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SHORT TITLE

THE CELESTIAL ELEMENT IN THE EUCHARIST

Veitengruber, S.T.M., 1964

THE "CELESTIAL ELEMENT" IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR
IN CONTEMPORARY LUTHERAN THEOLOGY (1945-1963)

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The "Celestial Element" in the Eucharist

This paper does not propose to defend the use of the term "celestial element." The debate which has grown up around the Arnoldshain Theses shows us that we ought not stake the Lutheran or New Testament theology of the Sacrament of the Altar on the use of this term. And yet, it is a good term, for it takes us immediately to the heart of that which separates the Lutheran from the Reformed tradition. Do we only receive bread and wine in the Sacrament, or do we receive something more? This "something" is the "celestial element."

The problem which lies before and behind all discussion on the Sacrament of the Altar is the problem of defining the "celestial element." It is the problem of interpreting the Lord's words, "This is my body, this is my blood." Is it the Lord's body and blood as "substance," or "virtue"? Is the body and blood of Christ we receive in the Sacrament as real a body as the body and blood conceived and nurtured by the Virgin Mary? Is the body and blood we receive that same body which Christ gave for us on the cross, or is it only his body as given for us, that is, the virtue divorced from the substance, the redeeming action separated from the body and blood given and shed for us?

These were crucial questions already for Luther and the theologians of the Augsburg Confession in their controversies with

the sacramentarians. These are crucial questions, as Lutherans today meet with other Lutherans, and with theologians of the Reformed tradition.

The "Celestial Element" in the Sacrament of the Altar in Luther

Exploration for Luther's teaching on the "celestial element" in the Sacrament of the Altar was limited to those writings explicitly appealed to in Article Seven of the Formula of Concord: "Against the Heavenly Prophets," "That these Words, 'This is My Body,' Still Stand Firm," "The Great Confession," and "The Short Confession."¹ In addition, Luther's "Sermon von dem Sakrament des leibs und bluts Christi widder die Schwarmgeister," is included in this study, at the suggestion of the editors of Die Bekenntnisschriften.²

Scholastic theology taught that the substance or essence of the bread was transformed or replaced by the substance or essence of the body of Christ. This teaching was heartily rejected by the confessional churches which emerged at the time of the Reformation. Replacing the scholastic theology was the thought that the bread and wine of the Sacrament merely intended to signify or represent the body and blood of Christ. Luther was

¹These four tracts are mentioned together in the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, 91. This will hereafter be referred to as FC SD. The Epitome of the Formula of Concord will be referred to as FC Ep.

²Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche (Fourth Edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), p. 1005, n. 3.

unable to accept this new alternative, an alternative already suggested by the English pre-reformer, Wicliff. Luther maintained with Wicliff that the bread does not cease to exist. On the other hand, he agreed with the scholastic theologians that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. "Und also widder alle vernunfft und spitze Logica halte ich, das zwei unterschiedliche wesen wol ein wesen sein und heissen mügen."³ The two distinguishable "essences" are the bread and wine, the body and blood. Such a possibility had been suggested to medieval theology by the term "consubstantiation," by which it was taught, in contrast to transubstantiation, that the two "essences" of bread and wine, and the body and blood of Christ coexist. As an attempt to explain philosophically and rationally that which cannot thus be explained, Luther rejected consubstantiation and in its place asserted that for practical and theological purposes, the two "essences" must be treated as one "essence." Luther finds support for this rather unusual approach in the creedal statements on the Trinity and Christ. As we say that there are three distinguishable persons in the Godhead, and yet a single "essence," "so mus es freilich nicht widder die schrift noch artickel des glaubens sein, das zwei unterschiedliche ding einerlei odder ein wesen gesprochen werden als brod

³Martin Luther, "Von Abendmal Christi: Bekenntnis," D. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1909), XXVI, 439, 29-31. This edition of Luther's works is hereafter referred to as WA.

und leib."⁴ In the same way there are in Christ two distinguishable natures which are one "essence," not in the sense that there is a unity in "essence" of the two natures, but because there is a personal unity.⁵ Similarly, the two "essences" in the Sacrament, bread and body, wine and blood, although they are two distinct and distinguishable "essences," are to be considered one "essence," in what Luther terms the unio sacramentalis. This is really no explanation at all of what occurs, or of how such a thing can take place, any more than the hypostatic union explains the relation of the two natures in Christ. The mystery is presented to faith, yet without thereby diminishing the mystery. Nor has Luther abandoned the use of philosophical thought or language when he speaks of the "identical predication" of the two "essences." The verb "to be" still indicates that we are talking about "substance" rather than "accidents,"⁶ but in the Sacrament we have an unusual case. For practical and theological purposes, we therefore speak of the bread in the Sacrament as the body of Christ, "Denn es ist auch eine Einigkeit aus zwei unterschiedlichen wesen worden. . . ."⁷ This unity of the two "essences" in the Sacrament, Luther terms a "sacramentliche Einigkeit," "denn es ist nicht eine natürlich odder personlich einigkeit wie inn Gott

⁴WA, XXVI, 440, 30-32.

⁵WA, XXVI, 440, 40-42 to 441, 1.

⁶WA, XXVI, 280, 33-35 and 384, 30-35.

⁷WA, XXVI, 442, 6-7.

und Christo."⁸ In the Sacrament, we no longer distinguish the two "things" or "essences," but speak of the bread and body as one "thing" or "essence." The bread of the Sacrament is no longer "just bread," but has become indistinguishable from the body of Christ.

ob gleich leib und brod zwo unterschiedliche naturnd sind ein igliche fur sich selbs, und wo sie von einander gescheiden sind, freilich keine die ander ist, Doch wo sie zu samen komen und ein new, gantz wesen werden, da verlieren sie ihren unterscheid, so fern solch new einig wesen betrifft, und wie sie ein ding werden und sind, also heisst und spricht man sie denn auch fur ein ding, das nicht von nöten ist, der zweier eins untergehen und zu nicht werden, sondern beide brod und leib bleibe, und umb der sacramentlichen einickeit willen recht gered wird: "Das ist mein leib," mit dem wörtlin "das" auffs brod zu deuten.⁹

Only in this way can we speak of breaking and eating the body of the Lord, as we break and eat the bread of the Sacrament. But the mystery is not thereby removed. Just as certainly as we take and eat Christ's body when we take the bread, so certainly it remains true that we do not take and bite into Christ's body as we would into a piece of meat.

Wer dis brod angreiffet, der greiffet Christus leib an, Und wer dis brod isset, der isset Christus leib, wer dis brod mit zenen odder zungen zu drückt, der zu drückt mit zenen odder zungen den leib Christi, Und bleibt doch allwege war, das niemand Christus leib sihet, greiffet, isset und zubeisset, Denn was man dem brod thut, wird recht und wol dem leibe Christi zu geeignet umb der sacramentlichen einickeit willen.¹⁰

Luther thus speaks of two elements in the Sacrament. These he

⁸WA, XXVI, 442, 25-26.

⁹WA, XXVI, 445, 2-10.

¹⁰WA, XXVI, 442, 32-38.

terms "ding" or "Wesen." He identifies the two elements as the bread and wine, and the body and blood of Christ. Regarding the relation of these two elements in the Sacrament, he rejects attempting a logical explanation for the presence of the body and blood of Christ. The mystery of the Sacrament does not permit us to say more than that the bread is the body, and that the wine we drink is the blood of Christ.

The sacramentarians say, "bread is bread, wine is wine;" or, there is "only bread" in the Sacrament. Luther responds: Of course, any fool knows that bread is bread, and that in the Sacrament we eat bread. But the sacramentarian cannot resolve the logical contradiction of there being two elements in the Sacrament, and so he reduces the Sacrament to one element, the bread and wine. This means the removal of the body and blood of Christ from the Sacrament, "den leib und blut Christi aus dem brod und wein nemen, das es nicht mehr denn ein schlecht brod bleibe, wie der becker beckt."¹¹ All the exegetical efforts of the sacramentarians on the biblical narrative of the Lord's Supper and on the instituting words of Christ leads to the same disastrous results. In the Sacrament we eat "eitel brod und wein," "schlecht brod und wein," "lauter brod." Maintaining this, in whatever form, means removing Christ's body and blood from the Sacrament. If Luther

¹¹Martin Luther, "Sermon von dem Sakrament des leibs und bluts Christi widder die Schwarmgeister," WA, XIX, 484, 3-5.

were confronted by the two alternatives, either "only bread and wine," or "only the body and blood of Christ," he would choose the latter.

ich offtmals gnug bekennet habe, sol mirs kein hadder gelten: Es bleibe wein da odder nicht, Mir ist gnug, das Christus blut da sei, Es gehe dem wein, wie Got wil. Und ehe ich mit den schwermern wolt eitel wein haben, so wolt ich ehe mit dem Bapst eitel blut halten. Weiter hab ich droben gesagt, wenn der wein Christus blut worden ist, so ists nicht mehr schlechter wein, sondern bluts wein, Das ich drauff mag zeigen und sagen: Das ist Christus blut.¹²

However, the instituting word of Christ does not confront us with this alternative. Rather it presents to us both the bread and body, and the wine and blood. The alternative is whether or not to believe the instituting word of Christ, which declares of the sacramental bread, "This is my body," and of the sacramental wine, "This is my blood." Just as human logic falls short of fathoming this mystery, so human words fail of proper expression. In the celebration of the Sacrament, we limit ourselves to his word, "This is my body," "This is my blood." Outside the celebration we are not limited to these precise words as we attempt to express the truth they contain. Thus we may say, "Christ's body is in the bread," or, "Christ's body is where the bread is," or even, "Christ's body is the bread." "Uber worten wöllen wir nicht zancken, alleine das der sinn da bleibe, das nicht schlecht brod sei, das wir im abendmal Christi essen, sondern der leib Christi."¹³

¹²WA, XXVI, 464, 2-8.

¹³Martin Luther, "Dasz diese Wort Christi 'Das ist mein leib' noch fest stehen," WA, XXIII, 145, 30-32.

But reason is not satisfied with this understanding of Christ's words. "Christus ist gen himel," says the creed, therefore he cannot be in the Sacrament with his body and blood. "We have known that Christ ascended to heaven for 1500 years now," exclaims Luther. "Aber das darumb eitel brot und wein im Abendmal were, das Nüsslein wolten sie kein mal beissen noch anrüren. . . ." ¹⁴

Any number of theories may attempt to explain how Christ can be both at the right hand of God and in the Sacrament. Even the Last Supper presents us with difficulties, for it is logically impossible for Christ to sit at table and also say of the broken bread, "This is my body." Thus reason attempts to remove the body and blood of Christ from the Sacrament, and leave an empty shell. "Denn fleisch kan nicht mehr sagen noch kennen, denn: hie ist brod und wein, darumb mus es sich ergern an Christo, da er spricht 'das ist mein leib,'. . ." ¹⁵

Luther insists that the bread and wine of the Sacrament are not "schlecht brod und wein," but the body and blood of Christ. If the body and blood are "there," answer the sacramentarians, it must be a tangible, visible, demonstrable body and blood of Christ. Otherwise the body and blood cannot really be "there." Luther answers that the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament is not to be understood metaphysically. The body

¹⁴Martin Luther, "Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sakrament," WA, LIV, 152, 9-10.

¹⁵WA, XXVI, 312, 34-35 to 313, 17.

and blood of Christ do not have to be in the Sacrament like grain in a sack, or money in a purse, "idest localiter."¹⁶ Surely the body and blood of Christ may be in the bread and wine in other ways than "locally." The word of God does not make a hole as it enters into the human heart. In the same way, who would say that Christ makes a hole when he enters the bread?¹⁷ Nor are we to imagine that we eat the body and blood in the same way that a wolf eats a sheep, or a cow drinks water, for Christ is not locally in the Sacrament.¹⁸ And yet, in the face of all human logic, in spite of the human understanding of reality, it is the body and blood of the Lord that we receive in the Sacrament, not mere bread and wine. ". . . Christus Leib nicht sei Localiter (wie stro im sack) im Sacrament, sondern definitive, das ist, Er ist gewislich da nicht wie stro im sack, Aber doch leiblich und warhafftig da. . . ." ¹⁹ Here lies the offense to human eyes and reason, that Christ should be offered to us bodily, and yet we are unable to see him with our bodily eyes. Because of this, men begin to talk of a spiritual presence. But this only serves to confuse the issue further. Since it is Christ's body and blood that we receive in the Sacrament, it accomplishes nothing to distinguish a spiritual eating of Christ's body from the bodily eating, since

¹⁶WA, XXVI, 429, 27-30.

¹⁷WA, XIX, 490, 20-23.

¹⁸WA, LIV, 145, 9-11.

¹⁹WA, LIV, 153, 26-28.

in either case we receive Christ's true body.

Sintemal Christus fleisch, Es sei wo es wolle, im geistlichen odder leiblichen wesen, sichtbarlich odder unsichtbarlich, so ists warhafftig natürlich leiblich fleisch, das man greiffen, fulen sehen und hören kan, von eim weibe geborn, am creutze gestorben.²⁰

The Christ in the Sacrament is none other than the incarnate Christ! But we are not to reduce this to a metaphysical identity. The person who takes the bread, takes Christ's body. He who eats the bread, eats Christ's body, "wer dis brod mit zenen odder zungen zu drückt, der zu drückt mit zenen odder zungen den leib Christi." But Luther immediately adds: "Und bleibt doch allwege war, das niemand Christus leib sihet, greiffet, isset odder zubeisset, wie man sichtbarlich ander fleisch sihet und zubeisset."²¹ To human eyes, the bread and wine seem mere bread and wine. The mouth likewise grasps and tastes what seems to be mere bread and wine. But the word of Christ leads the communicant to another conclusion: "das gebrochen brod ist, auch warhafftig und leiblich . . . der leib Christi, wie unsichtbarlich."²² This is a statement which only the word of God can make; metaphysically it is nonsense. But where the word of God meets with faith, the communicant is content to say,

man im abendmal wahrafftig und leiblich Christus leib isset und zu sich nimbt. Wie aber das zu gehe odder wie

²⁰WA, XXIII, 185, 1-4.

²¹WA, XXVI, 442, 32-37.

