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A Re-examination of the Lutheran Doctrine of the Real Presence

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A Re-examination of the Lutheran Doctrine of the Real Presence

If one glances through the history of dogma, especially as offered in some of the larger compends, as well as in the more important encyclopedias of theology and religion, one is bound to notice the comprehensive discussions which are contained in these monographs and articles on the subject of the Lord's Supper, or the Eucharist. It is clear that the enemies of the truth, and in particular the archenemy of Christ's Word and institutions, have singled out the doctrine pertaining to this Sacrament for an unusual measure of vicious attacks, until finally large denominations of Christendom have, in their official doctrinal declarations, perverted and denied the Scripture truth in one way or other.

In the early centuries indeed, before Nicaea, the adherence to the simple truth of the Bible is still one of the strong characteristics of doctrinal statements. Ignatius of Antioch calls the bread of the Eucharist the "medicine of immortality" (*Letter to the Ephesians*, chap. XX). The same man writes to the Philadelphians (chap. IV): "Be careful therefore to use one Eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup for union [*εἰς ἔνωσιν*] with His blood)." It is significant for the further development of the Church's teaching during the next centuries that the concept of an offering (*θυσία*) connected with the Eucharist was occasionally mentioned, though as yet confined to the liturgical prayers and the act of worship. One thing is clear, namely, that until the end of the Apostolic Age proper, the Real or Sacramental Presence was taught, but without the connotation of transubstantiation. The Eucharist was regarded as a communion, or fellowship, through the one bread.

Between the beginning of the second century and the first ecumenic council a number of teachers of the Church expressed

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themselves concerning the Eucharist and its doctrine. Here it is even more significant that much stress was laid upon outward form and upon allegory. In the consecration of the liturgy contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions* we find, in the *Epiclesis*: "That Thou mayest send down Thy Holy Spirit upon this sacrifice as the memorial of the suffering of Thy Son, the Lord Jesus, in order that He may set forth (*ἀνοψήνη*) this bread as the body and this cup as the blood of Thine Anointed." The distribution, according to this liturgy, was made in the words: "This is the body of Christ. — This is the blood of Christ." The *Liturgy of Saint James*, the *Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites*, and others contain similar statements. And with these liturgical statements agree the expositions of some of the great teachers of the period. Thus we read in Irenaeus: "The bread, which is taken from the earth, has the invocation of God upon it, and then it is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist." And in writing against those who despise the entire dispensation of God and disallow the salvation of the flesh, he says: "But if this indeed do not attain salvation, then neither did the Lord redeem us with His blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist the communion of His blood, nor the bread which we break the communion of His body. For blood can come only from veins and flesh and whatsoever makes up the substance of man, such as the Word of God was actually made." Clement of Alexandria states: "The vine bears wine as the Word bears blood; both are drunk by men into salvation, the wine bodily, the blood spiritually." And Cyril of Jerusalem, just about the time of Nicaea, states: "Consider therefore the bread and wine not as bare elements; for they are, according to the Lord's declaration, the body and blood of Christ; for even though sense suggests this to thee, yet let faith establish thee. Judge not the matter from the taste, but from faith be fully assured without misgiving that the body and blood of Christ have been vouchsafed to thee." So the true sacramental presence was taught and the union with Christ in the Eucharist emphasized.¹⁾

A few words might be inserted at this point with regard to the position taken by Tertullian, since at the time of the Reformation Oecolampadius in particular used a statement from that great Church Father in support of his symbolical interpretation of the words of institution. The sentences referred to are found in Book IV, chap. XL, in the treatise *Against Marcion*: "Then, having taken the bread and given 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

1) See "The Eucharist between 30 and 325 A. D." in *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, Vol. I: 167 ff.

