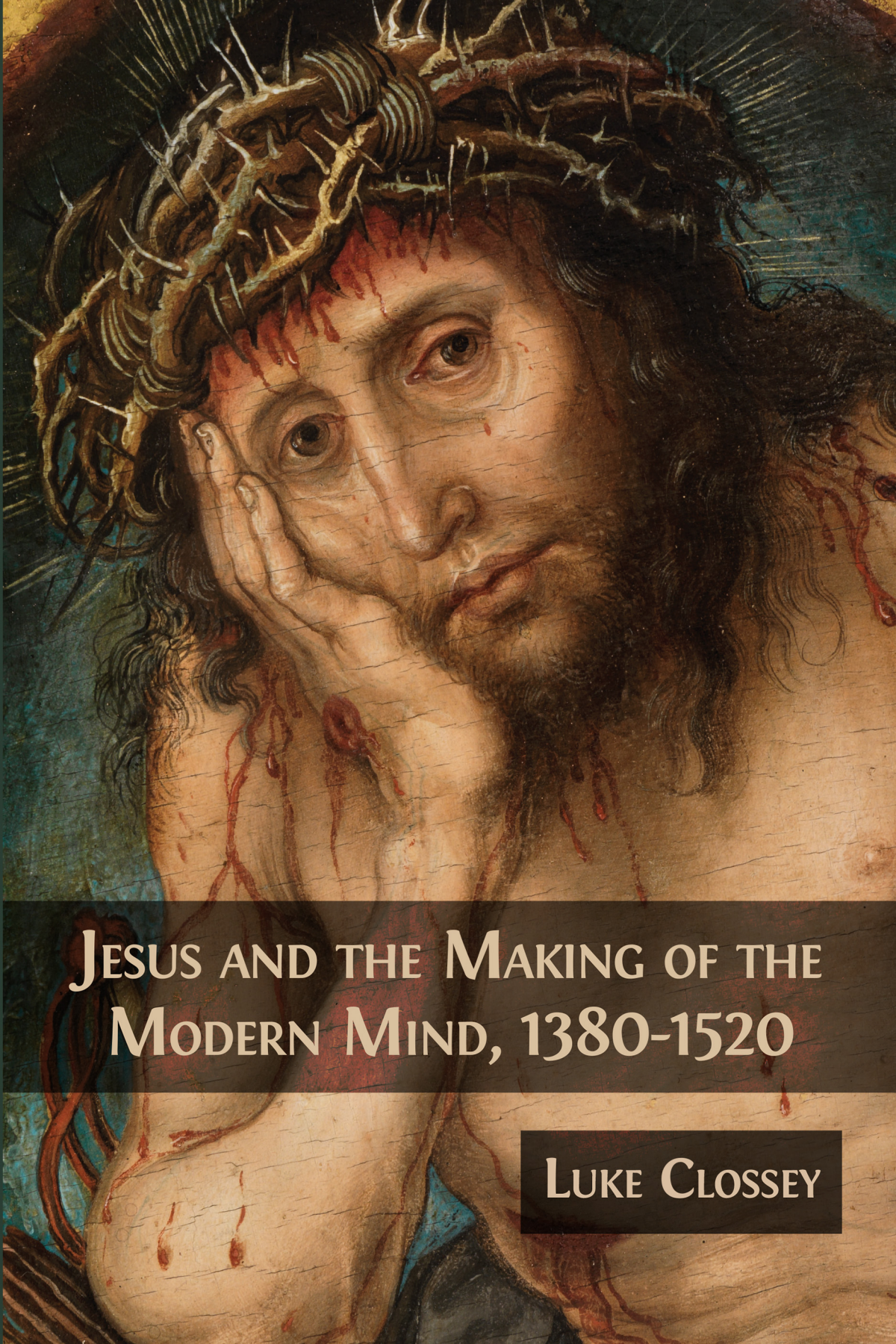

Jesus and the Making of the Modern Mind, 1380-1520

Luke Clossey

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9. The Eucharist in Its Liturgical Context

The blood and body of Jesus—wine transformed by the Eucharist ritual—filled a chalice held high above the altar by the Archbishop Egbert of Trier (ca. 950–93). From the heights of that cathedral, a solitary sparrow dove down deep, releasing its payload on the ecclesiastical dignity with a splat. Where the plain ken would see a careless bird defecating randomly, the deep ken could recognize the malicious bird's intent in releasing feces rich with implication.

Whether accident or treachery, the incident was not unprecedented. The popular medieval collection of Sanskrit stories called the *Śukasaptati* [Seventy Tales of the Parrot], available by 1400 in Malay and Persian translation, includes an account of a Brahmin boy whose prayers at the side of the Ganges were similarly bird-bombed.[1] Archbishop Egbert had no need of Core literature to understand what had happened. Inclined to the deep ken, the outraged Archbishop banned all sparrows from the cathedral, on pain of death, a ban held good into the nineteenth century.[2]

Egbert was not a plain-ken enthusiast, nor a fool. The sparrow had interrupted his execution of the Eucharist, the central rite in the Christian subcult. The fundamental design was rather straightforward—far less finicky than the Sanskrit rituals performed by the Brahmins in the Core—but the output was real, and awesome, the actual blood and body of Jesus. That awesomeness charged its environment with meaning. The time and place of the Eucharist *need* not be exact, but, given the resulting presence of God, it *should* be optimized. This chapter examines the plain-ken procedure of the Eucharist within its complex deep-ken context. After introducing the mass, the liturgical event that climaxes in the Eucharist, the chapter looks at the mechanics, controversies, and miracles surrounding the creation of Jesus's body and blood.

1 A. N. D. Haksar, trans., *Shuka Saptati* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2000), 2–4.
2 E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London: Heinemann, 1906), 28.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0371.09

The Mass in the Far West

The mass is a complex technical procedure, requiring precise timing and intentioned design; it coordinates space and time, thoughts, words, and deeds. The actual requirements for the mass were simple, but a variety of deep-ken factors could be taken into account to optimize its performance. The "rite" is a subsubcult's calendar arrangements, its liturgy (both texts and actions), and its chants. A church's rite established its rules for the mass.

In the Latin Far West, most of the masses followed the rules of the Roman Rite, with many local flavours with minor variations, as at Esztergom, Troyes, Salisbury ("Sarum"), Lyons, York, Hereford, and Cologne. Modern historians have traced how the medieval Franks had imported the Rite, improved or ruined it, depending on one's perspective, and then exported it back to Rome. In 1400, the Roman Rite was understood to have been mostly set by the sixth-century Pope Gregory I (ca. 540–604), called Great, and by the Holy Spirit, although historians today are cautious about affirming either's actual contribution.

Beyond the Roman Rite and its variations, other rites could still be found in certain places throughout the Latin Far West—like the Ambrosian Rite in Milan and the Mozarabic Rite in Toledo—and in certain religious orders, such as the Carthusians, or the Birgittines' *cantus sororum*. The variations between the various Rites were minor, even trivial to outside eyes. The Ambrosian Rite, for example, lacked the Agnus Dei and postponed Ash Wednesday, but increased the number of weeks in Advent from four to six. The Mozarabic Rite was longer, and allowed the celebrant to choose between alternative prayer formulas.

A growing geography enjoyed uniformity under the Roman Rite—at least Rome enjoyed that uniformity—and those permitted their own Rites jealously guarded those privileges. When Cardinal Franciso Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517) published, with papal support, a missal and breviary for the Mozarabic Rite, he quietly made a number of changes to make it more Roman.[3] In Milan, for Christmas 1440, Cardinal Branda da Castiglione (1350–1443) pointedly celebrated the mass according to the Roman Rite, rather than the local Ambrosian; in response, indignant crowds pointedly attacked his palace.[4]

3 This had long been a struggle. In 1085, Toledo used a duel to decide between the Mozarabic and Roman Rites. The Castilian Queen, Constance of Burgundy (1046–93), disapproved of settling the question in so arbitrary a manner, and afterwards revisited the issue more sensibly by having one book of each liturgy set aflame. J. G. Millingen, *The History of Duelling*, 2 vols. (London: Bentley, 1841), I, 48–49.

4 Julia Cartwright, *Baldassare Castiglione: The Perfect Courtier, His Life and Letters, 1478–1529*, 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1908), I, 3–4.

Jesus-Based Calendars

Our calendars reflect our conception of time, regular and homogenous, divided into interchangeable units. Compared to our calendar today, neatly arranged by days and months into dates, in 1400 the seasons would have loomed larger, as would the religious festivals. The festivals were a projection of the life of Christ onto broader time. The Dominican Henry Suso (1295–1366) explained that his wildly popular *Horologium sapientiae* [Clock of Wisdom] took its design from a vision given him by Jesus, who showed him a clock "of very beautiful and very noble style, of which the wheels were excellent and the bells sounded sweetly," a clock that was in some sense Jesus as well as the human's soul, all in agreement with the time of God.[5]

Structure

	UNDERLYING SOLAR CALENDAR	UNDERLYING LUNAR CALENDAR
CHRISTMAS cycle	**Advent** [4 Sundays before Christmas] **CHRISTMAS** [25 December] **Circumcision** [1 January] **Epiphany** [6 January]	
bridge	Sundays after Epiphany (variable) Sundays before Easter (four)	
EASTER cycle		**Lent** (40 non-Sunday days before Easter) **Palm Sunday** (Sunday before Easter) **Three Days** (3 days before Easter) **EASTER** **Ascension Thursday** (39 days after Easter) **Pentecost Sunday** (49 days after Easter)
bridge	Sundays after Pentecost (variable, up to 28), including in West: Trinity Sunday (56 days after Easter) Corpus Christi (Thursday 60 days after Easter)	

Table 9.1 Basic Christian Calendar.

5 Henry Suso, *L'Horloge de sapience*, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS IV 111, fol. 14ra.

The specifics of each Rite, which words to say, and how, depended primarily on the calendar. The Christian calendar is a hybrid. For part of the year, it operates under a solar calendar, inherited from the pagan Romans, centred around Christmas. Our own calendar today is also solar, and so, for us, Christmas arrives each year on 25 December. In February or early March, the Christian calendar switches gears into a lunisolar calendar, of Hebrew origin, arranged around Easter. The method of locating Easter in the solar calendar was a source of great controversy over the centuries. Because a lunar cycle (about 29.5 days) does not evenly divide a solar cycle (about 365.25 days), even a consistent method places Easter on different days of the solar calendar in different years. In contrast, if we normally used the lunisolar calendar, Easter could be fixed, and Christmas would migrate erratically. The calendar leaves the solar cycle soon after Christmas, and returns to it after Pentecost. If Christmas and Easter occur relatively close to each other, the first transition period is short, and the latter long; if Christmas and Easter occur relatively far from each other, the former transition is long, and the latter short. The transition periods expand and contract as necessary to accommodate the calendar's hybridity.

The Christmas cycle begins with four Sundays of Advent in preparation for Jesus's coming, then Christmas itself on 25 December for his birth, Circumcision on the octave (eight days later, 1 January) of Christmas, and finally Epiphany (6 January). In some Christian subsubcults, Epiphany is the most important of these, and we would better speak of an Epiphany cycle than a Christmas cycle. Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of Jesus's divinity, the moment when his Incarnation as human actually becomes known to humans—a more momentous occasion than the mere birth of his humanity. Among the Christians, towards the East they link Epiphany with his baptism, and towards the West with the Adoration of the Magi. Epiphany also connects with Jesus's first public miracle, when he transforms water into wine at a marriage at Cana. The Bible gives no date for that marriage, but the architects of the calendar noticed the resonance between the deep meanings of Epiphany and of the first public miracle, and with the deep ken concluded that the latter occurred on the anniversary of the former, like notes an octave apart.

The Easter cycle begins with Lent, a forty-day period, excluding Sundays, of a restricted diet devoid of mammal flesh, in imitation of a fast held by Jesus. Eating fish was allowed, and a popular alternative. Henry Bolingbroke's (1367–1413, the future Henry IV of England) austere pescatarian fast was limited to nothing more than bream, cod, conger eels, crabs, flat fish, flounder, freshwater eels, herring, lampreys, lobsters, pike, plaice, porpoise(!), ray, roach, salt fish,

sturgeon, tench, thornbacks, trout, whale, and whelks.[6] In the fourteenth century, increased demand in Central Europe, with the eastward expansion of Christianity, was such to refocus the Icelandic economy onto the commodified export of dried fish, with Hanseatic merchants as intermediaries.[7] The power of the export market for fish transformed the lives of farmers and of marine mammals, as so many fish were being murdered and exported and so many farmers became fishermen. Over the next two centuries, grain became steadily less cropped, and bread would soon have to be imported.[8] Some involuntary pescatarians suffered. One British child complained that you would "not believe how weary I am of fish" because "it has engendered so much phlegm within me that it stops my pipes [such] that I can neither speak nor breath."[9] Exceptions existed. Grand Duchess Anna of Lithuania (ca. 1350–1418) asked for papal permission to eat meat because of her allergies to fish.[10] To create a Lenten flesh alternative to the fish being exported, the pope in 1481 decided that dead seals were sufficiently fish-like to be consumed in Iceland even during fasts.[11]

Lent's last week includes Palm Sunday, remembering Jesus's entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, and the "Three Days" remembering the events of his Passion on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The next day is Easter, the celebration of Jesus's Resurrection. Pentecost, linking the Holy Spirit to Jesus's disciples, comes 49 days later. Roughly two dozen, depending on how the calendar cycles align, Sundays after Pentecost follow, amid which are two relatively recent innovations in the Roman Catholic calendar: Trinity Sunday, made obligatory in 1334, comes 56 days after Easter, and Corpus Christi, made universal in the thirteenth century, 60 days after Easter.

