

# The Reformation's



# Views on the Supper

Also called: Eucharist | Communion | The Lord's Supper



# **Catholic: Transubstantiation**

The Eucharist is the “heart and summit” of the mass. The Eucharist is described as, “the memorial of his sacrifice. In so doing, we offer to the Father what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread, and wine which by the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made present.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC, 1375).

# Trans **substantiation**

(**Change**) (substance)

The presence is “real” because of **transubstantiation** which is the change of the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

By consecration, the bread and wine change in **substance** (nature) but not in their accidents (what is perceived by the senses).

Because Christ is really present, “The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during the Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.” (CCC, 1378)

“The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice” (CCC, 1362)

### What this **isn't**:

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It is not that Christ is re-sacrificed globally every mass.

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The Eucharist can only be taken by those in a state of grace and congregants are obligated to take the Eucharist at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season” (CCC, 1389).

The Eucharist preserves, increases, and renews the grace of baptism - a means of growth in the Christian life and cleanses previous sins (mortal sins being exceptions, needing Reconciliation) and preserves from future sins.

### What this **is**:

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“When the church celebrates...she commemorates Christ’s Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice of Christ offered once and for all on the cross remains ever present.” (CCC, 1364)

“The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents the sacrifice of the cross, because it is a memorial and because it applies its fruits...The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.” (CCC, 1336)



# **Lutheran: Sacramental Unity**

“Of the Supper of the Lord, they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present and are distributed to those who eat the Supper of the Lord, and they reject those that teach otherwise.”

(Article 10, The Augsburg Confession)

# **Unio sacramentalis**

**(unity) (sacramental)**

While few Lutherans use “consubstantiation,” Luther did not but instead wrote against an individual who held to the position in *the Babylonian Captivity*. Instead, Luther described his view as a sacramental unity.

In the Supper, the substance (nature) of the body/blood and bread/wine are present together intermingled (Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, 36.32). For Luther, “against all reason and hairsplitting logic I hold that two diverse substances may well be, in reality, and in name, one substance.” (Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper, 37.295-296).

- Luther viewed the Supper similarly to the hypostatic union, and thus any objection against his view of the Supper could be seen as an objection to the incarnation.
- The Supper is the Word repackaged and thus it is the Gospel. The bread and the wine are a sign of promise regarding the forgiveness of sins in Christ that elicits a response of faith from the believer
- The Supper acts as a means to strengthen the faith of the Christian as a tangible reminder of the forgiveness of Christ, a testament to the Gospel.
- The sacrament would be of no benefit to those without faith, which for Luther presupposed a recognition of one's sins, therefore, the sacrament required a believer who was desirous, needy, and sorrowful. With this, in the Misuse of the Mass, Luther states that the meal is for sinners, but only those who long for righteousness and pursue holiness of life. (36.198)



**Calvin:  
Spiritual means of Grace**



- For Calvin, and the tradition of Westminster, the Supper is a gift of God and through the meal, believers have union with Christ. In the meal, Christ is present and strengthens the believer.
- The supper moves the congregation to grasp the death of Christ on their behalf and acts as the “the sealing [of] all benefits thereof unto true believers” (Westminster Confession, 29.1)
- In this view, the supper is a bond and pledge of communion with Christ and through the supper, there is a union and communion with Christ that takes place (Westminster Larger Catechism, 168).
- This union brings about assurance for the participating Christians and is a witness of growth.
- For Calvin, believers must participate in the Supper if believers are to have true communion with him (Institutes, 4.17.9)

- Further, for Calvin, the Supper is a communion with the real body and blood, but in a spiritual sense. Rather than believing that Christ is brought down into the elements, the believers are brought to Christ in the sacrament.
- Calvin states that Christ's true and substantial presence is essential for the Christian's nourishment. This is possible as the Holy Spirit unites those things that are separated in space - like Zwingli, Calvin agreed that Christ's body is ascended and his human nature is spatially bound yet in his deity Christ can be omnipresent in a way that Christ is wholly present, just not in his wholeness.
- Instead, believers have communion with the real flesh of Christ, which is in heaven due to the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The Westminster Confession follows Calvin with fewer specifics by stating that the Supper presents Christ as really but spiritually present.



# **Zwingli: Spiritual Memorialism**

- Zwingli held that the supper was a meal of commemoration of Christ's death rather than a remitting of sins - it is a memorial of what has already happened in fullness, the work of Christ on the cross.
- "We therefore now understand from the very name what the Eucharist, that is, the Lord's Supper, is: namely, the thanksgiving and common rejoicing of those who declare the death of Christ, that is, trumpet, praise, confess, and exalt his name above all others." (Zwingli, Commentary on True and False Religion)
- For Zwingli, the elements cannot be the literal presence of the physical body of Christ since his body was offered once and for all at Calvary and this could compromise the full humanity of Christ by granting to his human nature omnipresence. Instead, the elements point to that action in the past. The elements bring the church to remember the work of Christ.

- While Zwingli held to a memorial view of the Supper, it was not pure memorialism as Zwingli held that Christ was meaningfully present with the faithful as they partook of the elements of the supper.\
- Zwingli states that while the presence of Jesus was not physical, he is really present spiritually while congregations receive the cup and bread in faith.
- For Zwingli, there was a reason to hesitate when stating that Christ was present because this could imply that he was physically present but if one included the notion of Christ being Spiritually present in the supper, he would find agreement.
- “We believe Christ to be truly present in the Supper, indeed we do not believe that it is the Lord’s Supper unless Christ is present.” (Zwingli, an Exposition of the Faith). Zwingli further distinguished between the spiritual presence of Christ experienced by all believers at anytime by faith and sacramental presence that was exclusive at the Lord’s Table.