

Eroticizing the Eucharist

by Pastor Larry for **False Teaching**

T.D. Jakes and Communion at "A Table Set for Two."

"Brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:17-18, KJV)

In the Upper Room and to memorialize His upcoming death, the Lord Jesus took the common but symbolic elements of the bread and wine and instituted the ordinance that has come to be known as the Lord's Table, the Eucharist, Communion, or simply, "the breaking of bread." Luke records, ***"And when He had taken some bread and 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.' And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood'"*** (Luke 22:19-20). Of the rite established by the Lord to be observed by the church, Ralph P. Martin stated that subsequently it became "a fruitful source of heresy and confused doctrine." [1] Not only was this to be the case for developing Christendom, but it is also so among churches today.

To boost attendance, congregations within the Church of England have employed the music of the rock group *U2*. In one congregation, a bishop presided over what is blasphemously—for it's about them, not Him—called a "'U2-charist', a Holy Communion service that employs the Irish supergroup's best-selling songs in place of hymns." [2] The communion service is described:

In what is more rock concert than Book of Common Prayer, a live band will belt out U2 classics such as *Mysterious Ways* and *Beautiful Day* as worshippers sing along with the lyrics, which will appear on screens. The [nightclub] atmosphere will be further enhanced by a sophisticated lighting system that will pulse with the beat . . . [3]

USA Today reported that "U2-charist" worship has also come to Episcopal congregations in the United States, and likely will find its way into other denominations and congregations as well. [4] One worshipper, a Roman Catholic who attended a "U2-charist" at a nearby Episcopal church in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y., Bridgett Roberts, age 15, remarked of her experience:

It makes you, like, warm inside. Usually at church you love Jesus and everything. But this way you can express how you feel. [5]

Now in a recent message, "Communion," Bishop T.D. Jakes eroticizes the ordinance. [6] On a DVD presentation, he begins his remarks about the Lord's Table as follows:

One of the most personal, intimate things you can do is to have communion. It shows who you are to Him. It expresses that you are one with the Groom, that the Bride is connected to the Groom through the blood; they have fused together and become one; that they have the same DNA; that they've been devined by God; that the covenant has been ratified in the blood much like intercourse signified the ratification of blood in a wedding ceremony. [7]

Then he continues:

When the man and the woman come together, the Bible says, 'They shall cleave together and become one flesh.' His body and her body, her body and his body, they become one entity which is what they were at first when God made Adam. He made one person, male and female He created them and called his name Adam. And when He got ready, He pulled her out of him. And so that's why we have the right to come back together because we were together in the first place. (The audience stands, shouts, claps, and raises their hands.) [8]

Then Jakes drives home the point:

When Jesus says, 'Take, eat. This is my body that was broken for you,' He says, I want my body in you. (Pause . . . shouts and claps) I want my blood in you. And every time you celebrate this rite, it is a reminder that you belong to me, and I belong to you. And he said, 'I will drink no more wine until I drink it new with you and the kingdom of God. Communion is the most romantic ordinance. Eh, Eh, Eh. (He laughs. Pause . . . the audience shouts and claps.) It is the most romantic ordinance between two lovers. [9]

In the observation of communion, the Bishop's remarks are grossly inappropriate for a number of reasons.

First, why associate the ordinance with sex? Jakes heaps up sexually suggestive words, phrases and sentences—*intimate; Groom; Bride; fused together and become one; intercourse; wedding ceremony; shall cleave together and become one flesh; her body and his body; (Jesus says) I want my body in you; Communion is the most romantic ordinance . . . Eh, Eh, Eh; It is the most romantic ordinance between two lovers.*

The Apostle Peter warns against false teachers who, "**when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure [deceive] through the lusts of the flesh**" (2 Peter 2:18, KJV). Decades ago, A.W. Tozer noted that,

The period in which we now live may well go down in history as the Erotic Age. Sex love has been elevated into a cult. Eros has more worshippers among civilized men today than any other god. For millions, the erotic has completely displaced the spiritual. [10]

