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0521856795 - The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy

Lee Palmer Wandel

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Introduction

Cenantibus autem eis accepit Iesus panem et benedixit ac fregit deditque discipulis suis et ait accipite et comedite hoc est corpus meum

Et accipiens calicem gratias egit et dedit illis dicens bibite ex hoc omnes hic est enim sanguis meus novi testamenti qui pro multis effunditur in remissionem peccatorum

Matthew 26:26–28, Vulgate

Et accepto pane gratias egit et fregit et dedit eis dicens hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis datur hoc facite in meam commemorationem

Similiter et calicem postquam cenavit dicens hic est calix novum testamentum in sanguine meo quod pro vobis funditur

Luke 22:19–20, Vulgate

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Matthew 26:26–28, King James Version

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Luke 22:19–20, King James Version

They are simple words. Familiar to every Christian since the first century A.D., spoken in the earliest Eucharists among a persecuted sect, chanted in Latin in Masses celebrated in thousands of churches in Europe over more than a millennium, in the sixteenth century, these words tore apart Western Christendom. Fathers disowned sons, wives left husbands, neighbors massacred neighbors over the relationship between “this” and “my body.”¹ Subjects rebelled against lords over what “this do” encompassed.² Christian attacked Christian over the relationship between “this do” and “remembrance of me.” In the sixteenth century western Christians distinguished

¹ Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Donald R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

² See Chapter 2 for specific examples.

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between those who were “true neighbors” or “brothers or sisters in Christ,” and those who might be brother, sister, parent by blood, neighbor by geography, but by their understanding of these words, no longer belonging to humankind.³

This book will follow those words. It will follow them through sermons, polemical pamphlets, church ordinances, confessions, catechisms, books, even letters. In so doing, it seeks to illumine the many different ways sixteenth-century western Christians understood the relationship: between their persons and Christ; between objects of the mundane world and God; and among what they did in worship, their faith, and God Incarnate. For them, these words named precisely the relationship between the world of matter – bread, human bodies, wine, tables – and God. For none were these two realms separate, as we shall see. For all, the world of matter was implicated in the Incarnation. How the Incarnation set the relationship between the world of matter and God divided Christians in the sixteenth century.

Thus, for them, theology and liturgy were not discrete, but essentially interconnected. Worship was the praxis of faith – the embodiment, the corporeal expression, the “this do,” as diverse Christians understood it in the sixteenth century. The action of the priest or minister could be mimetic, symbolic, representative, or evocative, depending upon how one understood “presence.” Participation in the Eucharist could be nourishment, a “true food,” a mark of membership in a bounded community, or a designation of membership in the elect, depending on how one understood the Incarnation and its implications for the bread and the wine.

A very different story of the Reformation emerges from following these words. As we shall see in Chapter 1, in the millennium before 1500 representations of Christ’s body proliferated, even as the Mass acquired layers of meaning and complex material dimensions. As we shall see in Chapter 2, in the 1520s and 1530s, Europe witnessed a vortex of conceptualizations of the Eucharist – not one or two or three, but hundreds – fragmenting communities at every level, from family to state, as individuals, predominantly preachers, but, as we shall see, even housemaids, gave voice to divergent understandings of what these words mean for worship. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 chart the articulation of three discrete theologies of the Eucharist and the formation of translocal forms of worship. At the end of the century, western Christians were broadly divided among three very different understandings of “this do”; of the relationship between “this” and “my body”; and of what Christians were to do, some 1500 years after his death, “in remembrance of me.” The story of the Reformation ends only with the legislation of

³ The work of Frank Lestringant has addressed most explicitly this dimension. See foremost, *Une sainte horreur, ou le voyage en eucharistie: XVIe–XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1996); also, *L’expérience huguenote au nouveau monde (XVIe siècle)* (Geneva: Droz, 1996).

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“Churches,” at national synods, the Council of Trent, and the Peace of Westphalia.

The story of the Reformation that emerges from following these words, therefore, is neither the liberation from an oppressive system, nor the emergence of one or another tradition of truth. It is the story of the plurality of faith, all authentic, none normative. It is the story of the Incarnation as it came to be diversely understood some 1500 years after Christ’s death and as it came to be diversely embodied among western Christians – all visceral, to return to those husbands and mothers, but not uniform. Finally, the following is a meditation on this one religion and the tension that lies at the heart of it, between a text, held to be God’s self-revelation, in the words of sixteenth-century Christians, God’s Word, and therefore eternal and absolute, and the human communities who hear or read that word, who live in specific times and places, and who hear them within the contingencies of their own lives. These words resonated and resonate differently for different people. In the sixteenth century, those different understandings tore apart Christendom, the living body of Christ on earth.