These special days all overshadowed 1 January as the first day of the calendar. Even the Far West could not agree on a consistent New Year's Day. Depending on location, the new year could begin on Christmas, the Feast of the

6 This applied to Henry's Fridays; his Lents were probably similar. Ian Mortimer, *The Fears of Henry IV: The Life of England's Self-made King* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 92.

7 Gunnar Karlsson, *The History of Iceland* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 110.

8 Kirsten Hastrup, *Nature and Policy in Iceland, 1400–1800: An Anthropological Analysis of History and Mentality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 56–58.

9 *A Fifteenth Century School Book, from a Manuscript in the British Museum* (*Ms. Arundel 249*), ed. William Nelson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956), 8.

10 Stephen Christopher Rowell, "Was Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism as Lukewarm as Sixteenth-Century Reformers and Later Commentators Would Have Us Believe?," *Central Europe* 8 (2010): 86–106 (91–92), https://doi.org/10.1179/174582110X12871342860045

11 *Jón Þorkellson, ed., Diplomatarium Islandicum*, 16 vols. (Reykjavík: Í Félagsprentsmiðju, 1909–13), IX, 39–40.

Circumcision (1 January), Good Friday, Holy Saturday, or Easter Sunday. Only in 1752 did England move the new year to 1 January.[12]

Significance

Jesus-related feast days had implications beyond the requirements of the rite. Henry IV was born on 15 April 1367, Maundy Thursday, and celebrated his birthday every year on Maundy Thursday, even though it rarely fell on 15 April.[13] In 1382, Henry celebrated his birthday on 3 April, a Maundy Thursday, and broke with the tradition of giving alms to 13 poor men, instead giving to 15, to consonate with his age. This became a custom, one that would become politically charged in the fifteenth century by the Lancastrians.[14] English kings were not the only people to observe Maundy Thursday. By 1521, Danish law specified that witches could be identified by how they behaved on that day.[15]

Jesus holidays could create danger or safety. On 17 December 1399, a cabal against Henry IV set the following Epiphany as the date for seizing the new king: the deep ken linked the plot to the Epiphany's meaning of revelation, while the plain ken took advantage of a distracted king celebrating the feast.[16] In contrast, some Italians had discovered, or deduced, that eating an egg on Ascension Day protected them from fire.[17]

This calendar finds deep-ken meaning in the plain-ken progress of human time. In the Late Traditional period, the Far Western educational system centred on the quadrivium, four subjects used to measure things: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The calendar lies at their intersection. The regular reconciliation of the two cycles, which from the perspective of the Christmas/Epiphany cycle essentially entails the calculation of the date of Easter, was important and divisive. Even the weekly cycles within the larger annual cycle had Jesus-related meaning: Some theologians argued that Sundays were important because Jesus was born on a Sunday.[18]

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12 Duncan Steel, *Marking Time: The Epic Quest to Invent the Perfect Calendar* (New York: Wiley, 2000), 140.

13 Ian Mortimer, "Henry IV's Date of Birth and the Royal Maundy," *Historical Research* 80 (2007): 567–76, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2006.00403.x

14 Kew, National Archives, DL 28:1:1, fol. 4r.

15 Stephen A. Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 205.

16 Chris Given-Wilson, ed., *Chronicles of the Revolution, 1397–1400: The Reign of Richard II* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), 224–39.

17 This was reported by Bernardino of Siena, who was appalled. Bernardino of Siena, *Le Prediche Volgari*, ed. Ciro Cannarozzi, 2 vols. (Pistoia: Pacinotti, 1934), II, 182.

18 Alonso de Espina and Bernardino of Siena, for example. I expect the logic was circular: we know Jesus was born on a Sunday because Sundays, like Jesus,

The year number also had significance for Christians. Preachers could easily translate the date into a duration. Christmas was not just a year, but an anniversary: the Lollard William Taylor (d. 1423) mentioned in a sermon that that year was the 1405th anniversary of the Nativity.[19] One saint's life writes a date out to explicitly link it with the Nativity: "as one counts from God's birth one thousand four hundred and twenty years."[20] In his journal, the artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) qualified a reference to the year 1486 with the statement, "as one counts from the birth of Christ."[21] Of course, particularism reigned here too: Christians at Alexandria dated the years from the beginning of the reign of Diocletian (AD 284), and their co-subcultists in Armenia dated the years from AD 552, the year of their schism. Muslims, in contrast, dated the years from the Hijrah, in AD 622.

Controversies

For centuries, Christian scholars sought to reform their calendar, not least because of their perception that its problems made Christianity look bad in the eyes of Jews and Muslims. The gospels never gave precise dating information, but offered clues—an imperial census at the Nativity, the Passover festival before his arrest, and a three-hour "darkness coming over the land" before his death. John appeared to disagree with the other gospels about the timing of Jesus's Passion. Discrepancies in historical sources outside the Bible only compounded the confusion. Taking up the plain ken, scholars studied imperial history, Jewish culture, and—interpreting the darkness as an eclipse—astronomy to turn these clues into dates.

The English Franciscan Roger Bacon (1220–92) had advocated 25 December AD 1 and 3 April, AD 33 for the dates of Jesus's birth and death. His findings remained influential in our period, appearing in the calendar studies of

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were important. Circular logic works in the deep-ken perspective. See Steven J. McMichael, "Alfonso de Espina on the Mosaic Law," in *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Steven J. McMichael and Susan E. Myers (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 199–224 (221).

19 Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 13–14.

20 Karl Bihlmeyer, "Die schwäbische Mysterikerin Elsbeth Achler von Reute (†1420) und die Überlieferung ihrer Vita," in *Festgabe Philipp Strauch. Zum 80. Geburtstage am 23. September 1932*, ed. Georg Baesecke and Ferdinand Joseph Schneider, Hermaea 32 (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1932), 88–109 (105).

21 Albrecht Dürer, *Schriftlicher Nachlass*, ed. Ernst Heidrich (Berlin: Bard, 1910), 12–13.

Pierre d'Ailly (1351–1420) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64).[22] A 25 December Christmas had been favoured for centuries, although, even in the sixteenth century, serious scholars argued for an autumn Nativity. No consensus formed around the birth year (1 BC, AD 1, AD 2?), or the death day (3 April, 25 March?) or year (AD 33, AD 36?). Scholarly debate raged through and beyond our time period; Copernicus (1473–1543) remarked that it had inspired him to go into astronomy.[23]

Deep-ken logic played a role. A death date of 25 March benefited from the coincidence of the feast of the Annunciation also taking place on that day: Jesus's conception and death sharing a date would give symmetry to the beginning and end of his human life.[24] The time spent in the tomb, the interval between Jesus's death and the Resurrection, should match the three full days and nights that the prophet Jonah passed in the belly of the whale, a consonance pointed out by Jesus himself (Mt 12:40). Paul of Middelburg (1446–1543) reported Jews criticizing Christian scholars' death dates that fail to give Jesus the full 72 hours in the tomb.[25]

With the plain ken, the scholars paid attention to the circumstances of the first century. Paul of Middelburg drew on Jewish texts he understood to have come from that period.[26] From Basel, Hermann Zoestius (ca. 1380–1445) urged scholars to take into account the *deḥiyyot* rules for postponing the sabbath.[27] Peter de Rivo (ca. 1420–90) made a plain-ken argument to deny that those rules were current during the time of Jesus: they were actually a later invention by Jews, made merely to *detrahant* [disparage] Jesus by making it look as if he had broken Jewish law by eating on the Passover.[28] To answer objections based on a lack of ancient calendrical scholarship, Alfonso de Madrigal (ca. 1410–55), known as El

22 Ferdinand Kaltenbrunner, *Die Vorgeschichte der gregorianischen Kalenderreform* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1876), 40–64.

23 Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (Nuremberg: Petreium, 1543), fol. 4v (preface).

24 Damianus Lazzarato, *Chronologia Christi seu discordantum fontium concordantia* (Naples: M. D'auria pontificius, 1952), 468.

25 Paul of Middelburg, *Pavlina de recta Paschae celebratione* (Fossombrone: Petrus, 1513), A, 2v. See *Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples and the Three Maries Debates*, ed. Sheila M. Porter (Geneva: Droz, 2009), with an overview of the debate at 51–61.

26 Paul of Middelburg, *Pavlina de recta Paschae celebratione*, D 6v–E 6r.

27 Addendum to *De fermento et azymo*, BSB Clm 3564, fol. 144v. See C. Philipp E. Nothaft, "A Tool for Many Purposes: Hermann Zoest and the Medieval Christian Appropriation of the Jewish Calendar," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 65 (2014): 148–68, http://dx.doi.org/10.18647/3167/JJS-2014

28 Peter de Rivo, *Responsivum ad Epistolam apologeticam M Pauli de middelburgo* (Louvain: Ludovicus Ravescot, 1488), C, 4r–6r. See *Peter de Rivo on Chronology and the Calendar*, ed. Matthew S. Champion, Serena Masolini, and C. Philipp E. Nothaft (Leuven: Leuven UP, 2020), liii–lxii, https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461663474

Tostado, put himself in the psychology of an early Christian, and concluded they were too busy being persecuted to worry about calculating exact dates.[29]

Benefits for the Living

The official purpose of the mass was union with Jesus, the reception of grace, and participation in his sacrifice. Around 1400, most Christian experts believed that the mass was not itself a sacrifice, since Jesus died only once, according to the plain ken. In practice, though, it acted like a sacrifice made again to God.[30]

Theorists had figured out the more subtle nuances of the mass. Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200–80) had analyzed the mass into three components, and others followed his lead. Dividing the mass into parts laid the foundation for more allegorical interpretations, despite Albertus's warning against them.[31] Ludolph of Saxony (ca. 1295–1378) found consonance between the Descent from the Cross and the Eucharist, itself something like a "Descent from the altar"—but the Eucharist was superior, Ludolph insisted, as it involved taking Jesus not just in one's arms, but in one's mouth and heart.[32] By 1400, so many deep-ken explanations were in circulation that they ran into each other and became mixed up. Nicholas and Theodore of Andida's eleventh-century *Protheoria* had connected the mass liturgy sequence with the life of Jesus, and remained popular in our period.[33] The friar Michael of Hungary (d. 1482) identified thirty-three discrete steps in the mass, which the deep ken associated with Jesus's thirty-three years on earth.[34] Others connected the mass to a sequence that concluded with the Passion but began before Jesus's birth, in the Old Testament.[35] These traditions converged into the main guide for understanding the mass, the *Rationale divinorum officiorum* [Logic of the Divine Offices] of Guillaume Durand (ca. 1230–96); extant in countless manuscripts, and numbering over three dozen printings by 1500, his work was also influential in encouraging

29 Alfonso Tostado, *Defensiorum trium conclusionum*, in Tostado, *Opera Omnia*, 27 vols. (Venice: Pezzana, 1728), XXV, 115 (part 2, ch. 20).

30 Gabriel Biel, *Sacri canonis misse* (n.p.: Jean Clein, 1517), lectio 26, fol. 35v–38r.

31 Adolph Franz, *Die Messe im Deutschen Mittelalter* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche, 1963), 440, 460, 467.

32 Ludolphus de Saxonia, *Vita Jesu Christi*, ed. L. M. Rigollot, 4 vols. (Paris: Palmé, 1878), IV, 143 (part 2.2, ch. 65).

33 Hans-Joachim Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo, 1986), 89–90; Robin Cormack, *Icons* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2007), 60–61.