first a veritable body (*corpus veritatis*). An empty thing, or phantom, is incapable of a figure." 2) However, as Rudelbach points out, the connection clearly shows that Tertullian wanted to emphasize the reality of the body of Christ, as he does also in other parts of this apologetic writing, as in chapter XX. Throughout the argument of Tertullian the reality of the body of Christ, also in the Sacrament, is stressed. In this connection the figure and that which is portrayed belong together as links in the revelation of the mystery of the Eucharist. Tertullian did not speak of the *figura corporis* as a mere symbol, but as a form, or vessel, which conveyed a reality. The Church Father obviously ascribed to the word of the Lord the power to contain His body (*fecit illum suum corpus, dicendo, Hoc est corpus meum*). 3)

It is more than likely that the term "sacrifice" (θυσία) of the early Church Fathers had some influence upon later teachers of the Church, for in the ninth century the concept of transubstantiation, as we now know it in the official teaching of the Roman Church, is plainly found. It was Paschasius Radbertus who first crystallized the idea of an actual, physical change by using the verb *commutari*. He was followed in his ideas by Florus, Hincmar, and others. Although he was immediately opposed by Rhabanus Maurus, by Ratramnus, and others, the notion of a physical change in the elements persisted. When Berengar of Tours, in the eleventh century, openly declared himself against the idea of transubstantiation, a bitter controversy ensued, which culminated in the Council of Vercelli, in 1050, which Berengar refused to attend, and in the Council of Rome, in November, 1078, under Gregory VII, where Berengar was forced to recant in the words: *Profiteor panem altaris post consecrationem esse verum corpus Christi, quod natum est de virgine, quod passum est . . . , et vinum altaris, postquam consecratum est, esse verum sanguinem, qui manavit de latere Christi*. 4) In spite of all this, however, opponents of transubstantiation continued to assert themselves until the fourth Lateran Council, 1215, settled the matter, so far as the jurisdiction of the Pope was concerned, by stating: *Transubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina*. Thus the term coined by Stephen of Autun a century before became the pivotal expression of the official doctrine of the papal Church. 5) Matters remained in this state till the time of the Reformation.

2) *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III:418.

3) Rudelbach, *Luthertum und Union*, 645 ff.

4) Landon, *Manual of the Councils of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 2: 264, 106.

5) See the brief presentation of the controversy in *Theol. Quarterly*, Vol. XIX 18 ff.

When Luther began his reformatory labors, he was soon compelled to fight on two fronts. It took him several years to come to a clear understanding of the error of transubstantiation. In his *Sermon on the Lord's Supper* of December, 1519, Luther is still groping for the truth. But when, in 1520, he wrote his treatise *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, he had made such progress in the knowledge of the truth that he boldly attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation. We quote: "Even so here, when the Evangelists plainly write that Christ took bread and brake it, and the Book of Acts and Paul, in their turn, call it bread, we have to think of real bread, and real wine, just as we do of a real cup; for even they do not maintain that the cup is transubstantiated. But since it is not necessary to assume a transubstantiation wrought by divine power, it is to be regarded as a figment of the human mind, for it rests neither on Scripture nor on reason, as we shall see. . . . Moreover, the Church had the true faith for more than twelve hundred years, during which time the holy Fathers never once mentioned this transubstantiation — forsooth, a monstrous word for a monstrous idea! — until the pseudophilosophy of Aristotle became rampant in the Church, these last three hundred years." ⁶⁾ During the next years Luther constantly gained in clearness of the truth, so that Article VI of the Smalcald Articles presents the Scripture doctrine in an unmistakable form: "Of the Sacrament of the Altar we hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ, and are given and received not only by the godly, but also by the wicked Christians. . . . As regards transubstantiation, we care nothing about the sophistical subtlety by which they teach that bread and wine leave or lose their own natural substance, and that there remain only the appearance and color of bread, and not true bread. For it is in perfect agreement with Holy Scriptures that there is, and remains, bread, as Paul himself calls it, 1 Cor. 10:16: 'The bread which we break.' And 1 Cor. 11:28: 'Let him so eat of that bread.'" ⁷⁾

As with reference to transubstantiation, it also took Luther some years to emphasize the *sub utraque* as essential in the doctrine and the use of the Sacrament. With regard to the abomination of the Mass he expressed himself in unmistakable terms as early as 1523, *e. g.*, in his *Formula missae*, and this particular false doctrine became one of the chief points of attack on the part of the Reformer. That was the one front on which Luther fought, namely, against the false teaching of the Roman Church.

