

“An investigation into the theory and practice of Holy Communion.”

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1. INTRODUCTION

The sacrament of Holy Communion, more commonly known as the Lord's Supper, or the Last Supper is recognised by all main-line Protestant Christians, apart from the Salvation Army, as one of only two sacraments given to the Church by Jesus. The other ordinance of the Church is water baptism. The Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches are the exception. They recognise seven sacraments namely, baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, the sacrament of the sick, orders and marriage. Other words used for the service or ceremony of Communion include the Eucharist (giving of thanks) the Lord's Table and in Roman Catholic theology, the Mass.

Since it is an institution commanded by Jesus, it is very important to fully understand the ceremony that is carried out in most Churches every Sunday. In larger Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches this ceremony may be conducted at least once or more a day.

2. BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE FORMATION OF THIS SACRAMENT

The setting for the Last Supper was in a prepared room for the Passover. The author of the new feast was Jesus who instigated this ceremony. Poignantly, it was on the night he was betrayed by Judas. Why Jesus allowed Judas a place at his table will remain forever a mystery.

2.1. THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The Synoptic Gospels give considerable place to the events of the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted it with His disciples on the night He was betrayed. The accounts are found in Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26 and Luke 22:7-23. They are shown in parallel in appendix 1 for our further study.

2.2 APPENDIX 1 REPRODUCES THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS ACCOUNT OF THE 'LAST SUPPER'.

The term *Synoptic Gospels* relates to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The word 'synoptic' means 'taking a combined view.' It is wise when studying a particular event in the Gospels to review what all three writers have recorded. It is only when all these accounts are taken together can a full picture be found. The Gospel of John is set apart from the other three although there are records of some events that are found in the other three. John wrote his Gospel many years after the other three were written and there is little evidence that he used any of the other Gospels in his compilation of his Gospel.

2.3 THOSE GOSPEL WRITERS PRESENT AT THE LAST SUPPER

Only Matthew and John were present at the Last Supper. Mark was a disciple of Peter and therefore wrote about what Peter remembered. Luke was a gentile who was a disciple of Paul. It is believed that Mark's Gospel was written first followed by Matthew and Luke. Both Matthew and Luke use together all but 55 verses of Mark in their writings. Some small differences on their account of the Last Supper are indicated. John on the other hand did not make use of any of the material of the other three Gospels although he would know these writings. However, John records more of the words of Jesus immediately before the Lord's Supper than any other Gospel writers.

2.4 JESUS USED A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TIME DURING THE LAST SUPPER SPEAKING TO HIS DISCIPLES

Much time was needed by Jesus at the Passover Feast. He knew that this would be the last time He would have opportunity to speak in detail with His disciples. It was important for the future of the Christian Church that He was able to have considerable discussions with them and leave some important principles of ministering to one another in the future.

The time needed was evident in John's account of that last night supper. This event covered John chapters 14-17.

These chapters included:

- (i) Washing of the disciples feet (Ch 14)
- (ii) Jesus being the Way the Truth and the Life (Ch 14)
- (iii) The promise of the Holy Spirit (Ch 14 & 16)
- (iv) Jesus the True Vine (Ch 15)
- (v) Hatred of the world for Christians (Ch 15)
- (vi) They would have joy because Jesus was overcoming the world (Ch 16)
- (vii) The Lord's Prayer (Ch 17)

Jesus knew that delivering these important messages at this critical time would enable the Disciples to remember His words accurately.

3. PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER

3.1 THE PASSOVER FEAST

It is significant that Jesus chose the Passover Feast. Since his apostles were Jews, they would all know the ritual of the Passover having been taught it from children. Jesus was going to use this feast as a template or example of how they were to celebrate the new feast of the New Covenant. Therefore for the ordinary twentieth century Christian an understanding of this festival feast will give the Last Supper greater meaning and significance.

The room and food had to be prepared for the Passover. The arrangements included obtaining a lamb and taking it to the Temple for ritual sacrifice, collection of unleavened bread and bitter herbs and wine. It would also incorporate the layout of the room with couches and a meal table. This was to be a time of feasting, fellowship and conversation. A note of interest for Bible scholars is that in Luke's account, (22:7-8) Jesus takes the initiative as in Matthew (26:19) and asks for the preparation while Mark 14:12 puts the initiative onto the disciples.

3.2 DETAILS OF THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE PASSOVER

- (i) First a prayer of sanctification is offered consisting of the head of the household giving the prayer of sanctification (*qiddû*). This consisted of the benediction for the festival and the first cup (*the qiddû Cup*). The preliminary course known as *karpus*, consisted of green herbs, bitter herbs and a sauce of fruit juice were eaten without bread. The meal was

brought in but not yet eaten; the second cup was mixed with water and placed on the table but not drunk at that time.

- (ii) The Passover liturgy. The Passover service, in which the head of the household explained the special features of the Passover meal (Exod 12:26) in answer to that of the youngest boy's question which was the same question year after year, "Why is this night distinguished from all other nights," the father or leader of the Feast replies:

"And it shall be, when your children say to you 'What do you mean by this service?'
"That you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' "So the people bowed their heads and worshipped."
Exodus 12:26-27

He repeats the outline of this story, the *haggādā*; the first part of the Passover Hallel or Psalm which is Psalm 114 which was sung and the second cup (*haggādā*; *cup*) was drunk.

- (iii) The main meal. The head of household pronounced a benediction over the unleavened bread, which was given to each one and the meal eaten which consisted of the Passover lamb, mazzoth, bitter herbs (Exod. 12:8) and wine (optional). After grace the third cup (cup of blessing) was drunk.
- (iv) Conclusion. The second part of the Hallel (Psalms 115-118) was sung and a benediction over the fourth cup (Hallel cup).

3.3 JESUS WAS FOLLOWING THE PASSOVER CUSTOM AND HE WAS IN CHARGE OF THE FEAST

Just as a father in Israel would take charge over his family for this particular feast, Jesus took charge of the evening. At some time in the evening He takes the cup of wine - as would be His duty - and passed it round with the moving words "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer". To Him, this was the climax of the whole week. To share in a fellowship meal with His disciples before He died. This cup was passed round four or five times during the evening.

Luke records that Jesus took the cup twice and passed it round to His disciples. Luke 22:17 & 20. When passing the first cup round Jesus was signifying that they were drinking this wine for the last time under the old covenant. There was then an interval while feasting and talking continued. Then it is recorded in all the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus broke bread. Jesus then takes the cup "after supper" according to Luke and It is at this point that the Passover Feast becomes the Lord's Supper. This was to be the New Covenant that replaced the old one. A new memorial feast that all His followers hereafter would follow.