²²Martin Luther, "Wider die himmlischen Propheten, von den Bildern und Sakrament," WA, XVIII, 172, 20-21.

er im brod sei, wissen wir nicht, sollens auch nicht wissen Brod sehen wir mit den augen, aber wir hören mit den oren, das der leib da sei.²³

Reason continues to see the absurd in the Sacrament. How can it be a real body and blood of Christ since the Sacrament is celebrated in many places at the same time? If it is a real body, does it not diminish with eating? Those who ask such questions base their approach on a human system of reality. They forget that the Sacrament is founded on a word of God, and that the body and blood are Christ's. Christ's body does not diminish. The communicant does not eat a bit of Christ's nose or finger, but the whole body of the Lord.²⁴ It is the same in preaching. Even though a hundred hear the sermon, yet each receives the whole Christ into his heart, and not the hundredth, or some other part of Christ. "Denn er lesset sich nicht stucklich zu teilen und wird doch gantzlich ausgebreitet inn alle glewbigen."²⁵ At this every system of human reality gasps in utter disbelief, for none of these things can be said of a truly human body, and every Christian counter-argument to reason's assault falls back upon the words: "This is my body; this is my blood." God has said it, I will believe it.

The attempt to spiritualize the words of institution is firmly met in Luther's Christology, for Luther's defense lies upon the

²³WA, XXIII, 87, 31-35.

²⁴WA, LIV, 145, 20-26.

²⁵WA, XIX, 489, 18-20.

twin peaks of the words of institution and the Christology of the creeds. The sacramentarians object to the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. But this is no more difficult to believe than that the Son of God became truly incarnate. Would the opponents make Christ into a mere man? Then why do they argue so insistently for a bread and wine which finally are mere bread and wine? Human eyes and senses fail to find God in the child held in Mary's arms, or in the man in the garden or on the cross. Nevertheless it remains true that this child, Mary's son, and this man, is God, God dwelling bodily in Christ. The sacramentarians do not deny the incarnation of Christ. Therefore, how will they explain why it was necessary for our salvation that Christ be a true man, while at the same time they insist that it is unworthy and unnecessary to believe that Christ's body and blood are in the Sacrament..

wolt ich gerne hören, Warumb so eben Christus fleisch kein nütze sei, wenn es leiblich geessen wird, und nicht auch, wenn es leiblich empfangen wird und geboren, inn die krippe gelegt, inn die arm genomen, im abendmal uber tisch stizt, am creutze henget a. Sind doch das alles auserliche weise und brauch seines fleischs so wol, als wenn er leiblich geessen wird. Was ists besser, das es inn mutter leib ist, denn das es im brod und munde ist? Ists hie kein nütze, so kans dort auch kein nütze sein, Ists dort nütze, so mus hie auch nütze sein.²⁶

Hence, the Christ of the Sacrament is never to be divorced from the incarnate Christ. To talk about a spiritual Christ or a spiritual eating of Christ's body apart from the true, natural body of the incarnate Christ is to go against the creed.²⁷

²⁶WA, XXIII, 177, 25-33.

²⁷WA, XXIII, 183, 34-36 and 185, 1-4.

Luther refuses to say how the Christ in the Sacrament and the incarnate Christ are identical metaphysically--yet it is the same Christ.

Wir sagen nicht, das im abendmal Christus leib sei wie odder inn welcher gestalt er ist fur uns gegeben (denn wer wolt doch das sagen), sondern es sei der selbige leib, der odder welcher fur uns gegeben ist, nicht inn der selbigen gestalt odder weise, sondern inn dem selbigen wesen und natur.²⁸

The most that the sacramentarians can prove is that Christ's body and blood are not visibly evident in the Sacrament, or present in any way accessible for human verification. But even though it is an invisible Christ, and an invisible body of Christ which we receive in the Sacrament, it is the same body which Christ assumed in his incarnation. Surely Christ, conceived and born of Mary, received a truly human body from his mother. We receive that same body in the Sacrament, not mere bread. As little as we are able to see that the child and man Jesus is God by the use of ordinary human perceptions, so little will they help us see his body and blood in the Sacrament.

O lieber Mensch, wer nicht wil gleuben den Artickel im Abendmal, wie wil er doch imer mehr gleuben den Artickel von der Menschheit und Gottheit Christi in einer Person? Und fichtet dich an, das du den leib Christi mündlich empfehest, wenn du das Brot vom Altar essest, Item das Blut Christi empfehest mündlich, wenn du den Wein trinckest im Abendmal, so mus dich gewislich viel mehr anfechten . . . wie die unendliche und unbegreifliche Gottheit, so allenthalben wesentlich ist und sein mus, leiblich beschlossen und begriffen werde in der Menschheit und in der Jungfrauen leibe. . . .²⁹

²⁸WA, XXVI, 298, 32 to 299, 17-20.

²⁹WA, LIV, 157, 25-33.

In view of this we are better able to understand Luther's stress on the bodily eating and reception. Surely we do not crush particles of Christ's flesh between our teeth. Once we have made this qualification, it will be difficult for some to understand how this can still be a bodily eating. But Luther insists on the bodily eating, not because he sees a metaphysical identity between this food and other food, but because bodily is the only way we can have Christ, for he is a true, natural man.

We receive Christ bodily in the Sacrament because he himself has said this, and because this is the only way we can receive him. If these two things are kept in mind, it is utterly foolish to ask of what use it is to receive Christ bodily in the Sacrament, or why the bread and wine should be the body and blood of Christ. If Luther is pressed still further to give a reason why the eating of Christ's body benefits us, he supplies an answer that finds warrant in the fathers of the church, particularly in Irenaeus. Christ graciously gives us his body to eat, Luther answers, so that our bodies may live eternally.³⁰ The mouth, of course, does not understand what it is eating, but the heart understands and believes, and because the heart believes, the body too will live eternally.³¹ ". . . der mund fur das hertze leiblich und das hertze fur den mund geistlich esse, und also alle beide von einerlie speise gesetiget und selig werden."³²

³⁰WA, XXIII, 155, 32-36 and 157, 1f.

³¹WA, XXIII, 181, 7-15.

³²WA, XXIII, 191, 20-22.

The person who eats the body of the Lord does not metabolize that body into his own, but is himself transformed by it, so that his body becomes a resurrection body.³³

In view of what we have thus far discovered Luther to teach about the "celestial element" in the Sacrament, some may be tempted to make the following conclusion: Since Christ is "there" in the Sacrament with his body and blood, perhaps this should be considered the distinct gift of the Sacrament. But Luther himself does not support this conclusion. Wherever Christ is present, he is present with his body and blood. Luther does not permit us to make a distinction between a spiritual and bodily eating of Christ, if we thereby wish to set up a distinction between a fleshly body and a spiritual body of Christ. It is the same body "die im abendmal mit mund leiblich und mit hertzen geistlich geessen wird nach Christus einsetzung odder allein mit dem hertzen geistlich geessen durch wort. . . ." ³⁴ In both word and the sacraments, Christ is "eaten" spiritually by the heart, for he is a real Christ, with a real body, not some kind of phantom. "Sondern er gehe inn den mund odder hertz, so ists der selbige leib: gleich da er auff erden gieng, bleib er der selbige Christus, er keme inn der frumen odder bösen hende." ³⁵ St. Paul speaks of Christ dwelling in our hearts spiritually,

³³WA, XXIII, 205, 9-16.

³⁴WA, XXIII, 203, 32-33 and 205, 1.

³⁵WA, XXIII, 205, 4-6.

but we are not to conclude from this that he lives in us as a pure spirit, for as Christ told the disciples, "Touch and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have."³⁶

We see therefore that we have no warrant in Luther for speaking of a difference between Christ in the word and Christ in the sacraments. The difference is not in the Christ whom we appropriate--for he is the same whole Christ whether we receive him in word or sacraments. Rather the difference is in the way we appropriate Christ. In the word we receive the whole Christ through the physical acts of speaking and hearing what is spoken. In the Sacrament we receive the same whole Christ through the physical acts of taking and eating the bread and wine.

im brod der leib Christi und im wein warhafftig sein blut sei. Nicht das er sonst nicht auch anders wo mit seinem leib und blut sei. Denn er ist gantz mit fleisch und blut inn der glewbigen hertzen. Sondern das er uns will gewis machen, wo und wie du ihn fassen solt. Da ist das wort, das sagt, wenn du das brod issest, so issestu seinen leib, fur dich gegeben. Wenn das nicht da were, wolt ich das brod auch nicht ansehen.³⁷

We may receive Christ only as he is, that is as the Son of God in human form. And whether he be at God's right hand, or everywhere, we may receive him only where he promises to come to us. He has promised to be present for us in his Supper, where he gives us his body to eat and his blood to drink. Here, where we receive the bread and wine, he gives what he has promised to us. Thus

³⁶WA, LIV, 156, 27-32.

³⁷WA, XIX, 499, 32-38.

the "proprium" of the Sacrament is not that we receive Christ, or that we receive Christ's body and blood in particular--how can these be separated--but that we receive him by the physical act of taking and eating what is given us in the Sacrament--not mere bread and wine, but the body and blood of Christ. There are two things in the Sacrament, one is the heavenly, the other the earthly, But the "celestial element" is not thereby restricted to the Sacrament.

The "Celestial Element" in the Sacrament of the Altar in the Lutheran Confessions

Dogmatic discussion of the words of institution raises three distinguishable, but closely related questions: (1) What is the nature of the body and blood? (2) What is the relation between the bread and wine, and the body and blood? (3) What does the person who comes to the Lord's Table receive? The Lutheran Confessions have consistently answered: In the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of Christ are received by all who come to the Lord's Table.

The nature of the body and blood is explained and amplified in the confessions in the following ways: it is the "wahre Leib und Blut Christi" (Augsburg Confession, X, Schwabach Articles X, Marburg Theses XV) or the "wahrhaftige Leib und Blut." (Smalcald Articles, X) The Latin of Article Ten of the Augsburg Confession says simply "corpus et sanguis," as do also the Variata and the Apology. Thus the nature of the body and blood of Christ is taken almost for granted in the early confessions. For this

reason Melanchthon's words in the Apology (X,4) are quite remarkable. "Et loquimur de praesentia vivi Christi; scimus enim, quod mors ei ultra non dominabitur." The expressions "wahre" and "wahrhaftige Leib und Blut" continue to be a favored expression in the Formula of Concord. Two modifying terms are added to these initial definitions of the body and blood. Some sacramentarians are said to admit the presence of the "wahrhaftigen, wesentlichen, lebendigen Leibes und Bluts Christi" (FC Ep VII, 4) The same expression recurs later in the Solid Declaration where the theologians of the Augsburg Confession affirm the "wahren, wesentlichen Leib, den er für uns in den Tod gegeben, und von seinem wahren wesentlichen Blut, das für uns am Stamme des Kreuzes zu Vergebung der Sünden vergossen ist." (FC SD VII, 49) The theologians have attempted to define the body and blood historically. There appears to be an avoidance of philosophical language. In the previous paragraph, they had spoken of the "natürlichen Brot und von natürlichen Wein. . . ." (FC SD VII, 48) It would have been quite natural for them to speak of the "natürlichen Leib und Blut." The same hesitation to use the term "natürlich" appears in the Torgau Book. The sacramentarians deny that "ein wahrer, natürlicher Leib" can be in many places at the same time or that the exalted body and blood of Christ can be here on earth.³⁸ According to physics (physica), "ein wahrer, natürlicher Leib" cannot pass through a grave stone or a closed

³⁸ Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche, p. 1003.

door. In both these instances the reference is to the historical Christ. When finally a statement is made about the sacramental Christ, these words are used: "Wahren wesentlichen Leib und Blut."³⁹ In another place, Christ is said to have given his disciples "natürlich Brot und natürlichen Wein . . . welche er seinen wahren Leib und sein wahres Blut nennet. . . ." (FC SD VII, 63,64) Rarely do they speak of the "natürliche Leib Christi."

gleichwie in Christo zwo unterschiedliche, unverwandelte Naturen unzertrennlich voreinigt sein, also im heiligen Abendmahl die zwei Wesen, das natürliche Brot und der wahre natürliche Leib Christi in der geordneten Handlung des Sakraments allheir auf Erden zusammen gegenwärtig sein (FC SD VII, 37)

Here the term should be seen as an affirmation of the true humanity of Christ. There is a striking similarity with Luther's Christological formulation in the Groszer Bekenntnis. "Jesus Christus ist wesentlicher, natürlicher, wahrhaftiger, völliger Gott und Mensch in einer Person, unzertrennt und ungeteilt." (FC SD VII, 94) No mention has been made of a "natürliche Blut." The primary purpose of the terminology then is not to define the body philosophically, but to relate the body and blood to the historical Christ. If we wish to understand the nature of the body and blood in the Sacrament, we need only turn to the creeds accepted in the whole Christian church.

The relation of the bread and wine to the body and blood is defined as follows: ". . . wahrer Leib und Blut Christi wahrhaftiglich unter der Gestalt des Brots und Weins im Abendmahl

³⁹Ibid., p. 1004.

gegenwärtig sei" (Augsburg Confession, X); ". . . wahrhaftiglich gegenwärtig im Brot und Wein" (Schwabach Articles, X); ". . . leiblich im Brot und wein. . . ." (Marburg Theses, XV); ". . . vere adsint . . . in coena Domini. . . ."

(Augsburg Confession, X); ". . . in coena Domini vere et substantialiter adsint corpus et sanguis Christi et vere exhibeantur cum illis rebus, quae videntur, pane et vino. . . ."

