Biblical Communion: Concerning Transubstantiation
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4 views of Communion
From most ‘literal’ to most ‘metaphorical’
1. Transubstantiation (metousiosis) – Becomes Body and Blood ONLY.
2. Consubstantiation – All four elements present. Body and blood are “in, with, and under” the bread and wine.
3. Symbolism – Christ is present spiritually, not physically.
4. Zwingli– Only representation or symbol, no divine element.

Textual Evidence

Matt 26:26-29

Institution of the Lord's Supper
26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the [3] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

1. v28 not just his blood, but blood the covenant. This blood had not been poured out yet at the cross
2. v29 even after blessing it, to Jesus it is still the fruit of the vine, or grape juice/wine

Mark 14:22-25

Institution of the Lord's Supper
22 And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” 23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, “This is my blood of the [3] covenant, which is poured out for many the forgiveness of sins. 25 Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

1. Jesus is still present at the table. In human limited human form, how does the bread become Jesus body?

Luke 22:14-23

Institution of the Lord's Supper
14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it [2] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” 19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.
1. v19 Jesus physical body, not yet given on the cross.
2. V20 The cup is not Jesus’ blood, rather the new covenant. Is it the literal chalice, or vessel, for the wine that is the covenant? No, it is symbolic of the new covenant.

John 6:22-71

I Am the Bread of Life
22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” 30 So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” 32 Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.” 34 They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

41 So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” 43 Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— 46 not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the
flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” 59 Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

The Words of Eternal Life
60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

1. First, it should be noted that this text does not directly deal with Communion. And as such is included only because it is used to argue for Transubstantiation. John includes no account of the Institution of the Lord’s Supper.
2. The pattern of John up to this point in Jesus’ discourses involves Jesus communicating a Spiritual truth via tangible analog and the hearer stopping at the tangible. Spiritual rebirth with Nicodemos (3:1-15) and Living Water with the woman at the well (4:7-15).
3. Another pattern of John has Jesus referring to himself an inanimate object. Jesus is a plant (vine) and a slab of wood (door) if this the sayings are taken literally.
4. Note that the people seeking Jesus want physical bread to eat and not hunger. Similar to the woman at the well wanting physical water.
5. v32 manna is juxtaposed to ‘true bread’. That is although manna was tangibly bread, it was not ‘true bread’. It is in this sense that v52 uses true. Not to say that Jesus flesh is tangible bread, but rather bread with deeper substance. It is the same case with the ‘true drink’ of his blood. This may be connected to Colossians 2:16-17 where the true substance of tangible things (food, drink, festivals, new moon, Sabbath) belongs to Christ. So we enjoy the tangible knowing there is a deeper spiritual substance, that is Christ.
6. v50 Feeding on the bread Jesus makes it so that one will not die. Is he speaking physically? No, v58 indicates that this bread while like manna, in that it is from heaven, allows one to live forever. If he is speaking physically about Himself as bread, he would be speaking of a physical eternal life. Those who participate in ‘transubstantiated’ communion physically die. If we grant Jesus to be physically calling himself bread it is of no spiritual benefit.
7. The bold-underlined text shows Jesus requirements of obtaining eternal life, or coming to Jesus and the Father. The requirements are: being drawn by the Father, hearing and learning from the Father, looking on the Son and believing, and eating
Jesus flesh and drinking his blood. Does the author mean for these to be four separate requirements? I would say no. John 3:14-18 would also claim that the only way to have eternal life is to believe in the Son of Man who is lifted up. See also (John 3:36, 5:24, 17:3). If they are all one thing stated four different ways then eating Jesus flesh and drinking his blood must be a way of saying ‘believe’.

8. This text ends not with Jesus disciples cannibalizing Him in order to gain eternal life, but rather they either leave (v66) or believe (v68).

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1 Corinthians 11:17-34
The Lord’s Supper

17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [4] 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for [5] you. Do this in remembrance of me.” [6] 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body and blood of the Lord, he who eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. [7] 31 But if we judge [8] ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined [9] so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers, [10] when you come together to eat, wait for [11] one another—34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

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1. In this text Paul gives his own version of the words of institution (similar to Luke’s). Here he emphasizes that the Lord’s Supper is a remembrance and proclamation. He does NOT call it a sacrifice. It does not need to be a sacrifice as Jesus has made a final purification for sins and sat down (Heb 1:3, 10:12)
2. Again, the cup, or wine, is not Jesus blood, but rather it ‘is’ the new covenant.
3. The danger for Paul is not in eating the body and blood unworthily, but rather the ‘bread and cup.’ (v27)
4. ‘Discerning the body’ is not meant as: understanding that it IS the body. Rather it is referring to the church as the body. Paul set’s up this
terminology in 10:17. This is also evidenced by Paul not coupling body with blood here.

5. In 10:16 Paul says that the ‘cup is the participation in the blood’ NOT the ‘cup is the blood’. Similarly the ‘bread is the participation in the body’ NOT that the ‘bread is the body.’

Church History Evidences

- Doctrine of Transubstantiation not ‘officially’ established until 1079ish.
- Early church fathers, seem to be used to argue both sides

**Ignatius –**

**Pro trans**

They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, Flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in His goodness, raised up again. (Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Smyrnaeans).

**Anti-trans**

“Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, He made it His own body, by saying, "This is my body," that is, the figure of my body. A figure, however, there could not have been, unless there were first a veritable body” (Ignatius of Antioch, Against Marcion, Bk 4).

**Justin Martyr**

**Pro trans**

The food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by Him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh are nourished, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus. (Justin Martyr, First Apology).

**Anti trans**

“Now it is evident, that in this prophecy [allusion is made] to the bread which our Christ gave us to eat, in remembrance of His being made flesh for the sake of His believers, for whom also He suffered; and to the cup which He gave us to drink, in remembrance of His own blood, with giving of thanks” (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho).

**Augustine**

**Pro Trans**

That bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the Blood of Christ. (Augustine, Sermons, 227).

**Anti Trans**

“...our Lord Himself, and apostolic practice, have handed down to us a few rites in place of many (Old Testament rites), and these at once very easy to perform, most majestic in their significance, and most sacred in the observance; such, for example, as the sacrament of baptism, and the celebration of the body and blood of the Lord.
And as soon as any one looks upon these observances he knows to what they refer, and so reveres them not in carnal bondage, but in spiritual freedom. Now, as to follow the letter, and to take signs for the things that are signified by them, is a mark of weakness and bondage” (Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, Book 3)

The Lord did not hesitate to say: “This is My Body”, when He wanted to give a sign of His body” (Augustine, Against Adimant).

He [Christ] committed and delivered to His disciples the figure of His Body and Blood” (Augustine, on Psalm 3).

[The sacraments] bear the names of the realities which they resemble. As, therefore, in a certain manner the sacrament of Christ's body is Christ's body, and the sacrament of Christ's blood is Christ's blood” (Augustine, Letter 98, From Augustine to Boniface).

Conclusion

Given the previously stated biblical evidence and knowing that it was not a definitive issue for early church fathers, I personally lean toward Communion as Symbolism. That is, it is only bread and wine through which we remember Christ’s substitutionary death and glorious resurrection. At the same time experiencing Christ’s spiritual presence as he is physically in heaven until he returns again bodily.

I remain convinced by scripture and the Holy Spirit and this is my ‘Romans 14:5-esque’ conviction that I am willing to discuss openly in the spirit of unity in the body.