4. ONE OF THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF A SACRAMENT

One characteristic of a sacrament is that it represents one or more spiritual truths by means of sensible and outward signs.

There are four aspects, according to Berkhof, to the Lord's Supper:

4.2 IT IS A SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF THE DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes” 1 Corinthians 11:26.

The fact of a future redemption is shown clearly in the Old Testament by symbols in the New Testament sacrament. The words, 'broken for you' and 'shed for many', point to the death of Christ as a sacrificial one, for the benefit, and even in the place, of His people.

4.3 IT ALSO SYMBOLISES THE BELIEVER'S PARTICIPATION IN THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

The participants not only look on the elements of bread and wine but partake of them and in a figurative sense feed and drink them.

“Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, 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 food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever”. John 6:53-56

4.4 EATING THE FLESH AND DRINKING THE BLOOD

The text above also suggests, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. This must have been meant by Jesus as symbolic because He was alive at the time of speaking it. Nevertheless, many disciples stopped following Him at this point. The Roman Catholic theologians make much of the text found in John Chapter 6 because it can be seen to support their doctrine of transubstantiation (See page 25). The reason was that it meant total identification with Him. In a symbolic way these elements we take at Communion appropriate the benefits obtained by the sacrificial death of Christ. We spiritually feed on Him. We do it collectively and are not ashamed. It also typifies the Manna from heaven given to the Israelites for forty years. They depended on God feeding them every day. So we need feeding from God. Symbolically, the Communion service is typical of this Old Testament miracle. Paul refers to this in the text reproduced below.

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and

in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” 1 Corinthians 10: 1-4.

4.5 THE DEATH OF CHRIST REPRESENTED AS THE OBJECT OF FAITH, AND THE ACT OF FAITH

It is this which unites the believer to Christ, but also the effect of this act as giving life, strength and joy to the soul. This is implied rather than obvious. We nourish and invigorate the bodily life of man, so Christ quickens and sustains the life of the soul. The Scriptures state that we live, move and have our being in Him.

“For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring” Acts 17:28

4.6 THE SACRAMENT SYMBOLISES THE UNION AND UNITY THERE IS BETWEEN EACH BELIEVER

We, as members of the mystical Body of Christ, belong to each other. We eat of the same spiritual bread and drink of the same spiritual wine. We receive the elements from one another and this is an intimacy we do not share with others outside.

“For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” 1 Corinthians 10:17.

“For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. 1 Corinthians 12:14

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” 1 Corinthians 12:18.

Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” 1 Corinthians 12:27.

5. HOLY COMMUNION OR THE LAST SUPPER AS AN ORDINANCE

5.1 ORDINANCE

The word '*ordinance*' is often translated 'judgement' in the Authorised Version. It means 'to decide' and originally describes the decision of a local judge in cases of civil disputes. The word can mean '*judgement, justice, a legal case, claim, that which is right or fitting.*' The verb can mean to '*inscribe*' or '*engrave*' thus '*that which is fixed in writing, a decree, statute,*'

The Old Testament is full of statutes and ordinances. The word 'ordinance' appears 27 times in the Old Testament and the word 'statute' 35 times. The word is almost absent in the New Testament.

5.2 IS THE HOLY COMMUNION A REQUIREMENT FOR CHRISTIANS?

This question is answered in a general way by the writer to the Hebrews who lays down a ruling for Christians to meet together.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:25

The best statute or requirement to partake in the Lord's Supper is from the Words of Christ Himself.

“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; "for I say to you, I will not drink 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 which is given for you; **DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.**" Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:17-20

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “**TAKE, EAT; THIS IS MY BODY.**” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.”For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”
Matthew 26:26-28.

“And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; “**DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.**” 1
Corinthians 11:24.

These three texts give us the instruction to 'Do this in remembrance of Me' and 'Take eat this is My body'. This should be sufficient instruction for us to regularly take part in the service of Holy Communion or the Last Supper.

6. DIFFERENT WAYS OF TAKING COMMUNION

6.1 THERE IS NO SET PATTERN IN SCRIPTURE OF HOW TO TAKE COMMUNION

1 Corinthians 11 does not lay down exactly how the communion service should be conducted. Paul was more worried about the abuse at the love feasts and the drunkenness and disorderly nature of them while they incorporated the taking of bread and wine. It is obvious from the Epistles that communion was a part of the love (agape) feasts and not incorporated into the Passover Feast for the Jews.

6.2 ESTABLISHED CHURCHES

The Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches require an ordained priest to officiate at the Communion service. Without an ordained priest, Communion cannot be given. They require the priest to stand between God and the people as a representative of Christ. This is one of the reasons objections was made against women priests. The arguments from some people were that a man must represent Christ and a woman could not because of her sex. The Free Churches argue that Christ is our only representative before God and as all Christians are

priests in their own rights, anyone may officiate over the communion. (See Rev 1:6; 5:10; & 20:6).

The wine is normally given at the front of the Church before the altar and drunk out of one cup. The Roman Catholic Church gives only a wafer of bread and dips the wafer in the wine but ordinary members do not drink the wine. Priests officiating and present in the service do drink the wine.

This 'one' cup when used by any Church is symbolic of the oneness of Christ with the believer and between the believer and the Church that is the Lord's Body. Each Church has to decide how they interpret the single loaf and the single cup. For some the one loaf and one cup are extremely important in terms of symbolising the Lord's Body, His Church and His blood as one sacrifice for ever. To others the actual service of Communion is more important. There is no doubt that a single broken loaf and one cup are significant in terms of copying what happened during the Last Supper and what the practice was of the Early Church. This symbolism should be seriously considered.

6.3 FREE CHURCHES

The Free Churches do not normally require just an ordained minister to officiate at the service of Holy Communion. In other Churches, Elders or deacons used. Other Churches chose one of their number to officiate. Yet others suggest that the Holy Spirit guides who will do it. There is also a difference between some of the evangelical Churches in the way Communion is taken. For most Baptist and Evangelical Free Churches a small portion of bread and an individual glass is given while people sit in their chairs or pews. Variations include the Christian Brethren Churches: they would normally use one cup and a loaf of bread that is served to the congregation while they are sitting. Some Exclusive Brethren sit round a table and with one cup and one loaf passes it to each other.

