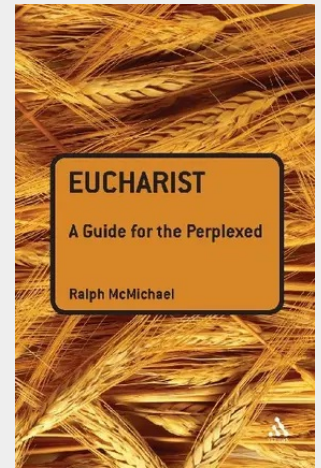


Eucharist

A Guide for the Perplexed

What is the Eucharist? This direct question would seem to yield an equally direct answer. However, as soon as we begin to answer it, we encounter an array of responses layered with various complexities. The answer is shaped by who answers, e.g. a Roman Catholic, an Anglican, or a Baptist. Perhaps, even the name 'Eucharist' would be contested. Answers to this question would reflect not only confessional differences but the spectrum of theological and liturgical perspectives across Christianity. One might emphasize the communal nature of the Eucharist, the presence of Christ for adoration, the fellowship around a table, or a sacrifice performed on an altar. In addition to the multiplicity of images employed and liturgical styles preferred, answering the Eucharistic question will involve explicitly or implicitly the comprehensive scope of theological concepts. Reflecting on the nature of the Eucharist will take Christological, soteriological, and ecclesiological directions, while implicating Trinitarian theology, theology of creation, eschatology, and theological construal's of culture and language. Lastly, we can consider the distorted Eucharistic relations among the churches. Why is the sacrament of unity functioning as a sign of disunity? In this book, Ralph McMichael analyses these complexities/perplexities raised by asking what is the Eucharist? This analysis will serve to point the way forward beyond the plurality of answers and emphases without reducing their significance. He develops a Eucharistic way to consider questions put to the Eucharist. Thus he locates theological reflection on the Eucharist within it.

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