

# **The Development Of The Eucharist**

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## 1. Introduction

In 1529, Martin Luther, and Huldrych Zwingli, met in Marburg; they attempted to reconcile the differences between the German and the Swiss reformation movements. The meetings lasted for some time, and produced an agreement on every subject except the meaning and nature of the Eucharist. When the dialogue was finished, Zwingli requested the hand of Luther in brotherhood, but Luther refused him because he claimed Zwingli was of a different spirit than he was.<sup>1</sup>

Although these men were not able to fellowship with each other because of their differences, Zwingli and Luther both believed that the Roman Catholic Church was operating upon a mistaken interpretation of the Eucharist. Faith was the major issue for both men, but Luther was willing to retain a partially catholic view of the Lord's Supper, but Zwingli sought for a more primitive view.

Luther believed the catholic doctrine of the sacrificial mass to be untenable, and noted that the *Fourth Lateran Council* had been unduly influenced by the teachings of Aristotle, having drawn a distinction between *substance* and *accidents*. For Luther, it was more important that the recipient believe that the *real presence* of Christ was there.<sup>2</sup> While Luther held the position that Christ was present in the Eucharist; he did not agree that the Eucharist was a sacrifice, or that the

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<sup>1</sup> Schaff, Philip, *The Creeds of Christendom*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 1998) Vol. 1, p 362-3

<sup>2</sup> McGrath, Alister E., *Historical Theology*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1998, 2000. p197

substance was literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ. In his abrasive style he condemned the Catholics with these words:

That the Mass in the Papacy must be the greatest and most horrible abomination, as it directly and powerfully conflicts with this chief article, (justification by faith) and yet above and before all other popish idolatries it has been the chief and most specious.<sup>3</sup>

Zwingli did not think a belief in the real presence was even necessary; and he believed the rite was not a sacrament at all, but is instead an ordinance. That is: something Jesus ordained to be observed as a sort of *object lesson*; with a view to memorialize the death of Christ in each Christian worship service.

The Roman Catholic Church, in response to the reformers, defined and codified their belief at the Council of Trent:

If anyone saith, that the sacraments of the new law are not necessary unto salvation but are superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of Justification; . . .let him be anathema.<sup>4</sup>

If anyone saith, that the sacraments of the new law do not contain the grace which they signify; or that they do not confer that grace on those who do not place an obstacle thereunto; as though they were merely outward signs of grace or justice received through faith, . . . let him be anathema<sup>5</sup>

The Catholics researched the writings of the church fathers and confirmed the long-standing belief in the sacerdotal nature of the Church. In their view, the Body and blood indeed change in the hands of the ordained priest. It is indeed a sacrifice. The Lutherans rejected

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<sup>3</sup> Luther, Martin *The Smalcald Articles*, Article 2, of the Mass, 1537.

<sup>4</sup> Council of Trent, seventh session, March 3, 1547, Decree on the Sacraments, Canon 4

<sup>5</sup> Council of Trent, seventh session, March 3, 1547, Decree on the Sacraments, Canon 6

the aspect of the sacrificial mass, but agreed that the church had always believed in the *real presence* of Christ in the communion. Zwingli viewed the practice as merely a lesson to remind the people that the Lord died for the world, and that He will return.

I will attempt to show that a Biblical understanding of the Eucharist includes both a sacrifice and a memorial. In order to do this, we must examine the original commandment of Passover and its redefinition after the conquest of Canaan. The reintroduction of the holiday under King Josiah, and examine how the rite was observed after the deportation under the priest Ezra. We will then move to the New Testament writings and continue on to the Catholic theologians.

## **2. The First Passover**

The institution of the Feast of Passover marks the seminal event in the history of the Nation of Israel. Prior to its institution, the children of Israel were enslaved to the Egyptian Pharaohs, and were not permitted to worship the God of Israel. After they entered the promised land, they have held the sacrifice as a memorial up to this day. Its importance to the Jewish people can not be overstated. Their calendar and religious new year originate from the date.<sup>6</sup> It is celebrated worldwide, and with an ancient order of service that varies little from place to place. It is the event that combines all branches of Judaism.

