

Scriptural Teaching On The Holy Communion

Early Church Passages

I Corinthians 11:17-33

I Corinthians 5:6-8

I Corinthians 10:14-22

Upper Room Passages

Matthew 26:17-30

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:14-20

Passover: Exodus 12:1-32

Post Resurrection Meals

John 21:1-14

Luke 24:13-35

Eschatological Meals

Genesis 14:17-20

Genesis 18:1-8

Psalms 110:4

Isaiah 25:6-10

John 6:1-14

Hebrews 7:1-17

Revelation 19:6-9; chapter 22

Kingdom Meals

Matthew 8:11-12

Matthew 22:1-14

Matthew 25:1-13

Luke 14:15-24

The church has one primary responsibility... the conduct of communal worship. Whenever and wherever people meet together for that purpose there is the church. (Reformed marks of the church: word and sacraments)

If the church does nothing else for the world it is doing the social order the greatest possible service and no other service it renders to society can compare in importance.

So long as the church bids us to the worship of God and providing a credible vehicle for worship, it need not question its place, mission and influence in the world. If it loses faith in the act of worship, is thoughtless in the ordering of worship, in the conduct of worship, it need not look for its avocation (its program) to save it. It is dead at its heart.

Willard Sperry
The Reality of Worship
1932

Liturgical Spirituality

In Christian liturgical spirituality, life in the Spirit of Christ is sought through the rhythm, forms, words and melodies of the liturgy. The yearly, weekly and daily cycles of praise and prayer provide the materials for focus on Christ. To be Christian in this way, we do the liturgy—we accomplish its actions, repeat its prayers, sing its songs, embrace its symbols—and when the liturgy is over, we live as if it were still going on—in praise of God and in loving care for one another.

Benedictine monasticism has modeled this Christian spirituality for centuries. Many church fathers and mothers wrote expositions of the liturgy. Many mystics experienced their ecstasies during or after worship. In our century Romano Guardini wrote Mediations before Mass. From Mary's Magnificat and St. Benedict's community to Gertrude of Helfta and Thomas Merton, the idea is this: The way we are Christian come from the liturgy and god back to the liturgy. We live the way we praise. Liturgical spirituality asks two questions: (1) What does the liturgy say that we mean, and (2) if we attend to this meaning, how will we live? Liturgical commentary seeks to assist in these questions and answers. These, we say, have been and out still to be the meaning of the liturgy. This, we say, might be how we live if the liturgy is singing into our soul.

Gail Ramshow
Words Around the Font, p. vii
LPT 1994

FIVE VIEWS OF THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

(1. The traditionalist Roman Catholic understanding of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is called "transubstantiation". It is based on the metaphysical philosophy of Aristotle. In sum, transubstantiation maintains that through the act of consecration by a priest, the bread and wine of the Eucharist become, in their essence, (substance) the body and blood of Christ, while the accidents of the bread and wine - color, texture, smell, taste, etc. - remain the same. The sacrifice of the cross is repeated in every Mass. The salvific work of the crucified Christ recurs each time the priest, who represents Christ, breaks the bread and pours the wine while saying what we call, "the words of institution".

In recent times, the Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx has suggested that two terms need to supplement the doctrine of transubstantiation: Transignification and Transfinalization. As the names indicate, the meaning of the meal and its purpose change when the elements are consecrated. Although the accidents of the bread and wine remain the same, they are no longer simply bread and wine. They have a meaning and purpose beyond ordinary food.

(2. The sixteenth century Reformers offered distinctly different views of the presence. Martin Luther did not believe the elements underwent any essential (substantive) change when consecrated. Instead, he held that Christ, by the Spirit, pervades the bread and wine, residing "in, with and under" them. Luther was trying to hold on to a simple understanding of Jesus' words, "This is my body". His view is often referred to as "consubstantiation", although Luther himself never used that term.

(3. John Calvin departed from both the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran view of the real presence of Christ in the Supper. Calvin contended that the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ, not by bringing Christ down from where he sits enthroned at the Father's right hand, as in the Roman view, but by raising the congregation up to the heavenly places to participate in the heavenly worship of God ("Therefore with angels and archangels and all the hosts of heaven..."). Through the eating of the Eucharist the gathered church experiences the fullness of the Risen Christ and receives all the benefits of his holy Incarnation and Resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit by ascending to Christ's heavenly Table, there to feed upon him. Calvin himself said that the mystery of the Eucharist was not to be

understood rationally. Rather, he wrote, “I shall not be ashamed to confess that it is a secret too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words to declare. And to speak more plainly, I rather experience than understand it.” (Refer to the last paragraphs in Calvin’s “Short Treatise” where he laments the outcome of the Marburg Colloquy and states his view of the presence in simple terms.)

