

Standard Identity and Relative Identity in the Context of the Institution of the Eucharist

As Beall, Rea, Van Inwagen, and others have noted in some of their works in analytic theology, one problem presented by fundamental theological theses, such as the Incarnation and the Trinity, is the problem of identity. The reason for this is the following. Both the doctrine of the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity affirm that things that differ in some respects are identical.

For example, the doctrine of the Trinity establishes the identity of three persons having different characteristics, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with one God. The problem is that if the three persons are identical to one God, this implies that they are identical to each other. But they have different and even contradictory characteristics. Therefore, these three persons are identical and not identical simultaneously. This case seems to imply a contradiction, and contradictions, for many people, are problematic.

The Eucharist understood as a real presence, poses the same problem. In the Greek words of the institution of the Eucharist,

- Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου /This is my body.
- τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου /This is my blood.

The linguistic particle ἐστιν establishes an identity relationship between two demonstratives: the object signaled through the demonstrative "this" —the bread in Jesus' hands— and what he calls "my body" and the demonstrative "this" —the wine in Jesus' hands— and what he calls "my blood" [Luke 22:19-21; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14: 22-24; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25].

This suggests a relationship of identity between things with no shared characteristics except location (where the host is, there is the body of Christ). As in the Incarnation and the Trinity case, this seems to imply a contradiction. Since the contradiction that arises involves an identity relationship that does not seem to accommodate the standard notion, the idea of solving this problem by proposing a theory of identity seems well-motivated.

The general intention of this talk is to give an account of the relationship between the bread and body of Christ in terms of a notion of identity that allows us to understand the identity between things that have (almost) no characteristics in common. I aim to show that the conditions of identity in the Eucharist make this a notion that contradicts Leibniz's *Principle of Indiscernibility of Identicals*, also known as Leibniz's Law (LL), and to propose an explanation of the identity relation that is implied here in terms of the RIT.

To this end, in the first part of my presentation, I determine the logical problem of the Eucharist and present the reasons that motivate an identity solution to this problem (i.e., a solution that focuses primarily on the identity relation). In the second part, I introduce a version of the RIT and present some examples in which this is applied. In the third part, I use this theory as a solution to the logical problem of the Eucharist and point out some advantages and disadvantages of this proposal.