

PROTESTANT TRANSUBSTANTIATION Part 2: Historical Testimony

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In the previous section we examined some of what Scripture has to say about the use of wine. Virtually all competent biblical scholars recognize that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with bread and wine. In this and the next section, we turn to the witness of the historical church. The following testimony is taken from several sources only to show that the practice of using wine in the Lord's Supper has been the universally accepted practice of the church regardless of denomination. Some of these individuals, denominations and churches disagree with each other about the *meaning* of the wine, but they are in complete agreement over the *use* of wine. Because of the importance of modern Reformed, Presbyterian and Baptist denominations in this controversy, the testimony of their historic founders, theologians, and confessions will be discussed in the following section.

EARLY CHURCH

Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 100-165)

"There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he, taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying 'Amen.' This word 'Amen' is the Hebrew for 'so be it.' And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those of us who are called deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and the wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion" (*The First Apology*, 65).

Comment

The second century apologist Justin, in elaborating on the order of the Lord's Supper, indicates that the elements are bread and wine. The wine in this case was mixed with water, a common practice among the Jews, but it was wine nonetheless, not juice.

Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 150-215)

“The Scripture, accordingly, has named wine the symbol of the sacred blood” (*The Instructor*, Book II, ch. II).

Hippolytus (ca. A.D. 170 - ca. 236)

“By thanksgiving the bishop shall make the bread into an image of the body of Christ, and the cup of wine mingled with water according to the likeness of the blood” (Quoted in J.G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church*, p. 151).

Cyprian (ca. A.D. 200-258)

“But when the blood of grapes is mentioned, what else is shewn than the wine of the Cup of the Blood of the Lord?” (*The Epistles of St. Cyprian*; Epistle 63.4).

“I marvel much whence this practice has arisen, that in some places, contrary to Evangelical and Apostolic discipline, water is offered in the cup of the Lord, which alone cannot represent the Blood of Christ...we see that in the water the people are intended, but that in the wine is shewn the Blood of Christ” (Ibid, 63:7-10).

Comment

Cyprian is here dealing with the only other instance in church history in which the use of wine in the Lord’s Supper was rejected. Interestingly, the issue wasn’t raised by orthodox Christians. Instead, heretical Gnostic sects were substituting water for wine in the Lord’s Supper. Cyprian argues for the use of wine mixed with water.

The Synod of Constantinople (A.D. 753)

“The only admissible figure of the humanity of Christ, however, is bread and wine in the holy Supper. This and no other form, this and no other type, has he chosen to represent his incarnation” (*Creeds of the Churches* by Leith; p. 55).

Comment

This early declaration was written during the height of the image controversy in order to reject the practice of using icons in worship. It points out that Jesus chose only the symbols of bread and wine to represent his flesh and

blood. Although the synod's rejection of icons was later nullified at the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicea in A.D. 787, the use of bread and wine was not an issue.

LUTHERAN

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

“The operative cause of the sacrament is the word and institution of Christ, who ordained it. The substance is bread and wine, prefiguring the true body and blood of Christ, which is spiritually received by faith” (*Tabletalk*; No. 313).

Luther's Small Catechism (1529)

Question: “What is the Sacrament of the Altar?”

Answer: “Instituted by Christ himself, it is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and to drink.”

The Augsburg Confession (1530)

“It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received. The contrary doctrine is therefore rejected” (Article X).

ANGLICAN

The Thirty-Nine Articles (1563)

“Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, can not be proved by Holy Writ” (Article XXVIII).

Comment

This Anglican confession, in its rejection of transubstantiation, indirectly declares that the true elements are bread and wine.

ANABAPTIST

The Dordrecht Confession (1632)

“We also believe in and observe the breaking of bread, or the Lord’s Supper, as the Lord Jesus instituted the same (with bread and wine) before his sufferings, and also observed and ate it with the apostles” (Article X).

Comment

Even the radical Reformers who rejected everything which they believed was a holdover from Catholicism did not reject the biblical elements of bread and wine.