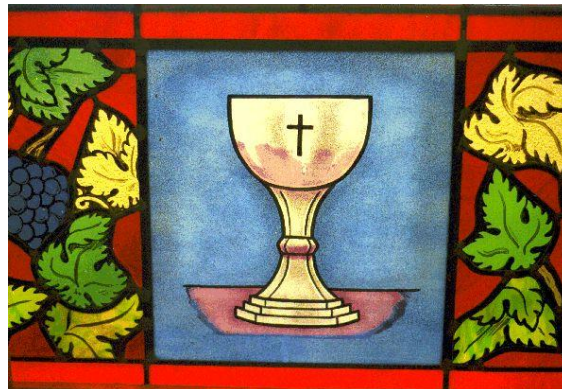


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# A Brief History of the Celebration of the Lord's Supper



Written by Robert C. Jones  
Acworth, Georgia

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# Christian History and Theology Adult Sunday School Courses

Robert Jones

[www.sundayschoolcourses.com](http://www.sundayschoolcourses.com)

I've always been a strong believer in adult Sunday School classes and Bible studies in our churches. And many churches have quality, Biblically-based adult-focused programs. Unfortunately, just as many churches tend to downplay adult education, focusing on children's education (not a bad thing in itself), or focusing on the needs of the "unchurched", where topics such as church history and theology are often purposely ignored.

Yet there is a strong need for adult education focused on both the Bible and the basic tenets and history of the Faith. Among the reasons:

- Not all adults come from a strong childhood background in the church – adult Sunday School classes/Bible studies may be their first serious introduction to what Christianity is all about
- Christianity (and especially Evangelical Christianity) is under constant attack from the media and popular culture (movies, music, etc.). We need to give fellow Christians the tools to defend the Faith against attack (or to provide a "ready defense" as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15)
- Even adult Christians that have a strong Biblical background often know little about the origins and history of their Faith

To better meet the needs of adult Christians (both those mature in their Faith, and those just starting out in the "School of Christ"), I've written a series of courses that focus on the history of the Christian Church (including the Jewish roots), as well as the development of doctrine in the Church. The topics represented in these courses are intended to both further the participant's walk in the Faith, as well as serve as a starting point for Christian apologetics.

While the primary purpose of these courses is for use in churches, they also may be useful for High School and College projects, especially the courses focused primarily on historical aspects.

One note: these courses are primarily written from an Evangelical Protestant viewpoint (I come from a Reformed Church background), but I hope I've given ample time to other points of view throughout the various courses.

Cover: Communion chalice

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## Introduction

The Catholic Encyclopedia uses the following text to summarize Roman Catholic doctrine regarding the celebration of the Eucharist:

“The quintessence of these doctrinal decisions consists in this, that in the Eucharist the Body and Blood of the God-man are truly, really, and substantially present for the nourishment of our souls, by reason of the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and that in this change of substances the unbloody Sacrifice of the New Testament is also contained.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05572c.htm>)

Contained within this doctrine are three key beliefs:

- Transubstantiation - “the body and blood of Christ are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the body and the wine into the blood by divine power.” (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215)
- The Real Presence of Christ during the sacrament
- The “unbloody Sacrifice” of the New Testament

All three of these doctrines have been disputed since the time of the Early Church, and like the practice of Baptism, form one of the major areas of dispute between Christian denominations. This booklet will trace the history of those disputes, and examine several different interpretations regarding what the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is all about.

There are other areas of dispute regarding the celebration of the Lord’s Supper which will be mentioned in passing in this course. These include whether the elements should be subject to “adoration”, the validity of “private masses” celebrated only by a priest, and the wine versus grape juice debate.

My goal is to be even-handed in these discussions. However, full disclosure – I’m a Presbyterian Elder, and I agree with John Calvin on most questions of theology.

One final note: This course is meant to be a companion to my earlier “A Brief History of Christian Baptism”.

## Quiz on Communion

1. T/F Luther strongly disagreed with the doctrine of the Real Presence during the Eucharist
2. T/F John Wycliffe rejected the doctrine of the transubstantiation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century
3. T/F The Greek word usually translated as wine in the new Testament in regard to the Last Supper always referred to a fermented drink
4. T/F In general, the term “Holy Grail” refers to the cup used at the Wedding at Cana
5. T/F King Arthur and his knights searched for the Holy Grail, according to Medieval romances
6. T/F Eucharist comes from a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving”
7. T/F In the early church, the agape meal was always distinct from the celebration of the Lord’s Supper
8. T/F St. Augustine, the most important theologian in Christianity during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D., strongly believed in the doctrine of transubstantiation
9. T/F Presbyterians and Baptists believe that the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is a commemoration of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, not a repetition

10. T/F As a general rule, anyone can receive the Eucharist during a Roman Catholic Mass

## Nomenclature

Over the millennia, several different names have been used to describe the celebration of the Lord's Supper, including:

- Eucharist (Greek: *Eucharistia* - typically used in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Churches.) It means "thanksgiving".

G2169

eucharistia

yoo-khar-is-tee'-ah

From [G2170](#); *gratitude*; actually *grateful language* (to God, as an act of worship):—thankfulness, (giving of) thanks (-giving). (*Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary*, Parson's Technology, 1998)

- Communion or Holy Communion (especially popular with the Reformed Church and its theological successors)
- "Agape" (Love-Feast)
- "Breaking of Bread"

I've used the term "celebration of the Lord's Supper" in the title of this course, to remain neutral on the typical Catholic versus Protestant terminology for this sacrament.

## Timeline

Date	Event
c. 110 A.D.	Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch is (probably) the first to use the term "Eucharist" in reference to the celebration of the Lord's Supper
c. 150 A.D.	One of the oldest depictions of the Eucharist is created in the catacomb of St. Priscilla
c. 150 A.D.	Justyn Martyr describes the rite of the Eucharist, stressing that the ceremony is for believers only
325 A.D.	Council of Nicaea forbids priests from receiving the Eucharist from deacons (18 <sup>th</sup> canon)
After 604 A.D.	The term <i>Mass</i> comes into common parlance after the death of Gregory the Great, as referring to the Eucharist
1079	The term "transubstantiation" appears for the first time in a sermon by Gilbert of Savardin, Archbishop of Tours (others say it was Hildebert of Tours around the same time period)
1202	The term "transubstantiation" appears in a papal document in a letter to the Archbishop of Lyon
1215	Transubstantiation is defined by the Fourth Lateran Council (see introduction)
1265- 1274	Thomas Aquinas devotes 400 columns of text to the Eucharist in his <i>Summa Theologica</i>

Date	Event
1380s	English priest John Wycliffe writes <i>On the Eucharist</i> , which rejects transubstantiation
1414-18	Council of Constance maintains that the Mass could be proved by Scripture
1520s	Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss Priest, writes various tracts that deny transubstantiation, the Real Presence (except in the spiritual sense), and the repetition of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross during the Eucharist
1536	The Lutheran Wittenberg Concord defines what will later be called the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation
1545-1563	Council of Trent upholds transubstantiation, Real Presence, adoration of the elements
1571	The Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles state "the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ"; and likewise that "the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ" (Articles of Religion, Article XXVIII: Of the Lord's Supper)
1646	Westminster Confession views the sacrament symbolically and figuratively

## Old Testament

Reference	Notes
Genesis 14:18-20	"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."
Exodus 12:21-28 (see also 1 Corinthians 5:6-8)	Slaughter of the Passover lamb
Proverbs 9:5	"Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed."
Malachi 1:10-11	In Catholic theology, foretells the institution of a new sacrifice

Perhaps the earliest potential precursor of the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the Old Testament can be found in Genesis, in the text which describes the interactions between the mysterious Melchizedek and Abraham. Many commentators over the years have believed that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate Christ; certainly, the New Testament book of Hebrews draws strong comparisons between Melchizedek and Christ. Germaine to our discussion here is that Melchizedek "brought out the bread and wine" and blessed Abraham, saying "Blessed be Abram by God Most High".