Throughout the book, I shall use the word, “Eucharist,” of Greek origin, to refer to a range of practices and beliefs. Sixteenth-century Christians could not even agree on the name for the act. Some continued to call it “Communio,” in the Latin, or “Communion,” in English. Others insisted that it be called “Abendmahl” or “la Cène” or “Supper.” The choice of name marked divisions not only over what constituted worship, or what happened in that act of worship, or even what the very nature of ritual was – its relationship to faith, to God, and to the community of believers. To this day, the differing names mark deep divisions in understandings of the relationship between humanity and God and of how Christ is “present” among the living community of the faithful.

At the center of this book are those words. We shall follow them, as different Christians took them up and articulated their different understandings of them. Before listening to them, however, it is important to place their readings within larger, longer term changes within Europe: humanism and biblical scholarship, the extraordinary “flowering” or “harvest” of late medieval Christian culture, encounters in the Americas and Asia. We shall view those changes through the lenses of the words of the Gospels.

“THIS IS”

The origins of the sixteenth century’s acute attention to the text of Scripture, the “Word of God,” are difficult to locate. There had been biblical scholars for centuries.⁴ In the early thirteenth century, Berengar of Tours

⁴ See, generally, *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3: *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, edited S. L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); *The Oxford Illustrated*

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had challenged precisely the conventional readings of this text.⁵ By the fifteenth century, theologians were deeply divided – between Nominalists and Scholastics, Via Moderna and Via Antiqua – on the relationship between names and their objects, signifiers and signified. So, too, formal training in fourfold reading of Scripture – historical, allegorical, moral or tropological, and anagogical – encouraged a sense of each text as multivalent, deep and complex. By the sixteenth century, theologians had been trained to be acutely sensitive to words’ layers of potential meaning.

In the fifteenth century, Lorenzo Valla made dramatic and explicit the insight of so many humanists: language exists within time, the vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical practices of each text reflecting the specific society in the past in which it was created.⁶ While his deconstruction of the Donation of Constantine has captured modern scholarship’s attention, his *Adnotationes*, critiquing the accuracy of the Latin Vulgate against older Greek texts, Desiderius Erasmus published in 1505 in order to make more broadly available the electrifying approach to Scripture philology offered.⁷ In 1516, Erasmus published the *Novum Instrumentum*, which he intended to provide an authoritative text of the Greek New Testament – the product of collecting various manuscripts from Europe and Byzantium, collating them, and working closely with the publisher Froben in Basel. Erasmus sought to offer Europeans – to bring Christians 1500 years removed from the life of Jesus – a text as close to Jesus’ own time as an artifact could to the living Christ.⁸

History of the Bible, edited John Rogerson (Oxford, 2001). On medieval biblical exegesis, see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952). On Reformation biblical exegesis, see *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, edited David Steinmetz (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), and *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, edited Richard A. Muller & John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1996), as well as the work of Steinmetz more generally. On French Catholic biblical exegesis, see François Laplanche, *La Bible en France: entre mythe et critique (XVIe–XIXe siècle)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994).

⁵ Gary Macy, *Treasures from the Storeroom: Medieval Religion and the Eucharist* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

⁶ Jerry Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), especially ch. 2; Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), especially chapter 3; the work of Salvatore I. Camporeale, most recently, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo, riforma e controforma: studi e testi* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2002).

⁷ Scholastics also understood the text of the Bible as historical, in the sense that it had been produced in a different time and place, but Valla brought home a particular sense of language in his understanding of “anachronism,” in which words did not simply exist over time – one sense of “historical” – but came into use within specific contexts, human societies and cultures of particular orientations and configurations, and carried, therefore, resonances of historically specific human communities. So, too, Valla’s mastery of Greek as well as his extraordinary feel for Latin words led him to attend to resonances and usages in ways Erasmus found at once new and exhilarating in their implications for the reading of Scripture, Bentley, pp. 34ff.

⁸ Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

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His Latin translation, which appeared alongside the Greek text, sought a vitality, a vibrancy he argued the Latin Vulgate lacked.

While Luther would declare his preference for the text of the Latin Vulgate at Marburg,⁹ Zwingli, Oecolampad, as well as dozens of other theologians immersed themselves in Erasmus's Greek New Testament. Although printed Bibles, even Bibles in the vernacular,¹⁰ predate the sixteenth century, Erasmus's *Novum Instrumentum* sought to bring to life Jesus' voice, his preaching, and his acts, his miracles, movements, and his gestures. "The Word of God," the very term, permeated communities across Europe, marking a sense of the text that differed from medieval exegetical methods as well as understandings of the text as Bible.¹¹ And in less than a decade, Europeans, lay and clerical, predominantly men, but also women, in homes and workshops, took up reading the Bible as a devotional act. They read it not as canon, not as "the Bible," but as "the Word of God." God commanding, God teaching, God speaking.