The Biblical narrative is found in twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. First, we must observe that the rite described in this passage *is indeed a sacrifice*, but it is unlike the Levitical sacrifices that were later instituted. This sacrifice predates the institution of the Levitical

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 12.2

priesthood, and it was to be sacrificed by the ordinary people (slaves). It was eaten in ordinary houses, with extraordinary results.<sup>7</sup> Observance would cancel the debt owed to God. Whenever the blood was applied to the door posts of the house, the death angel would pass over the house.

The meal itself is described as consisting of the roasted leg of lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that the passage does not even mention wine.<sup>9</sup> This was not thought to be some mystical or magical meal, but it was eaten by faith and obedience, and it procured their deliverance, and ultimately caused them to become the Nation of Israel. It demonstrated to the people that their God was indeed alive and interested in their well being.

### **3. The Passover in Deuteronomy**

The Children of Israel wandered for forty years before they were able to occupy the land of promise. Near the end of those wanderings, the law was restated to those who were still living. Several things had changed over the years. They were members of the second and third generation. The older people were gone for the most part, and the group needed to be re-acclimated with the redemption story of their parents, as well as the laws that were to govern them in their new country. The Passover was restated with a significant change. No longer would they sacrifice the Passover at each home, but from that time forward they were to gather in the place of God's choosing in order to celebrate the feast. This new direction is mentioned three times in the Deuteronomy text:

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<sup>7</sup> Exodus 12.3

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 12.8

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps it was not then available to slaves.

Deuteronomy 16.2,6-7 “And you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God from the flock and the herd, in the *place where the LORD chooses* to establish His name 6 but at the *place where the LORD your God chooses* to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt. “And you shall cook and eat it in the *place which the LORD your God chooses*. And in the morning you are to return to your tents.

This passage does not mention the memorial nature of the rite, but it does mention the sacrificial nature. It is not clear if the people offered the lamb for their family, or if the priesthood was to perform the bloodletting. When the roaming hoard was finally able to enter the promised land, they circumcised the children and observed the Passover on the plain of Jericho.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. The Passover of Josiah

It appears that the Israelites maintained the Passover until the time of the Judges, but after that it was either discontinued or observed in a small sporadic way. It is not even mentioned until the late period of the Kingdom of Judah, when Josiah found the commandment in the rediscovered book of the Law.

2 Kings 23.21-22 Then the king commanded all the people saying, “Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God as it is written in this book of the covenant.” Surely such a Passover had not been celebrated from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah.

Once again this passage does not mention any wine with the meal. It can be argued that the wine was assumed to be part of the meal, but no religious significance is attributed to it so as to make one think the order of service was yet developed. The interesting thing about this passage in Ezra is that this is the first time we find it stated that the Levitical priesthood was

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<sup>10</sup>Joshua 5.7-10

responsible for killing the sacrifice. This brings the ceremony under the direction of the priesthood.

## 5. The First Century Passover

It is impossible to determine with certainty if the modern seder is the same as the seder in the days of Christ, but there seems to be some striking similarities between the two. It was not the intent of the gospel writers to describe the order of the supper, but there are clues that show that it contained at least some of the modern elements. For instance, in the beginning of the modern service, a morsel of parsley is dipped into salt water to symbolize the tears of slavery. We see Jesus handing a dipped morsel to identify Judas as the traitor.<sup>11</sup> If this is so, it means Judas did not receive the communion, but left the meeting near the beginning.

### ◆ Thanksgiving

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* informs us that before the rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai were formed, during the days of King Herod the Great, the Passover had become a service of thanks. The service was built around the six “psalms of praise.”<sup>12</sup> Thanksgiving had routinely formed the nucleus of the seder.<sup>13</sup> Jesus gave thanks throughout, and sang a hymn at the end.<sup>14</sup> This concept of thanksgiving was to become the main focus of the church. The

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<sup>11</sup>John 13:26

<sup>12</sup>Psalms 113-117

<sup>13</sup><http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=427&letter=S&search=seder>

<sup>14</sup>Matthew 26:27



communion has become known as the Eucharist from the Greek word *ευχαριστεω* that means, to give thanks.

♦ **The Wine**

We can learn some things from other sources also. The Mishna, a collection of writings that were redacted around the beginning of the third century, (but teaching traditions that are much older) mentions several aspects of the seder.<sup>15</sup> For instance, even a poor visitor is to receive the full four glasses of wine during the meal.