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” (Genesis 14:18-20)

Another potential precursor of the Eucharist in the Old Testament is the slaughter of the Passover lamb. Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:7 explicitly links the slaughter of the Passover lamb with Christ’s Last Supper.

“Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped. The Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.” (Exodus 12:21-28)

## New Testament – the Last Supper

The Last Supper is described in all three Synoptic Gospels, and by Paul in 1 Corinthians. John 6 makes reference to the Lord’s Supper and its meaning. Key verses include Matthew 26: 26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22: 13-20, John 6: 53-58, 1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.



So, what do the Synoptic Gospels tell us about the Last Supper? Some points of interest:

- Introduces the elements that will later be used in the Sacrament – bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ
- Gives two reasons for the Sacrament – “the blood is poured out for many – for the forgiveness of sins” and “Do this in remembrance of me”
- A new covenant replaces the old
- “I [Jesus] will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes”



“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.’” (Matthew 26: 26-29)

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is my body.’

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them. ‘I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.’” (Mark 14:22-25)

“They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.’

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22: 13-20, NIV)

The passages in John 6 do not describe the actual Last Supper, but rather seem to describe the *importance* of the Sacrament. John uses the most graphic language out of all of the New Testament accounts, giving the impression that the bread and the wine may actually contain the body and blood of Christ.

“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.’” (John 6: 53-58)

## ***Paul’s views***

In 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, Paul states “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed”. Compare this with Exodus 12:21-28.

“Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. **For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.** Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of

malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Corinthians 5:6-8, emphasis added)

The account of the Last Supper that is used by most churches in their communion Sacrament comes from Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. There is some irony here, because the reason Paul provided this description was because some Christians were more focused on eating the agape meal (see next section) than on celebrating the Sacrament. Paul emphasizes the importance of eating the bread and drinking the wine in a worthy, reverent manner. He also sets the stage for later church prohibitions against open sinners taking the Sacrament.

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul notes that the Sacrament brings Christians together into a single community.

“Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” (1 Corinthians 10:14-17)

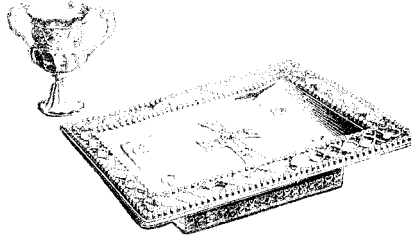
## Early Church

Various sources indicate that in the early church a fellowship meal (*agape*, the "love feast") was followed by the Eucharist ("thanksgiving"). Early Christians gave thanks during the meal and prayers were said over wine and broken bread (Acts 2:42, 2:46, 20:7, 20:11).

We discover in 1 Corinthians 11:20-29 that there were some difficulties in combining the fellowship meal with the Eucharist:

"When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! ..." (1 Corinthians 11:20-29)

In time, the practice of combining the fellowship meal with the Eucharist faded.



The c. 96 A.D. guide for catechumens, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, gives a brief description of a Gentile church “Christian Assembly on the Lord’s Day”. Some points to note:

- They gathered together once a week to “break bread” (probably the agape meal)
- They gave thanksgiving (probably the Eucharist) after confession (probably public confession)
- One shouldn’t partake if one is “at variance with his fellow”

“But every Lord’s day do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.” (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, “The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 7”, Edited by A. Roberts and J Donaldson, Chapter 14)

*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* also provides an ancient description of the celebration of the Eucharist. The emphasis here is on thanking God. Also, the Eucharist was reserved for baptized believers.

“Now concerning the Thanksgiving (Eucharist), thus give thanks. First, concerning the cup: We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. And concerning the broken bread: We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving (Eucharist), but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord hath said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs.” (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Chapter 9)

### ***St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 50 – c. 117)***

The oldest extant use of the word *eucharist* to indicate the Lord’s Supper may have been in the writings of late-first/early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D. Church Father Ignatius. St. Ignatius served as the Bishop of Antioch (one source says that he was appointed as Bishop of Antioch by Peter himself.) Ignatius was friends with St. Polycarp, a successor to John the Apostle. Ignatius was martyred in Rome – according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, “he won his long-coveted crown of martyrdom in the Flavian amphitheater.”

His extant writings include seven letters that he wrote to seven churches. I quote from his *Epistle to the Philadelphians* and his *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* here. Note these points:

- Communal use of one loaf and one cup
- Administered by the bishop, or “whom he has entrusted”
- Connects the Eucharist to the agape meal

"I have confidence of you in the Lord, that ye will be of no other mind. Wherefore I write boldly to your love, which is worthy of God, and exhort you to have but one faith, and one [kind of] preaching, and one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ; and His blood which was shed for us is one; one loaf also is broken to all [the communicants], and one cup is distributed among them all: there is but one altar for the whole Church, and one bishop, with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow servants." (*Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians* (longer), "The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1", Edited by A. Roberts and J Donaldson)

"See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid." (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans* (shorter), "The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1", Edited by A. Roberts and J Donaldson)

### ***Justyn Martyr (c. 100 A.D. – c. 165 A.D.)***

Justyn Martyr was one of the great early apologists of the Christian Church. Among his extant works are his *First Apology* and *Second Apology*. In his *First Apology* (c. 150 A.D.), Justyn Martyr gives a description of the Eucharist, again stressing that the ceremony is for believers only, and discusses the "transmutation" of the elements:

#### **"OF THE EUCHARIST**

And this food is called among us Eucharistia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, 'This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;' and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, 'This is My blood;' and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn." (*First Apology*, Chapter 66, Justyn Martyr, c. 150 A.D., "The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1", Edited by A. Roberts and J Donaldson)

### ***Irenaeus (d. 202 A.D. ?)***

Biographical information and especially dates regarding Irenaeus are sketchy at best. He was born in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, possibly in 130 A.D., possibly in Smyrna. He knew Bishop Polycarp. He was ordained a priest and made Bishop of Lyons in the 170s A.D. He wrote his famous *Against Heresies* c. 180 A.D. He was possibly martyred in 202 A.D.

