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WO 515 Sacramental Theology: Christ in the Church

Lester Ruth

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WO 515 Sacramental Theology: Christ in the Church
(This course fulfills a M.Div. core elective requirement in Proclamation.)
Spring 2003; Thursdays 2:30-5:15; Orlando and Wilmore
Dr. Lester Ruth

This course will involve distance-learning instruction since it is a joint Orlando/Wilmore class. Students will be expected to have familiarity with the First Class Client email system.

Professor's information: Dr. Lester Ruth; BC (Beeson) 218; 859-858-2175; lester_ruth@asburyseminary.edu; Office hours: 3:30-4:30 p.m. Wednesdays; 9:45-10:45 Thursdays; other times and other means (V-Tel and Orlando visit) by appointment. During office hours, I can be contacted by telephone, email, or First Class chat room. Telephone calls preferred over emails.

Course Description

This course is a basic worship course designed to prepare people in initial skills needed to lead worship in local congregations today. The underlying presumption is this theological notion: fundamentally there is only one sacrament now (the church as the tangible sphere for Christ's ongoing presence in the world). The essential question directing the class will be this: how is Christ's presence manifested in a church's worship? We will answer this question by looking at how Christ is present in the individual elements of worship as well as considering how these individual elements work together as a holistic manifestation of Christ's presence.

Course Objectives

Students completing this course will be able to:

- articulate a theology of the church as the sacrament of Christ;
- know Wesleyan criteria for discerning being moved by Christ in worship;
- discern Christ's presence in classic texts for Christian worship;
- know principles for preparing worship where different venues for Christ's presence work together cooperatively;
- assess how a congregation understands Christ to be present in its midst while making pastoral suggestions for deepening the congregation's experience of Christ in worship.

Texts to be purchased (3 required books)

Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1983). ISBN 0-89622-161-x

Charles Wesley, *Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection*, facsimile reprint, ed. Oliver A. Beckerlegge (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1992). ISBN 1-882339-01-0.

The United Methodist Book of Worship (Nashville: Abingdon). ISBN 0-687-03572-4.

There will be additional required reading on reserve.

Recommended collateral reading:

Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Transforming Our Days: Spirituality, Community & Liturgy in a Technological Culture* (New York: Crossroad, 2000). ISBN 0-8245-1844-6.

Assignments

There are 3 assignments, 1 of which is graded credit/no credit (it can adversely affect your semester grade if not done) and 2 of which factor into your numeric grade.

Assignment #1: devotionally using Wesley's *Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection* and the Great Thanksgiving prayers in the United Methodist Book of Worship, keep a journal recording your discoveries as to how you discovered Christ's presence in these texts. Pray with them, live with them, seek Christ in them until you discover Him there. The existence of such a journal will be checked on **Thursday, May 8**. Failure to have kept a journal will result in the lowering of your semester's numeric grade ½ letter (e.g., A to A-; B+ to B, etc.)

Assignment #2: close weekly reading of assigned readings from Cooke's *Sacraments and Sacramentality* and the reserve reading. Weekly quizzes will be given on the assigned reading, beginning **Thursday, February 20**. The top 9 of these 12 quizzes will be averaged together and form 40% of the semester grade. Quizzes will vary in format between objective and non-objective but all will be relatively short in nature.

Assignment #3: a comprehensive assessment of a single local assembly, **due Monday, May 12 at noon in Professor Ruth's Office (Beeson 218) for Wilmore students or Monday, May 12 at noon as an email attachment sent to Professor Ruth's email account (lester_ruth@asburyseminary.edu)**.

To gather the information needed to complete the project, the student should: 1) pick a local worshiping assembly with which she or he can have continued contact through the semester (it can be a church or campus ministry but not Asbury Seminary related); 2) worship regularly in this assembly through the semester in order to have multiple experiences from which to draw in writing the project; 3) interview 12 persons in this assembly including the two people most responsible for leading worship; the student should ask enough pertinent questions so as to understand where and how this assembly thinks Christ is present in their worship. It is recommended highly that, if possible, students not select a setting in which she or he has current worship leadership responsibilities. Student pastors and others with regular Sunday morning responsibilities should consider options like a Seventh Day Adventist church or a church with Saturday or Sunday evening services. (Do not forget about Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.) If a student must use their own church (and thus have leadership responsibilities), instead of trying to "interview" herself or himself, the student should include in the project a self-reflective section about their presumptions about Christ's presence in worship.

