Take eat; this is my body which is broken for you.’ And likewise, also the cup, saying: “This is my blood which is shed for you. As often as ye perform this, perform my memorial.”

## **Anamnesis/Oblation/the Memorial**

After the Institution, the next part of the Eucharistic Prayer calls to mind the saving action of God in the Christian mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection. As it is written in Hippolytus:

‘Having in memory, therefore, his death and resurrection, we offer to thee the bread and the cup, yielding thanks because thou hast counted us worthy to stand before thee and minister to thee.’

## **Epiclesis or the Invocation**

The third section in Hippolytus refers to the work of the Holy Spirit. The prayers asks that all who share in the Eucharistic gifts may thereby be filled with the Holy Spirit for the confirmation of their common faith.

“And we pray that thou wouldst send thy Holy Spirit upon the offering of thy holy church; that thou, gathering them into one wouldst grant to all thy saints who partake to be filled with the Holy Spirit that their faith may be confirmed in truth, that they may praise and glorify thee. Through thy servant Jesus Christ, through whom be to thee glory and honor, with the Holy Spirit in the holy church, both now and always and world without end. Amen.”

## **Rite II—Four Eucharistic Prayers**

**Eucharistic Prayer A** This prayer is a shorter, modern adaptation of the prayers of the previous American Books and Prayer 1 of Rite I. It has place for Proper Prefaces. It contains the Eastern memorial acclamations. The anamnesis moves in traditional style into the oblation of the gifts, and the epiclesis is based on that of 1549. An epiclesis upon the people has also been restored.

**Eucharistic Prayer B** Similar to Prayer A in many ways. However, differences lie in references to the prophets, emphasis on the incarnation, and the eschatological emphasis at the conclusion which make this prayer particularly suitable for use during Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and on saints’ days. Also, it is worth noting that the epiclesis upon the gifts is explicit, but upon the people, more subtle than in Prayer A.

**Eucharistic Prayer C** This prayer is distinctive in many ways. Like some Eastern prayers it contains many congregational responses. Also, an Eastern characteristic is that there is no provision for a proper preface, but the fixed preface recites salvation history which covers many of the aspects treated in the various proper prefaces of Prayers A and B. There is also a special emphasis on creation—more than in any of the other prayers.

**Eucharistic Prayer D** is adapted from the liturgy of Saint Basil, generally dated from Basil the Great (d. 379). It continues to be used on certain Sundays and feast days of special solemnity in the Greek and Slavic churches. It is also used by Coptic Christians and a revised for of this prayer is one of the 4 Eucharistic prayers of the Roman sacramentary of

Pope Paul VI. This makes it, in its main substance, authorized among more Christians than any other Eucharistic prayers.

**The Lord's Prayer** has been included since about 400AD in the Eucharist as a devotion preparatory to receiving the sacrament after the breaking of the bread.

**The Breaking of the Bread** The practical purpose of breaking the bread is to divide it for the people's communion. Symbolically the bread is shared, and Christ's body is broken.

**The Invitation *Sancta Sanctis*** ('The gifts of God for the people of God') dates back to Eastern liturgies of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

**Receiving Communion** The traditional posture for receiving communion is standing, a tradition the Eastern Church has always maintained. The tradition of kneeling came about in the Middle Ages. Among the reformed churches of Zurich and the continent, sitting was the accepted posture. The 1662 Prayer Book directs communicants to kneel. The present Prayer Book does not give any direction about posture. The use of the communion rail grew as a custom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Words of Administration** The 1549 Book joins two forms—the Zwinglian reformation notion of communion as a memorial 'Take and eat in remembrance that Christ died for thee...' and the catholic notion of the real presence of Christ in the elements 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ...'

**Post Communion Prayer** The use of a formal conclusion after the communion of the people was another development of the 4<sup>th</sup> century following the increase in numbers and move to larger buildings following the legalization of Christianity. The prayer emphasizes the Eucharist as an assurance of the baptismal promise that we are one with Christ and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**The Blessing** no evidence of blessings at the end of the Eucharist prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The 1662 Book contains the blessing found at the end of Rite I. Rite II allows for a blessing but gives no text allowing the priest to choose the prayer.

**The Dismissal** dates to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. At the time of the Reformation, the dismissal was not retained in the Prayer Book (it was on the continent by some reformers). The present Prayer Book is the first edition to restore it. The use of a dismissal is permitted in Rite I and required by Rite II.