34 Michael of Hungary, *Sermones dominicales perutiles a quodam fratre Hungaro* (Haguenau: Rynman, ca. 1516), Sermon 79.

35 This tradition goes back substantially to Ivo of Chartres (d. 1115). See Ivo of Chartres, Sermon 5, col. 535–62, in Johannes Gerson, *Opera Omnia*, 5 vols. (Antwerp: Sumptibus Societatis, 1706), II, col. 559.

deep-ken understandings in many subsequent theoretical texts. These kinds of examinations had significant value: one university professor, perhaps from Vienna, paid for his room and board at the Mondsee Abbey by giving lectures on the mass.[36]

Unofficially, informal advantages accrued to participants in the mass. Lists of these differed by location, presumably based on past outcomes. Across Europe, from England to Hungary, "unfailing results" were promised.[37] Thomas Brinton (d. 1389), Bishop of Rochester, named a series of bonuses. Some spoke to the deep ken: one did not age during the ceremony—in a sense, temporality stopped—and every footfall on the way to the ceremony was recognized as meaningful by angels, who counted their number. Brinton noted more plain-ken advantages as well: participation protected one against blindness, gossip, starvation, and sudden death.[38] Francis of Paola (1416–1507) was able to carry flaming embers without injury while assisting at mass. Other sources promised that any words uttered rashly would be forgiven. New masses were introduced specifically to defend health and property.[39] The benefits of the mass had been increasing in recent times. One formulation compared hearing the mass favourably to acts of asceticism and generosity: a rich person would benefit more from attending a single mass than by giving away everything the sun shines upon and suffering "in heat and in frost / in hunger and in thirst."[40] Thus, Jean Gerson (1363–1429) felt a need to caution against careless promises of mass results, which might encourage people to attend for the wrong, superstitious (called "Jewish," in his view) reasons.[41] Experts cautioned that thinking of Jesus's Passion was more beneficial than merely hearing the mass or parroting prayers.[42]

Benefits for the Dead

The mass could be closely tied to the well-being of the dead. At her execution, Joan of Arc (ca. 1412–31) requested that the priests present say a mass for her,

36 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3776, fol. 61r.
37 Josef A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, 2 vols. (New York: Benziger, 1951), I, 130.
38 Thomas Brinton, *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373–1389)*, ed. Mary Aquinas Devlin, 2 vols. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1954), II, 215–16.
39 Franz, *Die Messe im Deutschen Mittelalter*, 36–72, 102–217.
40 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 13292.
41 Gerson, *Opera Omnia*, II, col. 521–23.
42 Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor*, col. 519–954, in *Opera Omnia*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1855), CXCII, at col. 858–59 (book 4, distinction 9).

and asked that a cross be held before her face.[43] One of her generals, the Baron Gilles de Rais (ca. 1405–40), was accused of murdering children and threatening a priest celebrating mass; before being executed, by hanging and subsequent burning, Gilles asked the parents "whose children he had murdered that for the love of the Passion of Our Lord, they pray to God for him and forgive him in good heart."[44] Priests at Notre Dame celebrated masses for the knights fallen in the crusade at Nicopolis; one father endowed a mass to ensure his sons' safe homecoming.[45] A Swedish ballad remembers the death of a lord named Marten; because he had not arranged for sufficient masses to be said for his soul, two days later he returned from the dead, explaining he "can't lie down / and I can't rest." His widow released him by having seventy masses said for him.[46] Another noble in 1389 willed that his funerary mass be attended by thirteen poor men, each holding a candle.[47] By 1521, Strasburg had 120 endowed foundations for the mass, with masses being performed continuously through the mornings.[48]

For a single illustrative example, consider the stipulations of the will of Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter (1377–1426). First, he directed that "immediately after my death, on the following day if possible, or the second or third at the farthest, one thousand masses be said for my soul," a number powerful to the deep ken. Further, he arranged for "as many poor men as I may have lived years at my funeral, each carrying a torch, and habited in a gown and hood of white cloth, and receiving as many pence as I may have lived years; and that there be the same number of poor women, of good character, clothed in a gown and hood of white cloth, and each receiving a penny." Note the multiple deep-ken resonances, between his age at death, the number of men, the number of women, and the amount given to each man. These worked together to boost the most immediate role of these participants: "all of them, both men and

43 Willard Trask, ed., *Joan of Arc in Her Own Words* (New York: Turtle Point, 1996), 144.

44 Reginald Hyatte, *Laughter for the Devil: The Trials of Gilles de Rais, Companion-in-Arms of Joan of Arc (1440)* (Ontario: Associated University Presses, 1984), 9–14, 156.

45 Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London: Metheun and Co., 1934), 101; Christoph Brachmann, "The Crusade of Nicopolis, Burgundy, and the Entombment of Christ at Pont-à-Mousson," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 74 (2011): 183–89, https://doi.org/10.1086/JWCI41418733

46 "Herr Mårten," in *Svenska Medeltidsballader*, ed. Bengt Jonsson (Lund: Natur och Kultur, 1981), 46–47.

47 Alfred Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills* (Lincoln: Williamson, 1888), 56–57.

48 Luzian Pfleger, *Kirchengeschichte der Stadt Strassburg* (Colmar: Alsatia Verlag, 1941), 172.

women, praying for my soul..."[49] Perhaps ill health created urgency: the Duke composed this will on 29 December 1426, and died within a week.

Such urgency contributed to the "multiplication" of masses. As the number of clergy grew, in part from young men unable to get a foot in the door of the guilds, the pressure to say mass daily increased. Lateran IV (1215) had forbidden the purchase of masses, but donations remained acceptable, and in practice could be expected or demanded. So many priests were neglecting to say Sunday mass, preferring instead the stipends gained by saying anniversary masses for the dead, that a provincial council in Florence (1517) threatened fines against the practice when motivated by greed. Some priest "altarists" had the sole function of performing the mass. A parish church in Rouen saw about forty masses a day in 1432. A church could increase its capacity for masses by staggering them: since one could not sing multiple masses at once, the first part of a mass would be sung, and then turn into a "low," spoken mass as a second ceremony began. Churches began to have more and more altars, to remove that as a limiting factor. A church with three dozen altars was not unusual, and, by 1500, both the Magdeburg Cathedral and the Danzig St. Mary's Church had four dozen each. Nuns would have access to their own altars, secondary ones if not the high altar.[50]

Defining the Eucharist

In the sacrament of the Communion or the "Eucharist"—meaning "thankful," combining Greek terms for "good" and "grace,"—Christian priests regularly—usually daily—effected the body and blood of Jesus. The authorization and command for this came from Jesus himself, who on the eve of his betrayal handed his disciples bread, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body which is given for you," and a cup, adding "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:26–28).

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49 Nicholas Harris Nicolas, ed., *Testamenta Vetusta*, 2 vols. (London: Nichols, 1826), I, 208–11.

50 Joseph Braun, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 2 vols. (Munich: Alte Meister Guenther Koch, 1924), I, 379–81; Franz, *Die Messe im Deutschen Mittelalter*, 462, 515–17; Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone, 1998), 89; Jungmann, *Mass*, I, 130–31; Joannes Dominicus Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collection*, 39 vols. (Paris: Welter, 1902), XXXV, col. 240, cap. 4; Linda Elaine Neagley, *Disciplined Exuberance: The Parish Church of Saint-Maclou and Late Gothic Architecture in Rouen* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998), 15.

The mass thus created an important ceremonial context for the Eucharist. Indeed, the theologian Henry of Langenstein (ca. 1325–97) explained the entire mass as mere decoration for the consecration of the host.[51] We should resist any modern tendency to reduce "decoration" to the art of making bathrooms and cupcakes attractive. For the deep ken, decoration conferred power onto a ceremony. This even prompted the cross-dressing Joan of Arc to offer to wear a woman's dress, if that was necessary to attend the mass.[52]

The priest celebrated the Eucharist, consuming the bread and wine he had consecrated. He might be alone, or with a helper, or on a Sunday in a parish church with a lay congregation observing. The layperson's role was just that, to observe ("ocular Communion").[53] Ideally, he or she observed from a place of piety, with sins confessed, heart contrite, and reconciled to the community. Unlike in a modern Catholic church, in 1400 the lay observer usually consumed only at Easter, and even then only the baked, stamped, and consecrated Eucharist bread wafers, called "hosts," which, like the wine, they understood as *both* the body and blood of Jesus (see Fig. 9.1).[54] In the West, the bread was unleavened, but the Ferrara-Florence Council (1438–45), building a bridge eastward, ruled that leavened was also acceptable, and the choice should be made particularistically, "according to the custom of his own eastern or western church."[55] Some popes, in the preceding, fourteenth century, had given secular rulers special permission to touch the chalice, but access to the wine was normally restricted to the priests. To avoid the accidental desecration of Jesus, a tray or bib ("paten") would catch crumbs, and a rinse with unconsecrated wine, perhaps watered down, would encourage bits lodged between teeth down to the stomach to be properly consumed. At times that wine rinse would be given even to infants.[56] Some priests denied the Eucharist to those they did not know to be worthy of it. A Lithuanian man whose wife was refused, with an implication that she was morally unworthy, declared that he would sue the priest for "theft."[57]

51 Franz, *Die Messe im Deutschen Mittelalter*, 517–22.

52 Trask, ed., *Joan of Arc*, 120–25.

53 Bob Scribner, "Popular Piety and Modes of Visual Perception in Late-Medieval and Reformation Germany," *Journal of Religious History* 15 (1989): 448–69.

54 One Polish liturgical handbook advised Communion three times annually, at Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas. See Darius Baronas and Stephen Christopher Rowell, *The Conversion of Lithuania: From Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians* (Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, 2015), 431.

55 This is *Laetentur caeli* (1439). Andreas de Santacroce, *Acta latina concilii Florentini*, ed. Georgius Hofmann (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1955), 261.

56 Jungmann, *Mass*, II, 411–19.

57 Baronas and Rowell, *Conversion of Lithuania*, 100.

Fig. 9.1 Eucharist wafer iron (ca. 1390–1410), Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm, CC BY 4.0.

A variety of utensils were used to treat the Eucharist. In German nunneries, portals called "Jesus windows" were built into the wall of the choir. If the nuns unlocked their side, and the priest unlocked his, he could pass the consecrated host through the window to them.[58] Special altars were designed to be portable, some of those specifically for shipboard use.[59] Anna von Buchwald, who served as Prioress of the Benedictine Preetz Priory in Schleswig-Holstein (1484–1508), had made a large Madonna statue with a special hand made of copper, essentially to replace the priest: the Madonna would stand on the altar and with her copper hand serve the nuns unconsecrated ablution wine from the chalice formerly used for the consecrated Eucharistic wine.[60] These different purpose-built devices give a sense of the variety of contexts in which masses were celebrated.

The elevation of the host was the climax of the mass, both in its drama and its efficacy. The elevation proclaimed, contrary to heretical minorities, that the bread was more than just bread.[61] Continuing a long tradition, Ludolph of Saxony compared the elevation with the raising of the cross.[62] Contemporary mass handbooks specified that the priest's arms be lifted in remembrance of the Resurrection and Ascension, and stretched out (after consecration) in imitation

58 Johannes Meyer, *Women's History in the Age of Reformation: Johannes Meyer's Chronicle of the Dominican Observance*, trans. Claire Taylor Jones (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2019), 104.

59 "Portable Altar," Museum Exhibits, Wignacourt Museum.

60 A. L. J. Michelsen, ed., *Urkundensammlung der Schleswig-Holstein-Lauenburgischen Gesellschaft für Vaterländische Geschichte*, 4 vols. (Kiel: n.p., 1839), I, 400.

61 Jungmann, *Mass*, I, 118–19.

62 Ibid., I, 115–16; Andrew Kirkman, *The Cultural Life of the Early Polyphonic Mass* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2010), 182.

of the Crucifixion.[63] An assistant behind the priest might hold up his chasuble so that the priest could elevate the host even higher; we see this, for example, in some visual representations of the Mass of St. Gregory.[64] Such gestures became so dramatic that Henry of Langenstein had to caution priests that excessive movement could cause disaster; for example, the sleeve of the priest's alb might catch on and overturn the chalice.[65]

Maximizing the Eucharist

A sudden, dramatic acceleration in how often lay people participated in the Eucharist occurred just before our period and cast a long shadow across it. Typically, a Christian would take Communion annually, while those more pious might do so monthly. In extraordinary cases the frequency was higher. One of France's greatest generals, captured by the Ottoman Sultan at Nicopolis, was Jean II Le Maingre, known as Boucicaut (1366–1421), who had a reputation for extreme piety: he dressed all in black on Fridays, and each day took mass twice and spent three hours praying.[66] By 1400, the idea that a layperson could, or even should, consume the host more frequently had become, almost, acceptable. The idea of frequent Communion was often associated with the Devotio Moderna and the Imitation of Christ (see Chapter 20). In fourteenth-century Prague, the reformed sex workers of New Jerusalem participated in the sacrament daily. This was, in Jan Milíč's (d. 1347) understanding, the key to the tremendous social success of the project.[67] Later synods there (1388–89) rebuked a request for daily Communion as given "not rightly, cautiously, nor prudently," and limited the ritual to once a month.[68]

63 Hermann von Bruiningk, *Messe und kanonisches Stundengebet nach dem Brauche der Rigaschen Kirche im späteren Mittelalter* (Riga: Kymmel, 1904), 80–86.

64 Christine Göttler, "Is Seeing Believing? The Use of Evidence in Representations for the Miraculous Mass of St. Gregory," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 76 (2001): 121–41 (123), https://doi.org/10.1080/00168890109601550

65 Henry von Langenstein, "Qualiter signa crucis fieri debeat," in Langenstein, *Secreta sacerdotum* (Nuremberg: Höltzel, 1507), n.p.

66 John P. Harthan, *The Book of Hours* (New York: Park Lane, 1982), 72–73.

67 David R. Holeton, "The Communion of Infants and Hussitism," *Communio viatorum* 27 (1984): 207–25 (208).

68 Thomas Fudge, *Magnificent Ride: The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia* (Florence: Routledge, 2018), 53–55, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315238531; František Palacký, ed., *Documenta mag. Joannis Hus vitam, doctrinam, causam in Constantiensi Concilio actam* (Prague: Tempsky, 1869), 699–700; Matthew Spinka, *John Hus: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1968), 18; Murray Wagner, *Peter Chelcicky A Radical Separatist in Hussite Bohemia* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1983), 53–55.