Their reading rested, however, not on a shared education, either in biblical languages – Greek, Hebrew, and Latin – or in exegetical methods, let alone in a shared textual tradition. Europeans from widely differing educational experiences, not only from weavers to theologians, but even among theologians, came to those simple words.¹² Within that same decade, it became clear that so small a word, "is," was accorded different connotations, different syntactical functions. So, too, "this," which had within the medieval tradition of the Mass referred to the wafer, the "Host," for many Europeans designated bread, and for a minority within that group of readers, the simple bread of the common meal.¹³ Many had no experience of the Jewish Passover; they did not concern themselves, whether the bread was leavened, let alone with any of the other dietary laws of Judaism. What they read was a simple meal in an inn, and their experience of such meals connected to the words a rough wooden table, pewter and wooden implements, coarse bread, and mundane wine.¹⁴ Others brought the sensitivities of philology to bear on the text, and they recognized the historical remoteness of the

⁹ Walther Köhler, *Das Marburger Religionsgespräch 1529: Versuch einer Rekonstruktion* (Leipzig: M. Heinsius, 1929), p. 30. On Luther's knowledge of the biblical languages, see most recently Eric W. Gritsch, "Luther as Bible Translator," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, edited Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 62–72.

¹⁰ On the Bible as a printed object in this time, see Amin Doumit, *Deutscher Bibeldruck von 1466–1522* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1997).

¹¹ The term is to be found on the title pages of pamphlets, in testimonies before magistrates, as well as in sermons, in German, French, Latin, Dutch, and English. Cf. Oswald Bayer, "Luther as an interpreter of Holy Scripture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, pp. 73–85.

¹² For a more detailed discussion of the training of theologians, see Chapter 2, on Augsburg.

¹³ On the differing material objects the word "this" designated, see Chapters 3–5.

¹⁴ This is especially true for Anabaptists. See John Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism: A Study in the Christology of Balthasar Hubmaier, Pilgrim Marpeck, and Dirk Philips* [Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History No. 33] (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1993).

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moment. They also confronted the greatest difficulty of the text: “is” linked some sort of bread, a mundane material object, to Jesus’ body, which, at that moment in the Gospel narrative, was still very much alive.¹⁵

“MY BODY”

The anguish of the sixteenth century centered on these two words. What did it mean for Christ to have a body? What kind of body? How was Christ “present” among the community of Christians? Could he be known physically to his followers or did they simply have a disembodied memory of him?

As we shall see in Chapter 1, those questions were framed within a Christian culture dense in representations of that body: from the delicate renderings in manuscript illuminations through the life-sized bleeding bodies that hung, crucified, over high altars, to plays performed at Christmas, during Passion Week, and at Corpus Christi. Over centuries, Christians had explored in spoken, sung, and chanted word, in painted and sculpted image, and in performance, “the Word became Flesh.” They heard the story of Christ’s life in sermons. They had seen Christ depicted, represented in oil or tempera or marble or wood; many had seen Christ enacted. Christians, lay and clerical, men and women, adults and children had seen efforts, themselves all material – from the stone of tympana to the bodies of human actors – to represent Christ, to bring to the minds of Christians his person, his body, his gestures, his acts. And medieval Christians had been invited to use those visualizations as a focus for their devotional practices, for meditation, for the contemplation of Christ’s life. Specific moments in that life were rendered visually in images and performatively in plays, giving physical specificity to the New Testament narratives, making them memorable by making them visible.¹⁶

They were framed within Europeans’ efforts to make sense of their “encounters” with indigenous peoples.¹⁷ At center of those efforts was the dissonance between what their eyes saw – human forms, human bodies – and

¹⁵ Calvin, among others, marked this.

¹⁶ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God’s Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

¹⁷ For an elegant and economical sketch of some of the problems conceptual and historiographical, see Anthony Grafton, “The Rest versus the West,” in *Bring Out Your Dead: The Past as Revelation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 77–93. On the larger cultural reverberations in Europe of the encounter, see in particular Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: the American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), and *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). For the problem of naming, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

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what their eyes also saw – modes of dress utterly strange to European sensibilities – as well as what their ears heard: sounds that some Europeans could not bring themselves to call “languages,” certainly languages that no European had ever heard or read before. What was it to be human, theologians asked,¹⁸ if not to be Christian, to dress in a certain manner, and to speak words that Europeans could recognize?