In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus, like Ignatius, made use of the word "eucharistia". Note also these points:

- The bread is no longer common bread after receiving the “invocation of God”
- The Eucharist gives people the hope of “resurrection to eternity”

“Then, again, how can they say that the flesh, which is nourished with the body of the Lord and with His blood, goes to corruption, and does not partake of life? Let them, therefore, either alter their opinion, or cease from offering the things just mentioned. But our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 4, “The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1”, Edited by A. Roberts and J Donaldson)

“But vain in every respect are they who despise the entire dispensation of God, and disallow the salvation of the flesh, and treat with contempt its regeneration, maintaining that it is not capable of incorruption. But if this indeed do not attain salvation, then neither did the Lord redeem us with His blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist the communion of His blood, nor the bread which we break the communion of His body. For blood can only come from veins and flesh, and whatsoever else makes up the substance of man, such as the Word of God was actually made. By His own blood he redeemed us, as also His apostle declares, ‘In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the remission of sins.’ And as we are His members, we are also nourished by means of the creation (and He Himself grants the creation to us, for He causes His sun to rise, and sends rain when He wills). He has acknowledged the cup (which is a part of the creation) as His own blood, from which He bedews our blood; and the bread (also a part of the creation) He has established as His own body, from which He gives increase to our bodies.” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, “The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 1”, Edited by A. Roberts and J Donaldson)

### ***Hippolytus (died c. 236 A.D.)***

Hippolytus was a presbyter of the Church of Rome in the early third century. Some sources say that he eventually became a bishop, perhaps of Rome or Porto. He was said to have been a follower of Irenaeus. Hippolytus, in his c. 215 A.D. *Apostolic Tradition* (essentially, Book 8 of the *Apostolic Constitutions*), adds these thoughts on the Eucharist:

- The Eucharist should be received before any other food
- Great care should be taken that nothing is spilled
- Sacred bread should not be left where an unbaptized person (or even a mouse) could eat it
- “And when he breaks the bread, in distributing fragments to each, he shall say: The bread of heaven in Christ Jesus.”

“36 The faithful shall be careful to partake of the eucharist before eating anything else. For if they eat with faith, even though some deadly poison is given to them, after this it will not be able to harm them.

37 All shall be careful so that no unbeliever tastes of the eucharist, nor a mouse or other animal, nor that any of it falls and is lost. For it is the Body of Christ, to be eaten by those who believe, and not to be scorned.

38 Having blessed the cup in the Name of God, you received it as the antitype of the Blood of Christ. Therefore do not spill from it, for some foreign spirit to lick it up because you despised it. You will become as one who scorns the Blood, the price with which you have been bought.” (Translation from <http://www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html>)

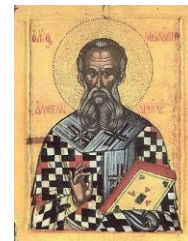
## Post-Nicene Church

### *St. Athanasius (c. 295 A.D. – 373 A.D.)*

Date	Events
c. 295	Born in Alexandria
319 A.D.	Becomes a deacon in Alexandria
c. 318 A.D.	Writes <i>On the Incarnation</i>
325 A.D.	Athanasius soundly defeats Arius at the Council of Nicaea, upholding the doctrine of the Trinity
c. 328 A.D.	Becomes Bishop (Patriarch) of Alexandria
c. 330 A.D. +	Athanasius removed (by Arian enemies) – and returned – 5 times as Bishop of Alexandria
Between 356 A.D. and 362 A.D.	Writes <i>The Life of St. Anthony</i> , about the founder of monasticism
367 A.D.	In his "thirty-ninth Letter of Holy Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, on the Paschal festival", Athanasius lists the books of the New Testament as we know them today
1568	Made a Doctor of the Church by Pius V

In a discourse on John 6:62-64, St. Athanasius, the defender of the doctrine of the Trinity at the Council of Nicaea, comes down strongly on the side of a spiritual, not “fleshy” interpretation. Of course, the part of John 6 traditionally viewed as specific to the Eucharist is John 6: 53-58, but his remarks could reasonably be applied to those verses, too.

**“For here also He has used both terms of Himself, flesh and spirit; and He distinguished the spirit from what is of the flesh in order that they might believe not only in what was visible in Him, but in what was invisible, and so understand that what He says is not fleshy, but spiritual. For how many would the body suffice as food, for it to become meat even for the whole world? But this is why He mentioned the ascending of the Son of Man into heaven; namely, to draw them off from their corporeal idea, and that from thenceforth they might understand that the aforesaid flesh was heavenly from above, and spiritual meat, to be given at His hands.**



For ‘what I have said unto you,’ says He, ‘is spirit and life;’ as much as to say, ‘what is manifested, and to be given for the salvation of the world, is the flesh which I wear. But this, and the blood from it, shall be given to you spiritually at my hands as meat, so as to be imparted spiritually in each one, and to become for all a preservative to resurrection of life eternal.” (*St. Athanasius: Select Works And Letters*, translated by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., And Henry Wace, D.D., Prolegomena, Chapter 5, “The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series, Volume 4”, by Philip Schaff, editor; emphasis added)

### *St. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315 A.D. – 386 A.D.)*

Date	Events
c. 315	Born

Date	Events
347	Cyril as a catechumen
By 352	Becomes a priest, and Bishop of Jerusalem
357	Cyril exiled on the charge of selling church furniture during a famine; eventually returns
359	Attends Council of Seleucia
360	Exiled a second time
361	Cyril returns to Jerusalem
367	Cyril exiled a third time
381	Attends Council of Constantinople
unknown	Canonization
1882	Designated a doctor of the Church by Pope by Leo XIII

In his work *On Sacred Liturgy and Communion*, St. Cyril of Jerusalem makes early use of the phrase “the bloodless service” in connection with the Eucharist. (Note: The Catholic Encyclopedia translates this as the “unbloody sacrifice”.)

“Then, after the spiritual sacrifice, the bloodless service, is completed, over that sacrifice of propitiation we entreat God for the common peace of the Churches, for the welfare of the world; for kings; for soldiers and allies; for the sick; for the afflicted; and, in a word, for all who stand in need of succor we all pray and offer this sacrifice.” (*On The Sacred Liturgy and Communion*, Lecture 23, The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 7, by Philip Schaff, editor)

### ***St. John Chrysostom (347 A.D. – 407 A.D.)***

Date	Events
c. 347	Born in Antioch
c. 367	After meeting Bishop Meletius, begins to devote his life to the Church
381	Appointed a deacon by Bishop Meletius
c. 386	<i>Writes On the Priesthood</i>
386	Ordained as a priest by Bishop Flavian
386 - 398	Chrysostom builds reputation as the greatest preacher in Christendom
398	Ordained as Bishop (Patriarch) of Constantinople by Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria
401	Deposes six bishops for simony in Ephesus
403	Chrysostom is deposed based on trumped up charges made by his enemies; Chrysostom returns to Constantinople in triumph
404	Chrysostom exiled a second time
407	Dies at Commana in Pontus
438	Chrysostom’s body moved to Constantinople with great pomp, and entombed in the church of the Apostles
unknown	Canonization
1568	Designated a Doctor of the Church by Pius V