The idea of *manducatio per visum* [eating by sight] to describe ocular participation in the mass had been developed in the thirteenth century.[69] People wanted to see the elevation. Henry of Langenstein described people who became depressed or vegetarian on days they did not see the consecrated host.[70] Enthusiasts asked that the elevation be repeated during the mass, despite some authorities insisting that the Crucifixion happening only once meant the elevation could only happen once, per mass. An elevation too hasty or too low might prompt the audience to holler at the priest, "Hold up Sir John, hold up. Heave it a little higher," and at the tall person in a front row, "Stoop down thou fellow afore, that I may see my Maker. For I cannot be merry except I see my LORD GOD once in a day."[71] Lawsuits clawed at seats with superior vantage points. Gratuities flowed to priests willing to draw out the moment. The excommunicated were not allowed to see the Eucharist, although some exploited or created holes in church walls to take in its benefits nonetheless.[72]

After seeing the elevated host in one church, enthusiasts could sprint to the next to try to repeat witnessing the elevation in another.[73] Michael of Hungary complained about the many devotees who would arrive immediately before the consecration, and then, immediately after the elevation, "they rush out of the church as if they had seen the devil." He reflected on this mutually unsatisfying relationship: "O my sweet Jesus, you are not pleasing to them, and certainly they are not pleasing to you!" His contemporary, the Augustinian Gottschalk Hollen (d. 1481), used the same simile to grumble about the crowds who came to the mass when they heard the bells, just in time for the elevation, and then immediately fled, "as if they had seen the devil."[74]

Additional opportunities for viewing the consecrated host developed. The host was often displayed in a monstrance during the eight days of the Corpus

69 Barbara Maria Savy, *Manducatio per visum: temi eucaristici nella pittura di Romanino e Moretto* (Cittadella: Bertoncello Artigrafiche, 2006).

70 Henry of Hesse, *Secreta sacerdotum magistri* (Liptzk: Lotter, 1503), n.p. (section "Qualiter hostia debet elevari").

71 Thomas Becon, *The Displaying of the Popish Masse* (London: A. Griffin, 1637), 183–84.

72 Peter Browe, *Die Verehrung der Eucharistie im Mittelalter* (Sinzig am Rhein: Sankt Meinrad Verl. für Theologie, 1990), 60–62; Jungmann, *Mass*, I, 120–21; Édouard Dumoutet, *Le désir de voir l'hostie et les origines de la dévotion au Saint Sacrement* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926), 18–25, 65–72.

73 Browe, *Die Verehrung*, 67–68.

74 Gottschalk Hollen, *Sermonum opus exquisitissimum* (Hagenau: n.p., 1517), Sermon 68.

Christi octave.[75] From 1407, it was carried in Corpus processions in Venice.[76] Elaborate carrying cases, described by one historian as "micro-architecture," large enough to be appropriate for parading the consecrated host around a city, sometimes took forms that represented local buildings.[77] At the most extreme, one Dominican nun spent the day fasting in preparation for watching a priest wash his fingers after they had held the consecrated host.[78]

Images also emphasize the importance of the mass, and of seeing the consecrated host. Lines of linear perspective (see Chapter 14) often converged on, drawing attention to, a Eucharistic focus. This can happen in different modes: Leonardo's *Last Supper* (ca. 1495–98) converges on Jesus in the act of instituting the Eucharist, Raphael's *Disputation* (1509–10) on a painted monstrance, and Masaccio's *Holy Trinity* (ca. 1426–28) just above a space where the mass would have been celebrated upon an attached ledge.

Kneeling for the host became common even outside the elevation. In the fifteenth century, the practice of genuflecting at the host became widespread.[79] Kneeling was a special challenge for the social elite, with their clean clothes and fashionably twisted shoes.[80] Some found ways to make piety and cleanliness compatible: in the 1430s, in their chapel in the Toledo Cathedral, Álvaro da Luna (d. 1453), the Constable of Castile, and his wife Juana Pimentel (d. 1488) had look-alike bronze androids that would automatically kneel for the elevation.[81]

Eucharist Controversies

England executed John Badby in 1410. He had refused to accept that the Eucharist truly created the body of Jesus. "If every host consecrated at the altar were the Lord's body," he pointed out, "then there were twenty thousand gods in England." The idea created such dissonance with his plain-ken sense of the possibilities of spacetime that he declined an offer of clemency from the future King Henry V (1386–1422), preferring instead to become the first layman

75 Browe, *Die Verehrung*, 98–102, 122–26.
76 Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1986), 223–24.
77 J. F. Moffit, "Archetypal Micro-architecture: Prolegomena to the Custodias Procesionales," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 18 (1989): 47–62.
78 Meyer, *Women's History*, 109.
79 Jungmann, *Mass*, II, 213.
80 Gottschalk Hollen, *Preceptorium domini* (Nuremburg: Peypus, 1521), fol. 5r.
81 Carmen González Palencia, "La capilla de don Álvaro de Luna en la Catedral de Toledo," *Archivo Español de Arte y Arqueología* 5 (1929): 109–22; Juan Carrete Parrondo, "Sebastián de Toledo y el sepulcro de don Álvaro de Luna," *Revista de Ideas Estéticas* 131 (1975): 37–43.

executed in England for reason of heresy.[82] His trial records opposed his plain ken with its own deep ken: in a chain of stepwise consonances, they note that when he answered questions about the Eucharist there appeared on his lips a spider, which represented a serpent, which represented heresy.[83]

Around the same time, 2,000 km to the south, ʻAbd Allah al-Tarjuman (1355–1423) cited Mt 26:26–29, before launching a series of mocking arguments. With a spatial plain ken, he imagined collecting globally all the consecrated bread, and comparing that gigantic doughball to the size of the historical Jesus. He ridiculed Christians who ate Jesus before hypocritically denouncing the Jews for killing him. Al-Tarjuman used the ridiculousness of the mass to undermine the Christian view of Jesus. Such Muslim opposition to the Eucharist had even led to legal opinions supporting the use of cannabis as a superior, non-blasphemous alternative to wine.[84]

The complexity of the Eucharist meant that, naturally, controversies arose, but miracles also occurred to point the way to truth. The second half of this chapter explains the basic mechanism of the Eucharist before surveying both the interpretations of how that mechanism actually worked as well as the range of criticisms assailing every aspect of it. As we will see, the plain ken of Badby and al-Tarjuman animates much, but not all, of those criticisms.

Mainstream Explanations

How did consecrated wine and bread become Jesus's body and blood? The humanist scholar Lorenzo Valla (1407–57) pointed out that God becoming bread in the Eucharist is no more difficult to believe than God becoming human in the Incarnation, yet the former troubles people who accept the latter easily.[85] Most Christians in 1400 accepted that the Eucharist *did* work, although the details of the *how* provoked a variety of controversies. Orthodoxy agreed that neither

82 John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 4th ed. (London: n.p., 1583), 545 [521]; Peter McNiven, *Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Henry IV: The Burning of John Badby* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987).

83 Thomas Waldensis, *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei catholicae ecclesiae*, 3 vols. (Venice: Bassanese, 1758), II, col. 387.

84 Miguel de Epalza, ed. and trans., *La Tuḥfa: Autobiografía y polémica islámica contra el Cristianismo de ʼAbdallāh al-Tarǧumān* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1971), 32; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 61–84 (74, 78–79); Austin MacPherson, "Wine and Hashish: Substitution of the Eucharist in Sufi Scholarship" (unpublished manuscript, 30 April 2020); Franz Rosenthal, *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 154–55.

85 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma 1300–1700* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 56.

bread nor wine remained after consecration, but no consensus governed the mechanics.

In 1215, the Council Lateran IV ended centuries of debate by agreeing that the authoritative explanation for the mystery was "transubstantiation." This concept explained how the consecrated bread and wine still appeared to be bread and wine despite actually being the body and blood of Jesus. Drawing from the Aristotelian tradition, theologians distinguished between the substance of an object and its "accidents," its superficial appearance accessible to human senses. Unconsecrated bread was bread in its accidents and bread in its substance; consecrated, its substance became the body and blood of Jesus, while its accidents remained bread. It thus resembled, but was not, bread. Transubstantiation effected a similar process in the consecration of wine. Deep-ken substances changed while plain-ken accidents endured. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), whose description of transubstantiation became influential, had good reasons for the flesh not appearing as flesh: eating human meat was "not customary, but horrible" for humans. Furthermore, non-Christian observers might mock the practice, and would cost the pious an opportunity to practice having faith in the unseen.[86]

With transubstantiation providing an authoritative explanation of the process, the theologians shifted the controversy to the exact meaning of "transubstantiation," about its specific mechanisms and consequences. Against the Dominicans, who generally accepted Thomas Aquinas's explanation, Franciscans pointed out that God could still use whatever mechanism he pleased to accomplish the transformation. Again contrary to the Dominican doctrine, the Franciscans insisted that a mouse eating a consecrated host was not eating Jesus: transubstantiation did not happen when the eater lacked understanding. The importance of the eater's mindstate for the nature of the reality of what was being eaten was a kind of deep-ken requirement for the Eucharist. While the next two centuries would see crisis and division over whether the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist was corporeal or spiritual, few theologians in 1400 doubted that his presence was real.[87]

86 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, III, q. 75, art. 1, 5; Kristen van Ausdall, "Doubt and Authority in the Host-Miracle Shrines of Orvieto and Wilsnack," in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, ed. Sarah Blicke and Rita Tekippe, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), II, 513–38 (527), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047430087_023

87 Amy Nelson Burnett, *Karlstadt and the Origins of the Eucharistic Controversy: A Study in the Circulation of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 9, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199753994.001.0001; Marilyn McCord Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

Doubts in England

Wycliffe's Explanation

In England, John Wycliffe (ca. 1328–84), although maintaining his belief in the real presence of Jesus in the hosts, investigated the Eucharist with the plain ken. This was necessary because Wycliffe put no weight on the opinion of Thomas Aquinas, "the rash assertion of one man."[88] Looking at history, Wycliffe noticed that the Church had not consistently taught transubstantiation until the thirteenth century. Looking at the canon, he noticed that (1) Jesus's words "this is my body" appeared in different ways in various passages of scripture, and that (2) the Vulgate said the seven lean and seven fat oxen of Genesis 41 "are" (*sunt*) seven years—"are," not "symbolize," seven years, although that was clearly the intent. Thus, "to be" could also have a meaning that was symbolic or figurative. Therefore, Wycliffe continued, *est* (the same Latin verb, in the singular) of the consecration could also mean *figurat*.[89] Moreover, (3) the Aristotelian terms "accidents" and "substances" were alien to the Bible.[90] Logically, accidents separated from substance created potential absurdities in plain-ken spacetime: Wycliffe wondered where Jesus was actually going if six hosts were moved by priests in the four cardinal directions, plus up and down. In one sermon, Wycliffe advised that we lock priests out of our wine cellars lest they consecrate the wine and turn it into mere accidents.[91]

Why was the fantastic impossible? Wycliffe had faith that God would not trick us. If it looked like bread and tasted like bread, it was bread. After consecration, the host was still bread, a "naked sacrament" (*nudum sacramentum*—that is, the elements alone) under which the body was "hidden invisible to the eye."[92] Furthermore, if bread were annihilated in transubstantiation, Wycliffe deduced, then "as many consecrated hosts there are, there would be so many openings void of corporeal substance." Even one such vacuum, he reasoned, would create an infinite vacuum, and, finally, the entire world would become Jesus. His logic depends on the subtleties of metaphysics, with each stage in his reasoning

88 Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), 82–86.
89 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 5.
90 Craig Atwood, *The Theology of the Czech Brethren from Hus to Comenius* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2009), 40–41, 58–59.
91 Kenny, *Wyclif*, 86, 97.
92 John Wycliffe, *Sermones*, ed. Johann Loserth, 4 vols. (London: Trübner, 1887–90), I, 164 (sermon 24); John Wycliffe, *De Eucharistia Tractatus Maior*, ed. Johann Loserth (London: Trübner, 1892), 11–12, 15, 28–29 (ch. 1).

amounting to an absurd impossibility.[93] For Wycliffe, the plain ken's continuous space was a given, just as in linear perspective and in Nicole Oresme's (ca. 1320/25–82) graphs correlating distance with speed.[94]

Wycliffe understood Jesus's institution of the Eucharist as being figurative—with the plain ken he was allowing Jesus to speak in a metaphorical way—but it was no less real for being figurative. Wycliffe saw not contradiction but consonance (*consonat*) in that "the same thing should be truth and a figure or sign." In his institution of the Eucharist, Jesus had used figurative language, but figurative language spoken by Jesus had efficacy—it was "true" in a sense that most figurative language was not, "for it has the efficacy [*efficaciam*] of making the body and blood of Christ exist in fact [*de facto*] beneath the sacramental species." The body and blood in the sacrament existed "really and truly, but figuratively." To illustrate, he pointed to the process of writing: if you write a sentence, the words as symbols exist above the paper (*corpus*) and ink beneath them. A literate reader seeking to understand will look more to the symbols than the material paper and ink. In the same way, but even "much more, the habit of faith induces the faithful to understand the true body of Christ through the consecrated bread." In the Eucharist, Jesus's "humanity is more efficacious [*efficacius*] than in a mere sign."[95]

Wycliffe found one way to preserve the deep-ken capacity for complexity within the homogeneity of plain-ken spacetime, in the geometry of quadric spaces. Jesus, he explained, was in the consecrated bread just like an image could be in a mirror. If two viewers looked into a mirror, they could see the same face even from different vantage points. That is, a face visible in a mirror would be present at every point on the mirror. In the same way, Jesus's body would be present at every point on the consecrated host.[96] The bread effectively acts like a paraboloid mirror, said by the Polish friar Vitello (ca. 1230–80/1314) to be the best for focusing light at a single point (see Fig. 9.2).[97] Jesus could be in heaven and yet be present intentionally in every host globally, just as you can see yourself in a number of mirrors.[98]

93 John Wycliffe, *Tractatus de Apostasia*, ed. Michael Henry Dziewicki (London: Trübner, 1889), 99–100, 142–45 (ch. 8, 11).