(Apology X, 1) It is notable that Melanchthon has introduced the word "substantialiter," since for many this has meant the injection of a philosophical concept into the discussion. It seems likely that Melanchthon adopted the language of the Pontifical Confutation: ". . . in eucharistia post consecrationem legitime factam corpus et sanguinem Christi substantialiter et vere adesse. . . ." ⁴⁰ The expression "vere et substantialiter" seems to have become somewhat of a normative expression for the Formula of Concord in the German expression "wahrhaftig und wesentlich." In these earlier confessional documents, the customary way of expressing the relation between the body and blood and the bread and wine is with a preposition. An explanation for the use of this language is to be found in the Formula of Concord.

die Formen: "unter dem Brot, mit dem Brot, im Brot" gebraucht, ist die Ursach, dasz hierdurch die papistische Transubstantiation verworfen und des unverwandelten Wesens des Brots und des Leibs Christi sakramentliche Voreinigung angezeigt würde. (FC SD VII, 35)

However, another form of expression is also possible. ". . . es

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 247, n. 1.

nicht lauter Brot und Wein, sondern Christus' Leib und Blut ist und heizet." (Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar, 10) Melanchthon quotes with approval the statement made by Vulgarius that "panem non tantum figuram esse, sed vere in carnem mutari." (Apology X, 2) The Wittenberg Concord states that "sacramentali unione panem esse corpus Christi, hoc est, sentiunt porrecto pane simul addesse et vere exhiberi corpus Christi." In the Smalcald Articles Luther wrote "Brot und Wein im Abendmahl sei der wahrhaftige Leib und Blut Christi." The function of bread and wine is to mediate the body and blood of Christ to us. The Confessions refuse to become involved in speculations about how the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ, or how we receive the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine. They only insist that in the sacrament we are dealing with more than bread and wine. The earliest Lutheran confession boldly affirms "des Altars Sakrament steht auch in zweien Stucken." So also the Wittenberg Concord of 1536: "Confitentur iuxta verba Irenaei, constare Eucharistiam duabus rebus, terrena et coelesti."⁴¹ This first thesis of the Wittenberg Concord is repeated in the Formula of Concord. "Sie bekennen, lauts der Wort Irenaei, dasz in diesem Sakrament zwei Ding seind, eins himmlisch und eins irdisch." (FC SD VII, 14) The two natures in the person of Christ are used as an instructive example of

⁴¹"Quemamodum enim qui est a terra panis, percipiens invocationem Dei, jam non communis panis est, sed eucharistia, ex duabus rebus constans, terrena et coelesti." "Ἐκ δύο πραγμάτων συνέστηκεν, ἐπιπέτον τε καὶ οὐρανίου." Irenaeus, "Contra Haereses," IV 18, 5, Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1857), VII, 1, 1028f.

the "zwei Wesen" in the Sacrament.

gleichwie in Christo zwo unterschiedliche, unvorwandelte Naturen unzertrennlich voreinigt sein, also im heiligen Abendmahl die zwei Wesen, das natürliche Brot und der wahre natürliche Leib Christi in der geordneten Handlung des Sakraments allhier auf Erder zusammen gegenwärtig sein (FC SD VII, 36,37)

The lack of concern for a precise definition here is remarkable. There are two "Stucken," "rebus," "Ding," "Wesen." "Wesen," or its Latin equivalent, "substantia," can carry a heavier philosophical load, particularly in the theory of transubstantiation. Here the one substantia is replaced by the other, while only the accidents remain of the substantia which has been replaced. It ought to be clear from the terminology used by the Confessions that no such theory is being attempted here. To say that there is a "celestial element" in the Sacrament is simply to confess that we receive the body and blood of Christ. That we are dealing with the body and blood of Christ needs to be stressed, in view of the fact that the sacramentarians were willing to admit

dasz der Herr Christus wahrhaftig, wesentlich, lebendig in seinem Abendmahl gegenwärtig sei, verstehen aber solchs allein nach seiner göttlichen Natur und nicht von seinem Leib und Blut (FC SD VII, 6)

Hence the expression, "vere et substantialiter," or the German equivalent, "wahrhaftig und wesentlich," intends to offer no theories about how the body and blood are present, but only affirms this against the assertion that only the Spirit of Christ, or Christ in the nature of his Godhead are present. The expression "wahrhaftig und wesentlich," confirms what is confessed of Christ in the creeds, that he became true man. The unwillingness to allow the two natures of the incarnate Son of God

to be separated underlies the rejection of the following statement:

dasz Christus allein nach seiner Gottheit bei uns auf Erden bei dem gepredigten Wort und rechten Gebrauch der H. Sakramenten gegenwärtig sei, und solche Gegenwärtigkeit Christi seine angenommene menschliche Natur ganz und gar nicht angehe. (FC SD VIII, 94)

That the expression "Wahrhaftig und wesentlich" does not intend to lay a philosophical basis for the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament can be illustrated from the formula of agreement suggested by Luther at the Marburg Colloquy.

Wir bekennen, dasz aus vermög dieser Wort "Das ist mein Leib, das ist mein Blut" der Leib und das Blut Christi wahrhaftiglich (hoc est substantive et essentialiter, non autem quantitative vel qualitative vel localiter) im Nachtmahl gegenwärtig sei und gegeben werd.⁴²

The same thing is to be understood when the theologians of the Augsburg Confession say that Christ is present in the Sacrament in a "gestlich, übernatürliche himmlische Weise. . . ." (FC SD VII, 104,105) No attempt has been made here to define the "celestial element" as an "übernatürliche himmlische Stoff oder Substanz." The theologians simply confess that this is a great mystery, and because it is well founded in Scripture, ought to be confessed by catholic Christians.

Finally, what does the person who comes to the Lord's Table receive? By now this should already be clear. The body and blood of Christ "ausgeteilt und genommen werde," (Augsburg Confession, X) "distribuantur viscentibus in coena Domini,"

⁴²Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche, p. 65, n. 1.

(Variata) "exhibeantur . . . his qui sacramentum accipiunt,"
 (Apology X, 1) "uns Christen befohlen zu essen und zu trinken,"
 (Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar, 8) "und werde nicht
 allein gereicht und empfangen von frommen, sondern auch von bösen
 Christen." (Smalcald Articles, The Sacrament of the Altar)
 Fundamental for these declarations is the assertion that there
 are indeed two "things" in the Sacrament, the "celestial element"
 and the "terrestrial element," that is, the body and blood of
 Christ, and the bread and wine. The word "wahrhaftig," used all
 through the discussion of the Sacrament as an appeal to the truly
 incarnate Christ, also describes the reception in the Sacrament.
 The body and blood of Christ "wahrhaftig ausgeteilet und empfangen
 werde." (FC Ep VII, 6) Later this is somewhat qualified where
 they speak of "ein wahrhaftig, doch übernatürlich Essen des Leibes
 Christi wie auch Trinken seines Blutes. . . ." (FC Ep VII, 42)
 Against the sacramentarians, they declare that the body and blood
 of Christ "mit dem Mund empfangen werde" (FC Ep VII, 2)
 Two kinds of eating in the Sacrament must be distinguished. The
 one is a spiritual eating. "Das ander Essen des Leibes Christi
 ist mündlich oder Sakramentlich. . . ." (FC SD VII, 63) This is
 further qualified when they say that the body and blood of Christ
 "mündlich doch nicht auf kapernaitisch, sunder übernatürliche,
 himmlische Weise . . . empfangen werde. . . ." (FC Ep VII, 15)
 The "kapernaitische Gedanken von der groben fleischlichen Gegen-
 wärtigkeit" is rejected for the "geistliche, übernatürliche himm-
 lische Weise," by which Christ is present in the Sacrament. (FC
 SD VII, 105) It must be made clear that nothing is said here of

a supernatural "thing" or "substance." The body and blood of Christ are not seen or tasted. Therefore, the Christian, because he has the words of Christ, bows before the "übernatürlichen, himmelischen Geheimnissen dieses Sakraments. . . ." (FC Ep VII, 41) The "celestial element," that is, the body and blood of Christ, remains a mystery of the divine dealing with us in the Word made flesh.

Excursus on Terminology in the Creeds and Confessions

Both the ancient creeds and the Confessions of the Lutheran Reformation employ the terminology and categories of Greek philosophy to explain the relation of the persons in the Trinity to the one God, as well as the relation of the human and divine in the one person, Jesus Christ. Our interest in this terminology is due to the use of similar language to describe the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament.

In the Nicene Creed⁴³ the Greek term *ὁμοούσιον* is rendered by the Latin consubstantiam, and the German einerlei Wesen. Jesus Christ is or has that which makes God to be God. The Athanasian Creed⁴⁴ makes more extensive use of these terms. On the one hand, we are not to confuse the persons of the Trinity, and on the other we are not to separate the substance or essence of God, neque substantiam separantes, noch das göttlich Wesen zertrennen. Here the Latin "substance" is translated by the German "divine essence."

⁴³Ibid., pp. 26f.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 27-30.

Again, the Creed says of the two natures in Christ: "Deus est ex substantia patris ante saecula genitus, et homo est ex substantia matris in saeculo natus." In both instances where substantia is used, the German translates Natur. However, Natur and Wesen seem to have a close proximity in meaning, as Part I of the Smalcald Articles indicates. "Dasz Vater, Sohn und heiliger Geist in einem gottlichen Wesen und Natur drei unterschiedliche Personen ein einiger Gott ist. . . ." The corresponding Latin translation reads, "divina essentia et natura." Article One of the Augsburg Confession seems to avoid using the term "substantia." On the basis of the Nicene Creed, it is taught "de unitate essentiae divinae . . . quod sit una essentia divina. . . ." The corresponding German speaks of the "gottlich Wesen." It seems strange that the term "essentia" was adopted, in view of the historical precedent the term substantia had.

From the terms substantia, Wesen, essentia and Natur have developed an equal number of adjectives, deriving their meaning from the nouns which lie behind them: substantialiter, wesentlich, essentialiter and natürlich. There is a close proximity in meaning between all four terms. They emphasize the reality of that which is divine, and the reality of that which is human, or they contrast divinity and humanity.

The German term wahrhaft is used to emphasize the reality of the two natures in Jesus Christ. The Nicene Creed emphasizes that he is "wahrhaftigen Gott vom wahrhaftigen Gott." The Athanasian Creed decrees that it is necessary that one believe that Jesus

Christ is "wahrhaftiger Mensch." Article Three of the Augsburg Confession says simply that Christ is "wahr Gott und wahr Mensch," although it goes on to add, "wahrhaftig geboren . . . wahrhaftig am dritten Tag von den Toten auferstanden. . . ." Luther, in his explanation of the Second Article of the Creed, says, "Ich gläube, dasz Jesus Christus, wahrhaftiger Gott vom Vater in Ewigkeit geboren und auch wahrhaftiger Mensch von der Jungfrauen Maria geborn, sei mein HERR. . . ." Thus when we find this term used to describe the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament, we may see the Christological emphasis which underlies it. The creeds do not permit us to separate the presence of the person of Jesus Christ either from his deity or from his humanity, for he is true God and true man.

Article Seven of the Formula of Concord defends the simple and literal interpretation of the words of institution, and the reality of the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. The controversy revolves around the presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament. But this last statement needs to be clarified. It is not the presence, the gegenwart that is at issue. The identity of the Christ who is present is at stake. While the sacramentarians confess that Christ is present, in opposition to the creeds they say that only the deity of Christ is present, and not the humanity, or they say that the humanity is present, but only in the sense of the benefits of the humanity. (FC SD VII, 3,5) For this reason we see the Formula often using the trilogy, the "wahrhaftig, wesentlich Gegenwart" of the body and blood of Christ.

But employing terminology which emphasizes the reality of

the humanity of Christ does not mean that an attempt is made to define this reality other than creedally--that is, metaphysically. Only when the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation is being discussed do we note the metaphysical possibility, and such speculation is rejected by Lutheran theology. (FC SD VII, 108)

Emphasis on the humanity of Christ, that is, the presence of the body and blood of Christ, does not mean that the Formula has lost sight of the whole Christ. Only an Arian heretic would deny that Christ himself is truly and essentially present in the Sacrament as true God and man. (FC SD VII, 126) Article Eight emphasizes that Christ's coming to us is as the Totus Christus

dasz er nãmblich auch nach und mit derselbigen seiner angenommenen menschlichen Natur gegenwãrtig sein kãnne und auch sei, wo er will, und sonderlich, dasz er bei seiner Kirchen und Gemein auf Erden als Mittler, Hãupt, Kãnig und Hoherpriester nicht halb oder die Hãlfte allein, sondern die ganze Person Christ, zu welcher gehãren beide Naturen, die gãttliche und menschliche, gegenwãrtig sei, nicht alleine nach seiner Gottheit, sondern auch nach und mit seiner angenommenen menschlichen Natur. . . . (FC SD VII, 78)

The benefits we receive in the Sacrament also are not to be separated from the whole Christ, nor indeed from his body and blood. "Christus wahrer Gott und Mensch sambt allen Guttaten, die er uns mit seinem Fleisch, fãr uns in den Tod gegeben, und mit seinem Blut, fãr uns vergosse, erworben hat." (FC SD VII, 62)

The "Celestial Element" in the Sacrament of the Altar as interpreted by Contemporary Lutheran Theologians

The terms "presence" and "real presence" are frequently associated with the Sacrament of the Altar. It is only too evident, however, that these terms are not decisive for the question of the

"celestial element" in the Sacrament. "Presence," or "Gegenwart" in the first instance may simply mean that Christ makes himself our contemporary in our history, that is, he becomes part of our history. He is particularly present, that is, part of our history, in word and sacraments. Here we encounter him as the living Lord, knowing that he is not only of the past or for the future, but is now. The term "real presence" may simply emphasize the "reality" of this same presence. "Christus ist in unserm konkreten Leben gegenwärtig 'in, mit und unter' etwas Konkretem. In dem hörbaren Wort, in der sichtbaren Handlung im Sakrament ist er real gegenwärtig."⁴⁵ We have casually understood the expressions "the presence" or "the real presence" of Christ in the Sacrament to indicate a presence there which is distinguishable from his presence under other circumstances. If such a conception once seemed tenable, it is not so today. ". . . the presence of Christ in the Eucharist does not differ from his presence in preaching." "It is the same presence, for both in the word and in the sacraments Christ accomplishes the same thing"⁴⁶ The presence of Christ in word and sacraments, understood in relation to the gift which he gives, is not distinguishable. However, the gift is not to be separated from the person of Christ.

Since Christ is active in all the Means of Grace, and since

⁴⁵Anders Nygren, "Die Gegenwart Jesu Christi in Wort und Sakrament," Bekenntnis zur Kirche. Festgabe für Ernst Sommerlath zum 70 Geburtstag (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, n.d.), p. 298.

⁴⁶Erik Persson, "Preaching and the Real Presence of Christ," Lutheran World, VI (March 1960), 365.

