

Did St Justin write the Church can change bread and wine into Jesus?

In the first apology of St Justin Martyr, we have an early account of the Eucharist ceremony. After the prayers are said communion is ready to be given out. The deacons take away what he calls bread and wine for the people who are absent.

So far, we are told that the Eucharist is bread and wine.

Then we are told, 'We call this food the Eucharist. . . . Not as ordinary bread or as ordinary drink do we partake of them, but just as, through the word of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ became incarnate and took upon Himself flesh and blood for our salvation, so we have been taught, the food which has been made the Eucharist by the prayer of His word, and which nourishes our flesh and blood by assimilation, is both the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.' Thomas B. Falls, *The Fathers of the Church, Saint Justin Martyr, First Apology 65-66* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University, 1948), pp. 105-06.

Read - "so we have been taught, the food which has been made the Eucharist by the prayer of His word, and which nourishes our flesh and blood by assimilation"

For Protestants, the bread and wine remain bread and wine but are sacramentally (power wise) the body and blood of Jesus. Another way this is put is that faith is considered the gift of God and the bread and wine are the body and blood of Jesus to our faith. We do not feed on the body and blood of Jesus as in real presence but as in by faith in the word. Justin's manner of speaking was used by the reformers. That is one way to show that his words do not prove that he agreed with Roman Catholic doctrine that the bread and wine become Jesus.

There is another. Justin says that just as Jesus was made flesh by God's power and had flesh and blood so the food and drink are the flesh and blood of Jesus. Now unless Jesus incarnates himself in the bread and wine but doesn't physically change them into his human body and blood there can be no parallel here. Then Jesus becoming flesh in his mother cannot prove he can turn bread and wine into his flesh for that is not the same thing. Incarnation is becoming flesh or something while transubstantiation is turning what makes for example bread bread into what makes the human body of Jesus the human body of Jesus. The bread then would be Jesus' body in the same sense that a fingernail is part of you, and composes your body.

If Justin said that as Jesus became man so he became food and drink he would seem to have been speaking literally. But mark this. Jesus becoming man is his spirit taking over a body and soul. What if Jesus had taken over something else instead of flesh? What if he used bread for a body? Then the bread would be his body. It would not mean that the bread was physically changed or physically different from ordinary bread. It would not mean that there is a body of flesh and blood and bone present. If Jesus had a body he could use the bread as another body in the sense described and the wine as blood but not the blood in his veins. Did Justin mean that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ but without physical transformation? If he did then he rejected transubstantiation. Perhaps what he believed in was incarnation in the bread and wine. Justin Martyr cannot be used as proof that the doctrine of transubstantiation was known in the early Church.

The Catholic Eucharist would be Jesus' divinity, spirit and soul and body taking over where there once was bread and wine in Catholic theology. There is a massive difference with what Justin seems to have believed. This was just as that as the spirit of Jesus took over the flesh making it his body so it takes over the bread and wine making them his new body and blood. He is not saying that the bread and wine become the human body and blood of Christ but that he is able to possess the bread and wine in the same way he possessed his flesh and body so that they are both bread and wine and still the body and blood of Christ. It is like if the demon in the movie *The Exorcist* did not become Regan O'Neill but took over a mannequin instead. In Justin we do not have transubstantiation but may have a bizarre kind of incarnation of Christ in non-living things. If he taught incarnation, this is proof that the early Church did not subscribe to transubstantiation and if the Bible says the bread and wine are Jesus' body and blood the incarnation dogma is what it is most likely to mean. The likes of Justin would have known a bit better than anybody else especially when the communion was a central rite.

Some say that when Justin said that the food is the flesh and blood of Jesus instead of saying it is Jesus which would be more accurate it suggests they are spiritually the same as the flesh and blood of Jesus or are symbols of them that give grace and so are as good as the real thing. The language suggests symbolism. Rome uses that language but that is only because it thinks the Bible does and sees that tradition does and since it cannot improve them it uses their style. Symbolism was the original doctrine.

Later Justin wrote, "It is quite evident that this prophecy also alludes to the bread which our Christ gave us to offer in remembrance of the Body which He assumed for the sake of those who believe in Him, for whom He also suffered, and also to the cup which He taught us to offer in the Eucharist, in commemoration of His blood" (Dialogue with Trypho 70).

Early tradition supports the notion that the bread and wine are sacramentally the body and blood of Christ. What this means is that because a sacrament is a sign of God's grace and gift then for all intents and purposes the bread and wine are Jesus Christ but not literally. The Eucharistic body and blood of Jesus feeds your soul with power and light from God and gives you the presence of God and Jesus to help you live a better life and become more like Jesus. Its being spiritual food is what it is all about. A physical change would deny that. It would be unnecessary. The Catholic doctrine that the Eucharist is a sacrament contradicts the doctrine that it physically transmutes into Jesus Christ.

It could be argued that even if Justin did believe in a transformation that he was unreliable for he never said it was the glorified body and blood of Jesus that rose from the dead but seems to think of it as the crucified body and blood. He made lots of mistakes that were unacceptable to later theology. Anyway when you read Justin you will see that he has Jesus leaving out the statement that the bread and wine are his body and blood given up for sins so there is no evidence that he thought the bread and wine were the crucifixion body and blood though he probably did. Moreover Justin said the bread and wine are consecrated by the word of prayer and never said that the words about them being the body and blood of Jesus which Jesus recited at the last supper effect the change into sacred food and drink.

The principle of taking the simplest interpretation would urge us that if the Bible teaches that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Jesus it means the incarnation in bread and wine theory. Transubstantiation is a step further for it says the bread and wine cease to exist and are replaced by the body and blood of Christ.

If Jesus incarnated his soul in the bread and wine they would be his body and blood in a sense. It would not mean that his real body in Heaven is in anyway involved. If I could get my soul out of my body and into a piece of toast then the toast would be my body without any visible change.

The incarnation idea of the Eucharist fits the language of John 6 better than the idea of transubstantiation. In that chapter Jesus says the bread he will give is his flesh. He says that unless you eat his flesh and drink his blood you will not have life and he who does this has life because of him. Life is the main thought. It is idea of having Jesus living inside you through eating his flesh and drinking his blood that is important.

In incarnationism, you touch Jesus when you touch communion. In transubstantiation, you do not. You touch the appearances of bread and wine not the inner substance which is Jesus. In incarnationism, you eat the body of Christ literally. This fits the alleged literalism of John 6. With transubstantiation you do not chew or eat Jesus literally but only the appearance of bread.