(4. The Swiss Reformer, Huldrych Zwingli, proffered a view of the Lord’s Supper that, if followed to its logical conclusion, made the eating and drinking of the Supper superfluous. Zwingli believed that the Supper helped to bolster the faith of communicants. The Supper is a memorial of Christ’s life and deeds, particularly, of his suffering and death. Zwingli also believed that Christ was present in the community itself, but that the bread and wine were merely apparati to aid individual reflection and growth in faith. It is faith, not the Supper that is transformative for Christians.

Cyril Richardson attempted to find greater depth in Zwingli’s view by showing the connection between Zwingli’s memorialism and the Biblical term “anamnesis”. Anamnesis means that the event or person being remembered is actually made present in the commemoration. In terms of the Last Supper (and this a problem because the Eucharist is not simply a re-enactment of the Last Supper) this means that Christ’s actions on the cross are experienced anew by those who partake of the bread and wine. However, since Zwingli’s view precludes any benefits of Christ’s death being received by eating and drinking the bread and wine, we are still left with a meal whose only purpose is to excite our faith. In this way, Zwingli’s Supper would produce roughly the same result in believers as the “Spiritual Exercises” of St. Ignatius Loyola.

(5. (This summary of the Orthodox view of the Sacrament is a bit more lengthy than the other four, since Orthodoxy is less familiar to most of us. Note, however, how many correspondences there are between the Orthodox view and Calvin’s.

“As with the Roman Catholic Church, the Eucharist is at the very center of Orthodox religious life, both of individual Christians and the great Community of the Faithful. It is as it were a synthesis of the whole religious experience, the whole ‘philosophy’ of the life of the Church. It is like a great river, a sea, where the different currents, the various aspects of the religious life are joined together and formed into one....

This Communion is completely true and real, physical and at the same time spiritual, embracing my whole being, purifying my soul and planting in my body the seed of eternal life, of the resurrection to come. But there is

nothing 'magical' or 'mechanical' in this Communion. It is imbued with an ethical quality. It is founded on moral presuppositions: it is the soul of the sinner that cries out from the abyss to the mercy of God. A moral tension, an anguished search for purity and a profound contrition penetrate all the Liturgy and prayers before Communion. For the soul is conscious of its fundamental unworthiness, its weakness and frailty. It is only with these feelings of utmost humility, with the cry of the repentant sinner who sees himself as he really is and condemns himself; it is only with such feelings that we can approach the Lord's Table.... 'I believe, O Lord, and I confess', says John Chrysostom, 'that Thou art truly the Christ who has come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. My Lord and my God, I know that I am not worthy, and I am ashamed that Thou shouldst desire to come under the roof of the temple of my soul, for it has fallen into ruin and desolation, and there is no place there where Thou canst rest Thy head. But as Thou hast humbled Thyself in descending from the heights of heaven for the sake of humankind's salvation, so deign now to humble Thyself to the depths of my unworthiness'.

The Lord comes not only to the individual soul, but also to his whole Church, and the mystical encounter in the Sacrament of the Eucharist is not only individual, but individual and corporate. What takes place here occurs above all within the individual's inner religious experience, but at the same time there is here a reality which involves the whole fullness of existence: the soul, and the body, and eternity, and the course of history, all mankind, and the whole creation. For this is a mystical experience of a quite exceptional order, corresponding to the very essence of the Good News. It is indissolubly connected with historical reality, with the humanity of our Lord, i.e. with a completely tangible and concrete reality, with the true humanity of the one who suffered and was crucified, and was raised again and transfigured in glory. The whole structure of the Liturgy is simply an expectation of the glorified Lord; the preparation and the consummation of His coming to the faithful. He comes to his Church as the King of Majesty, shining in glory, He who suffered and is alive, who is raised from the dead and surrounded by angelic powers.

We have in this boundless glory of the Risen One, the King of Glory, a commemoration of His passion and sacrifice. It may be said that the two fundamental and essential elements in the experience of the Christian Church are joined together in the Eucharist. The Lord's death is constantly recalled to the memory of the Church, constantly 'represented', in the literal sense of the word, i.e. made present. This is the foundation, the corner

stone, on which the whole edifice is built: without this historical reality, without this sacrifice, this death and victory over death, there is no salvation. This is the 'evangelical' moment of the Eucharist, the living and uninterrupted tradition of the apostolic message, the *depositum fidei*.

