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A STUDY OF THE REAL PRESENCE IN
THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS WITH SOME
LUTHERAN COMPARISONS

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

by

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1967

49289

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Reformation era the nature of the eucharistic presence of Christ has proved itself to be a point of very serious doctrinal and confessional differences between the various Protestant Churches on the one hand and the Roman Catholic Church on the other hand. Almost all Protestants are agreed in rejecting transubstantiation and in their insistence that according to Holy Scripture Christ's body and blood are not really and truly present in the Eucharist by the transubstantiation of the substance of the bread and wine in the Eucharist into the substance of Christ's body and blood. But Protestants have never reached any degree of unanimity on the question whether Christ's body and blood are really present in the Eucharist only in a spiritual manner or in a bodily manner in, with, and under the bread and wine. They have never been really one in believing and confessing a Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist by virtue of the oral manducation of Christ's true and essential body and blood in the Eucharist, the confessional position of the Lutheran Church. Reformed theology has always taught a Real Presence only in a spiritual manner, not by any oral manducation or in, with, and under the bread and wine. Patristic evidence cannot settle these controversies and the Fathers have been extensively used on all sides in the controversies on the Eucharist. A study of the nature of the eucharistic presence of Christ in the writings of the early

Fathers would therefore seem to have considerable practical value and should also help in forming a sound opinion and conclusions about the nature of this evidence.

In the present study it is also intended to examine Luther's views on the matter under discussion especially where they impinge on viewpoints and ideas set forth in the writings of the Fathers under consideration. Wherever possible reference will also be made to the Lutheran Confessions.

It is intended to examine and evaluate the patristic evidence up to and including Cyprian, that is, the study will cover the so-called ante-Nicene Fathers.

CHAPTER II

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The references to the Eucharist in the Apostolic Fathers are very few in number and so brief and terse that one hesitates to be very dogmatic about the precise views on the Eucharistic presence set forth in these writings. None of these writings is specifically dogmatical in character and only two of them come in for any consideration here, the so-called Didache, and the epistles of Ignatius.

The Didache

It is not unusual for patristic discussions to begin with the views set forth in the Didache. But, as Richardson declares: "No document of the early church has proved so bewildering to scholars as this apparently innocent tract which was discovered by Philotheos Bryennios in 1873."¹ In spite of all the work that has been done on this rather brief church manual it still remains something of a riddle,² not only in regard to its dating, but also in regard to its provenance

¹Cyril C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 161.

²The word "riddle" actually occurs in the title of the well-known work by F. E. Vokes, The Riddle of the Didache (London: S. P. C. K.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938).

and the exegesis of some of its most important passages.³ Three sections in the Didache are closely connected with the celebration of the Eucharist or make express reference to the Eucharist.⁴ It can now be taken as very likely that this writing refers to procedures in the Agape in the eucharistic prayers recorded in chapters IX and X. But towards the end of the latter chapter the Didache gives what must have been the introduction to the actual celebration of the Eucharist when it says:

Let Grace come, and let this world pass away!
 Hosanna to the God of David!
 If any one is holy let him come! If not, let him repent!
 Our Lord, come!⁵ Amen.⁶

³For the date of the Didache see Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Great Britain: Dacre Press Westminster, 1954), p. 342. It has been dated as early as 75 A.D. by some authorities but others like F. E. Vokes make the claim that "everything goes to prove that the Didache was written about the end of the second century A.D." F. E. Vokes, p. 210. In a book review published in Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII, p. 122 authorities are listed who date the Didache in the period 50-75 A.D. The latter dating is preferable.

⁴Chaps. IX, X, and XIV. The original Greek of these sections may be found in Jesus Solano, Textos Eucharisticos Primitivos (Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos, 1952), I, 53-55, 79-81, hereafter cited as Textos I. Kirsopp Lake's edition of The Apostolic Fathers with an English translation (London: William Heinemann: Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1945) is also a very useful edition. The Greek text may also be found in M. J. Rouet De Journal, Enchiridion Patristicum (Barcelona: Herder, 1949, pars. 6-8, hereafter cited as Ench. Pat. (quoted by paragraph).

⁵Greek: μαρὰρ ἰθά : cf. I Cor. 16:22.

⁶Chap. X. 6. Textos I, p. 54, 80: Ench. Pat. 7.

In the phrase, "Let Grace come!" "Grace" is a title for Christ and the Coptic Didache fragment actually reads *ὁ Κύριος* here.⁷ It is the viewpoint of this document that Christ is present in the Eucharist but nothing is said here about the nature of this presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is much the same with reference to the Eucharist in Didache XIV where the whole celebration of the Eucharist is spoken of as a "sacrifice."⁸

Ignatius of Antioch

The references to the Eucharist in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, written while he was on his way to suffer martyrdom at Rome in the latter years of the Emperor Trajan's reign, are very terse, as is usually the case with most of the things touched on in the letters of Ignatius, but it is quite certain even from these statements that Ignatius believed and taught the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. He actually insisted on this point with considerable emphasis. In his epistle to the Smyrneans Ignatius observes that certain heretics "abstain from Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our

⁷Johannes Quasten, Monumenta eucharistica et liturgica vetustissima (Bonn, n.p. 1935-1937), p. 12.

⁸This has occasioned a great amount of discussion. Seeberg argues very strongly that this "sacrifice" must be referred in particular to the eucharistic prayers which, in the view-point of the times, were a "sacrifice." Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte (Darmstadt: Sonderausgabe der Wissenschaftlichen Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1953), vol 1, 172-173.

Saviour Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins, which the Father raised up by His goodness."⁹ One does not expect detailed dogmatical statements about the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist in these early writers. In this particular context the statement of Ignatius on the Eucharist is his main argument against certain Docetists who denied the reality of Christ's body. To prove that this view is completely false Ignatius refers these heretics to the flesh of Christ received in the Eucharist. In his epistle to the Romans Ignatius employs even more realistic language when he says:

I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David, and for drink I desire his blood.¹⁰

Ignatius also urges the Ephesians to "obey the bishop and the presbytery with an undisturbed mind, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ."¹¹ Sasse observes that Ignatius quoted these famous words from the liturgy of the church of Antioch.¹² At the back of these words of Ignatius there seems to be a belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and they often crop up in subsequent eucharistic discussions. Even Luther seems to have had these famous

⁹Smyrnaeans VII. Greek text in Textos I, 51. 74; Ench. Pat. 64.

¹⁰Romans VII, 3. Greek text in Textos I, 49. 73. Cf. also John 6!

¹¹Ephesians XXII, 2. Textos I, 48. 71; Ench. Pat. 43.

¹²Hermann Sasse, This is my body (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), p. 183 n.127.

words of Ignatius in mind when he wrote in his Large Catechism:

We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also. Why then, do we act as if the sacrament were a poison which would kill us if we ate of it? . . . But those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems.¹³

The fact of the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist is very emphatically set forth in the references to the Eucharist found in the epistles of Ignatius written under the shadow of martyrdom early in the second century. His argument from what actually happens in the Eucharist against the heresy of the Docetists is especially significant in this whole connection.

¹³Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p. 721, 68, 70. See also Theodore G. Tappert and others, Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 454, 68, 70.

CHAPTER III

THE APOLOGISTS

Justin Martyr¹ is the only apologist to set forth any detailed information on eucharistic doctrine and practice in his day. He comes to speak of the Eucharist in his so-called First Apology as well as in his Disputation with Trypho.²

After giving a very simple description of the consecration of the bread and wine in the Eucharist Justin goes on to say:

Among us this food is called the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for the forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ has handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God's word had flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him and from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation,³ is the flesh

¹ca. 100/110-165 A.D. F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 756.

²The so-called First Apology was written ca. 155 A.D. and the Disputation with Trypho was earlier. F. L. Cross, p. 756.

³The Greek word used here is μεταβολή. By using this word Justin is not referring to any change in the elements or to any theory of transubstantiation. He is referring to the assimilation of food in the transformation that goes on in the digestive processes of the body. Bread and wine nourish our body by assimilation and the bread and wine of the Eucharist also nourish our body and soul, being the flesh and blood of Jesus incarnate. Paul F. Palmer translates the phrase under discussion as follows: "which nourishes our flesh and blood by assimilation;" cf. Paul F. Palmer, Sacraments and Worship (Westminster (Maryland): The Newman Press, 1963), I, 4. The Latin translation in M. J. Rouet De Journal, Enchiridion Patristicum (Barcelona: Herder, 1949), p. 128, hereafter cited as Ench. Pat. reads: ex qua sanguis et carnes nostrae per mutationem aluntur.

and body of that incarnate Jesus. For the Apostles in the memoirs⁴ composed by them which are called Gospels, handed down what was commanded them thus: that Jesus, taking bread and having given thanks said, "Do this in remembrance of me, this is my body;"⁵ and likewise, taking the cup and giving thanks he said, "This is my blood;"⁶ and gave it to them alone.⁷

Justin's statement on the celebration of the Eucharist in Christian congregations is very important because he gives a brief and simple explanation of the Eucharist. As in the case of the Didache and Ignatius the Eucharist in Justin is the central act of Christian worship which takes place on the Sunday. But Justin is more precise than either Ignatius or the Didache in stating what the Eucharist actually is. The consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist is expressly stated to be "the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh." After the consecration the bread and wine are no longer "common food."⁸ The simple way in which Justin quotes the actual words of institution would indicate that Justin wants to teach what Christ Himself

⁴Greek: ἀπομνημονεύματα

⁵Greek: τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἀναμνησίν μου, τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τὸ σῶμά μου.

⁶Greek: τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ αἷμά μου. These words of institution as quoted by Justin are not identical with any of the New Testament sources. He could well be quoting a liturgical form of these words.

⁷First Apology 66. For the Greek of this quotation see Jesus Solano, Textos Eucharisticos Primitivos (Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos, 1952), I, 62. 92; hereafter cited as Textos I, and Ench. Pat. 128.