The final written project should include the following sections at a minimum: 1) a self-appraisal by the student concerning her or his initial assumptions about Christ's presence in worship (an expanded section if the student has to do her or his own church); 2) the student's overall evaluation of the organizing sacramental principle in this

assembly using the grid provided in class; 3) describe 3 instances in which the student discerned this assembly encountering Christ in worship, noting the student's criteria for discerning Christ's presence (how did she or he know it was Christ?) and the ways in which different aspects of worship worked together for a holistic manifestation of Christ's presence; and 4) based on the student's overall evaluation of the assembly's organizing sacramental principle, develop pastoral suggestions on how this assembly might appropriately introduce less emphasized venues for Christ's presence.

The projects will be graded on the following criteria: 1) comprehensiveness; 2) clarity; 3) student perceptiveness; and, very importantly, 4) ability to synthesize the material from class and from reading.

In grading, the professor will use the following qualitative assessments, in descending order: exceptional work, good work, acceptable work, marginal work, and unacceptable work. For more details on the qualities of each level and their relationship to letter grades, please see p. 28 of the seminary catalog.

Means of calculating the grade

Students' grades will be calculated in the following manner:

--weekly quizzes on reading:	40% of the grade
--final comprehensive project:	60% of the grade

Late work/absences

Since 3 of the quizzes do not count, there is no makeup on the quizzes regardless of the reason for class absence. Tardiness on the final comprehensive project will be penalized in the following manner: every 24 hours late will result in the loss of an entire letter grade for the project. For example, a project turned in on Tuesday morning after the Monday noon due date will be dropped 1 letter grade (A to B) whereas a project turned in on Tuesday afternoon will be dropped 2 letter grades. The penalty is assessed on the project, not on the semester grade.

Course Schedule

A. Classroom discussions

(Orlando=Professor Ruth leads class from Orlando):

February 13: The promise of Christ's Presence and the sacramentality of the Church

February 20: The ministry of Christ: then and now; Orlando

February 27: Christ, baptizer with the Holy Spirit

March 6: Christ, host of the table, Lamb of God, heavenly bread

March 13: Christ continues to speak in the Word of God

March 20: Christ prays through His Church; Orlando

March 27: Discerning the Presence of Christ

April 3 Music and the Presence of Christ: guest lecture by Dr. John Witvliet, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

April 17: Christ, present and absent in fasting and silence

April 24: The ongoing ministry of Christ: healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, hospitality; Orlando

May 1: When Christ meets a funeral

May 8: When Christ attends a wedding

May 15: Review of semester projects

Please note that through March 6 the course will meet jointly with WO650, an advanced tutorial course on baptism and the Lord's Supper.

B. Reading and quiz schedule (All readings not in Cooke are on reserve in the library.)

February 20: The ministry of Christ: then and now; Orlando

Read: Cooke, 57-77; Lester Ruth, pp. 174-180 in *A Little Heaven Below* (Kingswood, 2000); Edward Schillebeeckx, pp. 13-17, 40-45 in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (Sheed and Ward, 1963).

Quiz preparation: review the questions at the end of each Cooke chapter; consider how Schillebeeckx says physical encounter is still possible with Christ, compare to the story of Keith in the section from the Ruth book.

February 27: Christ, baptizer with the Holy Spirit

Read: Cooke, 115-133, 150-167; Rob L. Staples, pp. 172-177 in *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Beacon Hill Press, 1991); James F. White, pp. 39-50 in *Sacraments as God's Self Giving* (Abingdon, 2001).

Quiz preparation: review the questions at the end of each Cooke chapter; consider how Staples and White might describe Christ as the active administrator of baptism.

March 6: Christ, host of the table, Lamb of God, heavenly bread

Read: Cooke, 94-144; J. Ernest Rattenbury, pp. 168-170 in *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (OSL Publications, 1996); Rob L. Staples, pp. 211-228 in *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Beacon Hill Press, 1991); Laurence Hull Stookey, pp. 41-62 in *Eucharist: Christ's Feast With The Church* (Abingdon, 1993); William Willimon, pp. 23-34 in *Sunday Dinner*.

Quiz preparation: review the questions at the end of each Cooke chapter; consider the different manners Christ is said to be present in the Lord's Supper in the other readings; how does affirming the presence of Christ affect what we say about the bread and wine?

