

SUB UTRAQUE SPECIE: A REFORMED ARGUMENT FOR
COMMUNION UNDER BOTH KINDS

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On July 16, 1562 the Council of Trent decreed, “If any one saith, that, by the precept of God, or by necessity of salvation, all and each of the faithful of Christ ought to receive both species of the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist: let him be anathema.”¹ The origins of the debate on partaking both elements of the Supper did not actually begin in the Reformation itself. Instead the theological discussions were debated centuries beforehand and continue still today. There are essentially two positions on the debate: (a) that the Supper must be taken of both elements by all the faithful, or (b) that only one is necessary for the faithful to partake.² In the following, I will argue that the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper must necessarily be administered in both elements.³ To this end, some historical background of the debate must first be surveyed to find the origins of these doctrinal disagreements. Following the historical survey, I will present the classic Roman Catholic argument against the necessity of communion under both kinds. Finally, this argument will be refuted by the use of the Reformed understanding of the Supper.

¹Council of Trent, Session 21, “Doctrine Concerning the Communion Under Both Species,” in Philip Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker 1998), Canon 1.

²For the rest of the paper, I divide these two positions into the Reformed and the Roman Catholic due to the nature of the current debate that is clearly more polarized in the post-Reformation context. But to divide these positions to Reformed and Catholic would be anachronistic to pose before the polarization, which came about more clearly at the Reformation. Of course, the first position is not distinctly Reformed, but the Reformed do contribute more to this discussion I believe than other Protestant traditions.

³Continuing on I will use the term *utraquism* for the practice of administering both elements to both clergy and laity. As well, in this necessity of both signs I also acknowledge the fact of extreme circumstances when the practice might be hindered.

Historical Survey Concerning the Use of Both Elements

To find the origins of the Eucharistic controversy concerning both elements is not an easy task. The complete history of these debates is dense and nuanced and outside of the bounds of this paper.⁴ Nonetheless this topic does need to be placed within its historical context to ground the debate in its historical dimensions, which have led to the current modern theologies that surround the Eucharist. Therefore in order to ground the debate in its historical context, the first section will cover the Hussite controversy in the 15th century. Next, the Protestant reception and response to the theological issues will be summarized. And the final section of historical context will give an overview of the Counter-Reformation development on the issue and its continuity with in modern Roman Catholic thought.

The Hussite Controversy

The controversies surrounding utraquism were already in motion before the 15th century. But these debates never came to a head like they did in Bohemia at that time. There is much that could be said about the politics of this historical account but the following will show the heart of the controversy surrounding utraquism. More particularly, the early theologies in favor of utraquism are of utmost importance to this discussion.

By the 13th century, the Roman Church stopped administering the sacrament of the Supper to laity in both elements.⁵ Instead it was commonplace for the bread to be administered to the laity, and reserve the cup for clergy alone. By the time of Jan Hus, controversy raged in

⁴For a brief history of the Utraquist movement see Hieromonk Patapios, "Sub Utraque Specie: The Arguments of John Hus and Jacobek of Střibro in Defence of Giving Communion to the Laity under Both Kinds," *JTS*, 53/2 (2002), 505-506. He notes that there is evidence of this controversy even in the 5th century with Pope Gelasius.

⁵Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 70-72.

Bohemia over this practice, along with disagreements about the Eucharist generally, preaching, and clerical impurity.⁶ Of the Hussites, there were several major figures that brought forth reform through writings, preaching and otherwise but for the sake of this essay, two of them are of specific help: Jan Hus and Jakoubek of Střibro.⁷ Both their differing theologies and their continuity concerning the topic of utraquism are insightful.

The Eucharistic theology of Hus was in many ways unified with Rome and yet separate in some ways. Throughout his entire life Hus taught and affirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation.⁸ Not only did he affirm the corporeal presence of Christ in the elements, but Hus also affirmed the doctrine of concomitance. In the partaking of the sacrament, there is a natural concomitance of blood with the flesh and therefore when one partakes of the bread (that is, the body) he partakes of both body and blood.⁹ It may seem that the natural conclusion of affirming both transubstantiation and concomitance would lead to Hus denying the necessity of communion under both kinds, but yet at the end of his life he affirmed all three doctrines.¹⁰ To summarize his rationale for the affirmation of utraquism, he supported the doctrine because

⁶William R. Cook, "The Eucharist in Hussite Theology," *ARG* 66 (1975), 24.