⁸It will be more convenient for us to take up this statement for more detailed consideration in our treatment of Irenaeus.

meant in the words of institution. Johannes Betz is correct when he writes of Justin's eucharistic doctrine:

Das Herrenmahl ist ihm des fleischgewordenen Jesus Fleisch und Blut. Zur Begründung dieses Glaubens aber führt er den Einsetzungsbericht an. Dahinter steht die Überzeugung, dass das, was die Stiftungsperikope erzählt, auch hier geschieht, dass also Jesus auch hier wie einst bei seinem Abschiedsmahl Brot als seinen Leib und den Kelch als sein Blut zum Genusse reicht.⁹

But opinions are sharply divided on the precise nature of this presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist according to the viewpoint of Justin. H. Grass writes:

In welcher Weise ^f fuer Justin die eucharistische Speise Leib und Blut Christi ist und wird, ist umstritten. Katholische Theologen finden hier bereits eine Art Wandlungslehre präformiert, während protestantische zurückhaltender urteilen.¹⁰

Justin also stresses the fact that the Eucharist is also a "remembrance" of the suffering and death of Christ but this in no way modifies his assertion of the Real Presence.¹¹ He also speaks of offering "sacrifices" in the celebration of the Eucharist.¹² After making a statement to this effect and quoting Malachi 1:10-12 Justin goes on to say:

⁹Johannes Betz, Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Väter (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1955), p. 89.

¹⁰H. Grass, "Abendmahl," Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, (Third edition; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1957), I, 22.

¹¹Cf. Disputation with Trypho 41. Greek text in Textos I, 65. 97 and Ench. Pat. 135.

¹²Ibid., Chap. 117. Greek text in Textos I, 67. 99.

Now that prayers and giving of thanks, when offered by worthy men, are the only perfect and well-pleasing sacrifices to God, I also admit. For such alone Christians have undertaken to offer and in the remembrance effected by their dry and liquid food,¹³ whereby the suffering of the Son of God which He endured is brought to mind, whose name the high priests of your nation and your teachers have caused to be profaned and blasphemed over all the earth.¹⁴

Here Justin expressly declares that the prayers and the givings of thanks are the sacrifices offered by Christians in the celebration of the Eucharist and he emphasizes this by stating that "such alone" are the sacrifices offered in the Eucharist. Justin's references to sacrifices in the Eucharist have nothing to do with the way in which he thinks of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. J. N. D. Kelly, while acknowledging what Justin says about the sacrifices in the Eucharist draws attention to another statement in the First Apology, which, he claims, indicates that in Justin "thanksgiving" is "technically equivalent to 'the eucharistized bread and wine.'"¹⁵

The bread and wine, moreover, are offered "for a memorial (*εἰς ἀνάμνησιν*) of the passion," a phrase which "in view of his

¹³Greek: τῆς τροφῆς ξηρᾶς τε καὶ ὑγρᾶς.

¹⁴Disputation with Trypho 117. Greek text in Textos I, 67. 99.

¹⁵First Apology 65, 3-5. The phrase in Greek reads: τοῦ εὐχαριστηθέντος ἄρτου καὶ οἴνου καὶ ὕδατος. It is rather difficult to determine what Kelly has in mind by offering this particular translation. The Greek words seem to require a translation something like this: "the bread and wine and water over which thanks have been given," or, "which have been consecrated" for use in the Eucharist. The phrase surely does not imply that anything has happened to the elements in the direction of some change by virtue of the consecration.

The reference to Kelly in this section is from J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (Second edition; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 197.

identification of them with the Lord's body and blood implies much more than an act of purely spiritual recollection. Altogether it would seem that, while his language is not fully explicit, Justin is feeling his way to the conception of the eucharist as the offering of the Saviour's passion."¹⁶ Kelly refers to the language of Justin as not being "fully explicit." Johannes Betz has also observed that some matters have been found in Justin "mehr zwischen als in den Zeilen."¹⁷ But even granting all this, Justin still stands forth as a very clear and decided witness of the doctrine of the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

¹⁶Kelly, p. 197.

¹⁷Betz, p. 89.

CHAPTER IV

THE OLD CATHOLIC AGE AS REPRESENTED BY IRENAEUS

Irenaeus,¹ the famous bishop of Lyons in the Rhone valley, was the pupil of Polycarp who was the pupil of the Apostle John.² He is one of the most prominent theologians of the ancient church and the leading theologian of what is usually called the Old Catholic period (ca. 175- ca. 300 A.D.). Altaner describes him as "in a certain sense the Father of Catholic Dogmatics."³ He is also the author of what has been called "the most considerable christian treatise which has survived from the second century,"⁴ his Refutation and Overthrow of the Knowledge Falsely So-called,⁵ or, according to its Latin title by which it is usually quoted, Against all Heresies.⁶ Only a small part of this

¹ca. 130-ca. 200 according to F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 701.

²Eusebius, H. E. V: 20, 5. Eusebius, The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine, translated by G. A. Williamson (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 227.

³Berthold Altaner, Patrology, translated by Hilda C. Graef (Freiburg: Herder, 1960, second impression), p. 150.

⁴Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Great Britain: Dacre Press Westminster, 1954), p. 749, who is thinking both of its size and importance.

⁵The Greek title being: "Ἐλεγχος καὶ ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως"

⁶Adversus omnes haereses or more briefly Adversus haereses.

work is extant in the original Greek but the whole of it survives in a literal Latin translation.

Irenaeus teaches⁷ that the bread and wine are really the Lord's body and blood. His witness is, indeed, all the more impressive because he produces it quite incidentally while refuting the Gnostic and Docetic rejection of the Lord's real humanity.⁸

The references to the Eucharist in Irenaeus are relatively few in number. He only refers to the Eucharist with some detail in four passages of his famous work.

In the first of these passages, in the order in which they occur in Irenaeus he says:

In giving a direction to his disciples to offer to God the first-fruits from his own creatures--not as though he stood in need of them, but that they themselves might be neither unfruitful nor ungrateful--he took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks, and said, "This is my body."⁹ And the cup likewise, which is part of the creation to which we belong, he confessed to be his blood,¹⁰ and taught the new sacrifice of the New Testament,¹¹ which the church on receiving from the apostles offers to God throughout the world, to him who gives us as the means of subsistence the first-fruits of his own gifts in the New Testament, concerning which Malachi, among the twelve prophets, thus spoke beforehand: "I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord Omnipotent, and I will not accept

⁷Three sections from the Adversus haereses are referred to in the footnotes: IV, 17,5; IV, 18,4 and V, 2,3.

⁸J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (Second edition; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 198.

⁹This part of Irenaeus is extant only in Latin: Hoc est meum corpus.

¹⁰Latin: suum sanguinem confessus est.

¹¹Latin: et novi testamenti novam docuit oblationem.

sacrifice from your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name and a pure sacrifice; for great is my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord omnipotent."¹² By these words he indicates in the plainest manner¹³ that the former people indeed will cease to make offerings to God but that in every place sacrifice shall be offered to him and that a pure one and that his name moreover is glorified among the Gentiles.¹⁴

There is nothing in this statement that goes beyond the simple realism of Justin. Irenaeus describes the bread and wine of the Eucharist as the "first-fruits" of God's creatures and refers to the whole celebration of the Eucharist as the "new sacrifice of the New Testament" which is offered to God throughout the world by the Christians "to him who gives us as the means of subsistence the first-fruits of his own gifts in the New Testament." It might be asked here: What is the essential content of the sacrifice in the Eucharist according to Irenaeus? In the absence of greater precision it could be argued that the bread and wine offered to God are the sacrifice. This seems to be almost necessary from Irenaeus' remark that Christ gave directions to his disciples "to offer to God the first-fruits from his own creatures-- not as though he stood in need of them, but that they themselves might be neither unfruitful nor ungrateful." In other words, the Christians

¹²Mal. 1:10-11.

¹³Latin: manifestissime significans.

¹⁴Adversus haereses IV, 17,5. For the Latin text see Jesus Solano, Textos Eucharisticos Primitivos (Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos, 1952), I, 74. 113 hereafter cited as Textos I and M. J. Rouet De Journel, Enchiridion Patristicum (Barcelona: Herder, 1949), p. 232, hereafter cited as Ench. Pat.

brought along the bread and wine used in the Eucharist as a thank-offering and this bread and wine were then offered to God as a sacrifice to be used by him for his own purposes in the Eucharist. On the other hand, it could also be argued that the eucharistic prayers or the words of institution are the essential content of the sacrifice in the Eucharist according to Irenaeus. Or, it could be interpreted that the bread and wine offered to God in the Eucharist become a sacrifice by virtue of the eucharistic prayers and the words of institution. It is a hazardous procedure to dogmatize here. This much is clear. The bread and wine offered to God as a sacrifice in the Eucharist is at the same time the body and blood of the Lord. In connection with the bread of the Eucharist he offers no comment beyond the simple words of institution: "This is my body," and the cup, he says, "he confessed to be his blood." The use of Malachi 1:10-11 in this context is also noteworthy. By this time it was traditional procedure to use this passage in connection with the celebration of the Eucharist. It is used in a similar context also by the Didache and Justin.¹⁵ What Irenaeus intends to stress by quoting this passage is defined with some precision when he says:

Since, therefore, the name of the Son belongs to the Father, and since in the omnipotent God the church makes offerings through Jesus Christ, he says well on both these grounds, 'And in every place incense is

¹⁵Didache XIV. See Textos I, 55. 81; Ench. Pat. 8. Justin, Disputation with Trypho 41. See Textos I, 65. 96; Ench. Pat. 135.

offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice.' But John, in the Apocalypse, declared that the 'incense' is 'the prayers of the saints.'¹⁶

Irenaeus uses the doctrine of the Eucharist in strong polemics against the Gnostics "who despise the entire dispensation of God, and deny the salvation of the flesh and spurn its regeneration, maintaining that it is not capable of incorruption." He then goes on to refute the views of these Gnostics by drawing attention to the unquestioned fact of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. If the flesh is not saved, he says:

then the Lord did not redeem us with his blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist the communion with his blood, nor the bread which we break the communion with his body.¹⁷ For blood can only come from veins and flesh, and whatever else makes up the substance of man, such as the Word of God was actually made.¹⁸ By his own blood he redeemed us, as also his apostle declares, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the remission of sins."¹⁹ And as we are his members and are nourished through the creation, he himself grants the creation to us making his sun to rise and sending rain according to his will. He has confessed the cup, a part of the creation, as his own blood, from which he bedews our blood; and the bread, a part of his creation, he has affirmed to be his own body, from which he increases our bodies.²⁰

¹⁶Adversus haereses IV, 17,6.

¹⁷Only the Latin translation is available here: neque calix Eucharistiae communicatio sanguinis eius est, neque panis quem frangimus communicatio corporis eius est. See Textos I, p. 77, 117; Ench. Pat., p. 249. Irenaeus is quoting 1 Cor. 10:16 here.

¹⁸In the original Greek this would have read: *ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ.*

¹⁹Eph. 1:7. From this point the quotation continues in Greek.

²⁰Adversus haereses 5, 2, 2. Textos I, 77, 117 and see also Ench. Pat. 249.