"grace" is not a spiritual substance but the living, active Presence of God Himself in Christ, we must also agree with the consensus of both traditional and contemporary Lutheran theologians that the same "grace" is given in all the Means of Grace. This grace is Christ himself and all His benefits.⁴⁷

Thus the presence of Christ in word and sacraments refers not only to his presence in redemptive operation, but also to his presence as the risen and exalted One. It is rather difficult to separate the presence of Christ from his operation. But "how" is the presence of Christ in word and sacraments? On the one hand, it is a hidden, spiritual presence. "The presence of the risen and ascended Christ in the time between His death and His second coming is only discernible to faith. . . ."⁴⁸ On the other hand, it must still be said that he is present "bodily."

Ist Christus in seinem Wort, in seiner Gemeinde gegenwärtig, dann ist er gegenwärtig nach seiner Gottheit und Menschheit. Auch im Wort ist Christus als derjenige, der aus Maria geboren, gekreuzigt und auferstanden ist, gegenwärtig. Auch im Wort ist er "leibhaft," d. h. in seiner verklärte Leiblichkeit. Christus hat nur diese eine verklärte Existenzweise als wahrer Mensch und als wahrer Gott.⁴⁹

In this case, the "bodily" presence of Christ is based on a Christological assumption. Since Christ is and remains a true man, his presence in word and sacraments involves the presence of his humanity. If such an assumption guarantees the "real

⁴⁷Glenn C. Stone, "The Sacrament of the Altar and the Church's Mission," American Lutheran, XLV (November 1962), 15.

⁴⁸Regin Prenter, "The Doctrine of the Real Presence," The Lutheran Quarterly, III (May 1951), 157.

⁴⁹Friedrich-Christian Viering, "Zur gegenwärtigen Situation des Abendmahlsgesprächs," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIV (November 15, 1960), 342.

presence" in the Sacrament, then his presence in the Sacrament is not distinguishable from his presence elsewhere.

The basic confusion seems to involve the identification of the "presence" of Christ in the Sacrament with that which is "given" in the Sacrament by the Christ who is "present" there. Only when we begin to distinguish between the Giver and the Given can we speak of a "proprium" in the Sacrament. "Und was ist das Proprium des heiligen Abendmahls? Hier ist Christus nicht nur leiblich gegenwärtig, sondern es wird auch sein Leib und Blut in leiblicher Weise gegessen und getrunken."⁵⁰ "Das Wesen des Abendmahls liegt nach lutherischer Lehre darin, dasz uns in im mehr geschenkt wird als im Wort des Evangeliums."⁵¹ Thus Christ is not only the host at his Supper, but also the substance of the meal.⁵² Christ is not only present with his church in the celebration of his Supper as God and man, but he gives the guests his body and blood, not merely a "vague 'real presence.'"⁵³ It will not do to say that the "presence in a physical sense . . . does not mean a higher degree of his presence."⁵⁴ While this is

⁵⁰ Gotthold Ziemer, "Realpräsenz oder Personalpräsenz?" Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (May 15, 1959), 154.

⁵¹ Fritz Heidler, "Luther oder Arnoldshain?" Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (March 1, 1959), 66.

⁵² Carl M. Doermann, "The Sacrament of the Altar," The Sacraments. Joint Theological Commission of the Church of South India and the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (Bangalore: The Christian Literature Society, 1956), p. 30.

⁵³ Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Christ Today: His Presence in the Sacraments," Lutheran World, X (July 1963), 280.

⁵⁴ Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church. Translated

undoubtedly true, it avoids the question of the "celestial element" which the words of Christ themselves raise.

For some the discussion of the body and blood of Christ as the "celestial element" in the Sacrament is not acceptable. It brings with it a "Verstofflichung der Abendmahlsgabe."⁵⁵ Attempts by Lutherans to explain the presence of Christ in the Sacrament as a more intense presence by virtue of the presence of the body and blood of Christ may lead to some such form of metaphysical thinking. The "Besonderheit der sakramentalen Gegenwart" is "ihr Verständnis als eine Gegenwart in den Substanzen, den res Leib und Blut." "Denn Leib und Blut werden verstanden als Substanzen seiner geopferten Menschheit."⁵⁶ The real presence" of Christ in the Sacrament is distinguishable from his "personal presence" in worship because of the presence in the Sacrament of "eines Dinges, einer 'res,' nämlich seines geopferten Leibes und Blutes."⁵⁷ A number of Lutheran voices have been raised against

from the fourth Swedish edition by Eric H. Wahlstrom and G. Everett Arden (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 398.

⁵⁵Otto Schnübbe, "Die lutherische Abendmahlslehre im Lichte des geschichtlichen Denkens," Lutherische Abendmahlslehre Heute, edited by H. Wenschkewitz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), p. 33.

⁵⁶Fritz Viering, "Erweiterte Diskussionsbeiträge zu den Vorträgen über die Gegenwart Christi im Abendmahl; theologisch-kirchliche Fragen und Anmerkungen," Gegenwart Christi (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, c.1959), p. 71.

⁵⁷Regin Prenter, "Die Realpräsenz als die Mitte des Christlichen Gottesdienstes," Gedenkschrift für D. Werner Elert. Beiträge zur historischen und systematischen Theologie, edited by Friedrich Hübner, Wilhelm Maurer and Ernst Kinder (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1955), p. 308.

this conception of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. Paul Althaus contrasts the conceptions "substance" and "life," "bodiliness" and "the result of his death."

"Leib" und "Blut," die Jesus den Seinen im Abendmahl gibt, bedeuten also nicht zwei Stoffe als solche, weder den irdischen Leib und das irdische Blut als Substanzen noch die kommende verklärte Auferstehungsleiblichkeit und ein ihr entsprechendes Blut; sondern das Leben als geopferetes, im Tode verströmendes, nicht von dem Blute als Substanz, als Bestandteil der intakten irdischen oder himmlischen Leiblichkeit ist die Rede, sondern von dem in den Tod hingegenen Leben, noch genauer: von der Hingabe des Lebens. Daher ist die Gabe des Abendmahls nach Jesu Sinn nicht seine verklärte Leiblichkeit und ihr Blut, sondern der Ertrag seines Sterbens.⁵⁸

To eat Christ's body and blood means to receive the benefits of his redemption, but not the body and blood as in any real sense belonging to a real human body. There are not two substances (body and blood) in the Sacrament, but the whole Christ, that is, the body and blood understood as Christ's life given for us.⁵⁹ The body is He as the whole, living person. The blood is not "stoff," but the blood as shed, that is, as the giving of his life. The contradiction between "substance" and "life" is not solved by speaking of the glorified body or bodiliness.⁶⁰ Brunstäd emphasizes that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ "nur in actu, in usu, in der aktuellen Handlung"

⁵⁸Paul Althaus, Die Christliche Wahrheit (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949), I, 371.

⁵⁹Paul Althaus, "Arnoldshain und das Neue Testament," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIV (February 1, 1960), 37.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 34.

This guards against the theory of transubstantiation, but Brunstäd also means it to be a rejection of the concept of a "celestial element."⁶¹ Our attention ought to be directed to the acting Lord who is present as the crucified, and to the body and blood of the glorified Christ as the body and blood given and shed on the cross.⁶² Our attention is thus drawn, not to a substance in the Sacrament, but to an event. The body and blood are the cross event, not substances. Aulen, with his interest in the Sacrament as sacrifice, emphasizes the act in opposition to the idea of a substance. The real presence in the Sacrament means that "the living Christ actualizes his eternally valid sacrifice and makes it into an effectively present reality."⁶³ The Lord's Supper is an act in which the glorified Lord is actively present. Theological preoccupation with the question of how Christ is present has "drawn the attention away from the essential element--the act of Christ. . . ."⁶⁴ Among contemporary Lutheran exegetes, Günther Bornkamm has also reacted against the idea of a substance in the Sacrament. Paul's theology of the Sacrament does not present the thought of "einer materiellen, naturhaften oder auch übernatürlichen Anteilshaft an einer mysteriösen Substanz. . . ." Rather, fellowship in the body and blood of Christ means "Anteil-empfangen

⁶¹Friedrich Brunstäd, Theologie der Lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1951), p. 180.

⁶²Ibid., p. 171.

⁶³Gustaf Aulen, Eucharist and Sacrifice, translated by Eric H. Wahlstrom (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1958), p. 94.

⁶⁴Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, p. 393.

am Sterben Christi und so an ihm selbst. . . ."65

All these are attempts to divorce the event, result, and gift of Christ's death on the cross from the body and blood which he gave and shed on the cross. Leading Lutheran voices have been raised against such divorce proceedings. The body and blood were "given and shed for us." Schlink comments: "This linking of all statements about Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper with the event of Christ's death on the cross dare not be lost sight of for one moment. . . ."66 "The same Christ who once gave his body on Calvary now gives his body in the Lord's Supper and this makes us contemporaneous with his death on the cross."67 Peter Brunner also raises a distinguished voice against the divorce of body, gift and event. At the same time he carefully avoids designating the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament as a substance. The body which the disciples received was not "das Stück eines Menschenkörpers, nicht das Stück einer toten oder auch physisch lebendigen Leibsubstanz. . . . Der Leib Jesu wird den Jüngern nicht als ein bloszer physischer Körper gegeben." Rather, the humanity of Christ is received in his "FÜR-EUCH-Charakter." The body of Jesus is "ER SELBST" as he who was given for us in the humanity united to the Word.68 The entire saving work and essence

⁶⁵Günther Bornkamm, "Herrenmahl und Kirche bei Paulus," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, LIII (1956), 338.

⁶⁶Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated by Paul K. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Boumann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1961), p. 160.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Peter Brunner, "Zur Lehre vom Gottesdienst der im Namen

of Jesus is contained in the body of Jesus.

Jesu Heilandswirken, Jesu Heilandsleiden, Jesu Heilandssieg, Jesu ganzes leibhaftiges für uns gelebtes Leben und für uns erlittenes Sterben und für uns erstrittenes Siegen ist in seinem Leibe und ist sein Leib.⁶⁹

The gift of the Sacrament is the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. The Sacrament gives us these gifts "eingeschlossen in den realpräsenten wahren Opferleib Jesu selbst." The treasure house (the sacrifice body) and the treasure (forgiveness) are one. The source of the gift and the gift are one. At this point we discover what appears to Brunner as the "proprium" of the Sacrament. Only here in the Sacrament where Christ gives us his body and blood under the form of bread and wine do we have such a "leibhafte Einheit seiner Opferfrucht mit seinem Opferleibe" ⁷⁰

The antithesis of substance to gift and event is seconded by a second set of antitheses: substance or person. The manducatio oralis does not point to "eine dingliche Himmelspeise" but to the true presence of Christ.⁷¹ The real presence of the body

Jesu versammelten Gemeinde," Leiturgia (Kassel: Im Johannes Stauda-Verlag, 1954), I, 235.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 236.

⁷⁰Peter Brunner, Grundlegung des Abendmahlsgesprächs (Kassel: Johannes Stauda-Verlag, 1954), p. 71. Albrecht Peters disagrees with this distinction made by Brunner. "Die Unterscheidung von Peter Brunner zwischen einer pneumatischen Ekklesia-Gegenwart des Herrn und einer eucharistischen Realpräsenz von Leib und Blut Christi ist deshalb bei ihm nicht zu belegen. Er hat die Spannung zwischen einem personalistischen Einsetzen bei Christi Person und einem mehr somatischen Denken von Christi Leib und Blut her nicht in dieser Schärfe auseinandertreten lassen." "Zum Schlussbericht der Arnoldshainer Abendmahlskommission," Lutherische Monatshefte, I (May 22, 1962), 203.

⁷¹Schnübbe, op. cit., p. 42.

and blood of Christ is not to be understood as a "himmlische Kraftsubstanz," as something which is to be understood in its relation to ontic reality, but as the personal presence of the exalted Lord.⁷² It is dangerous to introduce metaphysical thinking into the discussion of the presence of Christ since this presence is without analogy.⁷³ The Sacrament involves a personal presence, that is, a presence of Christ, and not the presence "irgenwelcher übernatürlicher Substanzen."⁷⁴ We are not to make mystical speculations about eating a "heavenly substance." "There is no magical transformation either of bread or wine or of our earthly bodies."⁷⁵ The body and blood of Christ are not to be separated from the person of Christ in "stofflicher Verselbständigung . . . als eine materialisierte Gabe. . . ."⁷⁶ The body and blood thought of as an "übernatürlichen Kraftstoffes" which works ex opere operato must be rejected and the emphasis placed on the personal presence of the exalted Lord.⁷⁷ Althaus indicates that this is also the position he takes.⁷⁸ "'Body and blood' is not some material

⁷²Ibid., p. 40.

⁷³Ulrich Asenforf, "Zur Frage der Materia Coelestis in der lutherischen Abendmahlslehre," Lutherische Abendmahlslehre Heute, p. 29.

⁷⁴Karl Manzke, "Die Arnoldshainer Thesen im Lichte der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft," Lutherische Abendmahlslehre Heute, p. 12.

⁷⁵Conrad Bergendoff, At the Lord's Table (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, c.1961), p. 21.

⁷⁶Brunstäd, op. cit., p. 172

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 176.

⁷⁸"Die personale Fassung der Präsenz Christi im Abendmahl

apart from Christ himself, it is his own personal presence."⁷⁹ The entire Savior, who was made man for us with "body and blood," with his whole life, in the unity of his divine-human person-- this is the "substance," the essence of the presence.⁸⁰ When real presence and personal presence are contrasted, this indicates that the body and blood are being thought of as "things."⁸¹ The personal presence of the risen and living Savior "rules out the eating of 'particles' of 'glorified body' and drinking of 'glorified blood,' as long as these are regarded as inert substances, quantitatively mutipliable."⁸²

The antithesis of substance to person results in the divorce of the body and blood of Christ from the person of Christ. The description of the body and blood of Christ in material, metaphysical terms must be avoided. But those who reject the idea of substance in connection with the body and blood must be asked whether they can still talk about the Christ who truly came in

haben in der neueren Theologie schon Männer wie M. Kähler, A. Schlatter, K. Heim, Lutheraner wie C. Stange, Fr. Brunstäd und ich selber vertreten." Paul Althaus, "Arnoldshain und das Neue Testament," p. 36.

⁷⁹Gustaf Aulen, Eucharist and Sacrifice, p. 162.

⁸⁰Reinhold Koch, Erbe und Auftrag. Das Abendmahlsgespräch in der Theologie des 20 Jahrhunderts (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957), p. 143.