⁷I am aware of the anachronistic terminology of applying Hussite to Hus, and also of the theological nuances that did distinguish Hus from many Hussites. But with that being said, the term is still helpful for the purpose of distinguishing between those on each side of the Eucharistic controversy. For more on Hus being a Hussite see Patapios, "Sub Utraque Specie," for continuity and discontinuity between Hus and his followers.

⁸Matthew Spinka, *John Hus' Concept of the Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 74-75.

⁹John Hus, *Super IV Sententiarum*, IV, dist. 8, qu. 11, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 2, ed. Vaclav Flajshans (Osnabruck: Biblio-Verlag, 1966), 557. "Similiter sub specie vini est sangwis Christi sacramentaliter, quia vinum benedicitur in sangwinem Christi et non in corpus, et quia iterum Sangwis Christi non est sine corpore, ergo concomitanter est ibizi eciam corpus Christi."

¹⁰Hus's affirmation of the necessity of communion under both kinds was certainly a development in his doctrine. Before Hus's first exile of Bohemia in 1412, there is little evidence to say that he affirmed the doctrine. Over time Hus's writing seems to be at first partial to the practice of utraquism, then favorable with wisdom toward institution of the practice, and finally at the end of his life in 1415 Hus is completely for utraquism. See Patapios, "Sub Utraque Specie," 510-519.

(1) both elements efficaciously aid in spiritual eating and (2) the express command of Scripture.¹¹

On the other hand, Hus's corresponding friend Jakoubek was quite different in his theology of the Eucharist. Unlike Hus, Jakoubek denied transubstantiation and affirmed remanentism.¹² In this understanding, the bread still remains in the element and is not replaced by the body of Christ, but both exist in one place.¹³ Jakoubek affirmed the doctrine of concomitance insofar as Christ body is never present without its blood.¹⁴ Yet this is distinct from the logical deduction of transubstantiation wherein Christ's body and blood would be present in each element concomitantly. Although his great disagreement with Hus on the nature of the sacrament is not minute, Jakoubek affirms the necessity of utraquism. And again, the rationale behind Jakoubek's affirmation of utraquism is the command of the Scriptures. In his own words, "it must be believed that according to the Gospel precept, the faithful community of the people should spiritually and sacramentally receive the body of Christ under the form of bread and His blood under the form of wine."¹⁵

¹¹Patapios, "Sub Utraque Specie," 516. Also see Cook, "The Eucharist in Hussite Theology," 25. For more on Hus's understanding of the nature of communion in the Eucharist, see Spinka, *John Hus' Concept of the Church*, 46-47, 74-75, 320-324. Hus's threefold communion (spiritual, sacramental, and spiritual-sacramental) in the Eucharist is in its addition to his conviction of both elements being "better", in that the spiritual communion is in some sense tied to the sacramental communion, and without one you cannot have the other. At the same time there is no affirmation from Hus that one must take of both elements to be saved.

¹²Patapios, "Sub Utraque Specie," 509.

¹³Stephen E. Lahey, "Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology," in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*, eds. Ian Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen Van Ausdall (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 516. For remanentism in the thought of Wycliffe on the Eucharist, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 330 and 336-338.

¹⁴Ian Christopher Levy, "The Eucharist in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 244.

¹⁵Patapios, "Sub Utraque Specie," 521.

From these two figures it is clear that transubstantiation did not necessitate the anti-
utraquist position. Their theologies of the Eucharist are distinct from those who would follow
them in the Reformation in affirming communion of both kinds, and yet their premises find an
identical root in the institution of Christ in the Scripture. For Hus and Jakoubek, simply put-
Christ instituted both elements of bread and wine for the nourishment of His people and to reject
one of the elements is to reject Christ's institution.¹⁶

Reformation Reception of Utraquism

Around a century after the times of Hus and Jakoubek, the Protestant Reformation
began in full force. The concern is focused on the reception or rejection of the utraquistic
doctrine. The uniform answer from the magisterial Reformers was an affirmation of the necessity
to practice communion under both kinds. Though these Reformers differed in their Eucharistic
theologies of presence and communion, there is an overwhelming uniformity in their insistence
to administer both the bread and cup to laity.