There is no argument for Irenaeus here unless his meaning is that in the Eucharist communicants actually receive the true body and blood of Christ. In receiving the true body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist the body and blood of the communicant is also nourished by the body and blood of Christ in such a way that it is the actual beginning of his blessed immortality. In another context Irenaeus observes that the Lord did not come as he might have come, in his immortal glory, for in that case man could never have endured the greatness of his glory. He then goes on to say:

Therefore it was that he, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered himself to us as milk, being infants. He did this when he appeared as a man, that we, being nourished, as it were, from the breast of his flesh, and having by such a course of milk-nourishment become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God may be able also to contain in ourselves the bread of immortality which is the Spirit of the Father.²¹

The likening of the Eucharist to a mother who offers her child milk for nourishment from her breast has been described by Johannes Betz as "das kuehne Bild von der Stillenden Mutter."²² According to all this the nourishment offered in the Eucharist is something very real, Christ's own body and blood, and this nourishment produces real results in man's body. After he partakes of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist he actually contains in himself "the bread of immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father." It is the Spirit of the Father, the

²¹Ibid., 4, 38, 1.

²²Johannes Betz, Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Vaeter (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1955), p. 90.

Holy Spirit, present in the elements who works immortality in man in connection with the nourishment received in the Eucharist.

Irenaeus supplies more details on this point when he says:

Accordingly, when the mixed cup and the bread which has been made receive the Word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ), and the Eucharist becomes the body of Christ (σῶμα Χριστοῦ), and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal, that flesh which is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord, and is his member?--even as the blessed Paul declares in his epistle to the Ephesians that 'we are members of his body, of his flesh, and his bones.'²³ He does not speak these words of some spiritual and invisible man, for a spirit has not bones nor flesh;²⁴ but he is speaking of that dispensation by which the Lord became an actual man, consisting of flesh, and nerves and bones,--that flesh which is nourished by the cup which is his blood, and receives increase from the bread which is his body. And just as cutting from the vine planted in the ground bears fruit in its proper season and as a corn of wheat falling into the earth²⁵ and becoming decomposed rises with great increase through the Spirit of God, who holds all things together, and then, through the wisdom of God comes into the use of men, and having received in addition (προσλαμβάνεται) the Word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ) becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and the blood of Christ, so also our bodies, being nourished by it and deposited in the earth and suffering decomposition in it, shall rise at the proper time, the Word of (τοῦ λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ) granting to them the resurrection to the glory of God the Father.²⁶

²³Eph. 5:30. Only the first clause of this passage is retained in Nestle's edition.

²⁴Recalling but not actually quoting Luke 24:39!

²⁵This phrase is identical with the well-known phrase in John 12:24.

²⁶Adversus haereses 5, 2, 3. For the Greek text see Textos I, 78. 118 and Ench. Pat. 249.

The way in which Irenaeus makes this point suggests that he was firmly convinced that in the Eucharist it was not simply a matter of purely spiritual blessings. The gift of Christ's body and blood was something concrete, something very real, an immortal deposit in man guaranteeing to man an immortality somehow or other commensurate with Christ's own immortality. And this immortality included the body-- the body itself becomes immortal when nourished on the immortal body and blood of Christ. All this he regards as a most effective argument against the views of the Gnostics who shared the eastern philosophic viewpoint that all matter was evil and that since the body was matter it had to be somehow or other discarded in any theory of immortality.

In this context also Irenaeus says that the bread "having received in addition the Word of God (that is, the Logos of God) becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ." In another context Irenaeus states:

As the bread from the earth after receiving the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies after partaking of the Eucharist are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.²⁷

There is still an "earthly" reality in the Eucharist after the invocation, the bread is still bread and the wine is still wine. But there is also a heavenly reality in the Eucharist, the Logos, which the bread receives in addition thereby becoming the Eucharist which is the body and the blood of Christ.

²⁷Ibid., 4, 18, 5. Greek text: Textos I, 76, 115; Ench. Pat. 234.

Irenaeus wrote this treatise before a technical theological vocabulary had been evolved whereby it became possible to express all kinds of nice shades of theological meaning and opinion. The communicatio idiomatum was still a matter of the future. In his polemics against the Zwinglians Luther, for example, makes considerable use of the communicatio idiomatum to refute their contention that because Christ is at the right hand of God he cannot possibly be really present in the Lord's Supper. Luther admits that Christ

is at the right hand of God, which means nothing else than that even as a man he is over all things, has all things under him, and rules over all. Therefore he must also be near at hand, in and about all things, and have all things in his hands. For nothing is delivered to him or put under his feet according to his divinity, since he himself made all things at the beginning and preserves them. But to sit at God's right hand is the same as to rule and have power over all things. If he is to have power and rule, surely he must also be present there in his essence through the right hand of God which is everywhere.²⁸

Luther's argument is that the man Christ Jesus is also almighty God and that because of this fact and the communicatio idiomatum he can be everywhere present in the Supper and give us his body and blood under the bread and wine. For Luther it is God's Word in the Sacrament which makes the Sacrament exactly what it says it is and whereby it effects exactly what it claims to effect. Luther also observes that "Christ's humanity is at the right hand of God, and also in all and above all

²⁸Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament. Vol. XXXVII of Luther's Works, edited by Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 64. See also: Martin Luther, D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Herman Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1901), XXXIII, 144, 4-11, hereafter cited as WA XXXIII.

things according to the nature of the divine right hand," that is, by virtue of the communicatio idiomatum. Luther then goes on to say:

You will not eat or drink him like the cabbage and soup on your table, unless he wills it. He also now exceeds my grasp, and you will not catch him by groping about, even though he is in your bread, unless he binds himself to you and summons you to a particular table by his Word, and he himself gives meaning to the bread for you, by his Word bidding you to eat him. This he does in the Supper, saying, 'This is my body,' as if to say, 'At home you may eat bread also, where I am indeed sufficiently near at hand too; but this is the true touto, the 'This is my body:' when you eat this, you eat my body, and nowhere else. Why? Because I wish to attach myself here with my Word, in order that you may not have to buzz about, trying to seek me in all places where I am; this would be too much for you, and you would also be too puny to apprehend me in these places without the help of the Word.'²⁹

Luther also quotes the last statement which has been quoted from Irenaeus and argues very strongly against the Zwinglians on the basis of this statement which Oecolampadius attempted to utilize in support of his contentions making "of the earthly and the heavenly a single thing, viz. the bread which is earthly, inasmuch as it comes from the earth, and also heavenly, because God is thanked and praised for it."³⁰

Luther declares:

I should like to hear and see the man who could interpret this quotation to the effect that nothing but bread and wine are present in the Supper. There stands Irenaeus, saying that the bread is not ordinary, common bread, inasmuch as it has been named or called by God, but "eucharist," as the ancients spoke of the

²⁹Luther, Word, p. 69. See also WA XXXIII, 150, 25-152, 4.

³⁰Luther, Word, p. 116. See also WA XXXIII, 231, 11-15.

sacrament. But what can this "naming,"³¹ be, with which God names the bread? It can be nothing else than the word which he speaks, "This is my body." There indeed, he names it, and gives it a new name which it did not have before when it was ordinary bread; and he says, "Let this bread, after this naming or word, consist of two things, the one earthly--i.e. bread, which is produced from the earth, as Irenaeus says here--the other heavenly," which must certainly be Christ's body, which is in heaven. What other sort of heavenly thing can be in the sacrament along with the earthly thing, which by God's naming or word is present?³²

A little further on in the same context Luther continues "Irenaeus says here that on account of the Word of God it is no longer ordinary bread, but along with the earthly bread there is also something heavenly present."³³

Perhaps Irenaeus and Luther could have come to some understanding in the respective use which they made of the Logos and the Word in explaining how the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ!

The Bodily Effects of the Sacrament

One of the most striking and vivid ways in which these early fathers set forth their belief in a Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist was in the theory, or theologoumenon, or doctrine--it depends on the viewpoint adopted what one calls it--which they developed about the bodily influence or effects of the sacrament,

³¹Instead of the accepted reading *ἐπίκλησιν* Luther's manuscript reads *ἐκκλήσιν* and his argument rests in part on the latter reading.

³²Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament. Vol. XXXVII of Luther's Works, p. 116. See also WA XXXIII, 231, 4-16.

³³Luther, Word, p. 117. See also WA XXXIII, 231, 34-35.

as it has been called.³⁴ This idea undoubtedly lies behind the famous statement quoted by Ignatius from the Liturgy of the church at Antioch in Syria in which he describes the Eucharist as "the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ."³⁵ Irenaeus is quite specific on this point. He says that Christ

has acknowledged the cup, a part of the creation, as his own blood, from which he bedews our blood; and the bread, a part of his creation, he has affirmed to be his own body, from which he increases our bodies.³⁶

Further on in this context he declares that "the substance of our flesh is increased and supported" from "the body of Christ" in the Eucharist against the heresy which claims that "the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God."³⁷ Later on he goes on to say that this flesh "is nourished by the cup which is his blood, and receives increase from the bread which is his body."³⁸ Irenaeus becomes quite specific on this point and tries to make his point quite clear by the use of certain well-known illustrations saying:

³⁴Herman Sasse, This is my body (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), pp. 182-186.

³⁵Ephesians XX, 2. Cf. supra: p. 6 and note 11, p. 6, for the Greek source.

³⁶Adversus haereses 5, 2, 2. Greek text in Textos I, pp. 77-78, and Ench. Pat. 249.

³⁷Ibid., 5, 2, 3: ΔΕΚΤΙΚΗΝ ΜΗ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΣΑΡΚΑ ... ΤΗΣ ΔΩΡΕΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ.

³⁸Ibid.

Just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground bears fruit in its proper season, and as a corn of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed rises with great increase through the Spirit of God who contains (holds together) all things, and then, through the wisdom of God comes into the use of men, and having received the Word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ, so also our bodies, being nourished by it and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition (διαλυθῆντα) in it, shall rise at the proper time, the Word of God freely granting to them the resurrection to the glory of God the Father.³⁹

The idea in Irenaeus is clear enough. Receiving Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist is the beginning of immortalization; the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist is "the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ." The blessings of the Eucharist are not entirely and absolutely spiritual, a real bodily nourishment is also obtained. The body and blood of Christ received in the Eucharist are an immortal deposit in our bodies which guarantees immortality to our bodies.