Even the poorest in Israel must not eat unless he sits down to table, and they must not give them less than four cups of wine to drink, even if it is from the [Paupers'] Dish....<sup>16</sup>

There is no doubt that by this time the seder contained a lot of wine. It appears evident to this writer that the complete Jewish Passover was introduced to the gentile church at Corinth, but the Greeks apparently did not possess the self control of Jewish celebrants. The Apostle Paul found it to be a serious problem, because the people were missing the point of the celebration. In this context, Paul describes the communion as the *Feast*, (of Unleavened Bread) and tried to correct abuse of drunkenness and disrespect for the poor.<sup>17</sup> He admonished them to:

1 Corinthians 5:8 . . . celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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<sup>15</sup>Cross, F. L., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997) p 1092

<sup>16</sup>Barrett, C.K., *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1956, 1987) p 197-198

<sup>17</sup>1 Corinthians 11:22

♦ **The Collection for the Poor**

The drunkenness of the Corinthians was coupled with a disregard for the poor. This was a violation of the culture and tradition of the Passover. As noted above, the poor were to be allowed all four glasses of wine, even though it was expensive to provide it to them. This generosity, called *money for wheat*, was a tradition of long standing. Each year a collection was received prior to the Passover so none would be left out.<sup>18</sup>

♦ **The Sacrificial Lamb**

Josephus gives another glimpse of a first century Passover celebration.

So these high priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour till the eleventh, but so that a company not less than ten belong to every sacrifice (for it is not lawful for them to feast singly by themselves), and many of us are twenty in a company,<sup>19</sup>

We learn that in the lifetime of Josephus, prior to the destruction of the temple, the high priests presided over the ritual slaughter in Jerusalem. So many were the priests, that the slaughter took only two hours. It was required that each lamb be divided between ten to twenty celebrants. There were thirteen in attendance that evening, so the last supper was well within the norm of those days.

♦ **The Unleavened bread**

In the modern service, three loaves of unleavened bread are used. During the service the middle Matzo is broken and hidden. When found, at the conclusion of the meal, it is exchanged

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<sup>18</sup>Kolatch, Alfred J., *The Jewish Book of Why*, (Jonathan David Publishers, Middle Village NY, 1981) p 186

<sup>19</sup>Josephus, Flavius, *Jewish Wars*, (Peabody, Hendrickson Publishers 1987) 6.9 (423) p 749

for a prize. Jesus broke this bread and served it to his disciples with the cup of salvation. Historically, the flesh of the lamb was always coupled with the unleavened bread. It is unlikely that any first century Jew would believe that a sacrifice had been made in the absence of the flesh of the lamb. In fact, it was well known that Cain had offered a grain offering without blood, and it was not accepted; while the blood sacrifice of Abel was acceptable.<sup>20</sup> Jews who lived when the blood cult was operating, understood that forgiveness was obtained only with blood. In light of this; one thing about the last supper that seems curious. Why did Jesus not say of the lamb, “This is my body that is sacrificed for you?” It would seem to make more sense.

Another question arises. Why were there three loaves of bread used during the meal? Several explanations are offered. Many Jewish scholars claim that the reason there are three loaves of unleavened bread at the meal is because when the three *men* appeared to Abraham, Sarah kneaded three loaves for them<sup>21</sup>. If this explanation is correct, it would explain the beginnings of a mystical or sacramental understanding of the Passover bread.

No mystical or sacramental view of the bread is found in the scriptures or in Jewish writings originating in Judah, but there is an interesting passage in a Greek writing. Philo, a Greek speaking Jew from Alexandria, sought to reconcile Jewish religion with Greek thought, by allegorizing the Hebrew Bible. In doing so he mystified the three loaves of bread:

XV. (59) For Abraham also, having come with all haste and speech and eagerness, exhorts virtue, that is to say, Sarah, “to hasten and knead three