94 Heather Phillips, "John Wyclif and the Optics of the Eucharist," *Studies in Church History, Subsidia* 5 (1987): 250–58.

95 Wycliffe, *De Eucharistia*, ed. Loserth, 84 (4), 120–21, 144 (5). See Kenny, *Wyclif*, 8, 89; Pelikan, *Reformation*, 58–59.

96 Wycliffe, *De Eucharistia*, ed. Loserth, 11 (1), 298–302 (9); Wycliffe, *Sermones*, ed. Loserth, IV, 352 (sermon 62).

97 Vitello, *Opticae Thesaurus*, ed. Federico Risnero (Basil: Episcopios, 1572), 400–01.

98 John Wycliffe, *Trialogus*, trans. Stephen Lahey (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2013), 216–17 (4.8). See Phillips, "John Wyclif and the Optics of the Eucharist," 251–55.

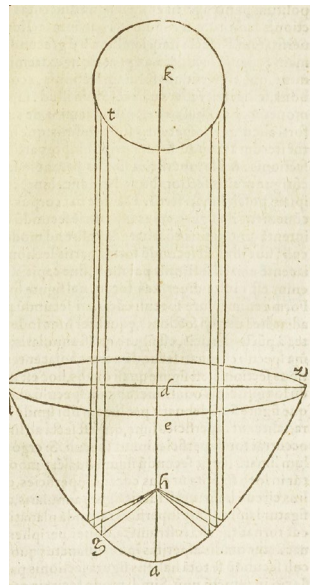

Fig. 9.2 Vitello, *Opticae Thesaurus*, ed. Federico Risnero (Basil: Episcopios, 1572), 401.

This line of thinking was not unique to Wycliffe or to England. A contemporary Irish Cistercian taught that the consecrated host was only a mirror to the body of Jesus in heaven.[99] In 1501, a Jewish woman who had converted to Christianity in Roa de Duero, Spain, refused to believe in the divine presence, arguing that the host on the altar was merely an "image" (*figurança*) of the divine.[100]

In Wycliffe's Wake

In England, the Lollards following Wycliffe, spiritually and chronologically, went further, understanding the Eucharist as merely a sign. Not inclined to see symbolic meaning in the material, the Lollards instead emphasized the division between the material and spiritual.[101]

Some popular opinions in England and Ireland evidently accepted the real presence, but doubted the specific requirements the Church held necessary

99 Walter Waddington Shirley, ed., *Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif* (London: Longman, 1858), 353.

100 Carlos Carrete Parrondo, ed., *El tribunal de la Inquisición en el obispado de Soria (1486–1502)* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1985), 146–47 (no. 358).

101 For example, Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives Office, Episcopal Register 12, fol. 271v–72r.

for consecration. Richard FitzRalph, the Archbishop of Armagh (ca. 1300–60), taught that the words of consecration need not be in Latin.[102] In the 1390s, Walter Brut insisted that a priest was not necessary to consecrate the host: a devout layman, a woman, or even a little girl, could perform the mass.[103] In two separate incidents in London in that decade a child was taught to say mass, in the one case for his mother at the birth of a new sibling. A knight from Salisbury in the 1380s outrageously took the host "to go," to eat at home, and in 1511 a woman and her sons did the same—perhaps they were hungry.[104] One Lollard imitated the sacrament to ostensibly transform the substance of a pig into fish, so that it could be licitly eaten on a Friday.[105] Each of these daring individuals broke up the deep-ken consonance linking language, attitude, performer, and location.

Others doubted the very consecration itself. In 1381 in Salisbury, the knight Laurence of St. Martin, impressed by radical Wycliffite ideas, defiantly took a consecrated host to his own home, locked the doors, and consumed it with oysters, onion, and wine; as punishment, the Bishop of Salisbury had him erect a stone cross in a public area, on which was engraved the story of his error.[106] Once, as a priest elevated the Eucharist, an onlooking Lollard admitted to the beautiful woman next to him that God was not as visible in the wafer as he was in her.[107] One William Colyn was condemned in 1430 for having said that he would rather see female genitals than the consecrated host. Colyn indignantly insisted that he had been misquoted, and that he actually had said he would rather *touch* the genitals than the host.[108] Was that radical theology, flirting, or both?

Less lusty doubters turned to numbers. In 1429, the Lollard Margery Baxter argued that "If every such sacrament were God, and the very body of Christ,

102 This belief was ascribed to the archbishop by the Franciscan William Woodford (1330–1400), who was dubious, in Woodford's *Quaestiones lxxii de sacramento altaris*, BodL MS Bodl. 703, fol 114r–19v.

103 BL MS Harley 31, fol. 194v–204v, 218r–223r. See Margaret Aston, "Lollard Women Priests?," in Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon, 1984), 52–59.

104 Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863–64), I, 450–51, II, 307. See Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 150–51.

105 Thomas More, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, ed. Louis A. Schuster, Richard C. Marius, James P. Lusardi, and Richard J. Schoeck, 3 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1973), I, 122.

106 Thomas Walshingham, *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham 1376–1422*, trans. David Preest (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 118.

107 Thomas Waldensis, *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei Ecclesiae Catholicae*, 2 vols. (Venice: Iordanum Zilettum, 1621), II, fol. 47r (ch. 26).

108 Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428–31* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 91.

there should be an infinite number of gods, because that a thousand priests, and more, do every day make a thousand such gods, and afterwards eat them, and void them out again in places, where, if you will seek them, you may find many such gods."[109] Richard Petefyne, busted for proposing a limit to the amounts priests might charge for the mass, told his inquisitors in 1491 that the sacrament was merely dough baked and pressed, which he could mass produce at a rate of thirty-one per hour. A mouse, he adds, would not dare to touch or eat it if it were truly the body of Jesus.[110] This plain-ken approach delighted in mouse psychology as well as the ugly number thirty-one.

The authorities, threatened, fought back. Indeed, we know the details of the previous paragraphs only because the authorities investigated and recorded them. Baxter, mentioned above, was sentenced to flogging. Even an eleven-year-old boy was interrogated.[111] Lollards likely to be questioned had been advised to say that they believed the consecrated host was whatever Jesus wanted it to be, and let the authorities object to that; the authorities in fact obtained a copy of this advice, and marvelled at the deception.[112] The Franciscan friar Roger Dymmok (fl. 1370–1400) explained how the Lollards' materialist understanding of the Eucharist was socially apocalyptic: denying transubstantiation would destroy the Church's sacraments, the oaths of king, and the political conventions of people. Just as a man does not appear different after being crowned king, Dymmok continued, bread does not appear different after it becomes Jesus.[113] In 1380, William Berton, Chancellor of Oxford, set up a commission that condemned the teaching that the substance of bread and wine remained after consecration. Soon, Wycliffe fled Oxford, pawning his papal decretals—decisions that formed the body of canon law—to a pawnbroker who valued them more than he did. In May 1382, the Blackfriars Council at London condemned the belief that bread and wine survived consecration. William Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury (ca. 1342–96), then used the Council's condemnation to attack the Wycliffites at Oxford, who had initially rallied to Wycliffe's defence. Before 1382 was over, Oxford appeared free of the heresy. In 1384, at the elevation during the Holy Innocents mass, Wycliffe dropped, paralyzed, and died three days later, on the

109 Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 668 [644].

110 Herbert Arthur Doubleday and William Page, *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1903), 48.

111 Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, Reg. Audley, fol. 148v. See Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 134.

112 Shirley, ed., *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, 385.

113 Roger Dymmok, *Liber contra XII errores et hereses Lollardorum*, ed. H. S. Cronin (London: Wyclif Society, 1922), 130–31.

eve of the new year. Only at Constance would Wycliffe be formally condemned, as the Western Schism distracted the Church authorities until then.[114]

Defenders of the Eucharist against doubts could also rely on a plain-ken empiricism to prove Jesus's presence in the consecrated host. The Carthusian monk Nicholas Love (d. ca. 1424) insisted that Lollards erred in emphasizing reasoning over observed miracles. Some people could sense the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He cited Jesus appearing in the Eucharist as the Christ Child to the Saint-King Edward the Confessor (ca. 1003–66) and in "a quantity of flesh all bloody" for Gregory the Great. The sacrament of the Eucharist, Love explained, happened "wonderfully & miraculously against man's reason." Miracles confirmed the truth of the Eucharist, but "here the Lollard laughs and scorns the holy church in allegiance of such miracles, holding them but as *maggetales* [mad tales?] and feigned illusions, and because of that he does not taste the sweetness of this precious sacrament nor feel the gracious working of it in himself. Therefore he does not allow what anyone else does." Love knew someone, and supposed there were others, who felt the Eucharist make his body "melting for joy as wax does before the hot fire." In contrast, the Lollards used their limited senses' inability to detect Jesus's presence as an excuse to abandon the orthodox understanding of the rite. This was worse than the sin of Judas, who believed in the orthodox (by 1400 standards) Eucharist even though Jesus the man was physically present next to the bread and wine, which would make the miraculous nature of the Eucharist harder to believe, for how can someone stand next to the bread he was in?[115]

Innovations in Bohemia

Perhaps more than anywhere else, in Bohemia the various understandings of the Eucharist were fluid, nuanced, and exaggerated by their opponents. What, exactly, was the consecrated bread? Conservative urbanites who preferred not to antagonize Rome with adventurous eucharistology accepted the standard transubstantiation: the bread fully transformed into the body and blood of Jesus. Moderates believed in consubstantiation, which held that the consecrated bread, while still Jesus's body and blood, also remained bread; this belief was similar to, and perhaps an imported version of, Wycliffe's. The radical sacramentalists or figuratists held the bread to be, really, mere bread, but charged by the spiritual presence of Jesus, the meaning of which could be taken up by consuming the

114 Kenny, *Wyclif*, 57, 91–99; Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and its Aftermath, 1399–1422* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1998), 50.

115 Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2004), 151–53.

bread. The radical radicals, the symbolists, taught that the bread was only bread, but could carry a symbolic weight.

The key to understanding these perspectives is to keep an eye not on the body of Jesus—the real presence of which both transubstantiation and consubstantiation accepted—but on the bread. In transubstantiation, the consecrated host had only the appearance of bread. While bread substantially becoming body was, miraculously, possible, having bread and body co-exist in the same location violated plain-ken spacetime and so was beyond the pale. In contrast, consubstantiation held the apparent bread to be real bread, regardless of the limitations of plain-ken spacetime. That is, transubstantiation's miracle was the disappearance of bread, while consubstantiation's miracle was the violation of spacetime. The radical radicals allowed neither miracle, and took up another aspect of the plain ken by reducing the Eucharist's symbolic power to human psychology.

On the far side of the radicals was Martin Huska (d. 1421). Huska reduced the Eucharist to a memorial meal, on a table decorated not with priestly trappings but with love. He held that Jesus was not in the Eucharist: Christ was in heaven, physically, and with the communicants themselves, spiritually. This last idea outraged Huska's enemies, who were concerned that this converted the communicants themselves into the body and blood of Jesus, and the paternoster's "Our Father who art in heaven" into "Our Father who art in us." In this, Huska was thinking with the plain ken, while his critics were thinking with the deep. To demonstrate the lack of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, and the emptiness of any ceremonial celebration of it, his followers would overturn monstrances and stomp on the consecrated hosts that fell from them. Huska mocked those who were "growing thin on the little piece of bread of the popish and heretical supper." Instead, "Christians should come together on feast-days [...] and, for perfection in love, eat what they want, and so to speak have a banquet [...] feasting and filling themselves up."[116]

Infant Communion

Such extreme beliefs might be safely kept unuttered, but the Bohemian radicals also experimented with innovations in the scope of the implementation of the mass. These changes were visible, and outrageous to mainstream society.

116 Laurentius de Brezowa, "Vavřinec z Březové Kronika Husitská," in *Prameny dějin českých: Fontes rerum bohemicarum*, ed. Jaroslav Goll, 8 vols. (Prague: Palacký, 1893), V, 454–63, 474. See Wagner, *Peter Chelcicky*, 59–63, 106–07; Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 424. The last quotation is Chelčický's paraphrase.