For Luther this was not just a theory or a theologoumenon, but a doctrine of which he made considerable use in his polemic against the Zwinglians. He says in his writing: That These Words of Christ, "This is my body," etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics:

It is a glory and praise of his inexpressible grace and mercy that he concerns himself so profoundly with us poor sinners and shows us such gracious love and goodness, not content to be everywhere in and around, above and beside us, but even giving us his own body

³⁹Ibid.

as nourishment, in order that with such a pledge he may assure and promise us that our body too shall live forever, because it partakes here on earth of an everlasting and living food.⁴⁰

In another section of this same writing Luther says:

The soul sees and clearly understands that the body will live eternally because it has partaken of an eternal food which will not leave it to decay in the grave and turn to dust.⁴¹

Luther reverts to this point quite frequently. In discussing the nature of Christ's flesh as defined in John 6, Luther declares:

His flesh is not of flesh, or fleshly, but spiritual; therefore, it cannot be consumed, digested, and transformed, for it is imperishable as is all that is of the Spirit, and a food of an entirely different kind from perishable food. Perishable food is transformed into the body which eats it; this food, however, transforms the person who eats it into what it is itself, and makes him like itself, spiritual, alive and eternal.⁴²

Luther believed that Zwingli completely underestimated the powerful effect of eating Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist or the virtue of Christ's body and blood as eaten and drunk in the Eucharist.

He says:

Since this poor maggot sack, our body, also has the hope of the resurrection of the dead and of the life everlasting, it must also become spiritual and digest and consume everything that is fleshly in it. And that is what this spiritual food does: when the body

⁴⁰Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament. Vol. XXXVII of Luther's Works, p. 71. See also WA XXXIII, 154, 32-156, 2.

⁴¹Luther, Works, pp. 93-94. See also WA XXXIII, 190, 25-28.

⁴²Luther, Works, p. 100. See also WA XXIII, 202, 23-29.

eats it physically, this food digests the body's flesh and transforms it so that it too becomes spiritual.⁴³

With Luther all this is more than a mere theory, or a theologoumenon.

He makes his point quite clear with a rather drastic "simple illustration" of the eating which takes place in the Eucharist when he goes on to say:

It is as if a wolf devoured a sheep and the sheep were so powerful a food that it transformed the wolf and turned him into a sheep. So, when we eat Christ's flesh physically and spiritually, the food is so powerful that it transforms us into itself and out of fleshly, sinful, mortal men makes spiritual, holy, living men. This we are already, though in a hidden manner in faith and hope; the face is not yet manifest, but we shall experience it on the Last Day.⁴⁴

Luther also quotes Irenaeus in this connection and defends him against the Zwinglians, and Oecolampadius.⁴⁵ He claims that "Irenaeus says that our bodies even now are no longer corruptible when they receive the sacrament, but have thereby the hope of the resurrection." For we see that the ancient doctors spoke of the sacrament in such a way that it even bestowed upon the body an immortal nature, "though hidden in faith and hope until the Last Day." Hence, according to Irenaeus' opinion, "there must be present in the sacrament something heavenly, which lives eternally and can and does give eternal life."⁴⁶ The food of the Eucharist is such a strong food that "it lives and gives

⁴³Luther, Works, pp. 100-101. See also WA XXIII, 204, 9-16.

⁴⁴Luther, Works, p. 101. See also WA XXIII, 204, 18-25.

⁴⁵Luther, Works, p. 115 etc. See also WA XXIII, 228, 21-35.

⁴⁶Luther, Works, p. 118. See also WA XXIII, 233, 29-30.

life to all who eat it, both to their bodies and to their souls."⁴⁷

Among the benefits which Luther lists as a result of the Real Presence of Christ's true body and blood in the Eucharist he lists in the second place a "bodily benefit"⁴⁸ which is "nevertheless an extraordinary great one, and it follows from the spiritual benefit."⁴⁹ Luther goes on to explain this saying:

For Christ surely will make even our body eternal, alive, blessed, and glorious, which is a much greater thing than giving us his body to eat for a short time on earth. Therefore he wills to be "in us by nature," says Hilary,⁵⁰ in both our souls and body, according to the word in John 6 (:56), "He who eats me abides in me and I in him." If we eat him spiritually through the Word, he abides in us spiritually in our soul; if one eats him physically, he abides in us physically and we in him. As we eat him, he abides in us and we in him. For he is not digested or transformed but ceaselessly he transforms us, our souls into righteousness, our body into immortality. So the ancient fathers spoke of the physical eating.⁵¹

Luther supplies some rather graphic details on the point under discussion here when he says in his final reference to this matter in the present context:

The mouth, the throat, the body, which eats Christ's body, will also have its benefit in that it will live forever and arise on the Last Day to eternal salvation. This is the secret power and benefit which flows from

⁴⁷Luther, Works, p. 125. See also WA XXIII, 244, 1-2.

⁴⁸German: "ein leiblicher Nutz, aber dennoch aus der Massen gross;" cf. Martin Luther, Saemtliche Schriften, edited by Joh. Georg Walch (23 vols. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1890), XX, 874, 281. See also WA XXIII, 254, 18-19.

⁴⁹Luther, Word and Sacrament. Vol. XXXVII of Luther's Works, p. 132. See also WA XXIII, 254, 18-19.

⁵⁰Quoting On the Trinity VIII, 13.

⁵¹Luther, Works, p. 132. See also WA XXIII, 254, 19-29.

the body of Christ in the Supper into our body, for it must be useful, and cannot be present in vain. Therefore, it must bestow life and salvation upon our bodies, as is its nature.⁵²

With Ignatius and Irenaeus, Luther also regarded the Eucharist as a special preparation for immortality and in this sense the Eucharist is also for Luther "the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ."

All the quotations so far given from Luther on this matter are from the same writing dating from the year 1527. But he makes this point also in other contexts. In a funeral sermon included in Veit Dietrich's Haus-Postille Luther is reported to have said:

The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine through the power of the Word are placed in our mouth, so that, as the holy fathers also said in this connection, our mortal bodies here on earth might be nourished unto everlasting life through an immortal food. And so there has arisen among Christians the custom of protecting those who are sick with this living and eternal food that they may grasp with all the greater certainty the hope of eternal life.⁵³

Luther then uses this whole idea of a bodily effect as described in the present context to impart special comfort to the mourners on this occasion. He assures them that the eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper should instil in Christians the hope of living forever because their bodies already here on earth have not only been fed with perishable bread but with the body and blood of Christ. Then he goes on to say to them:

⁵²Luther, Word, p. 134. See also WA XXIII, 258, 4-10.

⁵³Luther, Saemmtliche Schriften, XIIIa, 1327, 14.

Since you know that your good friend deported himself as a Christian in this regard, not despising that eternal food so rich in grace, sought it, and partook of it, you should now be satisfied that as far as he is concerned, he will not remain in death. As St. Paul says, Christ will bring him with himself on the Last Day and give him to you again just as her son was restored to the widow here (the sermon here being based on Luke 7:11-16!). And so the holy sacraments direct us to such a hope that we may be certain and have no doubts at all.⁵⁴

Luther would not have comforted mourners at a funeral with a theory or a theologoumenon. He was quite sure about "the bodily benefit" of the sacrament. For him there were not only specific spiritual blessings in the Eucharist for the Christians but a very special bodily blessing as well. Sasse quotes from the Large Catechism to demonstrate that Luther "makes use of the traditional thoughts of the earlier Church, which regarded the Sacrament of the Alter as food and as medicine."⁵⁵ Sasse observes:

Here we have the much debated "medicine for immortality, antidote against death" which Ignatius already at the beginning of the second century quotes from the liturgy

⁵⁴Ibid., XIIIa, 1327, 16.

⁵⁵Sasse, p. 182. The passages quoted by Sasse from the Large Catechism read: "It is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man. While it is true that through Baptism we are first born anew, our human flesh and blood have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint, at times even stumble. The Lord's Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger. For the new life should be one that continually develops and progresses" (Large Catechism: V, 23,24). The other quotation has been given above in discussing the views of Ignatius. See Large Catechism V, 67-70 quoted supra, p. 7.

of Antioch, and which has played such a great role for the Greek Fathers. It is true that the idea is to be found especially in Luther's writings against Zwingli of 1527 and 1528.

Sasse declares that Luther had special reason for doing this in the writings mentioned because of the stress placed by his opponents on the spiritualistic understanding of the Lord's Supper. But he also claims that the Large Catechism and the Formula of Concord with its references to John 6 and the Council of Ephesus in the article of Christ demonstrate that the doctrine in question is "not a private theory of Luther only, but has become a doctrine of the Lutheran Church."⁵⁶

Sasse then makes the claim that the idea that the sacrament is meant for the whole man, body and soul, is not "an unimportant incidental thought, a by-product of Luther's fight against Zwingli." It "is rather one of the fundamental elements of Luther's doctrine of the sacrament. We find it also with regard to baptism in the Large Catechism.⁵⁷ It is closely connected with the doctrine on the incarnation, just as it was for the Greek Fathers."⁵⁸ Sasse then goes on

⁵⁶Sasse, p. 183. Sasse refers to Sol. Decl. VIII, 59, 76 and draws attention to Canon II of the Council of Ephesus which reads: Si quis non confitetur carnem domini esse vivificam propterea, quod propria facta est verbi, quod omnia vivificat, anathema sit. For the actual wording of this Canon see: Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p. 1126.

⁵⁷Here Sasse refers to the Large Catechism IV, 44.

⁵⁸Sasse, p. 184.

to observe that "no single element of Luther's doctrine on the Sacrament has met with such criticism as this idea."⁵⁹ Zwingli, Calvin, the later Reformed churches, as well as modern Lutheranism have all rejected this idea with the noteworthy exception of some theologians like Sommerlath and Elert.⁶⁰ Those who have rejected this doctrine, Reformed as well as Lutherans have "regarded the idea that a bodily eating and drinking could give an eternal blessing to the soul and that the grace of God even affects our body as a remnant of non-Christian religion."⁶¹ Sasse is very strongly on Luther's side on this question.

In his final summing up he observes that Luther could appeal not only to the ancient fathers but also to the New Testament. He cites Luther's use of John 6 in this context.⁶² He also observes that there is a connection between the Sacrament and the last things. Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper look to the resurrection of the body. Both are anticipations of the future, of our resurrection and complete union with Christ according to the doctrine of the New Testament.⁶³ But Luther

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 184-185.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 185. J. G. Scheibel also taught this.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 185.

⁶²Sasse here quotes Luther's statement given supra p. 27. Luther goes on to say in this context: "This, of course, can be nothing but the body of Christ, of which he says in John 6 (: 55, 58), 'My flesh is food indeed. He who eats my flesh will live forever.'" See Luther, Word and Sacrament. Vol. XXXVII of Luther's Works, p. 118.