St. John Chrysostom, generally considered to be the greatest preacher of his day, mentioned the Eucharist several times in his homilies. In the following commentaries on Matthew and John 6, written c. 370 A.D. and 390 A.D. (respectively), note the graphic language. We can probably assume that Chrysostom believed in both the transmutation of the elements and the Real Presence:

“Let us submit to God in all things and not contradict Him, even if what He says seems contrary to our reason and intellect; rather let His words prevail over our reason and intellect. Let us act in this way with regard to the (eucharistic) mysteries, looking not only at what falls under our senses but holding on to His words. For His word cannot lead us astray. . . . When the word says, ‘This is My Body’, be convinced of it and believe it, and look at it with the eyes of the mind. . . . How many now say, ‘I wish I could see His shape, His appearance, His garments, His sandals.’ Only look! You see Him! You touch Him! You eat Him!” (*St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, 370 A.D., “The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 10”, by Philip Schaff, editor)

“And to show the love He has for us He has made it possible for those who desire, not merely to look upon Him, but **even to touch Him and to consume Him and to fix their teeth in His Flesh and to be commingled with Him**; in short, to fulfill all their love. Let us, then, come back from that table like lions breathing out fire, thus becoming terrifying to the Devil, and remaining mindful of our Head and of the love which He has shown for us.” (*St. John Chrysostom, Homily 46* (commenting on John 6), C. 390 A.D., “The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 14”, by Philip Schaff, editor; emphasis added)

### ***St. Augustine (354 A.D. – 430 A.D.)***

Date	Events
354 A.D.	Born at Tagaste
Early 1370s	Augustine as a dissolute student
Late 4 <sup>th</sup> century	Writes <i>Confessions</i>
387	Baptized by St. Ambrose on Easter
391	Ordained a priest
396-430	Made Bishop of Hippo
411	Augustine soundly defeats the Donatists at the Council Of Carthage
413-426	Writes <i>City of God</i>
417-418	Augustine soundly defeats the Pelagian heresy
430	Dies in Hippo
unknown	Canonization
1295	Designated a Doctor of the Church by Boniface VIII

St. Augustine of Hippo, the greatest theologian of the early church (and the ancient theologian most quoted by Protestant reformers a 1,000 years later), provides the most well known voice in the Early Church against the idea of some sort of transmutation of the elements. In his *On Christian Doctrine*, he strongly states that the terms “eat this flesh” etc. are meant to be taken figuratively, not literally.





The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (somewhat astonishingly) brushes aside these passages by saying that Augustine must not have been freed “from the bondage of Platonism” when he wrote this. It should be underscored that Augustine’s systematic theology formed the basis for Roman Catholic thought for the next 800 years, and is still influential today.

“If the sentence is one of command, either forbidding a crime or vice, or enjoining an act of prudence or benevolence, it is not figurative. If, however, it seems to enjoin a crime or vice, or to forbid an act of prudence or benevolence, it is figurative. ‘Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man,’ says Christ, ‘and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.’ This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a figure, enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that His flesh was wounded and crucified for us. Scripture says: ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink;’ and this is beyond doubt a command to do a kindness. But in what follows, ‘for in so doing thou shall heap coals of fire on his head,’ one would think a deed of malevolence was enjoined. Do not doubt, then, that the expression is figurative; and, while it is possible to interpret it in two ways, one pointing to the doing of an injury, the other to a display of superiority, let charity on the contrary call you back to benevolence, and interpret the coals of fire as the burning groans of penitence by which a man’s pride is cured who bewails that he has been the enemy of one who came to his assistance in distress.” (*On Christian Doctrine*, Book 3, Chapter 16, “The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 2”, by Philip Schaff, editor)

## Middle Ages

The Middle Ages were a busy time in terms of both solidifying Catholic tradition regarding the Eucharist, as well as creating an organized opposition to those traditions. It was in the Middle Ages that the term (although not necessarily the doctrine) of transubstantiation was first used.



### ***Fourth Lateran Council***

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 A.D., convened by Pope Innocent III, was attended by almost 1500 patriarchs, bishops, abbots and priors. Among its canons were several that had to do with the Eucharist, including these points:

- Transubstantiation was both defined and made dogma of the church
- The Eucharist must be administered by a priest
- The bread and the wine must be locked up in “properly protected places”

- Catholics must celebrate the Eucharist at least once a year

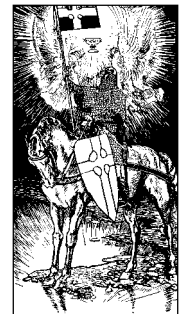
“Canon 1: There is one Universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation. In which there is the same priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed (*transsubstantia-tio*) by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood, so that to realize the mystery of unity we may receive of Him what He has received of us. And this sacrament no one can effect except the priest who has been duly ordained in accordance with the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the Apostles and their successors.”

“Canon 20: We decree that in all churches the chrism and the Eucharist be kept in properly protected places provided with locks and keys, that they may not be reached by rash and indiscreet persons and used for impious and blasphemous purposes. But if he to whom such guardianship pertains should leave them unprotected, let him be suspended from office for a period of three months. And if through his negligence an execrable deed should result, let him be punished more severely.”

“Canon 21: All the faithful of both sexes shall after they have reached the age of discretion faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year to their own (parish) priest and perform to the best of their ability the penance imposed, receiving reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist...” (*Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary*, From H. J. Schroeder (B. Herder, 1937))

## ***The Holy Grail***

An interesting sidelight to any study of the history of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is to take a look at the medieval romances (in general, published in England, France and Germany between 1190 and 1520) regarding King Arthur and the search for the Holy Grail. While in some romances, the Grail takes on pagan characteristics (horn of plenty, etc.) in most of them, there is a specific Christian connection. By tradition, the Holy Grail that Arthur and his knights searched for is the Cup from the Last Supper, brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea in 63 A.D. (or 37 A.D., in some accounts). Specific to our discussion here, some of the romances position achieving the Grail as a sort of alternative Mass. A good example of this genre is *The High History of the Holy Grail*, also known as *Perlesvaus* (1225). The work may have been written and published at Glastonbury Abbey, the religious site that tradition records as the spot where Joseph brought the Grail. It is also the presumptive burial spot of Arthur and Guinevere.



St. Joseph's Chapel, Glastonbury Abbey, Somerset, England. Arthur and Guinevere were supposedly buried outside the small door in the middle of the photo.



A March, 1997 stamp (copyright The Post Office 1997) from Great Britain, commemorating the traditional founder of Christianity in England - St. Augustine

In the excerpt below, King Arthur has gone to a “Chapel of St. Augustine” (probably the St. Augustine of Canterbury) in the “great forest adventurous”. The Chapel was maintained by a hermit who appears to have recently died.

In the excerpt, Arthur discovers that a Mass is being celebrated by the (assumedly dead) hermit. Arthur tries to enter, but is forced back – he is only worthy enough to observe the Mass from the doorway.