⁸¹Heinz Pflugk, "Vorfragen zum Verständnis der Realpräsenz," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XV (July 1, 1961), 208.

⁸²Martin J. Heineken, "An Orientation toward the Lord's Supper Today," Meaning and Practice of the Lord's Supper, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1961), p. 190.

the flesh. "Denn von diesem Christus kann man nicht reden, ohne zugleich von seinem Sein zu reden, von seinem Sein im Rahmen der Materie des Leibes, den ein Mensch hat. . . ." ⁸³ Sasse also objects to the rejection of the idea of the body and blood as a substance. Such a rejection may be tantamount to a rejection of the "substantialiter" of the Confessions.

"Substance" is neither in the Lutheran nor in the Catholic dogmatics the same as "materia" (matter), although it may include the material side of a thing. At any rate, "substance" in this connection is not what the physicist calls substance. ⁸⁴

The antithesis of an "I" to a "thing" presents us with a false alternative. ⁸⁵ We do not receive "ein Bestandteil von Blut als toter Stoff." Rather, we receive the Lord himself (Er Selbst) in his sacrifice for us. ⁸⁶ ". . . Christ's body is the person of the living Christ himself in his corporeal presence." ⁸⁷ The presence of the person of Jesus Christ is none other than the presence of the "'res' seines geopfertten Leibes und vergossenen Blutes." ⁸⁸ We must say that there is a presence both of the

⁸³Hans Asmussen, Warum noch Lutherische Kirche? Ein Gespräch mit dem Augsburgischen Bekenntnis (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1949), p. 147.

⁸⁴Hermann Sasse, This is my Body. Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1959), p. 44.

⁸⁵Ziemer, op. cit., p. 153. Johannes Meister, "Was wird aus dem Abendmahlsgespräch der EKD?" Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIV (December 15, 1960), 198.

⁸⁶Peter Brunner, "Zur Lehre vom Gottesdienst der im Namen Jesu versammelten Gemeinde," Leiturgia, I, 236.

⁸⁷Schlink, op. cit., p. 179.

⁸⁸Ernst Kinder, "Die Gegenwart Christi im Abendmahl nach Lutherischem Verständnis," Gegenwart Christi, p. 43.

body and blood of Christ and of Christ himself, and also, the presence of Christ himself in flesh and blood. The presence of Christ in the Sacrament is not to be reduced to a "naked" personal presence, for the presence of the living Christ always involves his body and blood, not as "things" divorced from the person, but always that "bodiliness" through which he brought the work of salvation to completion.⁸⁹

The question of the relation of the body and blood of Christ to the person of Christ also raises the question of the relation of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament to the crucified and glorified body. According to Althaus, the "bodiliness" of the Lord in the Sacrament cannot refer at the same time both to the heavenly body and to that which was given into death. It must be the one or the other. This is not to deny the identity of the crucified and exalted Lord. He stands before God as the one who was crucified, and it is in this capacity that he gives us the body, blood, and life which he gave in death.⁹⁰ Brunstäd understands the body and blood as the historical presence of Christ in his exaltation, in the mode of his presence between the exaltation and return.⁹¹ "The Christ that the believer meets at the altar table is the risen Christ, the glorified Christ."⁹²

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 42.

⁹⁰Paul Althaus, Die Christliche Wahrheit, I, 386.

⁹¹Brunstäd, op. cit., p. 173.

⁹²Bergendoff, op. cit., p. 22.

"But this does not mean that his presence is separated from his sacrifice." "The finished and eternally valid sacrifice cannot be separated from him."⁹³ Sasse believes that no distinction can be made between the crucified and the risen and exalted body.⁹⁴ We receive the same true humanity of Christ in the Sacrament which he received from the Virgin. It is the "wahren Menschseins Jesu in seiner gewandelten, endzeitlich neuen Weise."⁹⁵ "The exalted Christ is present bodily as the crucified Christ, and the body and blood of the exalted Christ are present as the body given on the cross and blood shed on the cross."⁹⁶

Thus the question of the "celestial element" in the Sacrament of the Altar is distinct from the question of Christ's presence in the Sacrament, but this does not mean that the two questions may be separated and answered in isolation, for when we speak of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament, this necessarily involves a presence of Christ. The great danger is that men will attempt to divorce what in Christ is joined together: the humanity from the person of Jesus Christ, the body and blood from the divinity, or the gift of Jesus Christ from the body and blood he gave and shed on the cross and which he now gives to those who eat at his table. "The body and blood of Christ can no more

⁹³Gustaf Aulen, Eucharist and Sacrifice, p. 203.

⁹⁴Sasse, op. cit., p. 360, n. 18.

⁹⁵Peter Brunner, Grundlegung des Abendmahlsgesprächs, p. 68.

⁹⁶Schlink, op. cit., p. 161.

CHAPTER II

THE "CELESTIAL ELEMENT" IN OFFICIAL STATEMENTS OF LUTHERAN BODIES AND IN INTER-LUTHERAN DIALOG

The Common Confession, 1950

In December 1949, the Fellowship Committee of the American Lutheran Church and the Committee for Doctrinal Unity of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod adopted the Common Confession.¹ The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod approved the document in 1950 at its convention.²

The basic statement is that "Christ gives us His body . . . and His blood." These are identified as the "body offered up for us, and His blood shed for us. . . ." The statement affirms the manducatio oralis ("we receive Christ's body and blood orally . . ."; Christ's body "to eat and to drink. . ."), and the manducatio impiorum ("All communicants receive Christ's precious

¹"A Proposed Joint Confession of Faith," [Common Confession] Lutheran Witness, LXIX (March 7, 1950), 76f. The section on the Sacrament of the Altar reads as follows: "In the Sacrament of the Altar Christ gives us His body offered up for us, and His blood shed for us, to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our faith, and the increase in holiness of life. In the Sacrament we receive Christ's body and blood orally as well as spiritually. All communicants receive Christ's precious body and blood together with the bread and wine, but only the believers obtain the blessings of the Sacrament. Christ is not only present at the celebration of the Sacrament, but in this Sacrament He enters into the most intimate communion with the members of His Church, bringing to them His body and His blood by which he made atonement for their sins."

²Proceedings of the Forty-First Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, June 21-30, 1950 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 567-573.

body and blood . . ."), and the unio sacramentalis (Christ's precious body and blood together with the bread and wine. . ."). The statement thus asserts that there are two "things" in the Sacrament. This is further emphasized in the final sentence which develops the relationship of the "celestial element" to the whole Christ.

Christ is not only present at the celebration of the Sacrament, but in this Sacrament He enters into the most intimate communion with the members of His Church, bringing to them his body and his blood by which he made atonement for their sins.

It is the living, whole Christ who comes to his people in the Sacrament, giving them there his body and blood. Nor are the substance and virtue of the "celestial element" divorced. The body and blood Christ gives his members are the body and blood "by which he made atonement for their sins."

Doctrinal Statement Presenting the Confessional Basis of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, 1951

The doctrinal statement of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (FELC)³ was drawn up not only for the purpose of providing the Federation with a common doctrinal basis, but also in view of a possible union with the Church of South India (CSI). For this reason it is already a dialog with the theological position of the CSI on the Sacrament, although only in a preliminary way.

³Doctrinal Statement Presenting the Confessional Basis of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (Ambur, N. A.: Concordia Book Depot, 1951).

A second consideration was the need to develop a theology which would come to grips with the religious situation and culture in India. But this point should not be overemphasized. Even though the statement arose on the mission field, it is largely the confrontation of European and American traditions in theology. One may doubt with considerable justification the assertion by Sigfrid Estborn, one of the leading representatives of the Church of Sweden's mission, that the emphasis on the personal character of Christ's presence in the Sacrament was dictated by the danger prevalent in India "of laying the emphasis on something impersonal or subpersonal in the Sacrament."⁴ The emphasis on the "personal character" seems rather to reflect the position of many theologians in Europe and America.

The discussion of the Sacrament is preceded by a general statement on the means of grace. Our attention is not to be centered on the material elements but on God who is "personally present and active through the Holy Spirit."⁵ This same emphasis is evident in the first point under the section on the Lord's

⁴Sigfrid Estborn, "The C.S.I. Service of the Lord's Supper of the Holy Eucharist," The Sacraments (Bangalore: The Christian Literature Society, 1956), p. 94.

⁵"The means of grace are not means in which the material elements are charged with divine power, given into our hands and placed at our disposal to be effective in a mechanical or magical way by their very use, but they are efficacious because in these means the Triune God Himself is personally present and active through the Holy Spirit." Doctrinal Statement Presenting the Confessional Basis of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, p. 13.

Supper.⁶ Jesus Christ is the "giver and the gift" in the Lord's Supper. As "an act of God," the Sacrament "is valid, independent of the faith of the participants." This statement follows directly from what was said about "means of grace." It says no more than that the means of grace, including the Lord's Supper, have an objective validity apart from man's faith. It is God's act, not man's. Consequently, this should not be taken as a statement of the Lutheran position on the manducatio indignorum.

The essence of the Sacrament is "the mystery of the real personal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷ This presence is not to be divorced from the incarnation, since he "became man and has given His body and shed his blood for us." Thus the whole Christ, God and man, gives himself under bread and wine. In giving us his body under the bread, he gives us himself, since the

⁶Ibid., p. 18. "The Lord's Supper is essentially an act of God in which Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the divine agent, at the same time the giver and the gift. Therefore, when celebrated according to our Lord's institution, it is valid, independent of the faith of the participants; but the salutary effect depends on its acceptance in faith, while reception in irreverence will place the receiver under judgment."

⁷Ibid. "(a) The Lord's Supper is essentially the mystery of the real personal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior Who became man and has given His body and shed His blood for us. He, the whole Christ, God and man, now glorified, gives Himself in the Lord's Supper under bread and wine. (b) Under the bread Christ gives His body; that is, He gives Himself, because the body of Christ is nothing but the risen Christ Himself, in order to establish and strengthen full communion with the believer. Under the wine Christ gives his blood; that is, He gives Himself, because the blood of Christ is nothing but the crucified Savior Himself, in order to reaffirm the covenant between Himself and the believer, who thereby receives forgiveness of sins, life, salvation, and power to combat sin and to serve in love."

body is not to be separated from the person of Christ, from the whole Christ, "because the body of Christ is nothing but the risen Christ himself." In the same way, "the blood of Christ is nothing but the crucified Savior Himself."

Confession of Faith of the Huria Kristen Batak Church, 1951

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Article Ten of the Batak Confession is its wording of the bread and wine as means of mediating the body and blood of Christ.⁸ The translator apparently felt that "mediating" was only an approximate translation. In a note he adds the following:

Parhitean, for the etymology of this word--hite means a small bridge like a tree or plank, laid across a stream. The prefix par and the suffix an give the word meaning "the bridge which one uses."⁹

This may be equivalent to saying that the earthly elements are vehicles of the heavenly element, or that "with the bread and wine we receive the body and blood of Christ." It would be necessary to understand the animistic background of this young church better in order to judge whether Article Ten of the Batak Confession is an adequate expression of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament.

⁸The Church and the Confessions, edited by Vilmos Vajta and Hans Weissgerber (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c.1963), p. 144. "Regarding Holy Communion, we believe and confess that it is the eating of the bread as a means of [mediating] the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the drinking of the wine as a means of [mediating] the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby forgiveness of sins, life and bliss come to us."

⁹Ibid., p. 205.

The United Testimony on Faith and Life, 1952

Doctrinal discussions between the American Lutheran Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Free Church resulted in the adoption in February 1952 of "The United Testimony on Faith and Life."¹⁰

The opening sentences of the three paragraphs on the Lord's Supper in "The United Testimony" bear witness to the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. Paragraph one identifies these as "His body offered up for us and His blood shed for us." Paragraph two emphasizes the presence of the body

¹⁰"The United Testimony on Faith and Life," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIII (May 1952), 362f. "In the Lord's Supper Christ gives us His body offered up for us and His blood shed for us, to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our faith, and the increase in holiness of life. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' (1 Cor. 10:16, AV). By virtue of Christ's promise, we hold that all communicants receive the body and blood of Him who is present not only in the congregation observing the Sacrament but in the Sacrament itself. Faith in Christ as the Savior from sin and faith in his promise in the words of institution, together with repentance, are necessary for a worthy participation in this Sacrament. The Church therefore has the duty to withhold this Sacrament from openly ungodly and unbelieving sinners, since Christ's promise of forgiveness is rejected by them. Faith does not make or unmake the Sacrament, but is required for the salutary use of the Sacrament.

We believe that we receive Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion, and the basis of this faith is our Lord's promise and assurance, not an ability conferred on a priest to change bread and wine into the Lord's body and blood by reciting the words of institution, nor the intention of a congregation to partake of the body and blood of the Savior. The Lord is personally present during the celebration of the Holy Communion to give sacramentally what He promises in His Word.

and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. ". . . we hold that all communicants receive the body and blood of Him who is present not only in the congregation observing the Sacrament but in the Sacrament itself." This is certainly a well formulated statement, for it connects the body and blood which is received closely to the Christ who is present both in the congregation and in the Sacrament. Paragraph three ties the presence and reception of the body and blood of Christ to the word and promise of Christ. "We believe that we receive Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion, and the basis of this faith is our Lord's promise and assurance. . . ." A closer look at the three paragraphs reveals another emphasis: "Christ gives us His body" "All communicants receive the body and blood. . . ." "We receive Christ's body and blood," Again in the final sentence, it is said that "The Lord is personally present during the celebration of the Holy Communion to give sacramentally what He promises in His Word." Thus two major concerns appear in this document. (1) We receive the body and blood of Christ, as the word of Christ himself says. (2) It is the body and blood of the Christ who is present, that is, alive and "personally present" with his people.

United Lutheran Church in America Statement on the Communion, 1960

The United Lutheran Church in America in 1956 authorized a commission to study the Sacrament of the Altar in order to provide a basis for the solving of a number of practical questions arising in that church. In 1960 the commission presented its "Report of the Commission on the Sacrament of the Altar and its

Implications"¹¹ to the convention of the church. The report has two sections, "Basic Affirmations," which deals with the biblical and dogmatic basis, and "The Shaping of Practice," the practical implications of the first section. The report was adopted, with only minor changes.