⁶³Sasse quotes Rom. 6:3-4; John 6:54-57. Of the latter passage he remarks: "This passage would be a sufficient proof, even if it dealt only with the manducatio spiritualis." Ibid., p. 185, 136.

never attempted with the schoolmen to point out how the Sacrament can have such effects. He was satisfied "to know that a connection does exist between our receiving Christ's body and blood and our future glory." Human reason must not be the decisive factor here. "Over against the Platonic separation of body and soul" Luther defended Biblical anthropology against Zwingli. Jesus also demonstrated His concern with man's body in the miracles of healing. These, too, have an eschatological significance.

And the apostles knew that not only our glorified bodies after our resurrection, but also our present bodies, despite all weakness and sinfulness, are "members of Christ" (1 Cor. 6:15), "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (v. 19). It was this New Testament truth that Luther defended against Zwinglian idealism when he maintained in the Great Controversy that our bodies, too, participate in the grace that Christ gives through His sacraments.⁶⁴

In another context Sasse refers to attempts which have been made to demonstrate a difference between the assurance of the forgiveness of sins in absolution and that given through the sacrament. He declares:

There is no such difference, for one and the same grace is given through the gospel and the sacrament. However, it is true that the manner in which forgiveness is imparted to us in the sacrament points to the fact that God's grace is meant for the whole man, body and soul, and that there is a connection between the participation of the "vivifying flesh" of our glorified Lord and the resurrection of our bodies.⁶⁵

Sasse then goes on to say that it is sometimes suggested that this doctrine had only a "transitory importance" for Luther in his controversy

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 185-186.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 385.

with the Zwinglians. But Luther, he claims, also taught this in his Large Catechism and on the basis of certain statements in the Formula of Concord⁶⁶ he believes that this doctrine "always remained his (Luther's) doctrine and that of the Lutheran Church."⁶⁷

Luther would not have expressed his views on this matter in the manner demonstrated had he not believed that they had the support of the New Testament. Furthermore, the Lutheran theologians of the sixteenth century like Matthesius, Chemnitz, and Selnecker are in full agreement with Luther on this point. The devotional literature of that period also makes frequent use of this idea as a fruit of the Sacrament.⁶⁸ Gerhard also maintains "that this our body in which sin and death are dwelling in this life will be resuscitated from the dust of the earth to eternal life because it has been nourished with the vivifying body of Christ."⁶⁹ From the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, most of the orthodox theologians have given up this idea. But there were noteworthy exceptions like A. Calov. Sasse thinks that this was the result of "the renewed Aristotelian philosophy" which found it impossible

⁶⁶ Referred to in note 56 supra.

⁶⁷ Hermann Sasse, This is my body, pp. 385-386.

⁶⁸ Sasse quotes from Matthesius: Ibid., p. 386 note 42.

⁶⁹ Locus XXI. cap. 20, par. 213. Johann Gerhard, Loci Theologici, ed. Preuss (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1867), V. p. 211. Among other passages Gerhard quotes 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13; John 6, 54, 56; 15:5 and gives the customary quotations which are also found in Martin Chemnitz, Examen Concilii Tridentini, ed. Preuss (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1861), p. 361 etc. Ibid., p. 386 note 43.

to accept the idea that the Eucharist is "a medicine of immortality, the antidote against death."⁷⁰

Hollaz, at the end of the orthodox period knows only the threefold use of the sacrament which every Calvinist could accept. In this connection Sasse also warns against the idea of some of the nineteenth century Lutheran theologians to further the understanding of this bodily effect by putting forward the theory that "some supernatural substance is imparted to our body to make it capable of being resuscitated." "Such speculations," Sasse says, "are as unbiblical as the theory of transubstantiation."⁷¹ Sasse claims that these men discredited the doctrine of Luther and the early Lutheran Church. But he warns against efforts to explain "the mystery that was first proclaimed in the liturgy." Only the omnipotence of God can effect the miracle of the resurrection. The church cannot set up any dogmas here. Just as the resurrection of the body and the Real Presence of Christ's true body and blood in the Sacrament are beyond all powers of reason and imagination "so we cannot know what the relationship may be between our participation in the body and blood of Christ and our resurrection." But there is an eschatological gift received even now in the Eucharist. The anthropology of the Bible must be allowed its full significance here. "Man does not consist of soul and body--he is soul and body." Each of the means of grace is meant by God to save the whole man.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 386-387.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 387.

Therefore it would be quite wrong to deny that the Lord's Supper has a meaning also for our mortal bodies. This is the profound insight into the mystery of God's saving grace that Luther expressed in the simple words of his Catechism: "Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."⁷²

Sasse has been chiefly responsible in modern Lutheranism for drawing attention to this facet of early Lutheran doctrine on the Lord's Supper which since the days of Hollaz has become more and more a forgotten doctrine of the Lutheran Church.⁷³ As set forth by Sasse this whole doctrine becomes a valuable support for the doctrine of the Real Presence and the references to this doctrine in the fathers certainly imply a very strong and vivid belief in the doctrine of the Real Presence on their parts.

The Bread No Longer "Common Bread"

This is the place for a more detailed consideration of the statement of Irenaeus that "the bread from the earth after receiving the invocation of God, is no longer common bread but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly."⁷⁴ This also recalls Justin's statement referred to above⁷⁵ that the bread and wine after

⁷²Ibid., pp. 387-389.

⁷³There is not even a reference to this matter in Pieper's footnotes!

⁷⁴Supra, p. 20. Adversus haereses IV, 18, 5. For particulars regarding the sources see supra, 21.

⁷⁵Supra, First Apology 66, pp. 9-10.

consecration are no longer "common food." On the basis of these statements it has been argued that Justin and Irenaeus believed in some theory of metabolism or transubstantiation in the Eucharist.⁷⁶ Here again these patristic statements may be compared with certain stated opinions of Luther. Luther also believed that the bread and wine after consecration are no longer "common food" without holding any kind of theory of a change occurring in the elements. In July, 1543, not so long before his death and hence in the period of his matured thought, Luther had occasion to write to a certain Simon Wolferinus, a pastor in Eisleben, on the question as to what should be done with consecrated elements which were left over after a communion celebration.

Luther tells Wolferinus that he should have known that it would give offence to mix what is left of the bread and wine after the celebration of Holy Communion with the supply of bread and wine in hand. He demands an example from him to justify such an action. He also warns him about posing dangerous questions if he sticks to the opinion that "the Sacrament terminates with the termination of the action." Luther is almost prepared to believe that Wolferinus is suffering from "the senselessness" of the Zwinglians. He gives him to understand that he is deeply pained and offended at what has taken place and urges Wolferinus to follow the example of the other churches. Wolferinus had described these matters as "trivialities" but Luther assures him that they are "very serious trivialities." Luther then suggests that Wolferinus might

⁷⁶Kelly, p. 198.

adopt the custom in vogue in Wittenberg where the bread and wine left over was simply distributed among the communicants till it was all used up. But he does not hesitate to warn Wolferinus that if he persists in his self-chosen procedure he will do away with the whole sacrament. And finally, Luther maintains

we will be compelled to have the Sacrament only in the action and not in the intermission of accidental matters and in the end a period of time and a moment of time will become the efficient cause of the Sacrament and many absurdities will follow.⁷⁷

The offence that drew forth this very strong language from Luther was that Wolferinus simply took what was left over from a communion celebration and put it back with the unconsecrated bread and wine. He acted as if the bread and wine, after the consecration, were "common food" and in Luther's viewpoint that was highly offensive conduct deserving the sternest of rebukes. Like Justin and Irenaeus Luther also did not regard the bread and wine of the Eucharist as "common food" after the consecration. About a week after admonishing Wolferinus in the manner outlined above Luther wrote to him again on the same subject. Apparently, Melanchthon had written to him in the meantime on the same matter. Luther agrees with Melanchthon in affirming that outside of the sacramental action there is no Sacrament but he claims that Wolferinus is all too hasty in breaking off the sacramental action. If Luther were pushed for a definite answer on the beginning and termination of the sacramental action he would be inclined to say that it begins at the commencement of the Lord's Prayer and continues "till all have communed, emptied the

⁷⁷Luther, Saemmtliche Schriften, XX, 1606-1607. WA Br. 10, No. 3888, 340-341.

chalice, eaten up the hosts" and the congregation has been dismissed and the pastor leaves the altar. In this way conscientious scruples, offences, and endless questions are avoided. His final word of advice to Wolferinus is

Therefore you will be careful that when anything is left over in the Sacrament, either some of the communicants, or pastors, or the preacher partake of it, not that the deacon or someone else on his own should drink up what is left in the chalice, but he should give it also to others who have been partakers of the body also that you should not appear by means of a bad example to divide the Sacrament or to be treating the sacramental action in an unbecoming manner.⁷⁸

Sasse points out also that Luther never limited the Real Presence to the instant of distribution and reception. Luther never abandoned the view that by the words of consecration bread and wine "become" the body and blood of Christ. Otherwise neither the elevation nor the adoration of Christ which were retained in Wittenberg up to 1542 could have been justified.

Luther

always regarded it as Zwinglianism to neglect the difference between a consecrated and an unconsecrated host, and it has always been the custom of the Lutheran Church to consecrate the new supply of bread or wine or both if more is needed than originally was provided for.⁷⁹

Sasse then goes on to point out that usus and actio must not be restricted to mean the same thing as sumptio, the eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper.⁸⁰ For Luther the bread after consecration was no

⁷⁸Ibid., XX, 1608-1609. WA Bv. 10, No. 3894, 348-349.

⁷⁹Sasse, pp. 173-174.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 174. For Sasse's reference to the elevation of the host in Luther as late as 1542 see: Luther, Saemmtliche Schriften, Vol XXI, b. 2799. (No. 2956).

longer "common bread" as his remarks from the letter of 1543 demonstrate and yet Luther refused to accept any theory of a change in the elements. Luther taught neither consubstantiation nor transubstantiation and he had good grounds for believing that in this respect he stood on the same ground as the fathers of the ancient church like Irenaeus. It cannot be demonstrated from Justin or Irenaeus that they held some theory of the metabolism of the elements when they spoke of the bread being no longer "common bread" after the invocation. Like Luther they may well have spoken in this way simply because they believed that after the consecration the bread and wine "became" in a sacramental sense the true body and blood of Christ.

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD CENTURY

The Eucharist was never a subject of controversy in the ancient church. Had that been the case, the ancient fathers, no doubt, would have been much more precise in speaking of the Eucharist and they may have avoided some of the rather ambiguous incidental statements which they sometimes permitted themselves in referring to the Eucharist. But for all that, the simple faith of the earliest period as reflected in the unadorned and direct statements of the earlier fathers was succeeded by a greater degree of reflection and analysis in regard to the Eucharist in the fathers of the third century and the results of this can be seen in the expressions now used in connection with the Eucharist. Certain practices which arose in the celebration of the Eucharist also clearly reflect the thought of these fathers.