In some ways, the Mass is very orthodox – it describes (a very literal) transubstantiation (from the Christ child to Christ on the cross), a very literal Real Presence, and a very literal re-enactment of the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross. On the other hand, it is subtly subversive, as the “elements” (in this case, the Christ child) are not offered up by the priest, but by Mary; and the Mass is not conducted by a priest, but rather the hermit who had only become a Christian five years before.

“The King goeth to the bar whereby one entereth into the launde, and looketh to the right into a combe of the forest and seeth the chapel of S. Augustine and the right fair hermitage. Thitherward goeth he and alighteth, and it seemeth him that the hermit is apparellled to sing the mass. He reineth up his horse to the bough of a tree by the side of the chapel and thinketh to enter hereinto, but, had it been to conquer all the kingdoms of the world, thereinto might he not enter, albeit there was none made him denial thereof, for the door was open and none saw he that might forbid him. Sore ashamed is the King thereof. Howbeit, he beholdeth an image of Our Lord that was there within and crieth Him of mercy right sweetly, and looketh toward the altar. And he looketh at the holy hermit that was robed to sing mass and said his Confiteor [prayer], he seeth at his right hand the fairest Child that ever he had seen, and He was clad in an alb [a linen vestment with narrow sleeves] and had a golden crown on his head loaded with precious stones that gave out a full great brightness of light. On the left hand side, was a Lady so fair that all the beauties of the world might not compare them with her beauty. When the holy hermit had said his Confiteor and went to the altar, the Lady also took her Son and went to sit on the right hand side towards the altar upon a right rich chair and set her Son upon her knees and began to kiss Him full sweetly and saith: 'Sir,' saith she, 'You are my Father and my Son and my Lord, and guardian of me and of all the world.'

King Arthur heareth the words and seeth the beauty of the Lady and of the Child, and marvelleth much of this that She should call Him her Father and her Son. He looketh at a window behind the altar and seeth a flame come through at the very instant that mass was begun, clearer than any ray of sun nor moon nor star, and evermore it threw forth a brightness of light such that and all the lights in the world had been together it would not have been the like. And it is come down upon the altar. King Arthur seeth it who marvelleth him much thereof. But sore it irketh him of this that he may not enter therewithin, and he heareth, there where the holy hermit was singing the mass, right fair responses, and they seem him to be the responses of angels. And when the Holy Gospel was read, King Arthur looked toward the altar and saw that the Lady took her Child and offered Him into the hands of the holy hermit, but of this King Arthur made much marvel, that the holy hermit washed not his hands when he had received the offering. Right sore did King Arthur marvel him thereof, but little right would he have had to marvel had he known the reason. And when the Child was offered him, he set Him upon the altar and thereafter began his sacra-

ment. And King Arthur set him on his knees before the chapel and began to pray to God and to beat his breast. And he looked toward the altar after the preface, and it seemed him that the holy hermit held between his hands a man bleeding from His side and in His palms and in His feet, and crowned with thorns, and he seeth Him in His own figure. And when he had looked on Him so long and knoweth not what is become of Him, the King hath pity of Him in his heart of this that he had seen, and the tears of his heart come into his eyes. And he looketh toward the altar and thinketh to see the figure of the man, and seeth that it is changed into the shape of the Child that he had seen tofore." (*The High History of the Holy Grail*, translation by Sebastian Evans, 1898; reprinted in *An Arthurian Reader*, edited by John Matthews (The Aquarian Press, 1988))

## Reformation

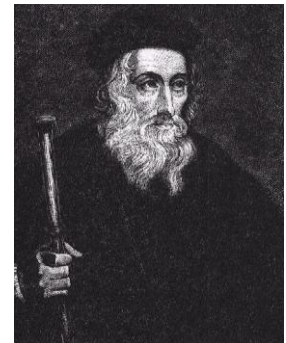
### *John Wycliffe (c. 1330 - 1384)*

Date	Event
c. 1330	Wycliffe born in Yorkshire, England
1361	Ordained priest (See of Lincoln)
1372	Doctorate of Theology
1374/76	Publishes <i>Tractatus de civili dominio</i>
1377	Brought to trial before Archbishop of Canterbury as a heretic; saved by the crowds
1377	Pope condemns 18 propositions of Wycliffe (in 5 separate bulls)
1380s	Writes <i>On the Eucharist</i>
1381/84	Begins first full English translation of the Bible (from Jerome's Latin Vulgate). Published in 1388.
1415	Condemned by Council of Constance for 267 heresies
1428	Remains dug up and burned on papal order

In the 1380s, a prominent English priest named John Wycliffe spoke out against the doctrine of transubstantiation. (However, Wycliffe believed in the "Real Presence" of Christ during the Eucharist - "spiritually, truly, really, effectively", similar to Luther 150 years later). In his work *On the Eucharist*, he stated:

"But the simplest layman will see that it follows, that inasmuch as this bread is the body of Christ, it is therefore bread, and remains bread, and is at once both bread and the body of Christ."

"In the same manner, accordingly, though the bread becometh the body of Christ, by virtue of his words, it need not cease to be bread."



We are thus shut up, either to destroy the verity of Scripture, or to go along with the senses and the judgment of mankind, and admit that it is bread. Mice, and other creatures, are aware of this fact; for according to philosophers, they have the power of discerning what is good for them to eat. Oh, if believer's in the Lord will look on, and see Antichrist and his accomplices so strong as to have power to condemn and persecute even unto death, those sons of the church who thus yield their belief to the Gospel, yet certain I am, that though the truth of the Gospel may for a time be cast down in the streets, and be kept under in a measure by the threats of Antichrist, yet extinguished it cannot be, since he who is the Truth has said, that 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but that his words shall not pass away!' Let the believer,

then, rouse himself, and demand strictly from our heretics, what the nature of this venerable sacrament is, if it be not bread; since the language of the Gospel, the evidence of our senses, and arguments that have in their favour every probability, say that so it is.”

“Beyond all doubt, then, the expression ‘this is my body,’ is figurative, as are those in the Gospel of John: ‘unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man’, with many like them, which Christ spake in another sense.”  
(*Tracts and Treatises John De Wycliffe D.D.*, Blackburn and Pardon, 1845; reprinted by Google Books)

## ***Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)***

Date	Events
1483	Born in Eisleben, Saxony
1505/07	Becomes Augustinian monk; ordained as a priest
1512	Doctorate in Theology; Professor of Biblical Literature at Wittenburg University
1517	Protests sale of indulgences by Pope Leo X
October 31, 1517	Tacks 95 theses to door of Wittenburg Castle
1521	Luther excommunicated
April 17/18, 1521	Council (Diet) of Worm, convened by Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Luther ordered to recant. Luther replied, “Here I stand. I can do no other.”
1521-1522	Luther in hiding at Wartburg Castle; translates New Testament into German, and battles with the Devil
1527	Writes "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" (Luther wrote a total of 41 hymns)
1528	Publishes "Large Catechism", "Small Catechism"
1530	Luther is the doctrinal inspiration for the Augsburg Confession
1534	Publishes German Bible - 100,000 copies of New Testament printed in Wittenberg during his lifetime

As Wycliffe had 150 years earlier, Martin Luther would come to the conclusion that, while there may not be a chemical change in the elements during the Eucharist, “the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, [is] in and under the bread and wine”. This view was later called, by some, consubstantiation. Luther also strongly believed in the Real Presence.