Luther was accused of teaching Hussite theology on the Eucharist. His published reply
pushed back against some Hussites who denied the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and also
by rejecting the idea that utraquism was heresy.¹⁷ But later in *The Babylonian Captivity of the
Church*, Luther does not only reject that it is a heresy to support communion under both kinds
but instead argued that it is altogether not in accordance with the command of Christ in the
gospels to only administer communion under one kind.¹⁸ The clear teaching of Luther was that

¹⁶Levy, "The Eucharist in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," 244. Or in the words of Hus, "...
malice now condemns Christ's institution as error." Patapios, "Sub Utraque Specie," 517.

¹⁷Amy Nelson Burnett, "The Social History of Communion and the Reformation of the Eucharist," *Past
& Present* 211/1 (2011), 90n30.

¹⁸Mickey L. Mattox, "Sacraments in the Luther Reformation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental*

the Lord's Supper is necessarily administered under both kinds to both clergy and laity.¹⁹ The same support of utraquism is found in Calvin and Zwingli as well. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote condemningly against the practice of communion under one kind.²⁰ The same is true for Zwingli, who affirmed the practice of utraquism.²¹

Trent and Modern Roman Catholicism

The Council of Trent and Vatican II both speak to the topic of communion under both species. While both maintain the same understanding of the Eucharist, there have been some slight developments for the practice of utraquism. The Council of Trent acknowledged the argument of the Reformers that the primitive church practiced communion under both kinds, but the council stated that the Church altered this practice by its authority.²² Trent also affirmed transubstantiation, concomitance, and condemned the *necessity* of utraquism.²³ The council did not altogether reject the practice of utraquism but left it to the discretion of the pope.²⁴ And this is where developments have happened in more recent times. The common practice of many

Theology, eds. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 276.

¹⁹Following two years after *The Babylonian Captivity* Luther wrote *Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament* which can be found in: Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 36, eds. Helmut T. Lehmann and Abdel Ross Wentz, trans. Fredrick C. Ahrens (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1959), 237-267.

²⁰John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1425-1428.

²¹Carrie Euler, "Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger," in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, ed. Lee Palmer Wandel (Leiden: Brill: 2013), 58; W. Peter Stephens, "The Theology of Zwingli," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 89.

²²Peter Walter, "Sacraments in the Council of Trent and Sixteenth-Century Catholic Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering, trans. David L. Augustine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 320.

²³Council of Trent, "Doctrine Concerning the Communion Under Both Species," Canon 1.

²⁴Walter, "Sacraments in the Council of Trent and Sixteenth-Century Catholic Theology," 320. That is, the practice of utraquism to the laity.

Roman Catholic Churches today is to practice utraquism, although some still do not.²⁵ This can be attributed to the developments of Vatican II, which specifically changed the determination of the practice by giving authority over to the bishops to practice utraquism for both the clergy and laity.²⁶ This is not to say that the Roman Catholic Church has changed her teaching on the whole Christ being present in one element. Instead, Rome has maintained the dogmas of Trent while also recognizing,

Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it takes place under both kinds. For in this form the sign of the Eucharistic banquet is more clearly evident and clearer expression is given to the divine will by which the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord, as also the connection between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Kingdom of the Father.²⁷

Therefore, Rome has stated that the practice of utraquism gives a more “full sign” and yet retains the understanding that under only one species the whole Christ is present and the partakers does not receive more grace under two than under one.²⁸

The Roman Catholic Argument

To understand the rationale for administering communion under one kind, there has to be the theological framework of transubstantiation and its logical conclusion- concomitance. In the words of the Council of Trent the act of transubstantiation is as follows: “a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and

²⁵Paul Gunter, *Doctrinal Formation and Communion Under Both Kinds*, accessed April 28, 2020, Vatican.va.

²⁶Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, accessed April 28, 2020, Vatican.va, 55.

²⁷“General Instruction of the Roman Missal,” *The Roman Missal*, accessed April 28, 2020, Vatican.va, 281.