Tertullian (ca. 160-222)

Chronologically, this period begins with Tertullian a most uncompromising advocate of what he regarded as being Orthodox doctrine and a relentless foe of all heretics. But despite his orthodoxy this man ultimately became a heretic himself never actually rejoining the Catholic Church of Carthage. The rigoristic discipline of the Montanists appealed to Tertullian and this was his heresy: he was never a heretic in doctrine. He is usually ranked alongside Augustine as the greatest

of the patristic period and bears the distinction of being the father of Latin theology.

Tertullian's views on the Eucharist have always been a subject of considerable dispute and he is confidently claimed by both sides in the controversy on the Lord's Supper which has raged in Protestant circles ever since the time of the Reformation. He was claimed by the Zwinglians and with equal confidence by Luther, and even today the leading authorities on the history of dogma are widely separated on the question of Tertullian's eucharistic doctrine. Tertullian, like all the early fathers, never deals with the doctrine of the Eucharist as such. All his references to the Eucharist are incidental being introduced chiefly to illustrate his views on other matters which happen to be under debate at the time. The precise interpretation of certain terms used by Tertullian in speaking of the Eucharist is most important in this whole connection. Tertullian used such terms as figura and repraesentare in speaking of the Eucharist and any view of Tertullian's eucharistic doctrine will naturally be determined by the interpretation of these terms.

In quite a number of contexts Tertullian speaks in a manner suggesting that he clearly believed that the body and blood of Christ are really and truly present in the Eucharist. For him the Eucharist is "God's feast" which we eat.¹ In the Eucharist Christians utter their "Amen" over

¹De spectaculis. For the Latin text see Jesus Solano, Textos Eucaristicos Primitivos (Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos, 1952), I, 89, 129; hereafter cited as Textos I.

"the Holy Thing."² The Eucharist is food on which the church "feeds";³ the Lord's body is "received" in the Eucharist and even "reserved."⁴

In the Eucharist Christians actually apply their hands to the Lord's body and those who makes idols would offer offence to the Lord's body if they partook of the Eucharist.⁵ In another place he speaks of feeding "upon the fatness of the Lord's body--the Eucharist, to wit."⁶

But besides these more general references Tertullian can also be quite specific in describing what is actually imparted in the Eucharist. In his De oratione he declares that Christ's body "is reckoned (or: considered) as being in the Eucharist."⁷ Tertullian has just pointed out that the petition "Give us this day our daily bread" may be understood "spiritually" as referring to Christ, the bread of life. "Then," he goes on to say, "there is also the fact that his body is reckoned (or:

²Latin: in Sanctum. Ibid., 25: Textos I, 89. 130.

³De praescriptione haereticorum 36: Textos I, 90. 132. Cf. also M. J. Rouet De Journal, Enchiridion Patristicum (Barcelona: Herder, 1959), 297; hereafter cited as Ench. Pat.

⁴De oratione 19: Textos I, 91. 134.

⁵De idolatria 7: Textos I, 101. 148.

⁶De pudicitia 9: Textos I, 103. 150.

⁷De oratione 6: Textos I, 90. 133. The Latin text here reads: Tum quod et corpus eius in pane censeatur. For the meaning of censeo here see Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1958), under censeo E 4b, p. 314. See also A. G. Rudelbach, Reformation, Lutherthum und Union (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von Bernh. Tauchnitz jun. 1839), p. 661, 44 where it is observed that censeri here is equivalent to esse and that this meaning of censeri is established legal usage which it is well known that Tertullian frequently followed.

considered) as being in the bread: 'This is my body.'" It seems that Tertullian is here trying to emphasize the fact that the bread of the Eucharist is Christ's body in a very real sense in contrast with the spiritual application of the "daily bread" of the Lord's Prayer which can be referred to Christ as the bread of life.

Tertullian wrote quite a massive work consisting of five books against the notorious heretic Marcion who is often reckoned among the Gnostics. According to Tertullian, Marcion, like all the Gnostics was a dualist⁸ holding the idea of the inherent evil of all matter which he took over from Greek philosophy and other eastern sources and among the other proofs which Tertullian adduces to demonstrate the falsity of such views Tertullian notes that the Creator did not disdain "the bread by which he represents⁹ his own body thus requiring in his very sacraments the 'beggarly elements' of the Creator."¹⁰ Here Tertullian uses repraesentare to describe Christ's action in the Eucharist. In an ancient context the verb repraesentare never means what the word "represent" often connotes in a modern context, namely, to symbolize or exhibit an image in place of something else. Dom Gregory Dix has shown that these words mean "Bread whereby Christ makes His very body to be present."¹¹

⁸Adversus Marcionem 1, 2.

⁹Latin: repraesentat.

¹⁰Adversus Marcionem 1, 14: Textos I, pp. 94-95. 138: Ench. Pat. 333

¹¹Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Great Britain: Dacre Press Westminster, 1954), p. 255.

Accordingly, here there is a striking and forceful statement from Tertullian that Christ's "very own body" is actually present in the Eucharist. Against the Docetic theory of Marcion Tertullian here argues that in the Eucharist Christ "makes his very body to be present." The real point in his argument against Marcion here is that Christ can give such a "representation" of his very body in the Eucharist because he has such a real body of his own to give. In other words, Tertullian here argues that there can only be such a "representation" of something real; there cannot be such a "representation" of a mere Docetic appearance. If Tertullian had held the Zwinglian view of "represent" his whole argument against Marcion would have been quite pointless. There is another passage illustrating the meaning of repraesentare in Tertullian in the De praescriptione haereticorum where Tertullian is not speaking of the Eucharist but of the authentic writings of the apostles "uttering the voice et repraesentantes faciem uniuscuiusque," that is, "making the face of each and every one of them to be present."¹² In another passage of the Adversus Marcionem where Tertullian comes to speak of the two goats which were presented on the great day of atonement he points out that "one of these goats was bound with scarlet, and driven out of the camp by the people into the wilderness, amid cursing, and spitting, and pulling, and piercing, being thus marked with all the signs of the Lord's own Passion." The other one, being offered up for sins and given to the priests of the temple for meat "afforded proofs of his second appearance" where the original has

¹²De praescriptione haereticorum 36: Ench. Pat. 297.

the noun repraesentatio for "appearance." It should be noted that this "appearance" is also a variety of "being present again." Tertullian goes on to say that this appearance takes place "when (after all sins have been expiated) the priests of the spiritual temple, that is, the church, are to enjoy the flesh, as it were, of the Lord's own grace, if I may say so."¹³ The quasi and the quadam should not be taken as a modification of the reality of the presence of Christ's flesh in Eucharist; they are an acknowledgment from Tertullian that some sort of apology is required for using such a daring expression as "enjoying the flesh of the Lord's own grace." In another passage from this same writing Tertullian uses the word figura in connection with the bread of the Eucharist. After referring to Christ carrying his cross he says:

This tree Jeremiah also makes known to you when he preaches to the Jews who are about to say: "Come, let us cast the tree (word) on to its bread,"¹⁴ that is, on the body. For so the Lord in your gospel also revealed it, calling the bread his body so that in time to come you may also understand that he has given the bread the figure of his body,¹⁵ he whose body the prophet of old formed (figured)¹⁶ in the

¹³Adversus Marcionem 3, 7: Textos I, 95. 140. The important words here are: dominicae gratiae quasi visceratione quadam fruerentur.

¹⁴Jer. 11:19. Tertullian here follows the LXX which reads here:
 Δεῦτε καὶ ἐμβάλημεν ξύλον εἰς τὸν ἄρτον αὐτοῦ.

¹⁵Latin: eum . . . corporis sui figuram pani dedisse.

¹⁶Latin: figuravit.

bread, the Lord himself desiring to give later on an interpretation of this mystery.¹⁷¹⁸

Here again everything depends on the interpretation of the noun figura and the verb figurare. Dom Gregory Dix draws attention to the findings of C. H. Turner on figura. "He concludes that it means something nearer to 'actual and distinctive nature' than anything like 'symbol' or 'figure' in our sense."¹⁹ He also quotes the observation of Harnack: "What we nowadays understand by 'symbol' is a thing which is not what it represents; at that time 'symbol' denoted a thing which in some kind of way really is what it signifies."²⁰

Dom Gregory Dix also has a very important discussion on repraesentatio. It is the word by which Tertullian elsewhere describes the coming of God's kingdom which Christians pray for in the Lord's Prayer.²¹ He also uses it of the Lord's coming to judgment and with power.²² The theophanies of God in the Old Testament like those in the burning bush were likewise repraesentationes.²³ The Son is manifested by

¹⁷Latin: sacramentum.

¹⁸Adversus Marcionem 3, 19: Textos I, 96.141; Ench. Pat. 337.

¹⁹Dix, p. 256, 2, where Turner is quoted from the Journal of Theological Studies VII, 595.

²⁰Dix, p. 256.

²¹With reference to De oratione 5.

²²With reference e.g. to Adversus Marcionem 3, 7.

²³Ibid., 3, 10.

the voice of the Father at the transfiguration

repraesentans eum, "declaring him"--"This is My son."²⁴
 The actual 'appearing' of men before the tribunal of God in body as well as in soul at the last judgment is a repraesentatio.²⁵ The secure fruition of God in the life to come by repraesentatio et possessio ('manifestation and possession') is contrasted with the obscure laying hold of Him by hope which is all that we can have in this world.²⁶ Tertullian declares that the repraesentatio (physical presence) of Christ in His earthly life is what the apostles saw and were blessed in seeing, which prophets and kings had desired to see and had not seen.²⁷

In view of all this Dix concludes:

It is obvious, of course, that a word with such associations for Tertullian cannot be adequately translated into English in connection with the eucharist, merely as 'bread by which He "represents" His body.'²⁸

Dix translates the passage under consideration from Tertullian "bread whereby Christ makes His very body to be present."²⁹ Rather than offering any support to the Zwinglian interpretation this passage

²⁴Ibid., 4, 22.

²⁵De carnis resurrectione 17 (twice). Dix adds the further observation here: "It is to be noted that in this chapter it is used as synonymous with exhibitio, the technical term for the 'production' of the actual person of a prisoner for trial before a court, which was the legal responsibility of the gaoler or the sureties." Cf. Dix, p. 255, 9.

²⁶De carnis resurrectione 23.