6.4 BLESSING THE EMBLEMS

The Roman Catholic Church will, in celebrating the Mass (meaning celebration of the Lord's Supper) see this aspect of their service as essential. As the prayer is offered (consecrating the Host) they believe that the bread and wine change into the actual Body and Blood of the Lord. This doctrine is called transubstantiation. For the Anglican Church, there is a serious and deliberate act of praying over the sacraments using the words of Paul from 1 Corinthians 11 as the basis of the prayer. Before that act there is a call from the Prayer Book for repentance from sin. For a person convicted by the Holy Spirit there is a prayer which encourages such a person to seek comfort or counsel from the officiating priest "or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly (spiritual) counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

Normally in the Early Church they would first bless the bread then the wine. Free Churches often tend to pray over both at the same time.

6.5 CORRECT PROCEDURE

There is no correct procedure in Scripture on how to conduct the Communion service. Taking the Scripture at its face value the only way conducted in the Early Church was one cup and one loaf of bread, passed round the table while partaking of a meal. Communion was very likely taken during conversation and fellowship. All Churches have changed this informal approach to one of great seriousness and dignity. In so doing however, perhaps the early spirit of fellowship with one another that is, the Lord's Body and its significance has been lost.

7. PARTAKING IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER

7.1 TAKING COMMUNION IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER

Paul gives a warning about approaching the Communion in an unworthy manner.

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 11:27

Theologically, this statement supports what Paul has said earlier in 1 Corinthians 11:7-22. Note what the writer Wordsworth says on this subject.

“The first sin is that of eating meats offered to idols, and of gluttony generally, and particularly at the meals before the Communion (1 Cor 11:21), a sin especially opposed to Communion in the Bread (1 Corinthians 10:21). The second sin—that of drinking the cup of devils, or false deities (1 Corinthians 10:2), and of intemperance in the meals before Communion (1 Corinthians 11:21) a sin especially opposed to the Eucharistic Cup.” (Wordsworth).

7.2 GOD WILL JUDGE THOSE NOT IN UNITY WITH OTHER.

God judges those who do not continue in unity with their brothers and sisters but still pretend at Communion to be in relationship. In fact it is a very dangerous position Christians put themselves in by taking bread and wine when something is wrong in their relationship. They are not discerning the body.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged but when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.” 1 Corinthians 11:30-32 (NAS)

8. QUALIFICATIONS FOR PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Basically those partaking of communion should be persons walking in obedience to the Lord's commandments. Therefore the qualifications would be those as indicated by the early Church Fathers. These would include:

8.1 REPENTANCE FROM SIN - STEP ONE

For a man or woman to be right before the Table of the Lord they must have repented of their sin. Only God can forgive sin. Unless He does then a person is banished forever from the sight of God.

a) Secret of Repentance - Evidence of mercy and repentance:

“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” Matthew 9:14

b) Jesus came to Call Sinners to Repentance:

“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” Luke 5:32

c) The Demand of Jesus - Repentance:

“..and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” Mark 1:15

“I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” Luke 14:3

The Message of the Early Church: repentance

“The message of the Early Church was clear. “Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38

8.2 FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST - STEP TWO

Step two on the road to salvation after repentance is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul confirms that works do not justify us but faith in Christ does.

a) Belief in Jesus equals Justification by Faith

Paul argues forcibly that a belief in the work of Christ is equal to being found right (justification) before God. That is, God looks at us through the death of Christ and finds us not guilty of sin.

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” Galatians 2:16

The Text below is the key text of the Bible linking repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 20:21.

b) Faith in His Blood

A Christian has a belief that the Blood of Christ has made him just before a righteous God and his sin has been covered or “passed over”.

“Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:25-26.

c) Spiritually we are crucified with Christ - Do not walk in the Flesh

A proper relationship with Christ means that Christ is evident in the life of the believer.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” Galatians 2:20.

8.3 BAPTISED IN WATER

Many evangelical Churches while preaching water baptism, do not all insist on it as an essential means of Church membership. The Scriptures take it as a matter of course that a Christian is one who has been baptised in water. Both Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches would only allow baptised members to take communion.

Communion taking people should be baptised thereby indicating:

- (I) The old life is dead
- (ii) Being buried, dead and risen -we should now walk in freedom
- (iii) Raised to new life in Christ
- (iv) We have a good conscience towards God

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:4.

“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” Colossians 2:12.

“There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 3:21

9. THE PLACE OF JUDAS AT THE TABLE

Judas Iscariot is an enigma or mystery in Scripture. The name Judas means ‘praise the Lord.’ He was the son of Simon and the writers of the Gospels distinguish between him and Judas the other disciple in Luke 6:1 by the word 'Iscariot'. His name goes down in history. A Judas is one who is a traitor. One who cannot be trusted. It is tragic that he could bring such discredit upon a lovely name:

“He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.” John 6:71

“Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor”. Luke 6:16

& John 14:22

The reason for Jesus choosing Judas and his subsequent betrayal of Jesus has attracted attention for two thousand years.

10. SYMBOLS OF BREAD AND WINE

The symbolism of the Bread and Wine has captured the imagination of individuals for thousands of years. The theme is dealt with under three headings, Bread, Wine and Points on Symbolism.

10.1 BREAD

The emblem of the bread is a symbol of the Broken Body of the Lord. Jesus Himself identified the bread with His body at the *Last Supper*:

“Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body.” Matthew 26:26.

“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me” Luke 22:19.

Paul says that we have to purge out the old leaven. Jews just before the Passover would search their homes for any trace of leavened bread. Paul says before we celebrate our Passover we should search out every sin, any possible hindrance to our fellowship with the Father. Now we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. We should be the new lump:

“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.

10.2 JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE

Jesus identified Himself with bread in John 6:48-58

- (i) The bread that He gives brings eternal life
- (ii) Jesus the living bread came from heaven
- (iii) It is superior to that of Manna given to the Children of Israel
- (iii) If we eat His flesh it is spiritual food for us
- (iv) Feasting on the Bread of Life causes a believer to abide in Him

10.3 WINE

Jesus made it very clear that the wine of the *Last Supper* was a symbol of His blood.

“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matthew 26:27-28.

A new agreement in His Blood means that once a year sacrifice by the High Priest is replaced with a once for all sacrifice of Jesus of which the wine is a remembrance. See Hebrews 9:23-28. Jesus, in the discourse indicated above about His flesh in John 6, also said that drinking the Blood of Christ brings eternal life.

10.4 PATTERN SET FOR THE CHURCH UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS

Paul received the ordinance of the Lord's Supper by revelation:

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you.” 1 Corinthians 11:23

Christians were to continue to partake of this feast “till He comes again.”