Second, to pursue the biblical mystery (Ephesians 5:32), Jakes makes it seem that the Groom and Bride are already married, when in fact the Church's marriage to Christ will not officially take place until the future *Marriage Supper of the Lamb* (Revelation 19:5-9). As a group, Christian believers may be compared to a Bride awaiting their Groom's return (Matthew 25:1-11). Though the one-year betrothal period in biblical culture was considered to be legal marriage (When Joseph discovered Mary was pregnant, he wrestled with the idea of divorcing Mary for infidelity, Matthew 1:18-19.), couples lived apart from each other during that time. That's why as His Bride, we're to observe the ordinance that remembers and preaches "**the Lord's death until He comes**" (Emphasis mine, 1 Corinthians 11:26). The ordinance by which the Lord requests His Betrothed to remember His sacrifice on the cross for their sins ought not to be turned into something akin to a *seduction*!

Third, in understanding the metaphor-mystery of the Bride's relationship to the Groom (i.e., the Church's relationship to Christ), earthly sexual connotation regarding that relationship ought to be removed. In answer to Jews who had posed a hypothetical question about the Levirate Law to Him, Jesus responded: "**Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven**" (Matthew 22:29-30, KJV). So even when the Bride is married to the Groom, that marriage in heaven will not be comparable to human marriage on earth for at core, earthly marriage is about covenant-commitment. The fact that the Church's relationship to Christ is explained by the metaphor-mystery of marriage, especially from the perspective of the

period of betrothal during which the bride and groom were separated, stands opposed to those who like T.D. Jakes, attempt to eroticize the ordinance in a earthly-fleshly and human-sensual vein.

Fourth, one must wonder what the preacher means when he asserts that communicants become *devined* by ingesting the elements (the bread-body and wine-blood) of the ordinance. By asserting that divine DNA infuses them, is Jakes advocating that magically transubstantiated elements possess the power to divinize communicants? [11] His words suggest this to be the case. According to his scheme of spirituality, the communion elements become a magical-mechanical-means whereby Christians become “gods.” By ingesting divinity, they become divinity. In the ancient church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, this process is known as deification (Greek, *theosis* or *theopoiesis*). Jakes’ bold language seems to “deliberately [evoke] the pagan language of apotheosis (humans, especially emperors, being advanced to the rank of deity) . . .” [12]

Fifth, in his sermon “Communion,” Jakes makes it seem as if the Lord’s Table is individual when in fact it’s communal. The ordinance is not observed between two lovers, but rather between Jesus Christ and the many who were/are His followers; initially, the original band of apostles/disciples in the Upper Room, and subsequently, all Christians who would come to believe in Him as their Savior and Lord (See John 17:20-21.). So Adolph Schlatter noted that in addition to Baptism, the Eucharist “constituted a second act that powerfully moved believers’ thoughts and desires and bound them together as a united community.” [13]

Sixth, for believers, the attraction of the Lord’s Table is the work He already accomplished for us. The ordinance’s focus is upon Jesus’ past death. *It’s all about remembrance, not romance.* The Lord ordered, “***This . . . do this in remembrance of Me***” (Luke 22:19). The Apostle Paul twice repeated, once for the Bread and then for the Cup, “***Do this in remembrance of Me***” (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). As Washington D.C., abounds with granite memorials remembering those who died in the cause for our and other nations’ freedom—the World War II Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, etc.—so the elements are taken in the memory of the One who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins, He who died for our spiritual freedom. The church must not allow sensuality to undermine her spirituality. The Table of the Lord must not be turned on its head to impress others of being some sort of bacchic rite (Bacchus was the Roman “party” god.), something that for reason early Christians called their meetings the Agape, or Love Feast (See 1 Corinthians 11:20-22), pagan stoics accused them of. *After all, communion is about redemption and reverence, not romance!* [14]

To conclude this presentation dealing with an aberrant, even abhorrent, treatment of Communion, A.W. Tozer may be quoted again. He wrote:

Now if this god Eros would let us Christians alone I for one would let his cult alone for the whole spongy, fetid mess will sink some day under its own weight and become excellent fuel for the fires of hell. But the cult of Eros is seriously affecting the Christian church. [15]

For reason that the cult of Eros will not leave Christians alone in this wired world of the Internet and is therefore affecting the church, this pastor is forced to issue a public disclaimer of what T.D. Jakes has made “Communion” out to be. *The Eucharist should not be eroticized.* [16]

ENDNOTES

[1] Italics mine, Ralph P. Martin, "Lord's Supper, The," *The New Bible Dictionary*, J.D. Douglas, Editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962) 751.