²⁷Adversus Marcionem 4, 25. For the whole quotation from Dix see Dix, pp. 255-256.

²⁸Ibid., p. 256.

²⁹Ibid., p. 255.

from Tertullian is a very strong testimony on the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist.

In a subsequent passage from the work against Marcion, Tertullian supplies another statement on the Eucharist in which he says:

Having taken the bread and distributed it to his disciples, he made it his own body by saying, "This is my body," that is, "the figure of my body." A figure, however, there could not have been, unless there were first a veritable body. An empty thing, because it is a phantom, is incapable of having a figure. If, however, he imagined to himself that the bread was his body because he lacked a true body, he must therefore have given bread for us.³⁰

Here Tertullian uses the Eucharist which he says is a "figure" of Christ's body to prove that Christ had a true body, which Marcion denied. On the basis of this statement it has been contended that Tertullian taught a symbolical or spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Oecolampadius and Zwingli claimed Tertullian in support of their views against Luther. Seeberg also claims that for Tertullian "the spiritual presence of Christ is the actual gift of the Eucharist." He believes that "the realistic interpretation of the words of institution" is excluded from the views of Tertullian. "In the Eucharist the Logos is present spiritually and the elements are the sensible symbols of this presence; but the body of Christ is also present." But Tertullian, according to Seeberg, believes that this "body of Christ" present in the Eucharist is "the congregation united with his body through Christ." In the Eucharist, according to Tertullian, "we must

³⁰Adversus Marcionem 4, 40: Textos I, p. 97, 143; Ench. Pat. 343.

certainly not think of a real presence of the body but the body is to be only a figura corporis, that is, a figurative, metaphorical, or symbolical representation of his body." Tertullian is completely removed "from the thought of the presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist."³¹ This may be regarded as a rather extreme statement of the one view. Sasse sets forth a more cautious view. He observes that the African Fathers Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine differ in their sacramental theology from most of their contemporaries. Africa, and more particularly Alexandria, seems to have been the home of what is usually called "sacramental spiritualism." The bread and wine are not changed in the Eucharist "but they receive a new quality" which makes them, according to Tertullian, "the figure of the body and blood of Christ." "They represent, as it were, Christ's body and blood." But the ancients never understood terms like "figure" and "symbol" as Zwingli and his followers did.

For the ancients "figure" or "symbol" is not only a mere sign, but a sign filled with reality. Thus the African fathers can use also traditional ecclesiastical terminology. For Tertullian the bread, as the "figura corporis," is at the same time the body. The consecrated bread is no longer common bread. It is carefully reserved. It must be eaten before any other food is taken. The Christian partakes of it every morning. All this is not a concession to the usage of the Church. It is rather an undeveloped idea of the Real Presence.³²

It can be argued that Tertullian speaks in a way that would rather suggest that he believes in a Real Presence of the body and blood of

³¹Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte. (Fourth Edition; Darmstadt: Sonderausgabe der Wissenschaftlichen Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1953), I, 461-464.

³²Herman Sasse, This is my body (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), pp. 28-29.

Christ in the Eucharist far more often than in a way that would suggest that he must be regarded as an advocate of some kind of spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. His statements have in fact been used in support of both views and this would suggest the existence of contradictory or ambiguous elements in the teaching of Tertullian on this matter and that is not like Tertullian. Tertullian was involved in far too much strife and controversy for that. After discussing the various interpretations placed upon the statements of Tertullian on the Eucharist, J. N. D. Kelly concludes:

All that his language really suggests is that, while accepting the equation of the elements with the body and blood, he remains conscious of the sacramental distinction between them. In fact, he is trying, with the aid of the concept of figura, to rationalize to himself the apparent contradiction between (a) the dogma that the elements are now Christ's body and blood, and (b) the empirical fact that for sensation they remain bread and wine.³³

Tertullian also evinced a very high regard for the consecrated elements as is clear from a celebrated statement made in his De corona where he says: "We feel pained should any of the cup or bread, even though ours, be cast upon the ground."³⁴ This need not have anything at all to do with some kind of theory of the metabolism of the elements but with Justin and Irenaeus, and Luther, too, for that matter, Tertullian held that the bread and wine, after the consecration, are

³³J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (Second edition; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 212.

³⁴De corona 3: Textos I, 100. 147; Ench. Pat. 367.

no longer common bread and wine and are consequently worthy of the most reverent attention and care.

Luther has quite a lengthy section on Tertullian's eucharistic doctrine in his famous writing against Zwingli: That These Words Of Christ "This is my body" etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics. Oecolampadius had claimed the support of Tertullian in favour of the Zwinglian interpretation. He had fixed on the word figura as used by Tertullian in the extracts from his work against Marcion quoted above. Luther grants that figura is an "obscure and ambiguous word." Oecolampadius, to support his views, would like to interpret it to mean parable, type, or interpretative sign. But Luther insists that in Latin figura does not really have any of these meanings. The onus of proof here rests with Oecolampadius. Then Luther sets out what he believes that Tertullian's meaning here really is.

We say that Tertullian employs the word figura in accordance with proper usage in the Latin language, where it means a form or figure in the mathematical sense--stating whether a thing is long, thick, broad, round, white, or black, which one can see, feel, and handle, as we Germans also say about the sacrament that Christ's body is present under the form of the bread and his blood under the form of the wine. Exactly that which we call gestalt, "form," Tertullian calls in Latin figura.³⁵

Luther then goes on to argue very strongly that Tertullian would have had no argument against Marcion without accepting the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. He is quite sure

³⁵Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament. Vol. XXXVII of Luther's Works, edited by Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. 109-110. See also WA XXIII, 218, 15-28.

CHAPTER VI

THE ALEXANDRIANS: CLEMENT AND ORIGEN

There is no systematic treatment of the doctrine of the Eucharist in the writings of Clement of Alexandria or Origen. But even the incidental references to the Eucharist found in the writings of these fathers suggest that they were beginning to think differently about the nature of the Eucharist and the eucharistic Presence of Christ than the fathers who preceded them. Both of these fathers were deeply influenced by Platonism and this factor, in a way, also determined some of their basic theological opinions and attitudes. Speaking of Clement and Origen, J. N. D. Kelly says

While they verbally reproduce the conventional realism, their bias to allegory and the Platonizing absorption in the spiritual world behind phenomena alter their perspective.¹

But when Kelly goes on to say that Clement "frequently"² refers to the Eucharist in a realistic way in his writings it is an overstatement. There are only some half dozen brief, incidental references to the Eucharist in all the writings of Clement. He is referring to the Eucharist when he says: "To drink the blood of Jesus is to become

¹J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (Second edition; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 213.

²Ibid.

a partaker of the Lord's immortality."³ In the same context he says that those "who by faith partake of it (the Eucharist) are sanctified both in body and soul."⁴ In the Quis dives salvetur? Clement makes Christ say: "I am the one who feeds you, giving myself as bread and no one who has tasted it any longer makes trial of death and day by day I supply the drink of immortality."⁵ Such passages, taken in isolation, might well suggest that Clement held the same views about the Real Presence as the earlier fathers. But in commenting on 1 Cor. 3:1-3 in his Stromata Clement says:

If then, "the milk" belongs to babes and "meat" is the food of the full-grown, according to the apostle's statement, "milk" will be understood to be catechetical instruction, the first food of the soul, as it were. And "meat" is the mystic contemplation [ΕΠΟΠΤΙΚΗ θεωρία]; for this is the flesh and blood of the Word [λόγου], that is, the comprehension of the divine power and essence. "Taste and see that the Lord is good," he says. For so he imparts of himself to those who partake of such food in a more spiritual manner [πνευματικώτερον] when the soul nourishes itself, according to the truth-loving Plato. For the knowledge of the divine essence is the meat and drink of the divine Word [Ἀρῶσις γὰρ καὶ πόσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ἢ γνῶσις ἐστὶ τῆς θείας οὐσίας].⁶

³Paedagogos 2, 2. For the Greek see Jesus Solano, Textos Eucaristicos Primitivos (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1952), p. 109, 159; hereafter cited as Textos I and M. J. Rouet De Journel, Enchiridion Patristicum (Barcelona: Herder, 1959), p. 410; hereafter cited as Ench. Pat.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Quis dives salvetur? 23. Textos I, 109. 160.

⁶Stromata 5, 10, 66. For the Greek see Otto Staehlin and Ludwig Fruechtel, Clemens Alexandrinus, Stromata 1-6 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960), II, 370.

In this statement the Real Presence seems to dissolve into the Christian Gnostic's knowledge. "Mystic contemplation" is the "flesh and blood of the Word" and this is equated with "the comprehension of the divine power and essence." This is the way in which the Lord imparts himself to those who partake of the food of the Eucharist "in a more spiritual manner." "The knowledge of the divine essence is the meat and drink of the divine Word." Seeberg says:

Die Eucharistie ist nach Cl.(emens) eine Mischung des sinnlichen Elements mit dem Logos und infolgedessen eine *ἐστίασις λογική*. Nur darum handelt es sich, dass der Logos auf den Menschen einwirkt, ihn heiligend und zur Unsterblichkeit fuhrend. Dass der Logos etwa in dem Element sei, liegt Cl.(emens) fern.⁷

Seeberg's remarks are supported by another statement of Clement from the Stromata where he says:

The Saviour, taking the bread, first spoke and offered a blessing. Then breaking the bread, he presented it, that they might eat it spiritually.

The word translated "spiritually" here is *λογικῶς*. G. W. H. Lampe defines this word as "rationally, in accordance with reason; spiritually opp. corporeally" and he quotes this passage from Clement in support.⁹ These statements, then, seem to make it quite clear that Clement is not thinking of a true bodily eating and drinking of the true body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

⁷Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte (Darmstadt: Sonderausgabe der Wissenschaftlichen Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1953), I, 499.

⁸Stromata 10, 1. Staehlin and Fruechtel, II, 30.

⁹G. W. H. Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1961--), p. 805.

Origen's views are similar but clearer. Origen and Clement were trained in the same school of thought. Origen can say that the Christians are accustomed "to drink blood;"¹⁰ that Christ offered himself "in the sacrifice of the altar" and supplies the forgiveness of sins thereby.¹¹ He can also describe Christian altars as being not sprinkled with the blood of sheep but "consecrated by the precious blood of Christ,"¹² and he declares that when Christians approach the Eucharist they have communion with the body of Christ.¹³ He states quite categorically that in the cup of the New Covenant and the bread of blessing Christ's own body and blood are freely given to the Christian.¹⁴ Origen also stresses proper preparation for the Eucharist and veneration and respect for "the holy things" of the church there offered to the Christian.¹⁵ In this connection, what he says about the proper handling and care of the consecrated elements should also be noted. He says in his Homilies on Exodus:

¹⁰Homilies on Numbers 16, 9. Latin text in Textos I, 129. 183.