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:26. This feast then was to be a permanent feature of the New Testament Church.

11. HISTORY OF HOLY COMMUNION OR THE LAST SUPPER

11.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a review of the history of Holy Communion by looking at the writings of the Early and Later Church Fathers. A brief summary of each of the Fathers is included for interest. The Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed Church and other positions and views are also considered.

The Holy Communion service has been held by Christians on a regular basis since the death of Christ. As the years have passed - from the days of Christ - various changes and additional non-Scriptural ideas have been added to this remembrance feast.

11.2 LORD'S SUPPER INITIATED BY CHRIST

Jesus gave the Last Supper to His disciples the night He was betrayed. The accounts are found in Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26 and Luke 22:7-23.

11.3 APOSTLE PAUL'S CONFIRMATION

Apostle Paul confirms in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 that the Last Supper was for the continuing use of the Church unto this present age.

11.4 ACTION TO BE TAKEN

It is something over which we have complete control. We are required to make a sober judgement of ourselves so that when condemnation of the world comes we are not counted with them.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” 1 Cor 11:31-32.

12. OTHER STATEMENTS REGARDING THE EUCHARIST AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

EARLY CHURCH FATHERS. (KNOWN ALSO AS THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS)

12. 1 INTRODUCTION

We know most of the development and change in the Church from the writings of the Early and Later Church Fathers. Some of these men were mighty men of God; however, because of some of their pagan background, some brought into Christianity some of the mystery and ceremony of their old lives.

The Early Church Fathers directed the Church from the time of the close of the Apostolic age to culmination of the acceptance of the Christian faith by the Emperor Constantine, thereby leading to the first formulation of doctrine at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Some of the Church Fathers knew some of the Apostles particularly the Apostle John.

12.2 YEAR C 100 THE DIDACHE (TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES)

This was an important document of the Early Church which although quoted extensively by the Church Fathers a full copy remained unknown until 1875 when Bryennios, Metropolitan of Serrae, was working in the great library of Constantinople (Istanbul). He discovered a Latin copy dated 1056 was discovered in the It bears the title, "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," with a sub-title: "The Lord's Teaching to the Heathen by the Twelve Apostles." There is some dispute concerning to actual year of the original writing with some writers in the 1800's give it an early date of AD 60 while others AD 100. The present thinking is inclined to give it a date of the second century. Generally it is commonly known as the 'Didache' which is the Greek word for the First word of the title. A useful summary of this debate can be found in Bettenson's *The Early Church Fathers* (See page 30 for more information). Below are two quotations from this document relating to the practice of the Eucharist. They appear under the various chapter headings of the original document, (See appendix 2 for the Didache's view of the Eucharist).ⁱ

There seems to be much early evidence that a person was not considered a Christian until they had repented, come to faith in Christ and had been baptised in water. Only then was he or she accepted into the Church.

(a) Chapter 9

ⁱ It may be interesting to review the actual translation of the Didache by Canon Spence in 1895 with that of later translators, particularly Bettenson. The later version moderates the language of the earlier versions.

“Let none eat or drink of your Eucharist, save such as are baptised into the name of our Lord. For concerning this the Lord hath said; 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs.’”

Faults between members were identified as a barrier for taking communion.

(b) Chapter 14

“On the Lord's Day assemble together and break bread and give thanks, first making public confession of your faults, that your sacrifice may be pure. If any man has a quarrel with a friend, let him not join your assembly until they are reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the sacrifice spoken of by the Lord: ‘In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice...’ (Malachi 1:11,14) *The Didache*

Note: These Early Church Fathers continued to teach that the bread and wine at the Eucharist were still bread and wine after the blessing. This is the reason there are more quotations from these men shown below because a change in understanding of the meaning of this service did take place later as will be seen.

12.3 YEAR C 115 IGNATIUS (AD 70-115)

[Bishop of Antioch. Little known about him but he suffered martyrdom. He wrote letters to Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles and Rome].

Ignatius saw the Eucharist as the Centre of Unity

“Take great care to keep the one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup to unite us by His blood; one sanctuary, as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants. Thus all your acts may be done accordingly to God's will.” *Epistle to the Philippians*

Supreme authority of the Bishop is indicated in one of his epistles. It should also be noted that even after just about eighty years, the order of priests had taken over what was in Paul's time a free meeting of Christians without priestly order. Under Paul's ministry it seemed that any Christian was free to give thanks and pass the bread and wine. From the time of Ignatius onwards the Lord's Supper was seen more as a ritualistic type of service both in its character and performance.

“Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is under the bishop or one whom he has delegated...It is not permitted to baptise or hold a love feast independently of the bishop. But whatever he approves, that is also well pleasing to God; that all your acts may be sure and valid.” *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*.

At this time the Bishop was elected by the local Church to be the chief elder and was responsible to the members for the discharge of his duties. The idea of a Bishop covering an area containing several Churches had not yet developed.

12.4 YEAR C 150 JUSTIN MARTYR (AD 100-165)

[Most famous of the Apologists. Born of Gentile parents towards the end of the first century in Samaria. He was a prolific writer but only two of his books survive. They are called 'Apology' and 'Dialogue with Trypho']

See Appendix 3, second part for Justin Martyr's views on the Eucharist. The comments overleaf relate to that part of the document.

It seems that new converts were made outside the Church and even baptised before being introduced to the brethren. Only baptised believers who were walking right with God were allowed to take the Eucharist. See also (a) the long period of thanksgiving in prayer and (b) that the President is the only person allowed to pray. The deacons served the members and took the bread and wine to members' homes that were unable to attend the Eucharist.

This statement is particularly important because this is the first time the bread and wine is talked about as going through a transformation into His flesh and blood.

12.5 YEAR C 185 IRENAEUS (AD 120-200)

[Bishop of Lyons c 177-200. His great work *Adversus Haereses* meaning Against Heresies is in Latin].

The Eucharist

“This He did, when He took bread, of the natural creation, and gave thanks, and said, ‘This is my body’. Likewise the cup of wine, belonging to the creation of which we are part, He declared to be His blood, and explained as the oblation [evening sacrifice] of the New Testament. This oblation the Church receives from the Apostles and throughout the whole world she offers it to God, who supplies as our nourishment the first fruits of His gifts in the New Testament.” *Adversus Haereses pt 4 Chapter 17:4*.

Some change in the Eucharist is seen by introducing the word 'oblation', meaning an evening sacrifice. This word allows others later to turn the feast into a sacrifice of Christ in the emblems.