Matthias of Janov (d. 1393) asked why should children, baptized, be excluded from Communion?[117] Jakoubek of Stříbro (d. 1429) used patristic and medieval sources to justify this expansion, but cited in particular Jesus's words at Jn 6:53–54: "very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."[118] Others pointed to the fact that Jesus had been incarnated as a baby, and specifically welcomed them, with "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them" (Mt 19:14).[119]

How the proponents of infant Communion used biblical support is instructive. Jakoubek turned to Jesus's words ("Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven") and asked why the one group singled out by Jesus as exemplary was exactly the one excluded. He, too, made use of Jn 6:53–54, classifying it as a divine precept, universally binding, with the implication that other verses spoken by Jesus were not. The priest Jan Želivský (d. 1422), preaching on Jn 21, took an instance of Jesus feeding his disciples to construct a loose parallel implying that priests should feed children the Eucharist. In another sermon, Želivský appealed to a verse that out of context appeared highly relevant: "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs" (Mt 15:26). In context, this was Jesus declining to help a foreign, Canaanite woman, one of the "dogs" of the verse. While in England critics tended towards a plain-ken attack on Eucharistic practice, here both Matthias and Želivský sought a reform of the Eucharist on deep-ken grounds, by deriving doctrine from Jesus's apparently casual reference to children or from the fact that Jesus was himself born a baby.[120]

Frequent and infant Communion saw considerable success in Bohemia. Jan Jenstejn (1348–1400), Archbishop of Prague, approved frequent adult Communion. By 1417, the key texts adorned the walls of the Bethlehem Chapel, and a general Communion that even included infants was practised. A 1418 synod accepted twenty-three articles, with infant Communion in the first place. That first article included detailed instructions, suggesting that the practice was not yet widely implemented.[121]

117 Matthias of Janov [Matěj z Janova], *De Corpore Cristi*, ed. Jana *Nechutová,* Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti 6 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993), 36–41 (chs. 8–12).

118 Jacobellus de Misa [Jacob of Mies], *De communione plebis sub utraqve specie*s, in Hermann von der Hardt, *Magnum oecumenicum Constantiense concilium*, 6 vols. (Frankfort: Gensch, 1698), III, col. 422 (part 1, ch. 2).

119 Noemi Rejchrtová, "Hussitism and Children," *Communio Viatorum* 22 (1979): 201–04 (202).

120 Holeton, "Communion," 213–16.

121 Palacký, ed., *Documenta*, 677–81; Holeton, "Communion," 209, 213.

Infant Communion's opponents fought back. Opposition thinkers tended to lack gospel support for their position, but rather pointed out the political, and perhaps the social, danger of the practice. In his 1415 Eucharist treatise, Andrew of Brod included a short chapter on the dangers of infant Communion. Royal authority remained steadfastly opposed. Želivský compared the opposition to the gospels' Pharisees, who threatened anyone who recognized Jesus as the Messiah with expulsion from the synagogue, and argued, perhaps not entirely in jest, for extra-episcopal Communion—that everyone *except* bishops be allowed to participate.[122]

After 1420, the debate on infant Communion continued, with mainstream Bohemian theologians supporting it. The Four Articles (1421) included "all true Christians," and at Caslav later that year the intent behind the "all" was spelled out as both "old and young." The debate attracted the attention of the Council of Basel. In Bohemia, the practice would become established enough that Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I's (1503–64) efforts to end it failed. Even after the seventeenth-century return of Roman Catholicism, attacks were still made against infant Communion, which implies that the practice continued.[123]

Just as intense inclusion in the communicant community marked social and material changes in the life of the ex-prostitutes at New Jerusalem, so too the inclusion of children in Communion marked an inclusion of children in society more generally. It is ironic that one of the most complete emancipations of children—maybe "juvenile adults" is more precise—happened in a society often especially cruel to children. Hard sorrows surrounded the joys of Communion, and its bloody social debut. Participation in Communion perhaps facilitated participation in the Hussite armies—Jan Zizka (ca. 1360–1424) armed children with slingshots—and children, as young as seven years old, shared Jan Hus's (ca. 1370–1415) fate at the stake in the years following his death. Even as non-combatants, they filled the role of the innocents to Emperor Sigismund's (1368–1437) Herod, as the imperial armies did not share the Hussites' aversion to killing women and children. Petr Chelčický (ca. 1390–1460) objected precisely to this juxtaposition of violence and the Eucharist, for Jesus "did not command the church to put his body on display before the motley crowd as to a herd of cattle, nor did he say to parade it through city streets or carry it before an army mounted on a pike."[124]

122 Jn 9:22; Holeton, "Communion," 212–16.
123 Holeton, "Communion," 207, 217.
124 Rejchrtová, "Hussitism and Children," 202–03; Wagner, *Peter Chelcicky*, 115.

Desecrations

The most extreme critical stances were expressed not only in words, but in action, in the desecration of the consecrated hosts. Church officials took measures against blasphemous or irregular uses of the Eucharist. In late-fifteenth-century Denmark, authorities required priests to keep the hosts carefully locked, for fear of their misuse in magical "imminent dangers."[125] One late-fourteenth-century Icelandic chronicle remember a nun from Kirkjubaer executed in 1343 for throwing the consecrated host into the toilet.[126] The frequently told story of a pig executed in Mortain, Normandy, in 1394 for eating a consecrated host appears to be a modern myth perpetuated by research error, but its persistence suggests that historians consider such an execution plausible in that society.[127]

The groups most often associated with host desecration in the fifteenth-century mind were the Jews, and the recent Jewish converts (*conversos*) to Christianity. Authorities took seriously any affront to the Eucharist's honour. We can consider the cases of two Sicilians. One, when at Communion, pretended to vomit. Another, observing a house being cleaned before the arrival of the host, sarcastically asked, "Is a count or a baron coming here?" Even we can see the humour in the dissonance; each mocked the host because it was just as dissonant with his world-view as the authorities found desecration dissonant with their own. Both men were executed, and died while saying "Jesus."[128]

More aggressively, Jews were "known" to have attacked consecrated hosts, which could sometimes miraculously defend themselves, or to have crucified babies. The vast majority of cases were in central or eastern Europe, but some occurred in Iberia.[129] In 1491, in southern Castile, a *converso* group was tried

125 G. J. Thorkelín, *Samling af Danske Kirke-Love* (Copenhagen: Godisches Arvingers, 1781), 108.

126 Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 122, 171.

127 I have not found a source for this prior to E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London: Heinemann, 1906), 156, which scholars frequently cite. Evans may have confused the 1394 case of a sow in Mortain which ate a child. See Émile Agnel, *Curiosités judiciaires et historiques du moyen âge: Procès contre les animaux* (Paris: J. B. Dumoulin, 1858), 8.

128 Nadia Zeldes, *'The Former Jews of this Kingdom': Sicilian Converts after the Expulsion, 1492–1516* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 175–76, 318–21.

129 From 1400 to 1800 the frequency of Jews being executed for host desecration halved, but this long continued, with the last known case happening in nineteenth-century Romania. Isidore Loeb, *La situation des israélites en Turquie, en Serbie et en Roumanie* (Paris: J. Baer, 1877), 143; Christopher Ocker, "Ritual Murder and the Subjectivity of Christ: A Choice in Medieval Christianity," *The Harvard Theological Review* 91 (1998): 153–92 (165).

for desecrating the host and fatally crucifying a "Holy Child" of La Guardia.[130] This reverberated in art and literature. In Italian paintings, horrific accounts of infanticide—such as Vincent Ferrer's (1350–1419) re-assembly of a child chopped and cooked up by his mother, or the case of the three-year-old Simon (1472–75) allegedly murdered by the Jews of Trent—appeared in the guise of representations of the Eucharist, with the child victim located in or near the place of the host or wine on the altar.[131]

In England, the Croxton Play of the Sacrament (ca. 1490s) dramatized some of these issues and fears, perhaps as an indirect criticism of the Lollards. In the play, Jews hire a Christian to drug a priest and steal a consecrated host, which they torture. In its defence, the host attaches itself to the hand of one of the torturers, a merchant, who is then forced to amputate it. The Jews then crucify the host-and-hand and place it in an oven. At this point, Jesus decides he has had enough. He emerges from the oven to condemn the Jews, who collapse to the floor and convert. Jesus restores the hand of the now ex-Jewish merchant. Church authorities intervene to certify the miracle and the conversion, and they all live happily ever after.[132]

Historians today assume that many, or even all, of such accusations against Jews were false. Certainly, the broad social hostility against Jews means we must discount, if not dismiss, the charges against them. Most likely Jews and *conversos*, like Christians descendant from Christians, had multiple understandings of the Eucharist, and would interact with it in multiple ways. Their Jewish heritage gave them a special vantage point. One Spanish *converso* considered the Eucharist with the plain ken and sought to explain its strangeness as a development in history. He concluded that it was in fact a Jewish ceremony augmented by the purely Christian elevation. That gave him new reason to doubt the presence of God in

130 Fidel Fita, "La verdad sobre el martirio del Santo Nino de la Guardia," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 11 (1887): 7–134; Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966), II, 398–423.

131 Roberto Rusconi, "Anti-Jewish Preaching in the Fifteenth Century and Images of Preachers in Italian Renaissance Art," in *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen J. McMichael (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 225–37 (229–32), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047400219_015; Laura Ackerman Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby: The Cult of Vincent Ferrer in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2016).

132 John T. Sebastian, ed., *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13843dg. See Cecilia Cutts, "The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece," *Modern Language Quarterly* 5 (1944): 45–60; Norman Davis, ed., *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments* (London: Oxford, 1970), 379; C. J. Gordon, "Bread God, Blood God: Wonderhosts and Early Encounters with Secularization," *Genre* 44 (2011): 105–28, https://doi.org/10.1215/00166928-1260161

the consecrated host: "That I can't believe for the world, nor do I know where they can prove it—there is nothing of this in the old law." He then reasoned from its absence in Jewish tradition to its absence in all traditions, concluding, "I can't believe that for the world, nor is there a law in this world where such appears."[133]

Eucharist Miracles

As we will see through the course of this book, people did not have to rely on faith alone to believe in the efficacy of the mass. Eucharistic miracles repeatedly proved, against Christian and Jewish doubters, that what appeared as bread was in fact the body of Jesus.

Many of the Eucharistic miracles were educational, in that they taught that Jesus really was present in the consecrated host. In one instance, a mixed lay and clerical procession marched barefoot through London to hear a sermon against heresy, and the knight Cornelius Cloyne—rumoured to be Wycliffite—saw the bread become "true flesh, raw and bloody," with "the name of Jesus written in letters of flesh, raw and bloody" on it, thus affirming the sermon's message.[134] Alternatively, the French abbess Colette of Corbie (1381–1447) (Nicole[tte] Boellet or Boylet) on one occasion did *not* see Jesus in an apparently consecrated host: she could sense that the priest had mistakenly used water instead of wine, and declined to worship it.[135] At Sergius of Radonezh's (1314–92) Trinity Lavra outside of Moscow, during one mass the consecrated wine exploded, with the consequent fireball disappearing into the chalice before the priest drank from it.[136] At Lanciano in central Italy were preserved five pieces of congealed Eucharistic wine-turned-blood, any subset of which had the identical weight as the complete set.[137]

In the Basilica di Sant'Antonio, Padua, the high altar featured a series of low-relief depictions by Donatello (ca. 1386–1466) of miracles performed by the thirteenth-century Anthony of Padua, including one of the Miracle of the Ass: a donkey which had been starved for three days preferred to kneel before the consecrated host rather than eat it, or even the oats offered as an alternative.

133 Carrete Parrondo, *El tribunal*, ed., 70–71.
134 Henry Knighton, *Knighton's Chronicle, 1337–1396*, ed. and trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 262–63.
135 Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de soeur Colette*, trans. Élisabeth Lopez (Saint-étienne: Publ. de l'Université de Saint-étienne, 1994), 111.
136 Dmitrij Čiževskij, *History of Russian Literature: From the Eleventh Century to the End of the Baroque* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 175.
137 Bruno Sammaciccia, *Il miracolo eucaristico di Lanciano* (Lanciano: Botolini, 1984).

