

*Aktual- und Realpräsenz: Das eucharistische Christusbild von der Spätantike bis ins Mittelalter.* Tobias Frese.

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The monograph at hand is the revised version of a PhD thesis in art history under the mentorship of Martin Büchsel. Frese worked on his thesis in the context of a DFG-project (“Fühlen und Erkennen. Kognitive Funktionen der Darstellung von Emotionen im Mittelalter”). Frese focuses on the significance of the religious cult on the representations of the Eucharistic Christ. He works out the major influence of the ever-changing Eucharistic and sacramental discourses on the origin and integration of the different presentations of Christ.

Whereas the earliest monumental representations in the choirs of churches showed the “Aktualpräsenz” of Christ, guaranteed by the bishop in Mass, the Byzantine presentations, showing the Apostolic communion, the “Maiestas Domini,” and the “Theokotos,” illustrate the “Realpräsenz” of Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice. In contrast to these traditions, the depiction of the crucified Christ became the most important and most influential sacramental picture in Western theology. This development, which took place over a thousand years, found its end and climax in the pictorial motif of the Gregorian Mass, which dominated late medieval piety and theology. This motif puts the somatic significance above its narrative meaning.

Frese’s outstanding achievement is to draw attention to the fundamental belief behind these various representations: the interpretation and understanding of the Mass as a picture, a motif. To work out and prove this conviction, he not only focuses on iconographic documents and sources, he also takes into account the then-contemporary liturgical texts (i.e., missals, sacramentaries, liturgical commentaries). His knowledge of

the Greek and Latin sources — of which he gives convincing translations — is impressive. He has also read the latest and sometimes difficult theological studies on the subject. All this enables him to find a personal voice in the study of pictorial motifs. He has got something to say and can face Martin Büchsel as well as Hans Belting.

To have shown the interdependence of liturgy and pictorial motifs in a very readable and vivid study is the great merit of Frese. His findings deserve attention, not only in art history, but in theology as well. He has worked out a fundamental belief in the history of Christianity and piety, too often forgotten nowadays: since the fourth century, liturgy itself was believed to be an “eikon.”

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