“But our opinion is congruous with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist supports our opinion. We offer to Him what is His own, suitably proclaiming the communion and unity of the flesh and spirit. For as the bread, which comes from the earth, receives the invocation of God, and then it is no longer common bread but Eucharist, consists of two things, an earthly and a heavenly; so our bodies, after partaking of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having hope of the eternal resurrection.” *Adversus Haereses pt 4 Chapter 18:4-6*.

So teaching developed that suggested that the bread somehow becomes the Eucharist when prayers are said over it.

12.6 YEAR C 200 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (AD 155-220)

[A considerable writer who attempted to rescue learning from the disrepute unto which Gnosticism had brought it].

The Eucharist - Body and Blood - the Church's Nourishment

“In another place the Lord also expressed that by a different symbolism, when, in John's Gospel (John 6:53) He says, 'Eat my flesh and drink my Blood'. The metaphor of drinking, applied to faith and the promise, clearly means that the Church, consisting, like a human being, of many members, is refreshed and grows, is compacted and welded together...” *Paedagogus 1:4 (38) (Meaning: An Introduction to Christianity)*

Clement in this writing continues to explain the bread and blood in symbolic terms at great length. He was one of the Church Fathers who resisted any attempt to bring mystery into the Eucharist.

12.7 YEAR C 230+ ORIGEN (AD 186-253)

[Born of Christian parents he is first of the Fathers to come from a Christian home and his boyhood is recorded. His father was martyred in 203 AD. A considerable teacher who was head of a catechetical school for the instruction of new believers].

In several places Origen makes statements about the Eucharist and the Bread and Blood of the Lord. In one place he seems to treat the bread almost as magical.

The Lord's Body for instance in the symbolism of the bread is treated with such respect.

“You who are wont to take part in the divine mysteries know how carefully and reverently you guard the Body of the Lord when you receive it, lest the least crumb of it should fall to the ground, lest any thing should be lost of the hallowed gift...such care in guarding His Body can you suppose less blameworthy to neglect the word of God than his body?” *Homiliae on Exodus 14:3. (Meaning Sermons on Exodus)*

He falls short of actually saying that the bread and wine are literally the body and blood of the Lord Jesus as the Church was later to decree. This statement however, led the Roman Catholic Church to make the bread into a wafer so that it could not be easily dropped. The very thought of guarding the bread suggests something magical about the bread.

The 'Spiritual' Interpretation of Body and Blood

“When the Jewish followers of the Lord heard such words in the Gospel they were offended, and said 'Who can eat flesh, and drink blood?' But Christian people, the faithful people, hears this and eagerly welcomes it, and follows Him who says, 'Unless you eat my flesh, and drink My blood, you will not have life in yourselves. For My flesh is really food, and My blood is really drink.' (John 6:52) And, to be sure, He who said this was wounded for men; for 'He was wounded for our sins' as Isaiah says. (Isaiah 53:5) Now we are said to drink the Blood of Christ not only in the way of sacraments, but also when we receive.”

“His words, in which life consists; as He Himself says, 'The words which I have spoken are spirit and life'(John 6:63). Therefore He is 'the wounded' whose 'blood we drink,' that is to say; we receive the words of His teaching.” *Homiliae in Numbers 16:9*

Origen is giving a mixture of mystery and spiritualisation on the theme of eating and drinking the Body and Blood of the Lord. Very few Evangelicals would disagree with this definition.

12.8 THE SHEWBREAD IN LEVITICUS

“If these things are interpreted with reference to the greatness of the mystery, you will find that memorial effects an immense propitiation. If you come to that 'bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world'; that 'bread of setting forth [LXXⁱⁱ for 'Shewbread'] which 'God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood', and if you have regard to that memorial of which the Lord says, 'Do this for a memorial of me', you will find that this is the only memorial which makes God propitious (Favourable) to man.” *Homiliae in Leviticus 14:3 (Meaning Sermons on Leviticus)*.

Origen was talking about the Shewbread in Leviticus 24:5-9. He gave this passage the title *For a Memorial*.

13. THE LATER CHURCH FATHERS

13.1 AD 375 BASIL OF CAESAREA (AD 330-379)

[His family was noble and wealthy; his father's mother rated as a saint, and his mother was a martyr's daughter. Of ten children, three became bishops, two achieving canonisation, and their eldest sister given the title of St. Macrina the Younger. He founded many monasteries and hospitals and hospices for the poor traveller].

Frequency of Communion has often been a debating point in many denominations. Some Free Churches for instance, only take communion monthly. Others daily.

“Daily communion and participation in the holy body and blood of Christ is a good and helpful practice. He clearly says 'The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, has eternal life (John 6:54). Who doubts that to partake of life continually is really to have life in abundance? For myself, I communicate four times a week, on the Lord's Day, on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and on the other days if there is a commemoration of a martyr. If in times of persecution, individuals, under this compulsion, give themselves communion with their own hands, without the presence of a priest or minister, this raises no difficulty. In fact there is no need to point this out, since long-established custom has sanctioned the practice under pressure of circumstances.” *De spiritu sacto, 93. (Meaning on the Holy Spirit)*.

The normal arrangement was that the priest who officiated over the Eucharist kept portions of the emblems for future use, particularly for those who were sick. Lay people were approved to take the bread and wine to those who were sick. The bread and wine however, had first to be first prayed over by the priest. They then kept the unused bread and wine in a locked cabinet. Hence the beginning of reserving the 'host'. Later the people would worship the

ⁱⁱ LXX stands for the Greek translation of the Old Testament carried out during the reign of Alexander the Great who invited Hebrew scholars to translate for the dispersed Jews who had lost the ability to read Hebrew.

cabinet containing the elements. This writing gives approval for the layman to give himself communion if a priest is unobtainable.

There is no Scriptural precedent for a priest to be present. There is no requirement that the bread and wine should be prayed over, except that Paul and the Gospel writers record that Jesus gave thanks. There is no agreement in Scripture that the ceremony should be performed in private although they broke bread in homes in Acts 2:42. This would be in terms of fellowship together rather than an official communion service.

13.2 YEAR UNKNOWN - JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (AD 350- 407)

[The third Oecumenical Doctor of the Eastern Church. He was an eloquent preacher being called 'John of the Golden Mouth'. Elected Bishop of Constantinople in 397].

The Consecration

“Christ is now also present. He who adorned the table [of the Last Supper] is he who now also adorns this. It is not man who makes the gift of the oblation to become the body and blood of Christ, but Christ Himself, who was crucified for us. The priest stands, fulfilling the original pattern, and speaks those words; but power and grace come from God. 'This is My Body', He says.