Writers would collect lists of such miracles to support their theological positions. Beyond demonstrating the presence of Jesus, miracles showed that the consecrated host was:

1. powerful

Around 1385 in Scandinavia a couple trying to have a baby consulted a demonologist, who in turn summoned a number of devils for further consultation, including one wearing a crown. At that moment, a priest with a consecrated host walked past, forcing the crown off the devil and the devil to his knees. The devil admitted the power of Jesus, and the couple decided not to gamble their souls on risky fertility methods.[138]

2. indestructible

During the Easter mass in 1513, at Catania Cathedral in Sicily, the tailor Giovan Battista Rizo seized the host, and attempted to shred it. Miraculously, despite his efforts, the host was undamaged. Rizo, on the other hand, was dragged by a mob to the piazza before the church and burned alive. One source mentioned that he was a *converso*, from a family of converted Jews, but explained the desecration as a moment of madness—with the mob later regretting their murder, since Rizo was normally such a nice fellow.[139]

3. unlose-able

In Swabia, the stigmatist virgin Elsbeth of Reute (1386–1420) devoted herself to asceticism and the Passion of Jesus. She was tormented by the devil, who, to make it look like Elsbeth was secretly breaking her long fasts, would steal food from the kitchen and hide fabricated feces in her room. This demonstrates the limits of empirical inquiry in a context where an intelligent malevolent being could manufacture precisely the most damaging evidence against you at will. On another occasion, her confessor was climbing the stairs with four hosts to serve Elsbeth and three other nuns, when "I had great fright and trembled with my whole heart"—the fourth host was missing. He searched frantically, in vain, before returning to Elsbeth for consolation and advice. When he entered her room, she laughed, saying,

> I know well what upsets you and what you seek, you have sought the holy sacrament: that I have received from my husband Christ the son of God, and I have also seen him in his heavenly nature

138 Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic*, 62.

139 Giovanni Di Giovanni, *L'ebraismo della Sicilia* (Palermo: Giuseppe Gramignani, 1748), 273–74.

> and I have also seen a number of angels and many saints, who stood around him and served him, and he has himself fed me spiritually with the sacrament. Therefore be not disturbed or sorry![140]

Bleeding Hosts

In the most prominent miracles, the consecrated hosts bled, sometimes to demonstrate that they were actually flesh, and sometimes in the course of effecting other miracles. In fact, the blood specifically indicated that this flesh was Jesus's, for a tradition, espoused for example by the mystic Mechthild of Magdeburg in the thirteenth century, insisted that Jesus's wounds bled eternally.[141]

A number of earlier miraculously bleeding hosts still commanded memories and devotion in 1400.

During the Christian reconquest of Iberia, near Valencia, in the thirteenth century, some hosts became bloody during a mass; they were displayed in the subsequent battle, and the Muslims were defeated. Afterwards, to mediate disagreement about who should possess the bloodied hosts, they were given to a mule, who, with covered eyes, wandered for days, over 300 km, up to the door of the St. Mark Church in Daroca, where she kneeled. That church took possession of the hosts.[142]

In Bolsena, central Italy, a host had bled onto its corporal (the white cloth placed under the host and chalice during the mass), which was later transported to Orvieto. In some accounts, the bleeding host solved the doubts about transubstantiation in the mind of the officiating foreign (suspiciously, possibly Bohemian) priest. In others, it inspired Pope Urban IV (ca. 1195–1264) to establish the Corpus Christi feast.[143] Fourteenth-century images in the chapel

140 The confessor is Konrad Kügelin of Waldsee (1364–1428), who wrote the biography of Elsbeth Achler (1386–1420) in 1421. Bihlmeyer, "Die schwäbische Mysterikerin," 105–07.

141 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in late Medieval Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 2007), 188.

142 John of Capistrano, "Tractatus de Christi sanguine pretioso," in Natale Cocci, ed., "Il Sangue di Cristo in San Giovanni da Capestrano: Problema storico-teologico," *Sangue e antropologia nella teologia medievale* 3 (1991): 1381–84 (16); Gaspar Miguel de la Cueva, *Historia del divino mysterio, del sanctissimo sacramento de los Corporales de Daroca* (Zaragoza: Escarilla, 1590). A description by a hostile witness is in Antonio Gavin, *A Master-Key to Popery* (Dublin: Grierson, 1724), 230–32. See José Luis Corral Lafuente, "Una Jerusalén en el Occidente medieval: la ciudad de Daroca y el milagro de los Corporales," *Aragón en la Edad Media* 12 (1995): 61–122.

143 Because there are no extent references to this before the fourteenth century, this is unlikely. Kirsten Van Ausdall, "Art and Eucharist in the late Middle Ages,"

at Orvieto illustrate the story and other host accounts, with Muslims kneeling and children appearing in the place of miraculous hosts. By the fifteenth century, miracle plays describing the bleeding had appeared.[144] In 1513, Raphael (1483–1520) executed a painting of the bleeding for Pope Julius II (1443–1513), including the prelate among the onlookers.[145]

In Brussels, on Good Friday, 1370, Jews allegedly stabbed hosts, which had been obtained by bribing a *converso*, and they bled copiously. Before the Jews could transfer them to Cologne, where the ritual might be repeated, another *converso* betrayed them, and the hosts were taken into Church custody. The guilty Jews were burned alive, and the city's other Jews exiled.[146]

In 1433, Pope Eugene IV (1388–1447) gave what would be called the Bleeding Host of Dijon to Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy (1396–1467). This host had an image of Jesus in Judgment, and bled from its hands and feet, and from the Arma Christi, the tools used to torture Jesus. Growing into a national cult, it became understood to be the result of a Jewish attack on the host—an attack Eugene did not mention, so perhaps a late addition to the story—and protected Dijon from disease and war.[147]

Let us now consider the most controversial Eucharistic miracle. In 1383, the knight Heinrich von Bülow expressed his grievances against the Bishop of Havelberg by burning down Wilsnack, a village in that diocese. Among the smouldering rubble, three hosts on a corporal were discovered on what was left of the altar. Neither the fire nor the subsequent rain had damaged them in any way. The centre of each had a drop of blood. A dream, or angelic voice, told the local priest to find them. A series of miracles followed: candles ignited and extinguished themselves without human intervention, and there were healings, and even resurrections. Naturally, a cult developed. The Bishop of Havelberg

in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ian Christopher Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen Van Ausdall (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 582–96, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004221727_015

144 Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 163–72.

145 Raphael, *The Mass at Bolsena* (1512–14), Apostolic Palace, Vatican City, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael_-_The_Mass_at_Bolsena.jpg

146 John of Capistrano, "Tractatus," 1378–80 (15.A); Etienne Ydens, *Histoire du S. Sacrement de Miracle* (Brussels: Velpius, 1605); Luc Dequeker, "Le Sacrement de Miracle: Notice historique," in *Le trésor de la cathédrale des Saints Michel et Gudule à Bruxelles*, ed. Anne van Yperseele de Strihou (Brussels: [Cathédrale des Saints Michel et Gudule], 2000), 13–19.

147 Roger S. Wieck, "The Sacred Bleeding Host of Dijon in Books of Hours," in *Quand la peinture était dans les livres: Mélanges en l'honneur de François Avril*, ed. Mara Hofmann, Eberhard König, and Caroline Zöhl (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 393–404, https://doi.org/10.1484/m.ars-eb.3.48

was concerned that the hosts might be unconsecrated—that in fact this was not a Jesus cult but a bread cult—and came to consecrate them, but one host bled profusely to demonstrate the redundancy of such an action.[148]

Within the next two years the pope and regional bishops issued indulgences to fund the reconstruction of the destroyed village church. Within a decade the stream of pilgrims had grown to the point that authorities set up a formal division of the revenue from pilgrim-badges sales, with only one third finding its way to the village church's reconstruction expenses.

Although Wilsnack was unusual in that a knight, rather than a Jew, was blamed for the initial outrage, this kind of event was not uncommon, and subsequently every few decades a new bloodhost cult would start in Europe, alongside a far fewer number of wine miracles. In 1492 at Sternberg, a priest had allegedly pawned to Jews a cooking pot and then recovered it by paying them with consecrated hosts. The Jews stabbed them until blood spurted, although the hosts proved to be indestructible. They were buried, but later recovered and found to work miracles, healing the sick and raising the dead. Twenty-seven of the sixty-five Jews who admitted their guilt were executed, the rest exiled. A pilgrimage developed around the miraculous hosts, and within four years enough money had been raised to build a chapel, which still houses the table on which the hosts lay as they were stabbed. That cult withered under the attack of the Reformers in the 1520s. In Knoblauch, 40 km west of Berlin, in 1510, a tinker allegedly stole a monstrance and sold the hosts it contained to a Jew. As at Sternberg, these hosts proved indestructible despite being tortured. Thorough investigation eventually led to the execution of dozens of Jews. The local bishop moved the host to Berlin, but no cult developed, despite no lack of trying.[149]

148 Hartmut Boockmann, "Der Streit um das Wilsnacker Blut: Zur Situation des deutschen Klerus in der Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 9 (1982): 385–408; Ernst Breest, "Das Wunderblut von Wilsnack, 1383–1552," *Märkische Forschungen* 16 (1881): 132–302; Morimichi Watanabe, "The German Church Shortly before the Reformation: Nicolaus Cusanus and the Veneration of the Bleeding Hosts at Wilsnack," in *Reform and Renewal in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher M. Bellitto (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 210–23.

149 "Anordnung des Bischofes Johann von Havelberg," in *Codex diplomaticus Brandenburgensis*, ed. Adolph Friedrich Riedel, 41 vol. (Berlin: Morin, 1842), II, part 1, 143–44. See Fritz Backhaus, "Die Hostienschändungsprozesse von Sternberg (1492) und Berlin (1510) und die Ausweisung der Juden aus Mecklenburg und der Mark Brandenburg," *Jahrbuch für Brandenburgische Landesgeschichte* 39 (1988): 7–26; Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 26, 68–69, 93; Volker Honemann, "Die Sternberger Hostienschändung und ihre Quellen," in *Kirche und Gesellschaft im Heiligen Römischen Reich des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hartmut Boockmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994), 75–102; Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of*

Debate on the Blood-Host Cults

Debates raged over these cults. Although a bloodcult's best defence was a friend in high places, actual arguments were sometimes made. The Irish poet Tadg Óg Ó hUiginn (ca. 1370–1448) wrote that no blood remained in Jesus's body after his death.[150] Some Franciscans proposed that Jesus did not need all of his blood in his glorified body, so perhaps he donated some blood for these miracles.[151]

A dubious bloodcult could be re-framed as a universally acceptable cult of the Eucharist. Pilgrimage encouraged devotion and peace.[152] Pope Nicholas V (1397–1455) defended a bloodcult promoted by the Franciscans at La Rochelle on the grounds of consistency with truth and tradition, and because it encouraged mass devotion.[153] In 1503, Johannes von Paltz (d. 1513) pointed out that contemporary dangers to orthodoxy, especially from the Poor Waldensians and the Bohemians, might have encouraged God to effect the miracle: "For when the blood flows from the host, our faith is confirmed against their errors, since we believe that true blood is contained not only in the chalice but also in the host." The bloodcult might thus discourage the Waldensian Poor from participating in the Eucharist. One scholar could believe the miraculous bleeding but nevertheless appreciated the difficulty in separating the truth from the legend—and indeed Albert Krummendiek (1417–89), Bishop of Lübeck, insisted on documentation when evaluating blood relics.[154]

To get a better sense of how such controversies could play out, let us return to Wilsnack, the controversy over which was both prominent and copiously recorded. Accounts of the Wilsnack miracles were written down in the early fifteenth century and printed in the 1520s.

Sometimes the debate was local and physical. To cure his withered hand, one pilgrim left a silver hand as an ex-voto at the Wilsnack shrine. When he later,

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Anti-Semitism in the Age of Renaissance and Reformation (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 97–99; Van Ausdall, "Doubt," 518, 529.

150 Salvador Ryan, "'Scarce Anyone Survives a Heart Wound': The Wounded Christ in Irish Bardic Religious Poetry," in *Wounds and Wound Repair in Medieval Culture*, ed. Larissa Tracy and Kelly DeVries (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 291–312 (298), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004306455_015

151 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 39, 166–68.

152 Livarius Oliger, "Johannes Kannemann, ein deutscher Franziskaner aus dem 15. Jahrhundert," *Franziskanische Studien* 5 (1918): 39–68 (46–47); Watanabe, "The German Church Shortly before the Reformation," 217.

153 From the Decree of August 19, 1449, in Henricus Denifle, ed., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, 4 vols. (Lyons: Delalain, 1897), IV, 683–84.

154 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 34, 70–72, 94; Heinrich Finke, "Zur Geschichte der holsteinischen Klöster im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Schleswig-Holstein-Lauenburgische Geschichte* 13 (1883): 143–248 (169).

uncured, heard the priest claiming that silver hand as evidence of a miraculous cure, he raised his still withered hand up to rebut him: "O priest, why are you lying?"[155]

The Archbishop of Prague became concerned that so many of his flock were travelling 400 km to participate in this dubious Wilsnack cult. In 1403, he set up a special commission to investigate. One member was Jan Hus, who collected data by interviewing returning pilgrims. Were the clergy of Havelberg taking advantage of the gullible faithful? Were similar bloodcults in the Italian and Polish lands also fraudulent?[156]

Hus explained that people should not be encouraged to believe that Jesus's body and blood were visible, rather than merely edible, during the mass. Ideally, Christians should content themselves with faith, for, Hus quoted Jesus, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet come to believe" (Jn 20:29). The demand that invisible things be made visible compromised that faith. He railed against a "people incredulous and perverse" who needed physical proof, calling them "unbelieving Jews [who] seek visible signs: first affecting with bodily eyes to see [Jesus] in the host and to make his blood flow, just as they sought on the cross his divinity with nails, crown, and lance." After the Resurrection, every part of Jesus's body came together again according to the *optimam armoniam* [best harmony].[157] Except for the blood that exists sacramentally—and really, but not materially—in host and wine, "Today the faithful of Christ should not venerate Christ's blood or hair existing anywhere locally and visually on the earth."[158] Hus went on to say that all the Jesus relics (nails, thorns, clothing, his foreskin in Rome, his mother's milk in Prague) existed similarly—really and sacramentally but not materially. This had consequence for our own salvation, for if Jesus was not intact in heaven now, would we too be dismembered when we were resurrected? "We cheerfully await our blood's glorification, even if for our Lord Jesus Christ we pour it out for to be drunk by dogs."[159]

Certainly, Hus admitted, God could have affected the Wilsnack miracle through his absolute powers: he could even have made faux visible blood appear on a host as a memorial to the real invisible blood. His plain ken, however, effectively limited God to his ordained powers, which did not encompass the phenomenon at Wilsnack, where "the fetid clotted blood of a dead horse is

155 Jan Hus, "Tractatus," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Václav Flajšhans, 3 vols. (Prague: Bursik, 1904), I, fasc. 3, 32–33 (14.45).