March 13: Christ continues to speak in the Word of God

Read: Gerhard O. Forde, "Preaching the Sacraments," in *Lutheran Theological Seminary Bulletin* 64 (Fall 1984): 3-12; B. A. Gerrish, pp. 109-115 in *The Old Protestantism and the New* (University of Chicago Press, 1982); D. Brent Laytham, "The Healthy Church: Embodying Scripture," in *Catalyst*, 29, 1 (November 2002): 3-4; Clayton J. Schmit, pp. 33-46 in *Public Reading of Scripture: A Handbook* (Abingdon, 2002).

Quiz preparation: consider the commonalities between these authors on how it might be that Christ still continues to speak and teach; according to Gerrish what is the connection between the Word and sacrament.

March 20: Christ prays through His Church; Orlando

Read: Paul F. Bradshaw, pp. 59-71 in *Two Ways of Praying* (Abingdon, 1995).

Quiz preparation: How does Bradshaw describe us praying “in Christ” and not alone?

March 27: Discerning the Presence of Christ

Read: Henry H. Knight III, pp. 8-15 in *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Scarecrow Press, 1992); Theodore Runyon, pp. 146-167 in *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Abingdon, 1998).

Quiz preparation: How do these two authors lay out similar criteria for discerning a true Presence of Christ? According to them, how might we go beyond feelings for discerning Christ?

April 3 Music and the Presence of Christ: guest lecture by Dr. John Witvliet, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

Read: Christine Pohl, pp. 150-169 in *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Eerdmans, 1999); Philip Sheldrake, pp. 33-63 in *Spaces for the Sacred* (SCM Press, 2001).

Quiz preparation: From Pohl, consider the characteristics of Christian hospitality and how these might be made evident in Christian worship. From Sheldrake, consider the different ways in which space might contribute to a sense of Christ’s presence.

April 17: Christ, present and absent in fasting and silence

Read: Cook, 168-178; Harry Boonstra, “Hush! Before the Lord,” in *Perspectives* 12, 9 (November 1997): 6-7.

Quiz preparation: review the questions at the end of each Cooke chapter; According to Boonstra, how might silence be of benefit in worship?

April 24: The ongoing ministry of Christ: healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, hospitality; Orlando

Read: Cooke, 179-194; L. Gregory Jones, pp. 133-147 in *Practicing our Faith*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass (Jossey-Bass, 1997).

Quiz preparation: review the questions at the end of each Cooke chapter; According to Jones, how might forgiveness be demonstrated?

May 1: When Christ meets a funeral

Read: Cooke, 195-207; Charles W. Gusmer, pp. 148-167 in *And You Visited Me: Sacramental Ministry to the Sick and the Dying* (Pueblo, 1984).

Quiz preparation: review the questions at the end of each Cooke chapter; According to Gusmer, what are the characteristics of sacramental ministry to the sick and dying?

May 8: When Christ attends a wedding

Read: Cooke, 78-93; William Willimon, pp. 100-146 in *Worship as Pastoral Care* (Abingdon).

Quiz preparation: review the questions at the end of each Cooke chapter; According to Willimon, in what ways can ritual conducted with pastoral sensitivity be an act of ministry to those in life transitions?

May 15: Review of semester projects

Read: Andrew E. Hill, pp. 162-192, chapter 9 in *Enter His Courts with Praise!* (Baker Books, 1996); Karl Rahner, "What is a Sacrament?" in *Worship* 47, 5 (May 1973): 274-284.

Quiz preparation: According to Hill, how are temple and tabernacle connected to promises of God's dwelling with people? How does the New Testament transform these concepts and this promise? According to Rahner, why is it more important to talk about Christ's "institution" of the church than about specific "institution" of individual sacraments?

C. Weekly class rhythm

The rhythm for each week's class will be the following:

- quiz on reading
- review of previous session and handling remaining questions and issues
- professor presents new material
- break
- viewing of worship videos and small group work
- clarifying lingering questions and issue

Student information sheet

Name _____

I moved here from _____

Current church (i.e., denominational) affiliation: _____

Prior church (i.e., denominational) affiliation: _____

Year at ATS: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th Other

My greatest desire for this course is

_____.

I usually experience Christ in worship at the following point(s):

_____.