This statement transforms' the oblations: and as the command, 'increase and multiply', spoken once, extends through all time, and gives to one human nature the power of reproduction so the statement, 'This is My Body', uttered once, makes complete the sacrifice at every table in the Churches from that time until now, and even till Christ's coming.” *De prodicione Judae 1.6 (Meaning: 'On the Betrayal of Judas'. A Maundy Thursday discourse at Antioch).*

13.3 YEAR UNKNOWN - AMBROSE (AD 340-397)

[Born in 339 AD when his father, a member of a noble Roman family, held high office in Gaul. He was appointed to a responsible post as the Emperor's representative in the district of Liguria and Aemilia. Forced to negotiate between warring factions regarding the election of a Bishop, he was so eloquent in his work that both warring factions chose him as their Bishop. He was consecrated just eight days after his baptism!].

The Eucharistic Sacrifice

“We have seen the high priest coming to us; we have seen and heard Him offering His Blood for us. We priests follow, as well as we can claim no merit, we are to be honoured in the sacrifice; for, although Christ is not now visibly offered, yet He is Himself offered on earth when the Body of Christ is offered. Moreover, it is made clear that He Himself offers in us, since it is His words which sanctify the sacrifice which is offered.” *From: enarrationes in Psalmos XII Ps 38.25 (Meaning: Explanations of Twelve Psalms. Ps 1, 30- 40, 43, 45, 47, 48, 61).*

Ambrose here talks of the Eucharist as a 'sacrifice'. He recognises the priest as the one officiating at the service. This goes again well beyond what Scripture warrants.

13.4 AD 381 AMBROSE

The Symbol

“Do you wish to know how it is consecrated by heavenly words? Hear what those words are-the priest says: ‘Make for us this oblation ratified, reasonable, acceptable, because it is the figure of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. ‘De fid ad gratianum 4.21 [Meaning: ‘On the faith addressed to Gratian.’” Five books against Arainism, written at the request of the Emperor].

Ambrose shows that, in his thinking, a consecration is required at the Eucharist because he considers that they are making a sacrifice, i.e., oblation. The beginning of mysticism.

13.5 AD 380 GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS (AD 336-395)

[Gregory was a contemporary of Basil and they took a similar course of study and they were closely links throughout their lives. Became Bishop of Sasima in 372 AD].

Eucharist - Symbolism or parable illustrations beyond the Eucharistic feast with discussion of Moses staff and sheep.

“This is my opinion about the staff [the 'staff in hand' at the Passover Exodus 13:11] and its allegorical (parable) significance. There is the staff for support, and the staff of the shepherd (the staff of teaching, which brings back the 'sheep' endowed with reason). It is the staff of support that the Law now prescribes for you, lest you stumble in all mind when you hear of the Blood of God, and His passion and death; lest you should wander erratically, deserting God when you should be God's advocate. You must without shamefacedness, without wavering, eat the Body, and drink the Blood, if you are eager for life. Do not disbelieve the sayings about the flesh, nor be put off by the teaching about the passion.” *De dominica 45.19* [Meaning: 'The Great Catechetical Oration'. A Statement of Catholic Dogma. Represents the first attempt at systematic theology].

This is a message for the priests. The Shepherd's crook is still a symbol of authority for Anglican bishops who carry one into their Cathedrals. There obviously were problems about the teaching of the passion. One wonders whether this related to the arguments about the status of bread and wine.

14. AFTER THE CHURCH FATHERS

14.1 INTRODUCTION

We see in some of these statements made by the Church Fathers that various opinions about what actually happens during communion particularly when the Bread and the Wine are prayed over or blessed. Berkhof says, "While some of the early Church Fathers (Origen, Basil, and Gregory of Nazianze) retained the symbolical or spiritual conception of the sacrament, others (Cyril, Gregory of Nyssa and Chrysostom) held that the flesh and the blood

of Christ were in some way combined with the bread and wine in the sacrament. Augustine retarded the realistic development of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper for a long time. While he did speak of the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ, he distinguished between the sign and the thing signified, and did not believe in a change of substance. He denied that the wicked, though receiving the elements, also received the body, and stressed the commemorative aspect of the Lord's Supper. During the middle Ages the Augustinian view was gradually transplanted by the doctrine of transubstantiation.

14.2 AD 830

The Church for many hundreds of years was happy for each section of communities of believers to assume whatever importance they wished to the actual symbols of bread and wine.

No Council of the Church pronounced on the matter for nearly one thousand years. As an illustration of how tolerant the Leaders of the Church were, in about the year 830, a monk of Corbey called Paschasius Radbertus endeavoured to answer this question. He held that at the consecration the bread and wine became the veritable Body and Blood of our Lord. He said, "After the consecration of the bread and wine nothing remains of these symbols save the outward figures under which the Body and Blood of Christ are really and locally present; secondly, that the Body of Christ thus present is the same body that was born of the Virgin, suffered on the Cross, and was raised from the dead." Some wrote against him, others for his views. This opposition included Rabanus Maurus, Abbot of Fulda afterwards Archbishop of Mentz. At this time Ratramnus, who was a trusted adviser to the Emperor Charles the Bald, said that the real Body of Christ was not present in the Eucharist, but yet that there is a kind of mystical presence, as of the Holy spirit in the water of Baptism. These views were tolerated centrally.

15. ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW OF THE EUCHARIST (MASS)

For two further centuries the matter rested with general acceptance of Radbertus' views. No Council however made a pronouncement that would interpret the differing views existing in the Church. There are significant dates relating to the developing theology of Roman Catholic thinking. These are briefly mentioned here.

15.1 AD 1040

Berengar, Director of the Cathedral school in Tours, following his study of the New Testament and the writings of Augustine, concluded that the current doctrine (that the bread and wine changed into the Body and Blood of Christ) was a popular superstition. He began to teach his students and sent a letter to an ex-student friend Lanfranc. He in turn gave the letter to Pope Leo IX.

15.2 AD 1050

Pope Leo IX called a Council in April 1050. The views of Berengar were condemned. A Second Council was held in September which Berengar was called to attend. He was imprisoned so could not attend. In his absence he was condemned. Another Synod was convened in Tours, 1054. Berengar agreed with the current teaching of the Church that at the consecration the bread and wine were changed into the real body and blood of the Lord. He

did suggest a spiritual presence also. Called to a Council in Rome before 115 Bishops his spiritual view was condemned and he was made to recant. He returned to France and reconfirmed his original views.