156 Fudge, *Magnificent Ride*, 65; Spinka, *John Hus*, 67–69.

157 Hus, "Tractatus," 17–18 (7.21), 20–21 (8.27), 23 (8.30).

158 Jan Hus, "Questio de sangwine Christi," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Flajšhans, I, fasc. 3, 7 (4). See Spinka, *John Hus*, 67–69.

159 Hus, "Tractatus," 17 (6.20).

venerated as the blood of Christ." Jesus's foreskin at Rome and his beard at Prague were not authentic. In the same line, Hus asked the practical questions: who would have been there to collect and preserve the foreskin, or Mary's breast milk? Hus noted that priests had confessed their fraud in faking the bloodcult at Litomyšl, some 150 km east of Prague, where a priest dropped onto the host blood from a cut on his own hand. This did nothing to moderate his disgust for his fellow priests, whom he suggested should be drowned "like puppies in a sack."[160]

For Hus, these cults dangerously distracted from the miracle of the host regularly consecrated by the ordinary parish priest. Relics distracted from the Eucharist. Cult priests distracted from the parish priest. Allowing only priests to drink the consecrated wine distracted from the awesomeness of the consecrated hosts. "Miraculous" hosts distracted from the miraculousness of every host.[161]

The Archbishop of Prague supported his commission's conclusions and invited Hus to preach at the Prague synods in 1405 and 1407. The Archbishop and his priests would denounce the cult once a month, and he outlawed pilgrimages from Bohemia to Wilsnack.[162]

Few cared. Enthusiasm for the cult shot up for decades afterwards. Pilgrims came from Hungary, 900 km away, and from Novgorod, 1,500 km away.[163] Children ran away from home to visit the church. Some 100,000 pilgrims visited Wilsnack each year. Even the Pope, Eugene IV (1383–1447), ruled in 1446 that the Wilsnack bloodcult was legitimate, although to be safe he had them add another host that was known to have been recently consecrated.[164] Wilsnack stood alongside Jerusalem, Rome, Santiago de Compostela, and Aachen in the first rank of Christian pilgrimage destinations.[165] When the throngs returned home, they took memories and images of the cult with them. A church at Basel had an image depicting a secondary miracle, occurring when pilgrims returning

160 Hus, "Tractatus," 10–11 (2.8), 13–14 (4.11–12), 34 (14.48); Hus, "Questio," 7 (4). See Spinka, *John Hus*, 67–69, 213.

161 Hus, "Questio," 33–37.

162 Breest, "Das Wunderblut von Wilsnack," 162–65.

163 Maria Starnawska, "Die Beziehungen des Königreichs Polen und des Herzogtums Litauen zu Wilnack und die Christus-Reliquienverehrung im Spätmittelalter," in *Die Wilsnackfahrt: Ein Wallfahrts- und Kommunikationszentrum Nord- und Mitteleuropas im Spätmittelalter*, ed. Felix Escher and Hartmut Kühne (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2006), 86–88.

164 Donald Sullivan, "Nicholas of Cusa as Reformer: The Papal Delegation to the Germanies, 1451–1452," *Mediaeval Studies* 36 (1974): 382–428.

165 Charles Zika, "Hosts, Processions and Pilgrimages: Controlling the Sacred in Fifteenth-Century Germany," *Past and Present* 118 (1988): 25–64 (49).

from Wilsnack, waylaid by bandits, witnessed their humble walking sticks transformed into swords. Dozens of bells featured images of the hosts in relief.[166]

Opposition intensified as well. Heinrich Tocke (d. 1454), from nearby Erfurt University, spent decades fighting the cult. In 1443, he went to Wilsnack to examine the hosts—after the worshippers had left the church, to avoid scandal—and found nothing but cobwebs. Supported by the Bishop of Magdeburg, Tocke gave a speech at the provincial synod there (June 1451), with an important visitor in attendance. Nicholas of Cusa, a legate for the new Pope, Nicholas V, was then doing a reform tour (see Chapter 13). Having heard Tocke, he travelled to Wilsnack, and attempted to end the cult for good. Cusa insisted that Jesus could not be divided up, partly in heaven and partly in Wilsnack; even during the three days between his death and Resurrection Jesus was still fully and completely human, and so all miracle hosts were false. Although "the clergy in their greed for money not only permit this but even encourage it through the publicizing of miracles," nonetheless "the glorified body of Christ has glorified blood completely un-seeable in glorified veins." His blood is "invisible in glorified veins," not visible in mundane miracles. If the Wilsnack cult continued, Cusa threatened, participants would be excommunicated, and the church put under interdict. The Wilsnack clergy should not display the hosts, which were to be eaten during the celebration of a normal mass. Pilgrim badges should no longer be made.[167]

John of Capistrano (1386–1456) was also asked to weigh in on the matter, and composed *De Christi sanguine pretioso* [On the Precious Blood of Christ] (ca. 1440–42). His understanding can be seen as a collision between the deep and plain kens: the divine was immutable, and the human contingent; because of the perfect union of divine and human in Jesus, that human contingent participated in the divine immutable. A deep-ken sense of consonance required harmony between Jesus's blood and the rest of him, for the part and the whole must have *congruentiam* [congruence] and *convenientiam* [accord], to avoid being *turpis* [ugly].[168] He, too, was dubious of Wilsnack. Capistrano argued that for it to be able to save us, the blood of God must be intact: Jesus's blood, innocent, cannot

166 Breest, "Das Wunderblut von Wilsnack," 190; Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 26–27, 43.

167 Erich Meuthen, ed., *Acta Cusana, Band I, Lieferung 3, Teilband A* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1996), 980–81; "Erzbischof Friedrich von Magdeburg publicirt das Verbot des Cardinal-Legaten Nicolaus von Cusa" (1452), in *Codex diplomaticus Brandenburgensis*, ed. Riedel, II, part 1, 152–56. See Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 27, 126, 142; Rudolf Haubst, *Die Christologie des Nikolaus von Kues* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1956), 298–304; Watanabe, "The German Church Shortly before the Reformation," 210–23.

168 This is a deep-ken perspective on two subjects, one itself deep ken (the divine immutable) and the other plain (the human contingent).

have been abandoned, since that separation would endanger the efficacy of the Eucharist. (He also explained that the purity of Mary's blood, which had never come into contact with sperm, allowed her to become pregnant with Jesus.)[169]

In the end, Nicholas of Cusa failed. The Bishops of Magdeburg and of Havelberg excommunicated each other. On the secular map, Wilsnack was located in Brandenburg, and, in 1453, its Elector Friedrich travelled all the way to Rome to get papal support. That year, Pope Nicholas undid all the excommunications and allowed the cult to continue, overruling the decree of his own legate. The new church, funded by the success of the cult, was completed a half-century later.[170]

Other blood-host cults ended when demonstrated to be fraudulent. In Leominster, in Herefordshire, during Henry VII's (1457–1509) reign (rl. 1485–1509) a woman ("strange wench") caged in an upper church gallery stopped eating and drinking, except for the host that floated to her mouth, borne by invisible angels. Investigation revealed a mechanism by which a thin hair was attached to the host to control its movement.[171] In another case, four Dominicans were executed in Bern in 1509 for faking the appearance of blood on hosts and a Mary statue that could gesticulate, weep, groan, speak, and cry blood. The novice Johann Jetzer (d. 1514) had been repeatedly fooled, so that he got "such a habit of incredulousness, that he would hardly believe his own eyes." This was itself considered dangerous. One local canon said that "if the testimony of our eyes could not be believed in this Cause, it would call in Question the truth of the bodily Presence of Christ in the Mass."[172] For this canon, the real presence was not invisible, but empirically visible with the eye.

Eventually, the debate over the Wilsnack cult ended, not with persuasion, but with violence fuelled in part by the German Reformation. Martin Luther (1483–1546) denounced it, and other blood host cults, in his *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation* [To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation] (1520). In 1552, the Lutheran pastor for Wilsnack burned the hosts, and was imprisoned.[173]

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169 John of Capistrano, "Tractatus," 1346–47 (3.A), 1349–50 (4.C.1), 1355–56, 1359–60 (6.C, 7.D), 1356–59 (7.A-C), 1367–68, 1377 (11.A.1–2, 14.A.1), 1371–72 (12.B). See Breest, "Das Wunderblut von Wilsnack," 255–74; Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 116–18, 141–42, 158.

170 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 43.

171 Thomas More, *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, ed. Thomas M. C. Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour, and Richard C. Marius (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1981), 87.

172 William Waller, *The Tragical History of Jetzer* (London: Ponder, 1679), 20, 24; Romy Günthart, *Von den vier Ketzern: 'Ein erdocht falsch history etlicher Prediger münch' und 'Die war History von den vier ketzer prediger ordens.' Edition und Kommentar* (Bern: Chronos, 2009).

173 Breest, "Das Wunderblut von Wilsnack," 282–95.

Envoi

Not everyone was impressed by careless enthusiasm for the Eucharist and the mass. Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444), so often accused of witchcraft and excess enthusiasm, was here a voice of restraint: he was annoyed by priests and those "damned old sorcerer women" who used the host for magical healing purposes.[174] He preached that preaching was more valuable than attending the mass, except on Sundays and obligatory holy days,[175] for one would not have faith in the mass if it were not for preaching.[176] In the Duchy of Burgundy, some children preferred to go to a local orchard to eat fruit rather than to the church to see the consecrated host of their lord and saviour. The Church excommunicated the orchard.[177]

The importance of the mass made it a decoration for important religious occasions, while its ubiquity sometimes brought it into other everyday contexts. A mass might be said before jousting, or jousting might be cancelled on the Easter holidays, presumably also to encourage church attendance.[178] It was not uncommon for the sacred and profane to thus mix: in 1385, Pope Urban VI (ca. 1318–89) read the liturgical Hours within shouting—or screaming—distance of the dungeon where he had ordered some rebel cardinals tortured.[179] Francis I of France (1494–1547) used the mass as an opportunity to flirt with women.[180] At the other extreme, proximity to the real presence of God could overwhelm sensitive souls. The young Luther had a panic attack as he celebrated his first mass.[181]

In 2020, a global pandemic moved the mass online. Priests performed the rite in empty churches under the judgmental eye not of God, but of webcams. Circumstances meant that lay people were once again reduced to ocular Communion. The human audience of this new stage in liturgical history had reverted back to one of the practices of 1400—frequent attendance at multiple

174 Bernardino of Siena, *Opera omnia*, 9 vols. (Florence: Quaracchi, 1959), VII, 417. See Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 95–96.

175 Mormando, *Preacher's Demons*, 242.

176 Bernardino of Siena, *Le prediche volgari*, ed. Luciano Banchi, 3 vols. (Siena: Tip. edit. all'inseg. di S. Bernardino, 1880), I, 66.

177 Barthélémy de Chasseneux, *Consilia d. Bartholomaei à Chasseneo Burgundi iurisconsulti præstantissimi: Hedvanae ac Montiscinerii præfecturarum Regij aduocati* (Lyons: Nathanaelem Vincentium, 1588), fol. 17r.

178 Mortimer, *Fears*, 87–88.

179 Georg Erler, ed., *Theoderici de Nyem de scismate libri tres* (Leipzig: Veit, 1890), 94.

180 Francis Hackett, *Francis the First* (New York: Doubleday, 1935), 98.

181 Martin Luther, *Tischreden*, 6 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1916), IV, 384 (4574).

masses. Some worshippers "hopped" from one mass to the next, globally, like flipping through television channels. Such mass-hoppers, however, were not maximizing spiritual benefits by repeated viewings, but were simply "sampling" them, to find the priest with the best "presentation skills."[182] Christians today may thus be on the cusp of a new debate about how the mass is valuable. Concerns about frequent visual consumption, whether by runners in 1400 or hoppers in 2020, is only the tip of the iceberg. The complexity, centrality, and mystery of the Eucharist almost guarantees controversy.

182 Fr. Brendan Hoban of the Association of Catholic Priests, quoted in Rory Carroll, "'Mass Hoppers' giving us Anxiety, say Irish priests," *The Guardian* (10 November 2020), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/10/ireland-catholic-priests-online-mass-reviews-causing-performance-anxiety