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<sup>20</sup>Genesis 4.4-5

<sup>21</sup>Kolatch, Alfred J., *The Jewish Book of Why*, (Jonathan David Publishers, Middle Village NY, 1981) p 193-4

measures of fine meal, and to make cakes upon the hearth. . . (60) Now it is very good that these three measures should, as it were, be kneaded together in the soul, and mixed up together, in order that so the soul, being persuaded that the supreme being is God, who has raised his head above all his powers, and who is beheld independently of them, and who makes himself visible in them, may receive the characters of his power and beneficence, and becoming initiated into the perfect mysteries, may not be too ready to divulge the divine secrets to any one, but may treasure them up in herself, and keeping a check over her speech, may conceal them in silence; for the words of the scripture are, "To make secret cakes;" because the sacred and mystic statements about the one uncreated Being, and about his powers, ought to be kept secret; since it does not belong to every one to keep the deposit of divine mysteries properly.<sup>22</sup>

This may be the beginnings of the mystical understanding of the communion bread. It was an attempt to reconcile the Greek understanding of mystery with the Hebrew. This attempt did not stop with the communion, but continued as the church became less and less Jewish and more Greek.

Let us notice several things about new the Testament Passover observance. The original Passover was both a sacrifice and a memorial. It was a retrospective, and it was also eschatological.<sup>23</sup> This can be seen in the cup of Elijah. The seder looks back at the Exodus event that miraculously created the nation, and forward to the proclamation of the Messiah by the promised coming of Elijah.<sup>24</sup> The communion is a memorial of His death which is to be proclaimed until he comes.

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<sup>22</sup>Philo, *The Works of Philo*, (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody Mass 1993) p 101-102 *The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel* 15-17 (59-63)

<sup>23</sup>Barrett, C.K., *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1956, 1987) p 197-198

<sup>24</sup>Malachi 4:5

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

Jesus was clearly identified as the quintessential Passover Lamb of God.<sup>25</sup> He instituted the ritual within the well known Jewish festival which celebrated the greatest act of salvation up until that time. The ordination of the last supper was not a sacrifice, but pointed both to the sacrificial lamb of the past, and prophetically pointed to His sacrifice that would be accomplished on the morrow.

## 6. Ante-Nicea

### ◆ The Didache

. As the church grew it became less and less a sect of Judaism, it began to assume an identity of its own. As the canonical books were finished and circulated, the Christians did not refrain from writing but began to produce many interesting works. One of the earliest of these volumes was discovered in the nineteenth century. It is called either *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, or the *Didache*. The latter title seems more appropriate. This short work appears to be a baptismal catechism. The authors seem to emphasize thanksgiving above all other elements of the Passover. The text of the prayers are preserved, and they are strikingly similar to the prayers of thanksgiving that are included in modern Passover seders.

Now concerning the Thanksgiving (Eucharist), thus give thanks. First, concerning the cup: We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. And concerning the broken bread: We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever. But let no one eat or drink of

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<sup>25</sup>John 1:29,36

your Thanksgiving (Eucharist), but they who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord hath said, Give not that which is holy to the dogs.<sup>26</sup>

It is notable that at this early date the communion was extended only to the baptized members of the church. The Passover included all of the covenant members and the same was true of the new covenant. Only those who have made the complete commitment were allowed to partake of this ritual. Secondly, it is observed that the bread is not said to be the slain body of Christ, but rather the people, who like separate grains of wheat, have been crushed and made into one. This was innovation! Thirdly, there seems to be a certain knowledge of the Holy One associated with the rite.

The prayer shows that the communion represents spiritual food and spiritual drink that help make Jesus known to the hearts of people. Further, it continues with the eschatological theme that they will continue to pray and observe until he returns:

But after ye are filled, thus give thanks: We thank Thee, holy Father, for Thy holy name which Thou didst cause to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Thou, Master almighty, didst create all things for Thy name's sake; Thou gavest food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to Thee; but to us Thou didst freely give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Thy Servant. Before all things we thank Thee that Thou art mighty; to Thee be the glory for ever. Remember, Lord, Thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Thy kingdom which Thou hast prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God (Son) of David! If any one is holy, let him come; if any one is not so, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen. But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving as much as they desire.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Didache Chapter 9 The Thanksgiving (Eucharist)

<sup>27</sup>Didache Chapter 10 Prayer after Communion

The Didache makes no mention of a sacrifice or a memorial associated with these prayers; neither is there any mention of the exodus, nor the lamb.