And questions of Christ’s body were also framed within a culture that had no single consensus, as to the physics, the chemistry, or the biology of the human body, on the one hand, or, on the other, as to physics more broadly conceived as the relationship between matter and divinity.¹⁹ “My body” was spoken within the Mass, the explicit function of which was to unify Christians in worship. In the sixteenth century, those words were revealed to connote widely differing understandings of the body and of physics.²⁰ At one level, as Elaine Scarry has argued, the body is the most intimate of experiences, the most elusive of verbal naming, description, conventions.²¹ That simple, mundane word called forth that entity which each human being “has” or “is,” a body, even as the experience of any one body denies universality. Indeed, as Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued more generally for all words, so, especially, with this one: it is not constant in time, but construed in particular moments within an individual’s life and within history.²² As representations of Christ’s own infancy, childhood, youth, and adulthood made visually explicit, the body is experienced differently and itself changes over the course of a human lifetime. So, too, the body has been understood and construed as experience differently at different moments in history.²³

The Eucharist was debated as Galenic conceptions of the body were abandoned in the face of knowledge acquired through the broadening use of dissection, through explorations of the human anatomy, and through experimentation.²⁴ It was debated as Aristotelian physics failed to accommodate

¹⁸ At, for example, the debate at Valladolid in 1552. See Bartolomé de las Casas’ response, *Aqui se contiene una disputa o controversia entre el Obispo do Fray Bartolome de las Casas o Casaus Obispo . . . y el doctor Gines de Sepulueda Coronista del Emperador nuestro señor . . .* (Seville: Trugillo, [1552]).

¹⁹ The best evidence for the diversity of conceptions of the body are Montaigne’s *Essais*. See also Roy Porter, *Blood & Guts: A Short History of Medicine* (New York: Norton, 2002), ch. 3. On the relationship between matter and divinity, see Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2003).

²⁰ On the irreducibility of “the body” more generally, see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). Introduction; for a different approach to thinking about Scripture than I pose here, see Scarry’s ch. 4.

²¹ Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, in particular, Introduction.

²² *Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990), in particular part II, section II.

²³ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

²⁴ Andrea Carlino, *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*, Translated by John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

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new data gained through the use of telescopes and microscopes – through amplified optical data. The relationship between eucharistic debates and these shifts in knowledge is not direct or causal, but fundamental categories – the “body” and “matter” – were no longer stable, certain, self-evident. At the same time, European Christianity, in the cult of saints, as well as in the experiences of mystics, implicitly posed different senses of the body than Galen had articulated.²⁵ Those conceptions had not been systematized or organized, and yet, in each town that had a local saint whose physical remains were the site of miracles, those conceptions were familiar, perhaps intimately so.

And finally, that intense engagement with the text of Scripture brought an electrifying confrontation with Incarnation. Jesus overthrew classical conceptions of the body as materially finite and temporally bounded. In the fullness of his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus’ “body” confounded ancient divisions – spirit/matter, eternity/mortality, divinity/humanity. In the three synoptic Gospels, Jesus linked “my body” to bread, and “my blood” to wine, material substances that were common to most households, common not simply in that moment, but as the Passover Seder underlined, traditional – substances that were eaten in the distant past and would be eaten in a remote future. “Bread” and “wine” named substances at once consumed entirely in a moment and reproduced seemingly infinitely in the continuum of human history. There had been bread for the first Passover; there would be bread at the end of time. There had been wine at the first Passover; Jesus would drink the next cup of wine with his disciples when “the kingdom of God comes.” And the bread, “this,” “is my body”; the wine, “this,” “is my blood.” In that moment, Jesus’ body was linked to substances common to every household for millennia.²⁶

The questions about Jesus’ “body” proliferated at a dizzying rate in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. What is “my body”? What does it mean to have a “body”? What sort of body did Christ have? In that moment, in the sixteenth century, 1500 years after his death and resurrection, did he sit corporeally at the right hand of the Father or was he corporeally present

²⁵ See in particular the work of Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), Part II, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), and *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

²⁶ Anabaptists, perhaps foremost, marked the ways in which Jesus’ original use of common bread and wine potentially carried the Eucharist into the humblest of homes. See, in addition to Rempel, Michele Cathleen Zelinsky, “Religion as a Civic Virtue: Religious Identity and Communal Relations in Augsburg, 1517–1555” [University of Pennsylvania dissertation, 2000].