But in addition, this sacrifice is made present for the faithful. Not as a simple commemoration, but as a real Presence. Not in the sense that the sacrifice of Golgotha is infinitely repeated by the Church. There is no need for repetition. The death of the Lord which took place once on Golgotha was completely sufficient for our salvation. But this voluntary sacrifice which took place 'once for all' is perpetually offered to the Father in eternity by the Lamb of God, as the Seer tells us in the fifth chapter of Revelation: 'And I looked, and behold, between the throne and the four living creatures I saw a Lamb, standing as it were, slain' (Rev. 5:6) it is not that He comes down from heaven to be sacrificed by a priest, but rather that we, i.e. the Church, are lifted up in the Sacrament of Communion to the level of the heavenly altar on which the Lamb of God is offering, from all eternity, that saving death which was consummated on Golgotha. This is why the element of divine glory, of the celestial altar with the angelic hosts covering their faces with their wings in dread before the inexpressible mystery of the divine sacrifice, is so emphasized by the Eastern Church."

Nicholas Arseniev

Quite simply, for the Orthodox the sacraments are the means by which the incarnate Christ is present to us now. As to a "moment" when the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, the Orthodox believe that happens in the whole of the Anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer).

What occurs when we receive the Lord's Supper?

- 1.) What is the signified becomes reality through faith.
- 2.) We become flesh of Christ's flesh and bone of his bone. (Scott's confession, Ch. 21) (St. John 6:52-57)
- 3.) We receive all the benefits of Christ's saving mission
 - a. Eternal life
 - b. Citizenship in the Kingdom
 - c. Forgiveness of sin
 - d. We become children of God
 - e. A place in heaven
 - f. Immortality
 - g. Power
 - h. Wealth
 - i. Righteousness

(John Calvin, Institute of the Christian Religions Book 4, Ch. 17, Section 2)

- 4.) Union with Christ I Corinthians 10:16-17
- 5.) Communion (community) with one another I Corinthians 11:17-32
- 6.) We look back to the past
W-2.4003a
St. Mark 14:22-25
Exodus 12:1-32
- 7.) We see the present
W-2.4003b
I Corinthians 10:14-22
- 8.) We look forward to the future
W-2.4003c
Revelation 19:6-9
Isaiah 25:6-10
St. Matthew 8:11-12

"The goal of the Christian life is union with Christ".

-John Calvin

I ask not only on behalf of these (the apostles), but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word (us), that they may all be one. As you Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

St. John 17:20-23

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

St. John 15:4-6

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

1John 4:10-16

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:19-20

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:3-5

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!

2 Corinthians 5:7

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another.

Romans 12:4-5

His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature.

2 Peter 1:3-4

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13

The Scott's Confession, Chapter XXI, **The Sacraments**

As the fathers under the Law, besides the reality of the sacrifices, had two chief sacraments, that is, circumcision and the passover, and those who rejected these were not reckoned among God's people; so do we acknowledge and confess that now in the time of the gospel we have two chief sacraments, which alone were instituted by the Lord Jesus and commanded to be used by all who will be counted members of his body, that is, Baptism and the Supper or Table of the Lord Jesus, also called the Communion of His Body and Blood. These sacraments, both of the Old Testament and of the New, were instituted by God not only to make a visible distinction between his people and those who were without the Covenant, but also to exercise the faith of his children and, by participation of these sacraments, to seal in their hearts the assurance of his promise, and of that most blessed conjunction, union, and society, which the chosen have with their Head, Christ Jesus. And so we utterly condemn the vanity of those who affirm the sacraments to be nothing else than naked and bare signs. No, we assuredly believe that by Baptism we are engrafted into Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of his righteousness, by which our sins are covered and remitted, and also that in the Supper rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined with us that he becomes the very nourishment and food of our souls. Not that we imagine any transubstantiation of bread into Christ's body, and of wine into his natural blood, as the Romanists have perniciously taught and wrongly believed; but this union and conjunction which we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the right use of the sacraments is wrought by means of the Holy Ghost, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly, and makes us feed upon the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once broken and shed for us but now in heaven, and appearing for us in the presence of his Father. Notwithstanding the distance between his glorified body in heaven and mortal men on earth, yet we must assuredly believe that the bread which we break is the communion of Christ's body and the cup which we bless the communion of his blood. Thus we confess and believe without doubt that the faithful, in the right use of the Lord's Table, do so eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus that he remains in them and they in him; they are so made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone that as the eternal Godhood has given to the flesh of Christ Jesus, which by nature was corruptible and mortal, life and immortality, so the eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of Christ Jesus does the like for us. We grant that this is neither given to us merely at the time nor by the power and virtue of the sacrament alone, but we affirm that the faithful, in the right use of the Lord's Table, have such union with Christ Jesus as the natural man cannot apprehend. Further we affirm that although the faithful, hindered by negligence and human weakness, do not profit as much as they ought in the actual moment of the Supper, yet afterwards it shall bring forth fruit, being living seed sown in good ground; for the Holy Spirit, who can never be separated from the right institution of the Lord Jesus, will not deprive the faithful of the fruit of that mystical action. Yet all this, we say again, comes of that true faith which apprehends Christ Jesus, who alone makes the sacrament effective in us. Therefore, if anyone slanders us by saying that we affirm or believe the sacraments to be symbols and nothing more, they are libelous and speak against the plain facts. On the other hand we readily admit that we make a distinction between Christ Jesus in his eternal substance and the elements of the sacramental signs. So we neither worship the elements, in place of that which they signify, nor yet do we despise them or undervalue them, but we use them with great reverence, examining ourselves diligently before we participate, since we are assured by the mouth of the apostle that "whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, **The Holy Supper**