²⁸Ibid., 281. Also for more on most contemporary Catholic understanding of the practice of the administration of the Eucharist, see *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, Vatican.va.

of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood.”²⁹ Though the accidents of the elements remain the same, the nature of the elements are no longer bread and wine but body and blood.³⁰ But Rome is also clear that under the species, not only does the bread contain only body, but necessarily contains the whole Christ.³¹ This is the doctrine of concomitance, in which what naturally goes with the body is blood, and therefore what is contained under one specie is contained in both.³²

Following the doctrines of transubstantiation and concomitance, it logically follows that if Christ is truly present wholly under one element, then there is no more grace to be had by taking of both elements.³³ But as previously noted, Rome has also stated that by partaking both species the sign is “fuller.”³⁴ Again, not more fully in grace, but fuller in the sense of signification of the new covenant in Christ’s blood and the eschatological banquet to come.³⁵ Therefore, the current position of Rome is that communion under both kinds is more “full,” but not necessary. As for the rejection of both kinds in practice, the reasons range from the dangers of spilling the sacraments to exegetical decisions of to whom Christ gave the chalice at the

²⁹Council of Trent, Session 13, “Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist,” chap. 4.

³⁰Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1925), IIIa, q. 75, arts 2 and 5.

³¹*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, accessed April 28, 2020, Vatican.va, 1374; Council of Trent, “Doctrine Concerning the Communion Under Both Species,” chap. 3.; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q.76

³²Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q.76, arts. 1-3.

³³Council of Trent, “Doctrine Concerning the Communion Under Both Species,” chap. 3.

³⁴“General Instruction of the Roman Missal,” 281.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 281.

institution.³⁶ The heart of Rome's argument for the both kinds being unnecessary for the laity is rooted in their understanding of transubstantiation and the doctrine of concomitance.³⁷

Reformed Critique and Argument

Criticism of Rome's dogmas concerning the Supper has been argued thoroughly and in several ways. The Reformed arguments surround two things: (1) the testimony of Holy Scripture and (2) the nature of Reformed sacramentology. The first critique is common to all Protestants and the second is specifically a Reformed contribution.

Testimony of Holy Scripture

The main argument among Protestants concerning the necessity of both kinds in the Eucharist is found in the institution of Christ at the Supper. Transubstantiation is to the argument of Rome as the commands of Christ to "eat" and "drink" are to the Protestant. Along with Hus, Jakoubek, Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, this institution of Christ was a permanent institution until he comes again. While Rome argues that the Church has the authority to modify the practice of the Supper without destroying its substance, the Reformed argue that the Supper should be practiced of both kinds because of the command in the Gospels.³⁸ Of course, the Reformed deny transubstantiation but, hypothetically, even under the understanding of this dogma there is a necessity for both kinds to be administered.³⁹ It is not as if the Reformed acknowledge something

³⁶These are supplemental arguments to the debate of administering communion under both kinds to which we are limited from here.

³⁷It should be mentioned that Rome ought to be commended for their recent stance on administering both kinds. The problem lies with the fact that Rome has dogmatically set itself against the necessity of both kinds.

³⁸Council of Trent, "Doctrine Concerning the Communion Under Both Species," chap. 2.

³⁹This is not a logical jump. An example would be Jan Hus who fully affirmed transubstantiation but was baffled yet by the denial of both kinds.

that is contrary to what Rome has admitted in the Council of Trent, wherein they confess Christ instituted both elements but the practice has been modified by the Church.⁴⁰ Christ instituted both bread and wine to be eaten and drank by all who are fitting to partake of the supper. Therefore, the church ought to practice communion under both kinds.⁴¹

Reformed Sacramentology

Protestants have widely argued that communion must necessarily take place under both kinds, but the Reformed position specifically contributes helpful categories to understanding the communion that takes place under both kinds. While on one hand Rome may seem logically consistent in its doctrine of concomitance following from transubstantiation and the unity of Christ's person, Reformed sacramentology gives more helpful nuance to this discussion. Specifically, the Reformed understanding of distinction and relation between sign and thing signified successfully maintains the dignity of both.

The Roman dogmas of transubstantiation and concomitance do not maintain the dignity of both signs but instead destroy it. Firstly, Rome harms the dignity of signs by removing the nature of the elements. Peter Martyr Vermigli writes, "Bread signifies the body of Christ because it feeds, strengthens, and sustains, and this we cannot attribute to accidents. It is also signification of many grains gathered into one, representing the mystical body, and that cannot

⁴⁰Council of Trent, "Doctrine Concerning the Communion Under Both Species," chap. 3.