Criticisms of the Statement dwell particularly on the apparent reluctance of the Statement to state clearly the relation of the bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ. An editorial in the American Lutheran notes "the statement's preoccupation with the personal presence of Christ and its apparent unwillingness to make a clear affirmation about the presence of Christ's Body and Blood in, with and under the elements of bread and wine. . . ." ¹² Walter Bouman, in a more thorough analysis printed in Una Sancta, writes: "The first point to be noted is that we look in vain for any mention of the Body and Blood of Our Lord in relation to the elements." ¹³

A second concern deals with what is called "the statement's preoccupation with the personal presence of Christ." The Statement avoids distinguishing between Christ's presence in word and

¹¹"Report of the Commission on the Sacrament of the Altar and its Implications," The United Lutheran Church in America. Minutes of the Twenty-Second Biennial Convention. Atlantic City, New Jersey. October 13-20, 1960 (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, n.d.), pp. 918-934.

¹²"Another Look at the ULCA Communion Statement," American Lutheran, XLIV (June 1961), 31

¹³Walter R. Bouman, "The U. L. C. A. Statement on the Sacrament: A Critique," Una Sancta, XVIII (St. James the Elder, Apostle, 1961), 10.

sacrament, or at table prayers. This is understood by the critics to mean a spiritualizing of the presence of Christ.

The Statement does not seem to recognize the question which it raises regarding the nature of Christ's presence in the Means of Grace. For if this presence is identical in all the Means of Grace, then it is either a spiritual presence in word as message, in Baptism, Absolution and Sacrament; or it is a bodily presence in all of them. The second alternative is absurd; the first is contradictory to the Lutheran Confessions.¹⁴

The bodily presence "in all of them" may seem absurd, nevertheless it is precisely what Luther and the Lutheran Symbols teach. It will be our task to examine whether the Statement affirms just such a presence, and then what relation it establishes between the earthly elements and the body and blood of Christ.

Paragraph Seventeen of the section "Basic Affirmations" attempts to place the presence of Christ in the Sacrament in a proper relationship with the incarnate and risen Christ.

In the sacrament, the total risen Christ who shared with us our humanity and raised it into glory is present. This Christ is not confined to any place in heaven. He is present everywhere as God is present everywhere. It is not only the Creator God who is present, but the Creator-Redeemer-Sanctifier God, the God who became flesh in Jesus Christ. In the sacrament, however, this everywhere-present but unknown God is revealed and proclaimed as the God-for-man and actually is present to impart himself to man as such, giving the body that was broken and the blood that was shed on Calvary into the most intimate, restoring union with the believer and as a judgment upon the unbeliever.

The antithesis of this paragraph would appear to be the assertion that Christ is restricted to heaven, or that the Christ present in the Sacrament is anything less than "the God who became flesh in Jesus Christ." The statement that God is present "giving the

¹⁴Ibid., p. 16.

body that was broken and the blood that was shed on Calvary into the most intimate, restoring union with the believer and as a judgment upon the unbeliever," is a rather inadequate statement of what the communicant receives.

The presence of the "total risen Christ" is not restricted to the Sacrament, but in the Sacrament it is "inseparable from the word of Promise." (Paragraph Nineteen)

Every meal at which Jesus is the invited guest ("Come, Lord Jesus, be thou our guest. . .") is also a celebration of the presence of the same Christ who is present in the sacrament. But such occasions are not a sacrament because they are not connected with the specific promise of Christ in connection with the giving of bread and wine for the remission of sins. So there is a difference in the way in which Christ is present when two or three are gathered together in his name, and the way in which the same Christ gives himself in the sacrament. (Paragraph Twenty)

We are grateful that the Statement asserts the presence of the same Christ both at His table and at ours. But the Statement seems very inadequate where it speaks of the "promise of Christ in connection with the giving of bread and wine for the remission of sins." This echoes the statement in paragraph two that Christians assemble "to share bread and wine in remembrance of him." Again, Paragraph Thirty speaks of those "to whom the body and blood are given." What is it that we receive in the Sacrament, bread and wine only, or also the body and blood of Christ? The Statement's answer to this question is heavily qualified. "There is no direct physical discernment of the presence of Christ in the Sacrament any more than of the presence of God in the man Jesus." (Paragraph Twelve) Paragraph Twenty-five speaks of the danger of formulating the relationship between the elements "and

the presence and self-impartation of the total Christ. . . ."

The "how" of Christ's presence remains as inexplicable in the sacrament as elsewhere. It is a presence that remains "hidden" even though visible media are used in the sacraments. Any intimations of the presence of particles of flesh and blood must be regarded as alien to the personal, living nature of the presence and quite out of keeping with the biblical witness. (Paragraph Twenty-four)

The reluctance to think of the presence of Christ in the Sacrament as the presence of a "celestial element" is also evident in the section "The Shaping of Practice."

In some Lutheran churches the minister places the host into the hand of the communicant, while in other churches the host is received directly into the mouth. The latter is a form of reception which was dictated by a material view of the relation of Christ to the elements. (Paragraph H, 1, c)

No Lutheran theological description of how Christ is present among his people in the sacrament has ever suggested that this presence is one of material identity. (Paragraph H, 3)

The Statement has been careful to reject any view which might be considered favorable to a theory of transubstantiation. But nowhere does the Statement speak of eating the body and blood of Christ. Without a clear statement that the sacramental bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ and that the body and blood of Christ are truly received by those who commune, we are left with the impression that, according to the understanding of the Statement, we have mere bread and wine in the Sacrament.

The "Winnipeg Theses," 1962

Theologians of the Lutheran churches in Canada met in a free conference in Winnipeg on September 4th and 5th, 1962. Eight "Theses On The Sacrament Of The Altar" were adopted at this

conference.¹⁵ It should be kept in mind that the theses are not regarded as an official statement of the participating churches.¹⁶

Thesis three reads:

In this Sacrament we receive, by eating and drinking, the true body and blood of Christ united with bread and wine by virtue of the Word of God in a manner understood by God alone.

This thesis offers an interpretation of Paul's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper as it is given in Thesis two. The emphasis in this thesis is on the manducatio oralis (we receive, by eating and drinking, the true body and blood of Christ), and on the unio sacramentalis (the true body and blood of Christ united with bread and wine by virtue of the Word of God in a manner understood by God alone). This is certainly a strong statement of the two "things" in the Sacrament, the earthly elements and the heavenly element. Thesis seven is to be understood in the light of this emphasis. "The communicant is prepared to receive the Sacrament when he . . . discerns his Lord's real presence in the Sacrament. . . ." Missing in the theses is any mention of the living Christ who gives us his body and blood. The relationship of the body and blood to the totus Christus should not be neglected.

¹⁵ A text of the theses was supplied by President F. A. Schole of the Lutheran Church--Canada.

¹⁶ Letter from F. A. Schole, January 13, 1964.

The "Bogotá Theses," 1963

Pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church--Columbia Synod and representatives of the Carribean Mission District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, with the participation of pastors of the Lutheran World Federation in the Carribean area and one representative of the Mexican Lutheran Church met in October 1963 to hold doctrinal meetings on the means of grace. The concensus at which they arrived is given in four theses.¹⁷ Thesis four speaks about the Sacrament.

Christ has given the HOLY SUPPER (the Sacramental Word) to his Church, where He is truly, essentially, and vividly (vivamente) present making of his own a brotherhood of believers (the body of Christ), which partakes of the benefits of the expiatory sacrifice of its Savior and Lord.

First of all, we must remark that the thesis is quite brief. For this reason we ought to be careful in evaluating it and the nature of the concensus at which the different groups arrived. There is a strong emphasis on the presence of the Christus vivus, who is present "alive" (vivamente) with his people. However, no mention is made of the body and blood of the Christ who is present so "alive," nor of the fact that the Sacrament involves our eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ, although the thesis speaks of partaking "of the benefits of the expiatory sacrifice of its Savior and Lord." It seems clear that the matter of the

¹⁷"Dos Reuniones integradas de Pastores Luteranos Discuten Temas Doctrinales," Noticiero de la Fe, XXIX (December 1963), 20.

"celestial element" has been carefully avoided in the formulation of this thesis.

CHAPTER III

THE "CELESTIAL ELEMENT" AS INTERPRETED BY LUTHERANS IN ECUMENICAL ENCOUNTER

Synod of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk and the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands:
"Concensus on the Holy Communion," 1956

Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Netherlands and the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk resulted in 1956 in a so-called "Concensus on the Holy Communion,"¹ although a leading Lutheran representative remarked at the time, "In six points we have found unanimity between the two churches. In the last four points questions remained open."² Thus it is debatable whether the ten theses which resulted from these discussions should be termed a "concensus." The purpose behind the discussions, it should be kept in mind, was to provide a better basis for intercommunion between the churches.³

¹Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Netherlands and Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, "Concensus on the Holy Communion," Lutheran World, III (March 1957), 383f.

²W. J. Kooiman, "The Question of Intercommunion," Lutheran World, III (March 1957), 385. It is not apparent what question remained open in Thesis Ten.

³Ibid., p. 384. "For a century already there had existed in practice between the Evangelical Lutheran church in the Netherlands and the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (the old Reformed folk-church) pulpit exchange and intercommunion in the sense of mutually open communion, although there was no fixed written agreement. We decided to clarify theologically this situation which had existed for so long and began conversations on the Holy Communion."

Thesis two discusses the presence of Christ in the word and sacraments and seems to equate this presence in both cases. "Both churches confess that the Lord is present in his church, both in and through the administration of the Word and in and through the administration of the Sacraments." Thesis three attempts to understand the Sacrament under the category "sacrament." The temptation to reduce the Sacrament to the word and the earthly element is evident here.

Both churches are of the opinion that the Sacrament with its material elements underlines the Incarnation of the Word. Since God in the Incarnation of the Word took upon himself the whole of human existence, yet without sin, he wishes in and through the Sacraments to take on and sanctify our whole human existence, body, soul and spirit.

It should be noted that this thesis is spoken of as an "opinion" of the churches. Thesis four says that "to remember the death of the Lord . . . signifies becoming contemporaneous with Christ" Thesis five asserts that the Sacrament is a means of grace. ". . . the Holy Communion expressly proclaims that the faithful seek their salvation outside of themselves in Jesus Christ (extra nos, in eo)."

Thesis seven clearly reveals the tension between the Lutheran and Reformed positions, for although Thesis two asserts the presence of Christ in word and sacrament, the identity of Christ is not yet determined. Therefore the Lutherans ask the Reformed what position they take on the answer given to question 47 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "Christ is Man and God: as Man he is no longer on earth; but as God and Lord he will never withdraw from us with his grace and Spirit." The presence of such a Christ in the word and sacrament is less

than the presence of the whole Christ, for it strips the humanity from the person of Christ in his presence among us. The Reformed in turn question the presence of the whole Christ. "The Reformed ask of the Lutherans whether the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ does not in fact mean the abrogation of the Incarnation."

The issue in Thesis eight seems to hinge on the distinction between real or spiritual presence.

According to the Lutheran's (sic) understanding, the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion is a presence in virtue of Christ's own power and grace in the form of his humiliation (sic) (form servi), whereas according to Calvinist understanding Christ is really present in and through the Holy Ghost.

Lutherans have always held that the instituting word of Christ is sufficient warrant for the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. However the reception of the body and blood of Christ in faith, and the reception of the gifts of the Sacrament, is the work of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps a letter published by T. F. Torrance in the Lutheran World goes a long way toward bridging this apparent contradiction between the Lutheran and Reformed positions. Even Lutherans may concede that "Christ is really present in and through the Holy Ghost," inasmuch as Lutherans confess that Christ became incarnate by the Holy Spirit, was "anointed by the Spirit, offered himself through the eternal Spirit to the Father, and was raised again from the dead according to the Spirit of Holiness. . . ." ⁴ What should concern us is

⁴T. F. Torrance, "On the Concensus in the Netherlands," Lutheran World, III (March 1957), 396.

that the Lutheran position is supposedly that "the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion" is "in the form of his humiliation" This statement needs clarification. The statement may be understood to mean the humanity of Christ, so that, as in the "days of his flesh" Christ was present as a true human being, even now he is present with his humanity. If Christ's presence "in and through the Holy Ghost" means that the person of Christ is stripped of his humanity in his coming to us in the word and sacrament, then the Lutheran antithesis is correct. However speaking of the "form of his humiliation" seems a strange way of stating this, particularly in view of Apology Ten, "and we are speaking of the living Christ, for we know that he can die no more."

Thesis nine to a certain degree amplifies Thesis five. Since both agree that salvation is "extra nos, in eo," the question again revolves about the person of Christ in the Sacrament.

According to the Lutheran understanding the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion is independent of faith, both of him who distributes as well as him who receives (manducatio impiorum). In contrast, the Reformed church confesses that only through faith which is the hand and mouth of our soul do we receive the true body and blood of Christ.

The two antithetical statements depend on deductions from decisions already made on the presence of the body and blood of Christ, that is, the whole Christ, in the Sacrament. We must say in conclusion that there has been no concensus on the "celestial element" in the Lord's Supper in this document and that

inter-communion between the two churches exists in spite of this lack of accord.

Discussions within the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD): The Arnoldshain Theses, 1957

The post-war in Germany saw the formation in 1947 of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), composed of Lutheran, Reformed and Union churches. Conditions under Hitler and after the war had brought these churches together, especially in the matter of altar fellowship. However, it was felt that such altar fellowship should be based on a common understanding among the churches of the Lord's Supper. The church convention held in Treysa in June 1947 to work out the constitution of the new church group requested the Council of the EKD to provide for a "binding theological discussion."⁵ For the next ten years, a committee composed of leading theologians of the three church groups met repeatedly for studies on the Lord's Supper. In November 1957, the committee agreed to eight theses on the Lord's Supper, the so-called Arnoldshain Theses,⁶ in which the Lutheran, Reformed

⁵Eugene M. Skibbe, "Discussion of Intercommunion in German Protestantism," The Lutheran Quarterly, XI (May 1959), 92.