♦ **Justin (c. 100-165 AD)**

Justin is the next author to mention the celebration of the Eucharist, and is careful to distinguish it from a similar rite in the Roman mystery religion called Mithraism. The similarities of the Eucharist and the cult were noticed, and the secret cult was not only condemned by Justin, but also Tertullian.<sup>28</sup> In the passage below, Justin shows that the church was beginning to come to the idea of a *change in the elements*, when he refers to them as becoming transmuted.

For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone.

Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn.<sup>29</sup>

♦ **Origen (c. 185-254 AD)**

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<sup>28</sup>Cross, F. L., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997) p1096

<sup>29</sup>Justin Martyr, *First Apology* Chapter 66 p 341-2 Of The Eucharist

By the early third century, some church leaders began to hint that the memorial was also to be seen as sacrificial. Origen's comments indicate that he held that there is a mystical element in the Eucharist that is also propitiatory in nature.

But if that text (Leviticus 24:5-9) is taken to refer to the greatness of what is mystically symbolized, then there is a 'commemoration' which has an effect of great propitiatory value. If you apply it to that 'Bread which came down from heaven and gives life to the world,' that shewbread which 'God has offered to us as a means of reconciliation, in virtue of faith, ransoming us with his blood,' and if you look to that commemoration of which the Lord says, 'Do this in commemoration of me,' then you will find that this is the unique commemoration which makes God propitious to men.<sup>30</sup>

As the concept of a sacrificial mass developed, the church was also in the process of developing a *priesthood theology*, one that slowly began to deviate from the New Testament pattern to an Old Testament paradigm. The church was beginning to define an ordained priesthood based loosely on the Levitical model, but it differed from the Mosaic model in that it was not nepotistic in nature; it was instead conferred by the sacrament of orders. If there was to be a defined ordained priesthood, then it follows that there must also be a sacrifice.

## 7. Council of Nicea

As the fourth century dawned, the church fathers began to universally view the communion as being a reoccurring sacrifice. The church was developing a sacerdotal nature. They were leaving the message that salvation is found in Jesus Christ, for the message that salvation is found in the church, the nominated dispenser of the Grace of God. After the fourth

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<sup>30</sup>Origen, Homilies on Leviticus 9



century began, the lead theologians and pastors almost universally believed the communion to be a sacrificial mass.

In an anonymous treatise entitled, “*This is My Body: Eucharist in the Early Fathers*,”<sup>31</sup> the author clearly shows that the Church accepted the communion as a mass after the council of Nicea in 325.

It has come to the attention of the holy and great council that in some localities and cities deacons give the Eucharist to presbyters, although neither the canon nor the custom permits those who do NOT offer sacrifice to give the Body of Christ to those who do **offer the Sacrifice...**<sup>32</sup>

A couple of quotations from the dozens that are available will serve to show that there is no question that the post Nicene church routinely believed in the mass. St. Athanasius, (who lived between c. 295 - 373 A.D.) made this comment:

You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine, and placing them on the table. So long as the prayers of supplication and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the **bread is become the Body, and the wine the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ**<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>[Http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm](http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm) 3/12/2003

<sup>32</sup>Council of Nicea (Canon 18), quoted in [Http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm](http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm) 3/12/2003

<sup>33</sup>Eutyches, *Sermon to the Newly Baptized*, quoted in [Http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm](http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm) 3/12/2003

St. John Chrysostom, (c. 344 - 407 A.D.) held similar view:

Reverence, therefore, reverence this table, of which we are all communicants!  
Christ, slain for us, ***the sacrificial victim who*** is placed thereon.<sup>34</sup>

Theologians had conceived the communion as a symbol, which was that which it conveys, and **is** what it represents. This idea later yielded to communion as being other than what it represents in that the elements, are the body and blood. As a result, some did not describe the bread and wine as symbols at all.<sup>35</sup>

## 8. Fourth Lateran Council

As time passed into the thirteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church felt it necessary to define the doctrine a little more specifically. This was accomplished when the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) coined the term *transubstantiation*. Philip Schaff summed it up this way:

The culminating point in the history of the mediaeval doctrine of the eucharist was the dogmatic definition of transubstantiation by the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215. Thenceforth it was heresy to believe anything else. The definition ran that "the body and blood of Christ are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the body and the wine into the blood by divine power." The council did not foist upon the Church a new doctrine. It simply formulated the prevailing belief.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Chrysostom, St. John, *Homilies on Romans* 8:8 quoted in

[Http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm](http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/num8.htm) 3/12/2003

<sup>35</sup>Cross, F. L., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997) p 568

<sup>36</sup>Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 5. Chapter 14 (MCL)

This new definition was cast in accordance with the newly recovered philosophy of Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas maintained that consecration prayer caused a change in the ‘substance’ of the bread and wine, and that which remained was only an outward appearance of being bread and wine.<sup>37</sup>

## 9. Council of Trent

With the advent of Protestant *innovations*, the Roman Catholics were forced to regroup, and codify their beliefs. A long and interrupted council was convened in Trent with a view to discuss the issues raised by the reformers, and to write an answer. They tackled every major Protestant challenge, and their theologians crafted a group of documents that have for the most part, defined Catholic orthodoxy even until the twentieth century.

The reformers uniformly rejected the idea that the Roman Catholic Church had any right to operate in a sacerdotal manner because it was itself an innovation. Since the reformers rejected the authority of the Bishop of Rome, it was also necessary for them to reject their sacrifice. Still, Luther sought to retain a patristic view of the Eucharist. He was quite comfortable with the comments of Origen and Justin. His disagreement with Rome resulted because he did not believe the *Fourth Lateran Council* had correctly interpreted the scriptures, and he claimed they had been unduly influenced by the writings of Aristotle. One might argue that Luther held a second century view of the matter.

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<sup>37</sup>Cross, F. L., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997) p 568

Calvin, like Luther, retained the sacramental nature of the Eucharist, and his followers gave the rite a prominent place in the reformed churches. In refuting the Catholic view of transubstantiation, Calvin pointed out that the teaching about transubstantiation was wholly unnecessary, for Christ already exists in all places at all times.<sup>38</sup>

The extreme radicals claimed communion is a condition of the soul; outward observance is not even necessary. Zwingli did not agree with the radicals, for he taught that the communion was necessary, although it is not a sacrament. He promoted the thinking that it was merely an ordained rite, instituted by Jesus as His own memorial.

## **10. Conclusion**

Several points are common to all views of Passover and Eucharist. First, all believers are acknowledging a faith in God's ability to save. Second, the major emphasis upon the response of thanksgiving are found in all views. Third, there is an eschatological hope emphasized in all views. The initial Passover was in anticipation of the coming promised land. The Jewish Passover reserves a cup for the coming Elijah. The Christians hold the service until he comes. Lastly, the Passover and Lord's Supper were both instituted before deliverance in faith, but thereafter have become a memorial to an accomplished fact.

Most Protestants would do well to partake of the communion more frequently. This is a radical thought for many Protestants, but it appears to be the apostolic pattern. We have instituted

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<sup>38</sup>Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4, chapter 17

the communion on a monthly rotation this year. Previously we partook quarterly. So far there have only been a few raised eyebrows, but no vocal complaints.

It appears that the early church did not separate the elements from a meal, but celebrated together in a love feast. We claim we are following the Bible so why should we not return to the Biblical pattern? I am planning to try this in an upcoming fellowship meal.

It is possible, that if we return to the Judaic understanding of the last supper it may help us develop a closer tie to Judaism. We have throughout history offended their sensibilities because of our ignorance on this, and many other subjects. Jews seem to be pleased when we make an effort to understand their religion, and have been known to even attend such meetings.

This leads to my last application and that is the eschatological nature of the Last Supper. Those who slaughtered the first Passover lamb looked forward to the new day of promise when they ate the feast in the land of promise. Jesus likewise looked forward to the day when he would share in the Passover in the new kingdom. I do not think I have ever heard a sermon on the eschatological nature of the Eucharist. The weekly observation of the death resurrection and the second coming must have served the early church well. Perhaps evangelicals can reach Jews with this message. The scriptures teach that when they accept of the Messiah, that will equal the resurrection from the dead.<sup>39</sup> You can not get more eschatological than that!

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<sup>39</sup>Romans 11:15