LORD'S DAY 28

4.075 Q. 75. How are you reminded and assured in the Holy Supper that you participate in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross and in all his benefits?

A. In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread, and to drink of this cup in remembrance of him. He has thereby promised that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood was shed for me, as surely as I see with my eyes that the bread of the Lord is broken for me, and that the cup is shared with me. Also, he has promised that he himself as certainly feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life with his crucified body and shed blood as I receive from the hand of the minister and actually taste the bread and the cup of the Lord which are given to me as sure signs of the body and blood of Christ.

4.076 Q. 76. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his shed blood?

A. It is not only to embrace with a trusting heart the whole passion and death of Christ, and by it to receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In addition, it is to be so united more and more to his blessed body by the Holy Spirit dwelling both in Christ and in us that, although he is in heaven and we are on earth, we are nevertheless flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, always living and being governed by one Spirit, as the members of our bodies are governed by one soul.

4.077 Q. 77. Where has Christ promised that he will feed and nourish believers with his body and blood just as surely as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

A. In the institution of the holy Supper which reads: The Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also the cup, after supper, saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. This promise is also repeated by the apostle Paul: When we bless "the cup of blessing," is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake.

LORD'S DAY 29

4.078 Q. 78. Do the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ?

A. No, for as the water in baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, nor becomes the washing away of sins by itself, but is only a divine sign and confirmation of it, so also in the Lord's Supper the sacred bread does not become the body of Christ itself, although, in accordance with the nature and usage of sacraments, it is called the body of Christ.

4.079 Q. 79. Then why does Christ call the bread his body, and the cup his blood, or the New Covenant in his blood, and why does the apostle Paul call the Supper "a means of sharing" in the body and blood of Christ?

A. Christ does not speak in this way except for a strong reason. He wishes to teach us by it that as bread and wine sustain this temporal life so his crucified body and shed blood are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life. Even more, he wishes to assure us by this visible sign and pledge that we come to share in his true body and blood through the working of the Holy Spirit as surely as we receive with our mouth these holy tokens in remembrance of him, and that all his sufferings and his death are our own as certainly as if we had ourselves suffered and rendered satisfaction in our own persons.

4.080 Q. 80. What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the papal Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which he himself has accomplished on the cross once for all; (and that through the Holy Spirit we are incorporated into Christ, who is now in heaven with his true body at the right hand of the Father and is there to be worshiped). But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the sufferings of Christ unless Christ is again offered for them daily by the priest (and that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine and is therefore to be worshiped in them). Therefore the Mass is fundamentally a complete denial of the once for all sacrifice and passion of Jesus Christ (and as such an idolatry to be condemned).

4.081 Q. 81. Who ought to come to the table of the Lord?

A. Those who are displeased with themselves for their sins, and who nevertheless trust that these sins have been forgiven them and that their remaining weakness is covered by the passion and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and improve their life. The impenitent and hypocrites, however, eat and drink judgment to themselves.

4.082 Q. 82. Should those who show themselves to be unbelievers and enemies of God by their confession and life be admitted to this Supper?

A. No, for then the covenant of God would be profaned and his wrath provoked against the whole congregation. According to the ordinance of Christ and his apostles, therefore, the Christian church is under obligation, by the office of the keys, to exclude such persons until they amend their lives.

THE SHORTER CATECHISM

7.088 Q. 88. What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?

A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer, all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

7.091 Q. 91. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.

7.092 Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

7.093 Q. 93. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?

A. The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

7.096 Q. 96. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

7.097 Q. 97. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper that they examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.