⁶The German text is available in the following sources: Die Evangelische Lehre vom Abendmahl, edited by Hans Grasz (Lüneburg: Heliand-Verlag, c.1961, pp. 78-80; Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (September 1958), 302-303; Lutherische Abendmahlslehre Heute, edited by H. Wenschkewitz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), pp. 4-6. English translations are available in the following sources: Lutheran World, VII (June 1960), 56f.; Concordia Theological Monthly, XXX (February 1959), 85-87; Church in Fellowship, edited by Vilmos Vajta (Minneapolis: Augsburg

and Union theologians considered themselves to have reached a consensus of understanding on the New Testament witness to the Lord's Supper ("Was hören wir als Glieder der einen apostolischen Kirche als entscheidenden Inhalt des biblischen Zeugnisses vom Abendmahl?"). It was felt that only by a return to the New Testament could the old confessional barriers be overcome. The matter of the "celestial element" in the Sacrament becomes rather decisive in two of the theses, Theses four and five. A number of studies on the theses also suggest that these two theses should be studied together.⁷

Publishing House, c.1963), pp. 122-125. An article by Hermann Werner, "Die Arnoldshainer Thesen auf Englisch," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (May 15, 1959), 156-158, includes a critique of the translation by Paul M. Bretscher in Concordia Theological Monthly.

⁷August Kimme, Der Inhalt der Arnoldshainer Abendmahlsthesen, in Luthertum, edited by Walter Zimmermann, and others (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1960), XXIII, 51.

"Die Worte, die unser Herr Jesus Christus beim Reichen des Brotes und des Kelches spricht, sagen uns, was er selbst in diesem Mahle allen, die hinzutreten, gibt: Er, der gekreuzigte und auferstandene Herr, lässt sich in seinem für allen in den Tod gegebenen Leib und seinem für allen vergossenen Blut durch sein verheißendes Wort mit Brot und Wein von uns nehmen und nimmt uns damit kraft des Heiligen Geistes in den Sieg seiner Herrschaft, auf das wir im Glauben an seine Verheißung Vergebung der Sünden, Leben und Seligkeit haben.

Darum wird das, was im Abendmahl geschieht, nicht angemessen beschrieben, a) wenn man lehrt, Brot und Wein würden durch die Stiftungsworte des Herrn in eine übernatürliche Substanz verwandelt, so dasz Brot und Wein aufhören, Brot und Wein zu sein; b) wenn man lehrt, im Abendmahl würde eine Wiederholung des Heilsgeschehens vollzogen; c) wenn man lehrt, im Abendmahl würde ein naturhafter oder übernatürlicher Stoff dargereicht; d) wenn man lehrt, es handele sich um einen Parallelismus von leiblichem und seelischem Essen als zwei voneinander getrennten Vorgängen; e) wenn man lehrt, das leibliche Essen als solches mache selig, oder das Anteilbekommen am Leib und Blut Christi sei ein rein geistiger Vorgang."

Following the meeting of the commission in April 1955, two sub-commissions were formed, the one of men at the University of Bonn, the other from Heidelberg. The two sections submitted draft theses at meetings of the full commission in October 1955, and April 1957. The text of the Arnoldshain Theses goes back to the wording of these draft theses.⁸ A series of three drafts of Thesis four were submitted by each section.⁹ The first draft of Thesis four by the Heidelberg section emphasizes that the gift of the Sacrament is not only a share in the saving power of Jesus' death, but also in the Lord Jesus himself, as the one who died and offered himself for us. We receive his body and blood given and shed for us. The instituting words of Christ do not point only to an act, but also tell us what the food and drink he gives us is. Christ makes bread and wine bearers of his body and blood given and shed for us in death. The reception of the body and blood is a bodily reception, as the bread and wine, the bearers of the body and blood, are bodily received. The Bonn draft also says that we receive Jesus Christ himself in the Supper, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, for the Lord gives us a share in himself--the sacrifice of his body and blood. The Bonn draft understands the reception of Christ in the Sacrament as a

⁸ Albrecht Peters, "Zur Kritik an den Abendmahlsthesen von Arnoldshain," Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie, II (1960), 183.

⁹ Peter Brunner, "Die dogmatische und kirchliche Bedeutung des Ertrages des Abendmahlsgesprächs," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XII (September 15, 1958), 298.

reception of his benefits, but not of the body and blood he offered for us. The second draft of the Heidelberg section attempts to define further the body and blood given us in the Sacrament. It is his true humanity which was offered up on the cross, that humanity which the Son of God assumed in his incarnation, and which is now exalted at the right hand of God. With this body and blood he gives us a share in himself as the Crucified and Arisen, a share in his death and resurrection, and thus forgiveness of sins and membership in his body, the church. Thus the objectivity of the grace offered in the Sacrament is accompanied by the objectivity of the body and blood given us in the Sacrament. The Bonn draft speaks only of the objectivity of the grace offered in the Sacrament. Jesus Christ not only brings us this very forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in his body and blood given in death. He gives us his body and blood, that is, he gives us a share in his bodily death and resurrection.¹⁰ The third drafts of the two sections are quite close to each other and to the thesis in its final form. The Heidelberg section raises the question of the relation of the body and blood to the

¹⁰ Ernst Sommerlath welcomes this objectivity in the completed thesis in his article "Auf dem Wege zur Einheit?" Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (February 1; 1959), 38. "These IV spricht aus, was Christus in diesem Mahle gibt, und zwar 'allen, die hinzutreten.' Dies ist vielleicht der erfreulichste Satz in den ganzen Thesen. Es wird heur das Bestreben bemerkbar, die Objektivität des Abendmahls zu betonen und die Gabe in ihrer allein von Christus abhängigen Wirklichkeit herauszustellen. Damit tritt diese Aussage in eine gewisse Parallele zu Sätzen, die bei den Verhandlungen der lutherischen Kirche in Südindien mit den Church of South India gemeinsam ausgesprochen wurden. Auch dort war die Frage der Objectivität des Sakraments ein Punkt, in dem man sich näherkam."

bread and wine. The words which Christ speaks in the distribution of the bread and cup tell us what bread and wine in the Supper are. With the bread and wine he gives his body given into death for all and his blood shed for all. The Bonn draft says simply that he permits himself to be taken by us in his body and blood given and shed for us, by the power of his promise. The final phrase of the two drafts continues to show the divergence of thinking on the objectivity of the body and blood given us in the Sacrament. The Heidelberg draft reads: "auf dasz wir im Glauben an seine Verheiszung mit seinem Leib und seinem Blut die Vergebung der Sünden, Leben und Seligkeit empfangen." Except for the underlined words, this is the reading of the Bonn draft, and the reading of the final form of Thesis four. This strongly suggests that Thesis four rejects the "celestial element." Two problems in particular suggest themselves in Thesis four on the basis of a study of the draft theses. One is the relation of the "given" in the Sacrament to the bread and wine. The other is the relation of Christ's body and blood to the benefits he offers and gives us in the Sacrament.¹¹

The theological commission of the Vereinte Evangelische

¹¹Brunner also finds that Thesis four raises two problems: the relation of what the Lord gives to the bread and wine, and the relation of the body and blood of Christ to his person. "Die dogmatische und kirchliche Bedeutung des Ertrages des Abendmahls-gesprächs," pp. 298f. This second problem, however, must be further subdivided: (1) What is the relation of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament to the benefits he bestows there? (2) What is the relation of the body and blood in the Sacrament to the humanity of the whole Christ?

Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands (VELKD), in its critique of the Arnoldshain Theses,¹² emphasizes the relation of the "celestial element" to the bread and wine. "It must be made indubitably clear that the bread and wine which are distributed to the recipient communicate to him the body and blood of Christ."¹³

Albrecht Peters believes that Thesis four stopped short of a "praedicatio identica" of the bread and wine, and the body and blood.¹⁴ The thesis has rejected the "'est' der neutestamentlichen Einsetzungsworte, welches Brot mit Leib Christi und Wein mit Blut Christi identifiziert. . . ."¹⁵ It fails to make a real "Identifizierung der Substanz des Brotes und Weines mit der Substanz des Leibes und Blutes Christi."¹⁶

The second problem was noted by one of the Lutheran representatives, Edmund Schlink. "Zu fragen ist, ob die Gabe des

¹²"Stellungnahme des Theologischen Ausschusses der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands vom 11./12. Oktober 1959 zu den Arnoldshainer Abendmahlsthesen," Informationsdienst, VIII (December 1959), 137-142. An English translation is given in Lutheran World, VII (June 1960), 57-60. The translation is defective in one place and should be compared with the German.

¹³"Statement of the Theological Commission of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany," Lutheran World, VII (June 1960), 59.

¹⁴Albrecht Peters, "Zum Schlussbericht der Arnoldshainer Abendmahlskommission," Lutherische Monatshefte, I (May 22, 1962), 206.

¹⁵"Theologische Feststellungen zu den Arnoldshainer Abendmahlsthesen," Lutherischer Rundblick, VI (1958), 139.

¹⁶Hans-Joachim Huhnke, "Zum Gespräch über die Arnoldshainer Abendmahlsthesen," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (December 1, 1959), 383.

Abendmahls die Person Jesu oder nur die Frucht eines Heilsgeschehens sei."¹⁷ The interpretation of the thesis given by one of the Lutheran representatives, H. Meyer, shows the same kind of confusion evident in Thesis four. To the question, "What is the function of faith in the Supper according to the thesis?" He replies: "Faith believes that the Lord gave his body and blood for us. Faith receives what the Lord has promised to give us, that is, forgiveness, life, and salvation."¹⁸ The problem, already evident in the draft theses, is the definition of the "Christus selbst." The expression in Thesis four, "in seinem für allen in den Tod gegebenen Leib und seinem für allen vergossenen Blut," may be simply a circumlocution for the "benefits" of Christ's saving work, which we receive apart from his body and blood.¹⁹ The body and blood are understood only as indicating the bodily and historical reality of Christ's death.²⁰ There has been a divorce between substance and virtue in the Sacrament.²¹

¹⁷Kimme, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁸H. Gollwitzer, W. Kreck, and H. Meyer, Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Abendmahl. Bericht über das Abendmahlsgespräch der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland 1947-1957 und Erläuterungen seines Ergebnisses, introduced by G. Niemeier (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1959), p. 38.

¹⁹Gotthold Ziemer, "Realpräsenz oder Personalpräsenz?" Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XII (May 1959), 153.

²⁰"Einspruch der Lutherischen Bruderkreise Deutschlands gegen die Lehrerklärung der EKD vom Heiligen Abendmahl," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (May 1, 1959), 142.

²¹"Theologische Feststellungen zu den Arnoldshainer Abendmahls-thesen," Lutherischer Rundblick, VI (1958), 138.

The problem which underlies both these questions is what is to be understood by "body and blood." This becomes a critical question in view of the rejection in Thesis five of "ein naturhafter oder übernatürlicher Stoff." At stake is the "celestial element" itself. Do we receive the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament, or mere bread and wine? Brunner agrees that the body and blood of Christ are not to be understood as a "tote, physische Stoffe," nor simply as a specimen of a natural or glorified body. The body and blood are not a "wunderhaftes Etwas" separated from the person of the Crucified and Arisen.²² The body and blood of Christ are received substantially (substantialiter) in the Sacrament. But this does not mean we receive a "thing" or "substance."²³ The theological commission of VELKD understands Thesis five as the rejection of the understanding of the body and blood as a "Stoff" divorced from the person and suffering of Jesus Christ.²⁴ The Lutheran participants in the discussion

gave up the attempt to maintain the presence of the body and blood of Christ through terms like res, substantia, or materia, concepts which are misunderstood today because of the profound change in meaning which they have undergone since the Reformation.²⁵

²² Brunner, "Die dogmatische und kirchliche Bedeutung des Ertrages des Abendmahlsgesprächs," p. 299.

²³ Ibid., p. 300.

²⁴ "Stellungnahme des Theologischen Ausschusses der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands vom 11./12 Oktober 1959 zu den Arnoldshainer Abendmahlsthesen," p. 139.

²⁵ "Statement of the Theological Commission of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany," p. 58.

The "Neuendettelsauer Thesen" on the Arnoldshain Theses agree that the body and blood are not to be thought of in isolation from the person of Christ. However, they warn against a conception which would reduce the Sacrament to mere bread and wine.²⁶ In other words, the thesis may be understood as a rejection of the praedicatio identica.²⁷ Althaus says flatly that Thesis five rejects the conception of a "materia coelestis. Die persona coelestis gibt sich uns."²⁸ Heidler believes that the Lutheran church teaches the reception of a materia coelestis with the bread and wine. "Die Gabe beim Abendmahl ist der himmlische Leib Christi selbst, und damit jener 'übernatürliche Stoff,' den These 5 c ablehnt." Christ assumes a "himmlisch-leiblichen ontischen "Qualität" in the Sacrament.²⁹ The problem according to Ziemer, is finding a term which will indicate both the earthly and heavenly form of Christ's body. The term "substance" must be theologically cleansed before it can be used. In its place he suggests using the term "res" or the expression, "wahren und wesentlichen Gegenwart des Leibes Christ."³⁰ Both Sasse and

²⁶"Neuendettelsauer Thesen zur Lehre vom Heiligen Abendmahl," Lutherischer Rundblick, VII (1959), 128.

²⁷"Einspruch der Lutherischen Bruderkreise Deutschlands gegen die Lehrerklärung der EKD vom Heiligen Abendmahl," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (May 1, 1959), 142.

²⁸Paul Althaus, "Arnoldshain und das Neue Testament," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIV (February 1, 1960), 36.

²⁹Fritz Heidler, "Luther oder Arnoldshain?" Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (March 1, 1959), 67.

³⁰Ziemer, op. cit., p. 155.

Sommerlath believe that we must take the body and blood more seriously. ". . . wenn die übernatürliche Stofflichkeit abgelehnt wird, wird man den Verdacht nicht los, dasz nicht ernsthaft an Leib und Blut gedacht ist."³¹ "Do the signers of the theses really believe that the body of Christ, which hung on the cross and is now exalted at God's right hand--this natural-supernatural body, is received in the Sacrament?" asks Sasse.³² Brunner has attempted to develop a new terminology which will guard the Lutheran theology of the Sacrament and yet at the same time not involve this theology in the difficulty of using philosophical or metaphysical terminology. Christ gives "ER SELBST" in his true humanity which was given and offered for us and which he received from his mother. We receive Christ in his sacrifice-body and in his sacrifice-blood.³³ The "given" of the Sacrament is not a "thing," yet it is "leibhaft."³⁴ Albrecht Peters says that the "Leib und Blut Christi sind weder von der Person des totus Christus abzulösen noch einfach auf sie zu reduzieren."³⁵

The Commission on the Sacrament was released from its duties in February 1962 at its meeting with the Council of the EKD. At

³¹Sommerlath, op. cit., p. 36.