¹¹Ibid., Numbers 24, 1. Latin text in Textos I, 130. 184 reading: in sacrificium altaris oblatum.

¹²Homilies on Joshua 2, 1. Latin text in Textos I, 131. 185.

¹³Homilies on Psalm 37, 2, 6. Latin text in Textos I, 131. 186.

¹⁴Homilies on Jeremiah 19, 13. Greek text in Textos I, 132. 187.

¹⁵On Ezekiel 7, 22. Greek text in Textos I, 132. 188.

Those of you who are accustomed to be present at the divine mysteries know how you keep the body of the Lord with every precaution and veneration when you receive it so that not even a small part of it should fall to the ground and so that nothing of the consecrated bread should be lost. For you believe, and rightly so, that you are guilty if any of it should thereafter fall to the ground.¹⁶

But in spite of these striking testimonies which, if taken in isolation, might easily form the basis of very strong argument for enrolling Origen among the supporters of the doctrine of the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, Origen also declared:

That bread which God the Word acknowledges as his own body is the Word which nourishes the souls, the Word proceeding from God the Word and the bread from the heavenly bread which has been placed on the table concerning which it has been written, "Thou hast prepared my table in my sight against those who afflict me." And that drink which God the Word acknowledges as his blood is the Word which furnishes drink to and excellently inebriates the hearts of the drinkers and he is in the cup of which it has been written, "And thy inebriating cup, how excellent it is!" And that drink is the generation of the true vine who says: "I am the true vine," and it is the blood of that grape which after being sent into the vine-press of the passion produced this drink just as the bread also is the Word of Christ who was made of that seed which "falling into the ground . . . brought forth much fruit." For God the Word did not say that that visible bread which he held in his hands was his body but the Word in the mystery (=Eucharist) of whom that bread had to be broken. Nor did he say that that visible drink was his blood but the Word in the mystery of whom that drink had to be poured out. For what else can the body or the blood of God the Word be but the Word which nourishes and the Word which rejoices the heart.¹⁷

¹⁶Homilies on Exodus 13, 3. Latin in Textos I, 127.

¹⁷Commentariorum in Mt. series 85. Latin in Textos I, pp. 136-137.
192.

Here Origen spells out his rejection of any kind of Real Presence of the body and the blood of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine in the Eucharist. The bread and wine which Jesus held in his hands at the original institution are not the "body" and "blood" of which Jesus spoke in the original institution. This bread and wine are representative or symbolical of the Logos and the Logos is the real bread and wine of the Eucharist nourishing and rejoicing the heart. Origen admits that the belief in the Real Presence was the more common understanding among the more simple Christians but he insists that those who have learnt to listen more deeply and have profounder insights find in the Eucharist the spiritual nourishment of the Logos. Origen says this in so many words when he declares:

Let the bread and the cup be regarded by the more simple in accordance with the more common interpretation of the Eucharist, but by those who have learnt to listen more deeply (let it be regarded) also in accordance with the more divine promise regarding the nourishing Logos who is the truth.¹⁸

Kelly says of Origen:

The outward rite, he implies, which imparts the sacramental body and blood, is for the simpler grade of Christians, while the more advanced, with their profounder insight, find nourishment in the Logos himself.¹⁹

In Origen there is a spiritual interpretation of the words of institution in the Eucharist. The true food and drink of the Eucharist is the Logos which nourishes the soul and heart and the elements, bread

¹⁸ Commentary on John, 32, 24. Greek in Textos I, 139. 194.

¹⁹ Kelly, p. 214.

and wine, are mere symbols of this food. Origen's views are also traceable in later theologians like Eusebius of Caesarea, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and even in the great Athanasius and the much greater Augustine. His Neo-Platonic spiritualism prevented him from interpreting the words of institution in a realistic manner. It must be pointed out, however, that this spiritual interpretation was always more and more obliterated by an uncompromising realism which left no doubt that the body and blood of Christ are really and truly present in the Eucharist. The views of the Alexandrians played only a very minor role in the eucharistic theology of the West.

CHAPTER VII

CYPRIAN

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, was converted to Christianity as an adult ca. 246 A.D. Within two years of his conversion he was elected as Bishop of Carthage having in the meantime acquired a very wide knowledge of Scripture and the writings of Tertullian. He was martyred in Carthage on September 14, 258. He was the second most important theologian of the Latin Church. On the Eucharist Cyprian always expresses himself in such a way that he must be regarded as a representative of a strictly realistic interpretation of the words of institution.

Cyprian's testimonies on the Real Presence are very numerous. He argues that "the holy body of the Lord" is present in the Eucharist on the clear testimony of Paul in 1 Cor. 11:27.¹ In the Eucharist Christians are fortified "with the protection of the body and blood of Christ."² The Eucharist is "the chalice of Christ's blood."³ Among the offensive and defensive spiritual arms of the Christian Cyprian makes special mention of the Eucharist of the body of the Lord.⁴ He

¹Epistle 15, 1. For the Latin text see Jesus Solano, Textos Eucarísticos Primitivos (Madrid: Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos, 1952), I, 143. 201; hereafter cited as Textos I.

²Epistle 57, 2. Latin in Textos I, 146. 206.

³Epistle 58, 1. Latin in Textos I, 147. 208.

⁴Epistle 58, 9. Latin in Textos I, 148. 209.

can also vary his expressions in stressing the Real Presence. In the Eucharist "the blood of Christ is shown forth."⁵ The Real Presence is adumbrated in the Old Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ offered a sacrifice to God the Father and he offered the same sacrifice which Melchizedek had offered, that is, bread and wine, namely, his body and blood.⁶ The wine of the chalice "shows forth" the blood of Christ.⁷ Mention is made of the wine in a certain passage of Isaiah, he tells us, that the Lord's blood may be understood by the wine and so that what was later manifested in the cup of the Lord might be foretold by the prophets announcing it. The treading and pressure of the winepress is also dealt with because just as it is impossible to attain to the drinking of wine unless the bunch of grapes be first trodden and pressed, so also we could not drink the blood of Christ in the Eucharist unless Christ had first been trampled on and pressed and had first drunk the cup of which he would also give believers to drink.⁸ The celebration of certain heretics who used only water in the Eucharist is quite invalid because water alone cannot express the blood of Christ. If that is to be done in the Eucharist it is absolutely necessary to adhere to Christ's original institution.⁹ When the blood of the Lord and the cup of salvation have

⁵Epistle 63, 2. Latin in Textos I, 149. 211.

⁶Epistle 63, 4. Latin in Textos I, 150. 213.

⁷Epistle 63, 6. Latin in Textos I, 152. 215.

⁸Epistle 63, 7. Latin in Textos I, 153. 216.

⁹Epistle 63, 10. Latin in Textos I, 157. 220.

been drunk, the memory of the Old Man is laid aside and there arises an oblivion of the former worldly conversation, and the sorrowful and sad breast which was oppressed by tormenting sins is eased by the joy of divine forgiveness (indulgentiae).¹⁰ Because Christ bore (portabat) all in that he also bore the sins of all, in the water is understood the people, but in the wine is showed forth the blood of Christ.¹¹ There was tendency on the part of some Christians in Cyprian's day to hold back from the wine of the Eucharist for fear of giving the impression to unbelievers that Christians were wine-bibbers from the smell of wine on them after partaking of the Eucharist. Cyprian asks these people: "How can we shed our blood for Christ, who blush to drink the blood of Christ?"¹² Cyprian is insistent on stressing that there must be no departure from what Christ both taught and did in the Eucharist.¹³ But it must be admitted that in determining what Christ both taught and did Cyprian accorded something also to tradition. He did not determine this absolutely on the basis of the written word.¹⁴ On this basis and with a rather generous use of allegory he can extract a very special meaning out of the water traditionally mixed with the wine in the celebration of

¹⁰Epistle 63, 11. Latin in Textos I, 158. 221.

¹¹Epistle 63, 13. Latin in Textos I, 159. 222.

¹²Epistle 63, 15. Latin in Textos I, 162. 224.

¹³Epistle 63, 17. Latin in Textos I, 163-164. 226.

¹⁴Epistle 63, 19. Latin in Textos I, 166. 228.

the Eucharist.¹⁵ His belief in the Real Presence can also be seen from his repeated warnings against all profanation of the sacrament and unworthy participation in the Eucharist.¹⁶ This is also the point in the story he tells of the child who had been polluted by being involved in pagan worship and who subsequently vomited when the sacrament was forced upon her. In the same context he mentions the case of a woman of mature years who crept in secretly at the celebration of the Eucharist and received not food but a sword and suffered convulsions at the Eucharist. Another woman who tried with unworthy hands to open her box in which she kept a consecrated host was deterred from touching it by fire arising from it. A man who was himself defiled and who attempted to receive the Eucharist along with the rest of the believers was unable to eat or to handle the holy thing (sanctum) but found a cinder in his hand.¹⁷ Such stories are, of course, quite tendentious but they certainly make a point in this context. Cyprian is quite certain that not only bread and wine are distributed in the Eucharist but the body and blood of Christ. And he also believes that the res sacramenti, the Presence of Christ with all its blessings for those who partake of it worthily, is withdrawn from the unworthy, the power of the Lord so determining it. On this point, Cyprian, in a way is the Zwinglian or Calvinist of the ancient church. But he certainly had no intention of

¹⁵Epistle 63, 13. Latin in Textos I, 159. 222.

¹⁶Epistle 65, 4. Latin in Textos I, 166. 229. Cf. also Epistle 16, 2. See Textos I, 144. 202.

¹⁷De lapsis 25, 26. Latin text in Textos I, 176-177. 243-244.

denying or modifying the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

Conclusions

With the exception of the Platonizing Alexandrians, Clement and Origen, the unanimous teaching of all the ante-Nicene fathers is "that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received."¹⁸ No better definition of the Eucharist could be formulated on the basis of the statements of these early fathers than Luther's simple definition in the Small Catechism: "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself."¹⁹ These fathers set forth quite a number of theologoumena which are not acceptable inasmuch as they are subjective speculations or traditional viewpoints without the support of clear Scripture but in their belief in the Real Presence there can be little doubt that they are setting forth the simple, unsophisticated faith of the earliest days of Christianity and the simple meaning of the original words of institution.

¹⁸Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p. 64. Augsburg Confession, Article X.

¹⁹Ibid., Small Catechism, pp. 519-520.

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