In his *The Large Catechism*, Luther answered the question “Now, what is the Sacrament of the Altar?” with:

“It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in and under the bread and wine which we Christians are commanded by the Word of Christ to eat and to drink. And as we have said of Baptism that it is not simple water, so here also we say the Sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread and wine, such as are ordinarily served at the table, but bread and wine comprehended in, and connected with, the Word of God.



It is the Word (I say) which makes and distinguishes this Sacrament, so that it is not mere bread and wine, but is, and is called, the body and blood of Christ...

With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say: If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics, should rush forward, crying, How can bread and wine be the body and blood of Christ? etc., I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as is the Divine Majesty in His little finger. Now here stands the Word of Christ: Take, eat; this is My body; Drink ye all of it; this is the new testament in My blood, etc. Here we abide, and would like to see those who will constitute themselves His masters, and make it different from what He has spoken. It is true, indeed, that if you take away the Word or regard it without the words, you have nothing but mere bread and wine. But if the words remain with them as they shall and must, then, in virtue of the same, it is truly the body and blood of Christ. For as the lips of Christ say and speak, so it is, as He can never lie or deceive." (*The Large Catechism*, by Martin Luther, translated by F. Bente and W.H.T. Dau, Published in: "Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church" (Concordia Publishing House, 1921))

In 1530, Luther's views on the Eucharist were officially incorporated as a tenet of Lutheranism in the Augsburg Confession:

"Of the Lord's Supper: '...the [true] body and blood of Christ are truly present [under the form of bread and wine], and are [there] communicated to those that eat in the Lord's supper...'"

Luther's belief in the Real Presence caused a split in the ranks of his own followers, as this 1525 letter from Luther indicates:

"Carlstadt, who is quite given over to the devil, rages against me, having issued various writings full of poison. He, with his followers, denies that the body and blood of Christ are present in the Sacrament. I am ready to confute him, although through artifice, as he has led many astray in different places." (*Letter 113, To John Brismann*, Königsberg, January 11, 1525, "The Letters of Martin Luther", reprinted by Ages Software, 1997)

### **Ulrich Zwingli (1484 - 1531)**

Date	Events
1484	Born in Wildhaus, Switzerland
1506	Master of Arts, University of Basel; becomes a priest - Influenced by writings of Erasmus
1518	Appointed preacher at Grossmünster Cathedral in Zurich - Leads Zurich to withdrawal from alliance with Catholic France
1522	Resigns from priesthood; employed by Zurich City Council as evangelical pastor
1523	Publishes <i>67 theses</i>
1525/1526	Authorizes execution of the Anabaptists
1531	Dies fighting in Catholic/Protestant Second War of Kappel

Ulrich Zwingli, often considered the founder of the Reformed Church tradition, would take things a step further than Luther and Wycliffe, and deny transubstantiation, the Real Presence, (at least in the way it had traditionally been understood), and the repetition of the Sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Zwingli (like Augustine a 1,000 years before) believed that the "this bread is my body" etc. verbiage in the New

Testament was meant to be taken symbolically. He believed in a “spiritual eating”, efficacious through faith in Jesus Christ, not through the words of the Sacrament. In his work *On Predestination, Baptism, and the Eucharist*, Zwingli wrote:



“I believe that in the holy Eucharist, i.e., the supper of thanksgiving, the true body of Christ is present by the contemplation of faith. This means that they who thank the Lord for the benefits bestowed on us in His Son acknowledge that He assumed true flesh, in it truly suffered, truly washed away our sins by His blood; and thus everything done by Christ becomes as it were present to them by the contemplation of faith. But that the body of Christ in essence and really, i. e., the natural body itself, is either present in the supper or masticated with our mouth and teeth, as the Papists or some [i.e., the Lutherans] who look back to the fleshpots of Egypt assert, we not only deny, but constantly maintain to be an error, contrary to the Word of God.

In view of these passages we are compelled to confess that the words: ‘This is my body,’ should not be understood naturally, but figuratively, just as the words: ‘This is Jehovah’s passover’ [Ex. 12: 11]...

Let them who wish go now and condemn us for heresy, only let them know that by the same process they are condemning the opinions of the theologians, contrary to the decrees of the Pontiffs. For from these facts it becomes very evident that the ancients [Ambrose and Augustine] always spoke figuratively when they attributed so much to the eating of the body of Christ in the Supper; meaning, not that sacramental eating could cleanse the soul but faith in God through Jesus Christ, which is spiritual eating, whereof this external eating is but symbol and shadow. And as bread sustains the body and wine enlivens and exhilarates, thus it strengthens the soul and assures it of God’s mercy that He has given us His Son; thus it renews the mind by the confidence that, by His blood, the sins with which it was being consumed were destroyed...” (Ulrich Zwingli: *On Predestination, Baptism, and the Eucharist*; From *Ulrich Zwingli, An Account of the Faith of Huldreich Zwingli Submitted to the Roman Emperor Charles (3 July 1530)*; Trans. S. M. Maccauley, “The Latin Works and Correspondence of Huldreich Zwingli, vol. 2”, (Philadelphia: Heidelberg Press, 1922))

## ***John Calvin (1509 - 1564)***

Date	Events
1509	Born in Noyon, France
1523	Studies for priesthood in Paris
1528/29	Studies law in Orleans, Bourges
1533	"Conversion" - Breaks with Roman Church
1536	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publishes <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i></li> <li>• Flees to Geneva Switzerland, which declared for the Reformed Faith two months before Calvin arrived</li> <li>• At the urging of William Farel, becomes an evangelical preacher in Geneva</li> </ul>
April 23, 1538	Farel and Calvin deposed by the Great Council of Geneva – Calvin goes to Strasbourg, Farel to Basel
1541	Prodded by commercial interests, and fear of a revived Catholicism, the Great Council asked Farel and Calvin to return to Geneva

Date	Events
1541/1564	Theocratic ruler of the "City of God" in Geneva, Switzerland
1542	"Ecclesiastical Ordinances" passed - Government of the Reformed Church established (no bishops, cardinals, etc.)
1610	Long after Calvin's death, Dutch Calvinist's debate Arminians (believers in free will) in Dort; the Calvinist's develop the acronym TULIP <sup>1</sup> to describe Calvin's theology.

John Calvin, essentially the successor to Ulrich Zwingli in the Reformed Church, took similar views on the Communion. He believed that there was no sacrifice involved – the Sacrament is a memorial. Further, he thought that the “eat this body” language should be taken figuratively, and that if Christ is present during the Sacrament, it is through the Spirit.



To represent Calvin's views, I've quoted from his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* below.

“Nothing is more manifest than that their Mass is diametrically opposed to the sacred Supper of our Lord. I go farther — we show in the plainest manner, that it is full of wicked abominations: hence there is need of reformation...”