[2] Jonathan Petre, "Hymns replaced by U2 lyrics at church," *ReligionNewsBlog.com*, January 30, 2007. Online at: www.religionnewsblog.com/17326/hymns-replaced-by-u2-lyrics-at-church.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Gary Stern, "Episcopal 'U2-charist' uses songs in service," *USA Today*, October 26, 2006. Online at: www.usatoday.com/life/music/2006-10-25-u2-churches_x.htm.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Bishop T.D. Jakes, "Communion," *The Potter's Touch*. Online at: <http://en.sevenload.com/videos/FBdNHJu-20090419-Communion>. Video transcribed from minutes/seconds 16.04-19.55.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] A.W. Tozer, "The Erotic Is Rapidly Displacing the Spiritual," *Renewed Day by Day, Daily Devotional Readings*, Volume I, Compiled by Gerald B. Smith (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1980) May 13 reading. I thank my friend Pastor Robert C. Gifford for bringing Tozer's devotional to my attention.

[11] As regards Jesus' statement, "This is My body" (Luke 22:19; Compare Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; 1 Corinthians 11:24.), R.P. Martin notes: "There is no ground for a literal equivalence as in the doctrine of transubstantiation. The copula 'is' is the exegetical *significat* as in Gn. 41:26; Dn. 7:17; Lk. 8:11; Gal. 4:24; Rev. 1:20; and in the spoken Aramaic the copulative would be lacking, as in Gn. 40:12; Dn. 2:36; 4:22. The figurative, non-literal connotation 'ought never to have been disputed' (Lietzmann)." See Martin, "Lord's Supper," 750.

Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-1872), a German philosopher who believed the Christian faith was a "dream of the human mind," and therefore was no friend of the faith, especially the Roman Catholic, wrote of the elements: "The wine and bread are in reality natural, but in the imagination divine substances." See his, *The Essence of Christianity*, George Eliot, Translator (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2004) 245.

To explain the sense of "is" in the sentence, "**This is My body**," a seminary professor once took a picture of his wife out of his wallet and said, "This is my wife." So, "The bread becomes under His [Jesus'] sovereign word the parable of His body yielded up in the service of God's redeeming purpose (*cf.* Heb. x. 5-10); and His blood outpoured in death, recalling the sacrificial rites of the Old Testament, is represented in the cup of blessing on the table. That cup is invested henceforward with a fresh significance as the memorial of the new Exodus, accomplished at Jerusalem (Lk. ix. 31)." Martin, "Lord's Table," 750.

Indeed, as the Apostle put it, "**Christ our passover is sacrificed for us**" (1 Corinthians 5:7b, KJV).

[12] John A. McGuckin, "Deification," *The SCM Press A-Z of Patristic Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2005) 98.

[13] Adolf Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles*, Andreas J. Köstenberger, Translator (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998) 47.

[14] The sense of the Greek noun "remembrance" (anamnesis) is to remember again "in an affectionate calling of the Person Himself to mind." See W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., "Remembrance," *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984) 946-947.

[15] Tozer, "The Erotic."

[16] See also Pastor Larry DeBruyn, "Evangelicals: Emergent and Erotic," Guarding His Flock.com. Online at: <http://guardinghisflock.com/2009/06/08/evangelicals-emergent-and-erotic/#more-3>.

Postscript: I want to thank Mrs. Gaylene Goodroad, a member of Franklin Road Baptist Church, Indianapolis, Indiana, for drawing my attention to Bishop Jakes' internet sermon.