³²Kimme, op. cit., p. 53.

³³Brunner, "Die dogmatische und kirchliche Bedeutung des Ertrages des Abendmahlsgesprächs," p. 299.

³⁴Ibid., p. 300.

³⁵Albrecht Peters, "Zum Schlussbericht der Arnoldshainer Abendmahlskommission," Lutherische Monatshefte, I (May 22, 1962), 206.

this meeting, the Commission presented some clarifications of the earlier report. Significantly, it attempts to clarify the relation of the body and blood to the bread and wine, and the relation of the body and blood to the gift and person of Jesus Christ.

The body and blood of Jesus Christ are nothing else than Jesus Christ himself. They are not to be separated from the person and history of Jesus Christ, as the crucified and risen Lord is not to be separated from his body given for all in death and his blood shed for all.

When bread and wine are spoken of in Thesis 4, it is thus stated, that the bread and wine in the Supper are means chosen by Jesus Christ for the giving of his body and blood.

The undersigned have not reached a more precise definition of the relationship of the body and blood to the bread and wine with regard to the diversity of the New Testament Witnesses.³⁶

Discussions between the Church of South India and the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches: "Agreed Statement of the Lord's Supper," 1955; "The Faith of the Church," 1962; "Draft Catechism," 1962

Initial conversations between the Church of South India (CSI) and the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (FELC) were complicated by the inclusion of Baptist representatives in the discussions. These discussions produced a number of "agreed statements," including an agreed statement on the Lord's Supper.³⁷

³⁶"Der Schlussbericht der Arnoldshainer Abendmahlskommission," Lutherische Monatshefte, I (March 15, 1962), 133.

³⁷The text of the agreement is quoted by Hans-Werner Gensichen

The Sacrament is identified as a means by which God meets his people and offers them the fruit of Christ's suffering. We receive this gift through faith. The statement on the elements recalls Thesis four of the Arnoldshain Theses. "Nach dem Gebot Christi werden Brot und Wein besonders genommen und mit Dank-sagung und Gebet zu seinen Gedächtnis verzehrt." The Statement thus bypasses the issue of the "celestial element." Indeed, no mention is made of the body and blood of Christ. "The religious meaning is so deep, that no human formula can fully grasp it," the statement concludes. Needless to say, the three groups were unable to draw together on such a basis.

Discussions between the CSI and the FELC were again resumed, this time without participation by the Baptists. These discussions produced a number of "agreed statements," and in 1955, the "Agreed Statement on the Lord's Supper,"³⁸ This Statement is a great deal more explicit than the earlier Statement. Gensichen, writing in 1955, saw it as "eine deutliche Annäherung an den lutherischen Stankpunkt." Whereas the earlier statement does not even mention the body and blood of Christ, "ist die jetzige Erklärung für das lutherische Verständnis der Realpräsenz

in his article "Südindisches Abendmahlsgespräch," Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, X (April 1, 1956), 128.

³⁸ Joint Theological Commission of the Church of South India and the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, "Agreed Statement of the Lord's Supper," The Sacraments (Bangalore: The Christian Literature Society, 1956). pp. 165f.

zweifellos offener."³⁹

The Statement attempts to put the question of the presence of Christ's body and blood within the context of the operation of Christ. ". . . in the Lord's Supper Christ verily gives Himself to His people." "He is truly and personally present, the Giver and the Gift." Thesis two attempts to present the relationship between the Christ who gave his body and shed his blood for us, and the Christ who "gives Himself to us under bread and wine." Perhaps the reluctance to speak of the Christ who gives his body and blood to us under bread and wine is due to the attempt to reject a false idea of sacrifice in the Sacrament. However, the reluctance also seems to extend to the Lutheran position. "The Lord's Supper is essentially the mystery of the real personal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . ." The question is: precisely what kind of real presence is meant, since there seems to be a distinction between Christ on the cross and Christ in the Sacrament. The Christ in the Sacrament is defined as "God and man, crucified, risen and glorified." This much of a distinction must be made: On the cross, Christ is palpable and visible. On the cross he gives his body and blood in a unique, once-for-all way. In the Sacrament he is the risen and glorified Christ. He is no longer palpable and visible for us. In the Sacrament he does not give his body and blood on the cross, but he does give

³⁹H. W. Gensichen, "Die Gespräch zwischen der CSI und dem Lutherischen Kirchenbund Indiens," Lutherische Rundschau, V (May 1955), 83.

us his body given for us and his blood shed for us. But does he give us his body and blood as event or as substance? On the cross, we dare not separate the event from the substance, the dying and giving from the body and blood given and shed in death. We are almost irresistably tempted to make such a separation in the Sacrament, the body from the giving, the blood from the shedding. Thesis three makes just this separation. ". . . we must . . . deny that in this sacrament we eat the material flesh of Jesus of Nazareth. . . ." This may be understood as a rejection of a capernaitic eating, but this is a dangerous way of rejecting that position. The thesis goes on to add a number of qualifications. "We believe that as we receive the bread and wine according to His commandment, we receive the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner because of the sacramental union which He has established by His word." Here again, the phrase "in a spiritual manner" casts doubt on the entire formulation. This can be seen as an attempt, as in Thesis two, to separate the substance from the event, to present us with a desecrated Sacrament, for it is a Sacrament without the word when that word is not permitted to speak for itself. In the regional conferences in which the statement was discussed, questions were raised "about the wording in paragraph 2 of the manner in which Christ gives Himself in the sacrament and the phrase 'in a spiritual manner' at the end of paragraph 3. . . ." ⁴⁰ When the joint

⁴⁰"The CSI-Lutheran Joint Theological Commission (Minutes April 14-16, 1959, at Bangalore)," Gospel Witness, LV (September 1959), 277.

theological commission met in 1959, it decided to add a footnote in future publications of the Statement to the phrase "in a spiritual manner."

The word, "spiritual" means "effected by the work of the Holy Spirit" and is not to be read as implying a purely symbolic interpretation. Both this expression and the words in paragraph 2 about the manner in which Christ gives Himself in the Sacrament are meant to express the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament.⁴¹

But one should note that speaking about the "real presence of Christ in the Sacrament," really does not help the situation. The "real presence" itself must be defined, and the definition given by the Statement is certainly open to doubts and misunderstandings.

In Thesis four the presence of Christ in the Sacrament is defined in terms of the "time between the times." Lutherans may welcome the rediscovery of the eschatological accent in the Sacrament which ecumenical encounter has brought for Lutheran theology.

Though the mode of Christ's presence with us in this sacrament is not the same as that of His presence with the disciples in Galilee, or as that to which we look forward when He comes again, yet the Christ who gives Himself in the sacrament is the same Christ who was and who is and who is to come.

The understanding of this statement is unfortunately qualified by the problems raised by Theses two and three. According to such an understanding, Christ may be present and give himself in

⁴¹ Agreed Statements. The C.S.I.-Lutheran Theological Conversations 1948-1959, introduction by J. R. Chandran (second edition; Bangalore: The Christian Literature Society, 1960), p. 23.

the Sacrament apart from his body and blood, as a person stripped of his humanity, as an event without the substance. In such a case, he would not be "the same Christ who was and who is and who is to come," for although his mode of coming truly is different from his presence in his earthly days and his coming on the day of judgment, it must not be thought of as a presence without the humanity.

The Statement has come in for some rather sharp criticism from Lutherans in other lands. The Lutherans who accepted the Statement "have abandoned the Lutheran teaching at the decisive or vital point."⁴² This "decisive or vital point" is apparently felt to be the manducatio indignorum. Neither "die manducatio oralis corporis et sanguinis Christi und noch weniger die manducatio oralis indignorum der himmlischen Elemente des Heiligen Abendmahls sichergestellt." The Statement speaks of partaking of the body and blood of Christ by eating the bread and drinking the wine, however, it is not a bodily eating of the body and blood of Christ. ". . . von 'himmlischen Elementen' aber wird nicht abgegrenzt von einem Essen und Trinken, das schliesslich doch nur durch den Glauben stattfindet."⁴³ Ernst Sommerlath approaches the Statement more irenically. ". . . I wonder whether the Statement expresses with sufficient clarity that the gift of the

⁴²H. Hamann, "Ominous Developments in South India," The Australasian Theological Review, XXVI (September 1955), 93.

⁴³W. M. Oesch, "Fanal in Südindien," Lutherischer Rundblick, III (July 1955), 64.

Lord's Supper is the true body and blood of the Lord which are also orally received." Sommerlath is careful not to separate the body and blood of Christ from the whole Christ.

As the apostles had Him, and as we shall have Him on His return, so we have Him even now, in this interim period, in a palpable manner, though still concealed, and that is what we mean when we speak about the body and blood of Christ as the gift of the Lord's Supper.⁴⁴

In 1961 the two church groups were rapidly moving toward organic merger. In that year the joint theological commission of the two groups produced a doctrinal statement, "The Faith of the Church," which is to be a part of the constitution of the new church and which is to serve as its doctrinal basis.⁴⁵ The approach to the Sacrament in this document is somewhat different from the approach used in the two previous agreed statements. Here the discussion of the Lord's Supper is preceded by a statement on the sacraments. "In them the Word of God is operative through the material elements and outward actions. . . ." This introduces the temptation to make a parallelism between Baptism and the Lord's Supper which is not justified: water and the word; bread and wine and the word. In the instance of the Lord's Supper, the word not only makes the Sacrament a means of grace, it also makes bread and wine the body and blood of Christ, according to the institution of Christ: "This is my body; this is my blood."

⁴⁴E. Sommerlath, "Remarks on the 'Agreed Statement on the Lord's Supper,'" Gospel Witness, LI (June 1956), 231.

⁴⁵"The Faith of the Church," Lutheran World, IX (October 1962), 389-391.

Fortunately, the statement on the Lord's Supper itself guards against this danger.

In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper Christ, who is really present, gives us His body and His blood to eat and to drink in accordance with His words at the Last Supper "This is my body . . . This is my blood. . . ."

It almost appears as though the non-Lutheran participants in this formulation urged the expression "Christ, who is really present," to guard against the possibility of interpreting the statement to teach the presence of a lifeless body. He is the risen Christ. He died once-for-all. Now he is present with us as the risen Christ.

Preliminary work on a common catechism was also completed in 1961.⁴⁶ As in the doctrinal document "The Faith of the Church," the discussion of Baptism and the Lord's Supper is preceded by a statement on the nature of a sacrament. Question 49 asks, "What is a sacrament?" The catechism answers, "It is a sacred act instituted by Christ in which the Word of God is connected with earthly elements and brings to men the lifegiving grace of God through faith." Question 52 asks, "What is the Lord's Supper?" The catechism answers:

It is the sacrament instituted by Christ in which under bread and wine He gives His body and blood to eat and drink in memory of His death, for the forgiveness of sins and that we may be in fellowship with Him and with all His saints.

⁴⁶ "Draft Catechism--for use in the Preparation of Christian Young People for Communicant membership in the Church." Second Meeting of the C.S.I.-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission, June 6th to 8th, 1962 (Bangalore: Christian Literature Society, n.d.) pp. 20-26.

Certainly a great deal more can be said, but all that needs to be said has been said here. ". . . He gives us His body and blood to eat and drink. . . ." Here the "celestial element" is presented in its simplicity.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The ecumenical encounter of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions has produced a wealth of new thinking--or at least rethinking, on the question of the "celestial element" in the Sacrament of the Altar. However, the fact that we still include the term "celestial element" in quotation marks indicates that we are not to pronounce the question settled.

The term "celestial element" is equivalent to the expressions "the presence," or "real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament." We must insist that the terms "presence," or even "real presence" are inadequate without further definition.

The term "celestial element" points to what Luther saw as a praedicatio identica. In the Sacrament there are two things. As a sacrament, the Lord's Supper consists of earthly elements and the word. But the word is not the "celestial element." The Lord's Supper is also the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. And this is the "celestial element." The bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. Doctrinal agreements and discussions which avoid dealing with the relation of the earthly elements to the body and blood, fail to come to grips with the question of the "celestial element."

Some Lutherans would reject the term "celestial element" as pointing to a substance or piece of matter in the Sacrament. But, while it is difficult to conceive of the presence of a genuine

human body outside of such metaphysical categories, we must content ourselves with a definition of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament which takes its inspiration from the creedal statements on his person and incarnation. So far we may go, and no further! The tension which this has created is only too evident within Lutheranism today.

Some would avoid the question of the "celestial element" by adopting a "figurative" understanding of the words of institution. "Body" and "blood" are to be understood as the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation Christ gives us in the Sacrament. There is no "celestial element." Christ does not give us his material body in the Sacrament, but the fruits of his self-sacrifice on the cross. Some important Lutheran theologians now support this position. Indeed, this raises the question whether we ought not restudy the exegetical decision made in the Lutheran Confessions, a decision which rejects anything other than a literal understanding of the words of institution. Could it be that Lutherans have not fully understood the New Testament texts dealing with the Lord's Supper?

The question of the "celestial element" also raises Christological problems. On the one hand, Christ is not to be considered present in the Sacrament apart from his humanity, nor on the other, apart from his divinity. The Christ we receive in the Sacrament is the whole Christ, God and man as the creeds have it. Secondly, the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament are the body and blood he gave on the cross, but they are also the body

and blood of the victorious and glorified Christ, for the Christ in suffering and the Christ in glory are not to be separated. We receive the body and blood of both the sacrificed and living Christ. Thirdly, the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament is not to be separated from the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation his dying on the cross brings to us in the Sacrament. These gifts are not received apart from the body and blood, that is, neither apart from the body and blood he gave on the cross, nor apart from the body and blood he now gives us as the living Lord. We also affirm that we do not receive his body and blood apart from the gifts he promises us. "This is my body, given for you; this is my blood, shed for you."

Assertions of this nature demand that we place ourselves under Scripture for restudy and rethinking. The discussions which led to the Arnoldshain Theses also produced a wealth of biblical studies on the Sacrament of the Altar. We, too, need such restudy lest our theology of the Sacrament become a glib repetition of older formulations. We may not load the term "celestial element" with scripturally indefensible connotations. But neither can we afford to ignore its usefulness if understood in a sense warranted by the Verba Testamenti.

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