“...For the meaning of the words is: ‘By participating in the breaking of bread, according to the order and observance which I have prescribed, you shall be participants also in my body.’ Hence, when an individual eats of it by himself, the promise in that case goes for nothing. Besides, we are taught in these words what the Lord would have us do. Take, says he. Hence those that offer a sacrifice to God have some other than Christ as their authority, for we are not instructed in these words to perform a sacrifice.”

**“Let us regard it then as beyond all controversy that Christ is here speaking of the bread. Now the question is — ‘In what sense?’ That we may elicit the true meaning, we must hold that the expression is figurative;** for, assuredly, to deny this is exceedingly dishonest. Why then is the term body applied to the bread? All, I think, will allow that it is for the same reason that John calls the Holy Spirit a dove. John 1:32.) Thus far we are agreed. Now the reason why the Spirit was so called was this — that he had appeared in the form of a dove. Hence the name of the Spirit is transferred to the visible sign. Why should we not maintain that there is here a similar instance of metonymy [symbolism], and that the term body is applied to the bread, as being the sign and symbol of it?”

“...The statue of Hercules is called Hercules, but what have we there but a bare, empty representation? On the other hand the Spirit is called a dove, as being a sure pledge of the invisible presence of the Spirit. Hence the bread is Christ's body, because it assuredly testifies, that the body which it represents is held forth to us, or because the Lord, by holding out to us that symbol, gives us at the same time his own body; for Christ is not a deceiver, to mock us with empty representations. Hence it is regarded by me as beyond all controversy, that the reality is here conjoined with the sign; or, in other words, that we do not less truly become participants in Christ's body in respect of spiritual efficacy, than we partake of the bread.”

**“...I conclude, that Christ's body is really, (as the common expression is,) — that is, truly given to us in the Supper, to be wholesome food for our souls.** I use the common form of expression, but my meaning is, that our souls are nourished by the substance of the body, that we may truly be made one with him, or,

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<sup>1</sup> Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints



what amounts to the same thing, that **a life-giving virtue from Christ's flesh is poured into us by the Spirit, though it is at a great distance from us, and is not mixed with us.**"

**"...But that participation in the body of Christ, which, I affirm, is presented to us in the Supper, does not require a local presence, nor the descent of Christ,** nor infinite extension, nor anything of that nature, for the Supper being a heavenly action, there is no absurdity in saying, that Christ, while remaining in heaven, is received by us. **For as to his communicating himself to us, that is effected through the secret virtue of his Holy Spirit,** which can not merely bring together, but join in one, things that are separated by distance of place, and far remote."

"But, in order that we may be capable of this participation, we must rise heavenward. Here, therefore, faith must be our resource, when all the bodily senses have failed."

"Do this in remembrance of me. **Hence the Supper is a memorial,** appointed as a help to our weakness; for if we were sufficiently mindful of the death of Christ, this help would be unnecessary." (John Calvin, *Commentary On The First Epistle To The Corinthians*, Ages Software, 1997; emphasis added)

### ***Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489-1561)***

Date	Events
1489	Born in Ossig, Silesia, Germany
1518	"Visitation of the divine" - Schwenckfeld's conversion - becomes early follower of Luther
1524	Writes <i>Admonition</i>
1525	Schwenckfeld-Luther debate
1541	Writes "Great Confession"
1547-1563	Entire body of Schwenckfeld's works banned by the Council of Trent - an honor shared with Luther and Calvin
1561	Death of Schwenckfeld
1734	Schwenckfelders flee from Jesuit persecution to Pennsylvania
1826	Last Schwenckfelder in Europe dies

Schwenckfeld, although an early follower of Luther, ended up disagreeing with Luther on the subject of communion. Schwenckfeld took what is now sometimes viewed as the "spiritual" interpretation of the Eucharist. He felt that, just as the bread and wine can provide physical nourishment to the body, they also provide spiritual nourishment:

"It was not until the disciples had eaten the bread and drunk the wine that Christ spoke the words. Bread is not a food until the grain has been grown, threshed, ground, baked and eaten; bread when eaten nourishes and strengthens the body."

"Give the physical to the body, spiritual to the poor soul which is spiritual; let physical bread nourish the physical body, the invisible [bread], the invisible soul." (*Christian History*, Issue 21, p. 15)



Also, Schwenckfeld believed that Christians should not take communion when in open discord (see 1 Corinthians 11:27). Schwenckfeld halted communion among his followers because of this view, and the ban lasted for several centuries!! (Engraving from *The Schwenkfeldian*, Spring Issue 2004)

## ***Westminster Confession and Catechism***

The Westminster Confession (1646) and the Westminster Larger Catechism (1648) have a series of statements (the former) and questions and answers (the latter) that discuss the nature of the Lord's Supper (Communion). The catechism and confession were largely the work of 17<sup>th</sup> century English and Scottish Calvinists, and codified the views of Calvin and Zwingli. Key precepts:

- Denies transubstantiation
- Christ is present only in a spiritual sense
- Communicants must properly prepare themselves before taking communion
- There is no sacrifice, only a commemoration

### **Westminster Confession**

"29:2 In this sacrament, Christ is not offered up to His Father; nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins of the quick or the dead (Heb 9:22, 25, 26, 28); but only a commemoration of that one offering up of Himself, by Himself, upon the cross, once for all: and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same (Matt 26:26, 27; 1 Cor 11:24-26): so that the Popish sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is most abominably injurious to Christ's one, only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of His elect (Heb 7:23, 24, 27; 10:11, 12, 14, 18)."

"29:4 Private masses, or receiving this sacrament by a priest or any other alone (1 Cor 10:6); as likewise, the denial of the cup to the people (Mark 4:23; 1 Cor 11:25-29), worshipping the elements, the lifting them up or carrying them about for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use; are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ (Matt 15:9)."

"29:6 That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason; overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, and hath been, and is the cause of manifold superstitions; yea, of gross idolatries (Luke 24:6, 39; Acts 3:21 with 1 Cor 11:24-26)."

### **Westminster Larger Catechism**

"Question 170: How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord's Supper feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein?"

Answer: As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in, with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal and carnal, but in a spiritual manner; yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.

Question 171: How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?

Answer: They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

Question 173: May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, be kept from it?

Answer: Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ has left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.

Question 174: What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the time of the administration of it?

Answer: It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that, during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces; in judging themselves, and sorrowing for sin; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fullness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace; in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints."

## Council of Trent

By the 1540s, the Roman Catholic Church was reeling from the affects of Protestantism all through Europe. While once the pope reigned supreme over all of Western Christendom, by 1540, whole countries had been lost to Protestant usurpers, including England (Henry VIII), Germany (Luther) and Switzerland (Calvin). France, too, was starting to look shaky, as a growing community of Calvinists were asserting their rights there. And (unthinkably!) Protestantism was even making inroads into Italy itself! The Roman Church viewed that something must be done to stem the tide of defections. The set of methodologies employed to do so is collectively known as the Counter-Reformation.