15.3 AD 1078-1215

Berengar was summoned again to Rome in 1078 and made to finally reject this 'false' doctrine. The final doctrine of Transubstantiation was finally approved at the Lateran Council in 1215.

The view of the Roman Catholic Church is therefore:

- (a) Jesus Christ is truly, really, and substantially present in the holy sacrament.
- (b) The fact that He is seated at the right hand of God does not exclude the possibility His substantial and sacramental presence in several places simultaneously.
- (c) By the words of the consecration the substance of bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ.
- (d) The entire Christ is present under each species and under each particle of their species.
- (e) Each one who receives a particle of the host receives the whole Christ.
- (f) He is present in the elements even before the communicant received them.
- (g) In view of this presence, the adoration of the host is but natural.
- (h) The sacrament effects an "increase of sanctifying grace, special actual graces, remission of venial sins, and preservation from grievous (mortal) sin, and the confident of eternal salvation".

15.4 DENIAL OF THE WINE

Eventually, the Roman Church denied the wine to the lay people because of the idea that not a crumb of the bread should fall to the ground because they would be dropping Christ. The lay people could not be trusted not to spill the wine so this was confined to the priests only. The Scriptural justification was that Jesus only gave the wine at the Last Supper to ordained men i.e., the Apostles. Hence point (e) above. That fact that He only gave the bread to the Apostles seems to have escaped their notice!

16. OBJECTIONS TO THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW OF THE EUCHARIST

16.1 DOCTRINE BASED ON A FALSE INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES:

When Jesus said, "This is my body" in Matthew 26:26 He meant this is a symbol of my body. It is similar to viewing a photograph. It is not the real person but an image of the real

thing. Jesus often used this type of language. When He said to Peter, "Get behind me Satan" he was not mistaking Peter for Satan but that Peter by his actions was portraying the works of Satan. Remember, the Lord's Supper shows a real absence of Christ Himself because we do it in remembrance of Him. Why do it if He is present? In John 6 when Jesus stated that to be true disciples they would have to eat His flesh and drink His blood, He was still very much alive yet many turned away from this doctrine. Jesus must have meant this to be figurative as He was still to go on to minister on earth for some time after making this statement.

16.2 IT CONTRADICTS THE EVIDENCE OF THE SENSES AS WELL AS A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH:

The emblems remain the same. They do not turn to body and blood. Jesus while still alive in John 6 called His disciples to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Were they supposed to kill Him there and then? He was speaking figuratively as He was in the Last Supper.

Dangers began when the simple love feast was changed so that a priest took charge. This separated the common people from celebrating the Lord's Supper in a more casual way where anyone gave thanks.

We should not make this feast a priest, or minister led service. No one needs to stand before God on behalf of another. We are all priests unto God and can come into His presence without the mediation of another man. Our Mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2:5

The people should be free to take part and offer up the blessing and to break the bread for themselves.

16.3 IT INVOLVES THE DENIAL OF THE COMPLETENESS OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE:

Jesus offered Himself once for our sins and now sits on the right hand of the Father. No priest can offer again to God what Christ has offered once for all.

16.4 IT DESTROYS CHRISTIANITY BY EXTERNALISING IT.

The Eucharist replaces Christ who alone can forgive sins and give grace and forgiveness. The magic of the Eucharist seems to replace the work of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing of Christ's Blood.

16.5 COUNCIL OF TRENT SESSION VII DECLARES IN CANON IV:

“If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Testament are not necessary to salvation, but are superfluous, and that without them, and without the desire thereof, men attain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification; though all [the sacraments] are not needed necessary for every individual: let him be anathema.”

This statement also means that the actual bread and wine are worshipped as Christ being present. Therefore the worship of the 'Host' is encouraged as if Christ were there. In Scriptural terms this is nothing less than idolatry.

17. THE LUTHERAN AND HIGH CHURCH VIEW - CONSUBSTANTIATION

The communicant eats and drinks the veritable or actual body and drinks the veritable blood of Christ in the bread and wine, although the elements themselves do not cease to be material. There is a local presence of the Lord. This is the *Doctrine of Consubstantiation*.

17.1 THIS VIEW IS NOT REQUIRED BY SCRIPTURE.

All the passages quoted in this study point to the bread and wine being symbolic of the Lord's body and blood.

17.2 IMPOSING PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL CONDITIONS

By imposing physical and material conditions of receiving Christ, it counteracts the Doctrine of Justification that is only obtained by faith. Changes the ordinance from a sign to a means of salvation.

17.3 NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BELIEVER AND NON-BELIEVER IDENTIFIED.

This doctrine holds that each communicant is a partaker of Christ's actual body and blood whether he is a believer or not. This results in the absence of faith, being condemnation instead of salvation.

17.4 CHARACTER OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IS CHANGED.

The whole character of the Lord's Supper is changed from one of festival and remembrance to one of mystery and fear. The whole of the Gospel method of salvation is obscured.

Note: Luther never explained how Christ was in the elements. It was suggested that Luther tried to change as little as possible in the Church so this is why he made some but not all the changes necessary in the Eucharist.

18. ZWINGLIAN VIEW

Zwingle was a Swiss reformer who lived from 1484-1531. He was perhaps the architect of the Reformed Movement in the Church. It was left to Calvin to give it a systematic form. Zwingle differed from Luther on the Lord's Supper. He insisted that the bread and wine were signs and symbols. But his writings also contain statements that point to a greater level of understanding than that bold statement. The main emphasis was upon the believer and his behaviour rather than God's. He did not deny the presence of Christ among His people when bread was broken but spoke against the magical and mystical approaches of the then present Church.

19. CALVIN'S VIEWS

Calvin took an intermediate position. Like Zwingle, he denied the bodily presence of the Lord in the sacrament, but in distinction from the former, he insisted on a *real*, though spiritual, presence of the Lord in the Supper, the presence of Him as a fountain of spiritual virtue and

efficacy. He emphasised that the meal was first an expression of a gracious gift of God to man, and only secondarily a commemorative meal and an act of profession. Like Luther, he saw it as a means of strengthening faith.

20. THE REFORMED CHURCH VIEW

Since Calvin, the Free Churches have tended to follow what is called the Reform Theology. This is the evangelical approach and this includes:

20.1 PRE-CONDITIONS:

Only those laid down by Scripture. The Church does not frame rules for communion but is required to make the Scriptural requirements known.

20.2 REGENERATION

The Lord's Supper is the outward expression of an inward work. Only those who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus should take part.