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among Christians on earth? Was Christ's body human – temporally and spatially bounded – or different because of his divinity? What did divinity mean for Jesus' corporeal presence: capable of being in the bread at the moment Jesus' own words were spoken, or physically capable of being everywhere at the same time? The questions revealed a visceral diversity among human beings who had held themselves unified by a single text, a single command, "this do in remembrance of me."

"THIS DO"

As we shall see in Chapter 1, from the death of Christ to the beginning of the sixteenth century, "this do" changed, from a simple meal held among Jesus' followers, to the central event of "the Mass," a ceremony whose text and whose scripted actions were the focus of centuries of debate, discussion, elaboration, and definition.²⁷ By 1500, "the Church," through councils, papal bulls, and episcopal decrees, had come to stipulate who was to participate, degrees of participation, the clothing of the celebrant(s) and their connotations, the gestures of the celebrant and their connotations, the times and places when and where the Eucharist could be celebrated, as well as the vessels, the specific site – the "altar" – the lighting, the music, the incense – all the somatic dimensions of the ritual.²⁸ By the sixteenth century, "this" had come to comprise a ritual dense in gesture, objects, and representations – dense in connotation, association, historical resonances.

By the sixteenth century, Europeans had also articulated complex understandings of "representation" and its relationship to ceremony, the sixteenth-century term that most closely approximates our notion of "ritual."²⁹ An increasingly explicit sense of the interconnections between "self-fashioning" and "representation,"³⁰ would, as we shall see, resonate in the debates

²⁷ This is the case elegantly made by Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945).

²⁸ There is a substantial body of work on the history of the Mass as a liturgical text; most consider definitive Joseph A. Jungmann, S. J. *Missarum Sollemnia: Eine genetische Erklärung der römischen Messe* (Vienna: Herder, 1948); *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 2 vols., Translated by Francis A. Brunner, C.S.S.R. (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1950).

²⁹ On sixteenth-century discussions of ritual and ceremony, see foremost Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), which also provides extensive bibliographies. My own thinking on ritual has also been enriched by Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Revised and expanded edition (New York & London: Routledge, 1988); S. J. Tambiah, "A Performative Approach to Ritual," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65 (1979): 113–69; and the growing literature on embodied and enacted meaning, for example, *Culture Embodied*, edited Michael Moerman & Masaichi Nomura [Senri Ethnological Studies no. 27] (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1990).

³⁰ See, for example, Stephen Bann, *The True Vine: On Visual Representation and the Western Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Gunter Gebauer & Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, Translated by Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Stephen

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on “this do.” What was the relationship between Christ’s person and the sixteenth-century human being who sought to follow that command, “this do in remembrance of me”? Was the act itself a *mimesis* of Christ, a command for a specific physical act on the part of his human believers, “take, eat . . . drink”? Or was the relationship one of *representation*, in which the human actor sought to bring Christ’s movements to the minds of those who knew the text and could make the connection – to make Christ *present* cognitively, perhaps even somatically? Did the human body link Jesus to generations of human actors; did their reenactments make him “present”? How did that act function, both within the larger body of believers and between the realms of humanity and God?

The text is sparse.³¹ In each of the Gospel narratives, Jesus speaks little, his words at once strange and brief: “take, eat; this is my body . . . Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament.” “This do” was a simple command. No gesture, no particular movement, no vessel, no substance was specified, no particular arrangement of persons, no particular dress or costume, no particular setting, no particular cadence of voice, no particular sounds, no smells, no particular textures, colors, shapes, forms. The Gospel accounts state that Jesus sat down with the twelve disciples for the Passover Seder, the feast of the unleavened bread, in the guest chamber, “a large upper room furnished” [Luke 22:12], of a house of man he had designated to Peter and John. The accounts are silent on so many aspects of that meal: if the thirteen sat down in a circle around a table, faced one another, if indeed they formed a single group; how Jesus held the bread, the cup; whether his disciples reached for the bread and cup, or received them from him. The biblical text, the sole artifact by which many sixteenth-century Christians held Jesus’ intent might be discerned, was silent on so many different questions sixteenth-century Christians brought to it. That should give us pause: how did these “details” come to be so central theologically? Why did it matter, if an altar or a table was the site of the ritual? Why did it matter if the container for the wine was silver or tin? Why did it matter what the celebrant wore?

The Eucharist confronts the mystery of the Incarnation more explicitly and more variously than any other sacrament. The sixteenth-century debates on the Eucharist agonized not only over what “body” was present

Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); *The language of art history*, edited by Salim Kemal & Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John Sherman, *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Robert Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, edited by David Hillman (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

³¹ For fuller references on the early history of the liturgy, see Chapter 1, notes 1–4.