The Counter-Reformation used several methods to attempt to save the church. Among these were the creation of a new militant religious order (the Jesuits), open warfare against Protestant strongholds (The 30 Years War in Germany), and reconstituting the Inquisition. Germane to this discussion is one more method used - to call a great church council. The Council of Trent met from 1545–1563, and enacted many church reforms, and restated basic Catholic beliefs. Among the canons on the Eucharist:

"CANON I.-If any one denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that He is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue; let him be anathema.

CANON II.-If any one saith, 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 denieth that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood-the species Only of the bread and wine remaining-which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation; let him be anathema.

CANON III.-If any one denieth, that, in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist, the whole Christ is contained under each [Page 83] species, and under every part of each species, when separated; let him be anathema...

CANON VI.-If any one saith, that, in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship, even external of latria [adoration, supreme honor]; and is, consequently, neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in processions, according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy church; or, is not to be proposed publicly to the people to be adored, and that the adorers thereof are idolators; let him be anathema...

CANON VIII.-If any one saith, that Christ, given in the Eucharist, is eaten spiritually only, and not also sacramentally and really; let him be anathema...

CANON XI.-If any one saith, that faith alone is a sufficient preparation for receiving the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist; let him be anathema. And for fear lest so great a sacrament may be received unworthily, and so unto death and condemnation, this holy Synod ordains and declares, that sacramental confession, when a confessor may be had, is of necessity to be made beforehand, by those whose conscience is burthened with mortal sin, how contrite even soever they may think themselves. But if any one shall presume to teach, preach, or obstinately to assert, or even in public disputation to defend the contrary, he shall be thereupon excommunicated." (*The Council of Trent, The Thirteenth Session, The canons and decrees of the sacred and ecumenical Council of Trent*, Ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848))

## Catholic practice

In the early 2000s, I had a young married couple attending my Sunday School class. The wife was a life-long Protestant; the husband was a life-long Roman Catholic. On her first visit to her husband's home church, she was in line to receive the Eucharist. Somehow it was indicated to her that, since she wasn't a practicing Catholic, she couldn't partake of the Eucharist. She started to walk away, with the communion wafer in her hands. According to her, "the priest ran after me, and practically tackled me to get the wafer back. I was so embarrassed – I'll never go to a Catholic Church again."

As a life-long Evangelical Protestant, I can't picture such an incident happening in, say, a Presbyterian church, the U.C.C., or a Baptist church. So, why did it happen in a Catholic church? If you believe in the three things that we identified at the beginning of this course as key Catholic beliefs on the Eucharist, it becomes clearer:

- Transubstantiation - "the body and blood of Christ are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the body and the wine into the blood by divine power." (Fourth Lateran Council, 1215)
- The Real Presence of Christ during the sacrament
- The "unbloody Sacrifice" of the New Testament

If you really believe the physical body and blood of Jesus Christ is present during the Sacrament, and you believe that you are performing the "unbloody Sacrifice" of the New Testament, then the actual elements (and how they are treated) become a key area of focus. There are other Catholic practices that come out of the above three beliefs:

- “According to the law of today (Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, de reform.), the Mass may be celebrated only in Chapels and public (or semi-public) oratories, which must be consecrated or at least blessed.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10006a.htm>)
- “The altar-cross is also necessary as an indication that the Sacrifice of the Mass is nothing else than the unbloody reproduction of the Sacrifice of the Cross.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10006a.htm>)
- The requirement that each church have a tabernacle, “the name for the receptacle or case placed upon the table of the high altar or of another altar in which the vessels containing the Blessed Sacrament...are kept (Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14424a.htm>)”.

According to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, “this tabernacle must be safe and inviolable”. Some Medieval Synods added a requirement that the tabernacle have a lock.

## And Protestants today...



Dr. Bryant Harris, Senior Pastor of Mars Hill Presbyterian Church in Acworth, GA, prepares to celebrate communion in 2007

If we look at modern Protestantism, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper can be viewed as a continuum, with those Protestant denominations closest to Catholic practice (Anglican, Lutheran) on one side of the continuum, and those that take a commemorative/figurative or spiritual view on the other end of the continuum (Presbyterian, U.C.C., Baptist, Church of the Nazarene, etc.) The Methodist Church is somewhere in the middle, rejecting transubstantiation, but believing in the Real Presence.

It is probably worth noting that there is some degree of ambivalence in the Anglican view of celebrating the Lord’s Supper. While the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles state “the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ”; and likewise that “the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ”, other Anglican documents view “Communion as a spiritual mystery”.

It should be noted that almost all Protestant denominations reject the adoration of the elements.

As noted previously, Roman Catholics only allow practicing Catholics to receive the Eucharist. Some Protestant Churches also practice “closed” communion, including the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church, and some Mennonite groups. Most Protestant denominations practice “open” communion, although some require that the participants be baptized Christians (as was seen in the section of the

course on the Early Church, this practice dates from a very early time). In the Presbyterian Church communion is typically open to “anyone that accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior”.

### ***Wine vs. grape juice***

One of the arguments within Protestantism is whether wine or grape juice should be used to represent the “blood of Christ”. Those on the wine side of the issue nod towards church tradition, and note that Jesus and the Apostles would have used the drink common in the Passover ceremony which was wine. Those on the grape juice side often have Calvinist roots, and abhor all use of (drinkable) alcohol for any reason.

Here is the Greek word used in the Bible:

G129

aima

*hah'ee-mah*

Of uncertain derivation; *blood*, literally (of men or animals), figuratively (**the juice of grapes**) or specifically (the atoning *blood* of Christ); by implication *bloodshed*, also *kindred*:—blood. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, Parson's Technology, 1998; emphasis added)

Going strictly by the definition above, it would seem that either wine or grape juice would be acceptable for the Sacrament.

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Color photos by Robert C. Jones



### About the Author

Robert C. Jones grew up in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area. He made his living as a hotel lounge band leader/musician from 1974-1981. In 1981, he moved to the Atlanta, Georgia area, where he received a B.S. in Computer Science at DeVry Institute of Technology. Since 1984, Robert has worked for Hewlett-Packard as a computer consultant.

Robert is an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church. He has written and taught numerous adult Sunday School courses (see front inside cover). He has also been active in choir ministries over the years, and has taught the *Disciples* Bible Study five times.



Robert is also President of the Kennesaw Historical Society, for whom he has written several books, including "The Law Heard 'Round the World - An Examination of the Kennesaw Gun Law and Its Effects on the Community", "Retracing the Route of the General - Following in the Footsteps of the Andrews Raid", and "Kennesaw (Big Shanty) in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century". A new book, "Images of America: Kennesaw", was published by Arcadia in 2006.

Robert has also written several books on ghost towns in the Southwest, including in Death Valley, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and Mojave National Preserve.

In 2005, Robert co-authored a business-oriented book entitled "Working Virtually: The Challenges of Virtual Teams". His co-authors were Lise Pace and Rob Oyung.

His interests include the Civil War, Medieval Monasteries, American railroads, ghost towns, hiking in Death Valley and the Mojave, and Biblical Archaeology.

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