20.3 BAPTISM

There is strong evidence in the early Church and in Scripture that Baptism by water was the normal entry into the Church. If a person calls themselves a believer and will not take the second step of obedience in water baptism, that person's faith is suspect. The early Church would not allow such a person to take communion.

Baptism is the only other ordinance instituted by Christ. It was in operation before the ordination of the Lord's Supper.

The Apostles who celebrated the first Lord's Supper had in all probability been baptised. Out of all His disciples He chose only to share the supper with His twelve.

The command of the Lord Jesus Christ was to "Go and make disciples, baptising them, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you." Mat 28:20. The order would be (1) receive the Gospel, (2) be baptised and (3) receive communion as a thing taught after baptism.

Most Churches of all denominations make baptism the door of entry to Church membership.

20.4 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The original Love or Agape Feasts were for those who knew each other. They were Church feasts to which only believers attended. The Early Church records show that only baptised members were allowed to take communion lest they fall into judgement. Reformed Churches make membership a condition for Communion.

20.5 LIVING A LIFE WELL PLEASING TO GOD

Paul in many places exhorts Christians to stop sinning and live instead under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said we are to take action against those who are in sin (Matt 18). The communion is a solemn affair where we can come under judgement. The elders would not willingly admit members who were walking a life of worldliness that was dishonouring to God.

20.6 THOSE HOLDING TO FALSE DOCTRINES

.“Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:30.

20.7 THOSE WHO PROMOTE DISSENSION IN THE CHURCH:

“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.” Romans 16:15.

It should be emphasised that the conditions listed above would also apply to many of the previous denominations mentioned.

21 CONCLUSION

The reader has been taken on a journey commencing with the original words of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, and through the words of the Apostle Paul. Early in the second century the set prayer from the Church in the Didache showed an imperfect understanding of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We traced the history of writings about the communion service from the Early and Late Church Fathers to the developing thinking of the various Church Councils throughout the centuries. The decision of the Church in 1217 at the Lateran Council finally made the decision that the wine and bread was changed after the blessing into the actual Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Anglican, Lutheran and Free Churches have varying views between each other and on occasions between ministers of the same denomination. The reader should note that even those Free Churches that profess that the bread and the wine are but symbols often act differently in their ritual of taking the emblems. Often the Church has a communion table set aside strictly for Communion. Leaders in the Church would possibly be upset if a person sat on it. The visitor may see the elders or deacons grouped round the table in prayer or meditation. Yet the minister may say, only bread and only wine but symbols of the reality. The visitor may well go away confused because they thought the leaders behaved differently to that which was spoken.

Finally, the reader must by study and prayer convince him or herself what is the truth about this mystery and holy sacrament of the Church.

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Appendix 1

Synoptic Gospels of the Last Supper New American Standard Version

Matthew 26:21-30

21 And as they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me."
22 And being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"
23 And He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me.
24 "The Son of Man {is to} go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."
25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said {it} yourself."
26 And while they were eating, Jesus took {some} bread, and after a blessing, He broke {it} and gave {it} to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."
27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave {it} to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;
28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.
29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."
30 And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Mark 14:18-26

18 And as they were reclining {at the table} and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me-- one who is eating with Me."
19 They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?"
20 And He said to them, {"It is} one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl.
21 "For the Son of Man {is to} go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! {It would have been} good for that man if he had not been born."

22 And while they were eating, He took {some} bread, and after a blessing He broke {it} and gave {it} to them, and said, "Take {it} this is My body."
23 And when He had taken a cup, {and} given thanks, He gave {it} to them; and they all drank from it.
24 And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.
25 "Truly I say to you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."
26 And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Luke 22:14-22

14 And when the hour had come He reclined {at the table,} and the apostles with Him.
15 And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;
16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."
17 And when He had taken a cup {and} given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves;

19 And when He had taken {some} bread {and} given thanks, He broke {it,} and gave {it} to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
20 And in the same way {He took} the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

21 "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table.
22 "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to

that man by whom He is betrayed!"

APPENDIX 2

RULINGS OF THE CHURCH RELATING TO THE EUCHARIST IN THE SECOND CENTURY

I Recorded in the Didache (Teaching of the Apostles) - The Eucharist

"Concerning the Eucharist: give thanks in this way. First for the cup :We give thanks to Thee: our Father: for the holy wine of David thy servant, which Thou madest known to us through Thy servant Jesus. To Thee be the glory for ever. And for the broken bread; 'give Thee thanks to Thee, our Father: for the life and knowledge: which Thou madest known to us through Thy Servant Jesus. To Thee be the glory for ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the hills: and was gathered together and made one, so let Thy Church be gathered together into thy kingdom from the ends of the earth; for Thine is the glory and the power through Christ Jesus for ever."

"Let none eat or drink of your Eucharist, save such as are baptised into the Name of the lord. For concerning this the Lord hath said, 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs."

After ye are filled, give thanks thus: 'We give Thee thanks, Holy Father, for Thy holy Name, which Thou hast made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge, faith and immortality which Thou hast made known to us through thy servant [*or* Son] Jesus. To Thee be the glory for ever. Thou, Almighty, didst create all things for Thy Name's sake, and gavest food and drink to men for their enjoyment that they might give Thee thanks; and to us Thou didst grant spiritual food and drink and life eternal, through Thy servant [or Son]. Above we thank Thee that Thou art mighty. To Thee be glory for ever. Remember, Lord Thy Church, to deliver her from all evil and to make her perfect in Thy love, and to gather from the four winds here that is sanctified into thy kingdom which Thou didst prepare for her; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any is holy, let him come: if any is not holy, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen."

APPENDIX 3

JUSTIN (C 150) APOLOGIA 1:90-94 (MEANING: APOLOGY NO 1)

“When we have thus washed a man who has accepted the teaching and has made his confession of faith, we bring him to those who are called brethren, when they are assembled, to offer prayers in common for ourselves, for the person thus illuminated, and for all others everywhere, with might and main; that we, who have learnt the truth, may be granted to prove, through your deeds also, good citizens and keepers of the commandments, that we may obtain eternal salvation.”

“At the end of prayers we embrace each other with a kiss. Then bread is brought to the president of the brethren, and a cup of water and wine: this he takes, and offers praise and glory to the Father of all, through the name of His Son and of the Holy Spirit; and He gives thanks at length for our being granted these gifts at His hand. When he has finished the prayers and the thanksgiving all the people present give their assent with Amen, a Hebrew word signifying 'So be it.'”