⁴¹This argument is simple, but the main argument in early Protestant thought. See Luther, Calvin and Zwingli as noted above. Specifically in Reformed thought see: Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, in Peter Martyr Library vol. 7, ed. and trans. Joseph C. McLelland (Kirksville, Missouri: Trueman State University Press), 44; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997), 3:447-454; R.L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 816-817; Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. and trans. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 5:214-220.

be attributed to accidents.”⁴² Martyr is saying that by transubstantiation, the element is no longer bread and therefore cannot be a sign that signifies nourishment and unity. Secondly, Rome’s understanding of concomitance makes “Christ less bountiful, since he gave no more in the two parts than is contained in the one alone.”⁴³ If Christ is wholly in one, then two parts are essentially unneeded. In both of these ways, Rome’s sacramentology damages the signs themselves that are intended to signify Christ’s true body and blood.

On the contrary, the Reformed position upholds true dignity for the sign and the thing signified. The dignity of both is upheld by positing a sacramental relationship between the elements of bread and wine to Christ himself. This union is not corporeal or local but instead relative and moral.⁴⁴ Corporeal, local unions damage the signs (and posit problems for the thing signified), while this union relates both so that by the true nature of the sign, the thing signified is brought before participant in a true sensory and intellectual manner, and is therefore truly present.⁴⁵ Therefore, the elements remain signs and are not changed in their nature but only have a new relation to Christ’s body and blood.⁴⁶ Also then, the Reformed understanding correctly formulates concomitance. By distinguishing the signs from the thing signified, the concomitance of Christ’s body and blood are rightly attributed to Christ’s human nature, which is in heaven. Rome’s mistake in concomitance is confusing the distinction of sign and thing signified.⁴⁷

⁴²Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist*, 36.

⁴³Ibid., 43-44.

⁴⁴Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3:349.

⁴⁵Ibid., 3:349.

⁴⁶Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist*, 122-125.

⁴⁷Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3:459

Concomitance is rightly attributed to Christ's heavenly body (the thing signified) but not attributed to the bread and wine (the signs). Otherwise, the signs are destroyed.

These distinctions made by the Reformed promote communion under both kinds by the understanding of eating and drinking. Reformed speak of a *duplex manducatio* in the Supper, both a sacramental and a spiritual eating.⁴⁸ In sacramental eating, both signs are necessary to promote the signification of body and blood. What one eats of in the bread is unique sacramentally, while also what one drinks of the cup is unique sacramentally. Both promote specific significations in different ways.⁴⁹ How much is it different to eat than to drink? Or what signification of body does wine have or of blood does bread have? But in the spiritual eating, the substance is the same, for we do not eat spiritually of two different Christs but of one Christ.⁵⁰ Therefore if one is to speak of concomitance in the Supper one can speak of it rightly in speaking of the thing signified, which is eaten spiritually by the faithful, and not of the signs.⁵¹

Following the sacramentology of the Reformed, both kinds are necessary in the supper for their signification. The species both uphold specific signs that are intentional in their signification of body and blood. At the same time, under both species one eats of the same Christ spiritually. Without the distinction between the sign and thing signified, the two signs are collapsed into one and neither retains its proper dignity.

⁴⁸Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist*, 119-121; Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3:510-519.

⁴⁹Vos helpfully asks the question, "Why the double sign of bread and cup next to each other?... The principle reason, however, resides in this: The separating of flesh and blood, of bread and wine, places before our eyes, in the most vivid way, how we have to do here with a suffering, crucified Savior." Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 5:216.

⁵⁰Another way to articulate these eatings are to say that in the sacramental eating there are two types (eating and drinking) and in spiritual eating there is one type (by faith).

⁵¹Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3:455; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 687.

Conclusion

Thus far it has been argued that communion should necessarily be administered under both kinds. In arguing this, first the historical dimensions of the debate were surveyed by showing the theologies of two particular figures in the Hussite Controversy, and then showing their general reception or denial through the history of the church to the modern day. Following the historical survey, the Roman Catholic argument for the necessity of the Supper under only one kind was presented. And finally, the main arguments of Rome were refuted according to a Reformed understanding of sacramentology. In conclusion, with the Reformers, it is necessary to administer both bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As our Lord commanded, "Take; *eat*; this is my body," and "*Drink* of it, all of you, for this is my blood (Mt 26:26-28)."

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