# Theories about the Eucharist at time of the Reformation—How is Christ Present?

## Transubstantiation

This is the attempt made by Thomas Aquinas to explain Christ's presence in the bread and wine by means of Aristotle's philosophical categories of *accidents* and *substance*. Aristotle argues that every physical object, like bread and wine, presented its reality to our physical senses through properties like shape, size, color and taste. These sense-perceived qualities are called *accidents* by Aristotle.

At the same time, he argued that every object had a fundamental underlying reality – *in* the thing – which the mind could understand. This intellectually understood aspect of reality Aristotle called *substance*. In terms of the Eucharistic, Aquinas's theory allowed him to say that by the power of God, the *substance* of the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, while *the accidents* remain those of bread and wine. Because Aristotle's categories of substance and accidents gradually lost their hold intellectually on thoughtful people, which led to many rejecting the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Although still the official position of the Roman Catholic church it has lost its technical Aristotelian meaning and now merely describes the fact of Christian experience of Christ's "real presence", as Episcopalians would put it.

## A Memorial—Zwingli

The 16<sup>th</sup> century Swiss Reformer, Zwingli argued that Christ's words "This is my body" should be read, "This signifies my body." He claimed that the Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial, an initiatory ceremony in which the believer pledges that he is a Christian and proclaims that he has been reconciled to God through Christ's shed blood. Martin Luther adamantly rejected Zwingli's doctrine, insisting that Christ's words "This is my body" must be taken in their plain, literal sense.

## Martin Luther—"A real presence in the bread and wine"

Martin Luther argued that although Rome's explanation of Christ's true presence in the Lord's Supper was wrong, the fact of Christ's true presence was correct. He offered a different explanation for the presence of Christ. To understand his view, however, a brief explanation of some rather obscure theological terminology is required. Medieval scholastic theologians had distinguished various modes of presence, or ways of being

present. They used the term *local* presence to describe the way in which physical, finite things are present in a circumscribed place. Spiritual presence described the way in which spiritual beings (such as angels, souls, or God) are present. Because this term was somewhat vague, other terms were used to be more specific. *Illocal* presence, for example, described the way in which finite spiritual beings (for example, human souls or angels) are present, while *repletive* presence described the way in which an infinite spiritual being (God) is present. Because Christ's body can be present in an illocal manner, according to Luther, it can be present in the bread of the Lord's Supper. In his Confession Concerning Christ's Supper (1528), Luther argues that there is a "sacramental union" between the substance of Christ's body and the bread resulting in a new and unique substance that Luther refers to as *fleischbrot* ("flesh-bread"). Thus, according to Luther, Christ's human body is present in the Lord's Supper supernaturally in a real and illocal manner. According to the Lutherans, the body of Christ is orally eaten, but it is a supernatural or hyperphysical eating rather than a natural or physical eating. Both believers and unbelievers receive the body of Christ according to the Lutherans, although unbelievers receive it to their own judgment.

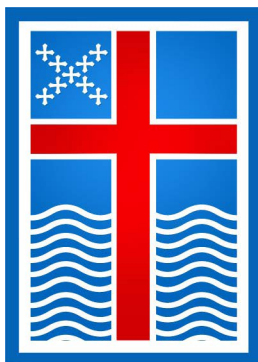
## **Calvin—A real spiritual presence**

Calvin followed Augustine in defining a sacrament as "a visible sign of a sacred thing" or as a "visible word" of God. The sacraments seal the promises found in the Word. In regard to the Lord's Supper, it is given to seal the promise that those who partake of the bread and wine in faith truly partake of the body and blood of Christ. Calvin explains this in terms of the believer's mystical union with Christ. Just as baptism relates to the believer's initiation into union with Christ, the Lord's Supper strengthens the believer's ongoing union with Christ.

How does Calvin understand the nature of Christ's presence in the Supper? According to Calvin the sacraments are signs. The signs and the things signified must be distinguished without being separated. Calvin rejects the idea that the sacramental signs are merely symbols (for example, Zwingli's view). But he also rejects the idea that the signs are transformed into the things they signify (for example, Roman Catholic transubstantiation). Calvin argues that when Christ uses the words, "This is my body," the name of the thing signified ("body") is applied to the sign (the bread).

Calvin repeatedly stated that his argument with the Roman Catholics and with Luther was not over the fact of Christ's presence, but only over the mode of that presence. According to Calvin, Christ's human body is locally present in heaven, but it does not have to descend for believers to truly partake of it because the Holy Spirit effects communion. The Holy Spirit is the bond of the believer's union with Christ. Therefore, what the minister

does on the earthly plane, the Holy Spirit accomplishes on the spiritual plane. In other words, those who partake of the bread and wine in faith are also, by the power of the Holy Spirit, being nourished by the body and blood of Christ.



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