But the other front became quite as important in the course of

6) *Works of Martin Luther*. Holman Ed., II:190; St. Louis Ed., XIX:25.

7) *Articuli Smalcaldici*, VI, *Conc. Trigl.*, 493.

the third decade of the sixteenth century, namely, that on which the Swiss reformers were active. It is against these that Luther was obliged to launch some of his sharpest attacks, and in this case concerning the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord in the Sacrament. In this treatise *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, the second part of which was published in January, 1525, Luther lays down this principle: "Where the Holy Scripture establishes any point of faith, there one should not deviate from the words as they read, nor from the order as it is given, unless an expressed article of faith compel us to explain the words differently or to follow a different order. Otherwise what would become of the Church?"⁸⁾ Luther then proceeds to apply the principle of hermeneutics to the words of institution, not only in the rest of this treatise, but also in his *Introduction to the First Edition of the Syngamma*, his *Sermon of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ Against the Enthusiasts*, his classic *That the Words of Christ "This Is My Body," etc., Still Stand Secure Against the Enthusiasts*, and his *Large Confession of the Lord's Supper*.⁹⁾

We quote some of the most significant statements of the Reformer, not only in his explanation of the text, but also in his refutation of the position taken by Carlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and others. He grows rather sarcastic in speaking of Carlstadt's suggestion, who placed the emphasis on the *τοῦτο*, as though Jesus had pointed to His physical body when He pronounced the words of institution. Luther summarizes his discussion in § 84, where he writes: "The word 'this' in all Evangelists will not and may not be interpreted and referred to anything but only to that which Christ offers, namely, the cup, or the beverage, and bids them drink. . . . But if we have concluded this correctly, that in the Sacrament the blood of Christ is truly present, as these words compel us to do, it must be equally certain that in the other part of the Sacrament the body of Christ is truly present." (Col. 233 f.) "What is the communion of the body of Christ? It can be nothing but this, that those who receive the broken bread, every one his piece, receive in it the body of Christ. So that this communion is as much as being partakers together, so that every one receives the common body of Christ with the other, as he says there (1 Cor. 10:17): 'We are all one body because we are all partakers of that one bread.'" (Col. 237.) "There the verse stands and clearly and distinctly states that Christ gives His body to eat as He distributes the bread. On this we stand, believe and also teach that in the

8) St. Louis Ed., Vol. XX, § 39, col. 213 f.

9) St. Louis Ed., Vol. XX: 578 ff.; 734 ff.; 762 ff.; 894 ff.

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Lord's Supper the body of Christ is truly and bodily eaten and received. But how this can be or how this comes about that it is in the bread we do not know, nor should we know it. We should believe the Word of God and set neither mode nor boundary for it. We see bread before our eyes; but we hear with our ears that the body is present." (Col. 777.) "Dr. Carlstadt in this holy text 'This is My body' makes a martyr of the word 'this'; Zwingli makes a martyr of the word 'is'; Oecolampadius makes a martyr of the word 'body'; others make a martyr of the entire text and change the position of the word 'this,' placing it at the end, and put it thus: Take, eat; My body, which is given for you, is this. Some make a martyr of half the text by placing the word 'this' in the middle and say; Take, eat; what is given for you, that is My body. Others make a martyr of the text thus: This is My body in remembrance of Me; that is, My body is not here naturally but only as a remembrance of My body, so that the text would read: "Take, eat; this is the remembrance of My body, which is given for you." (Col. 789.) "You should know that it is a matter of pure fiction to say that this word 'is' means as much as 'signify.' No person can ever prove in a single place in the Scripture; yea, I shall say more: if the enthusiasts can bring one proof from all languages of the earth that the word 'is' means as much as 'signify,' I shall grant them the victory." (Col. 905.) Then Luther proceeds to show that the metaphor is never to be found in the copula but in the noun or the adjective. "Since, then, these words: 'This is My body,' according to the sound and usage of all languages, do not mean bread or the figure of a body, but the body of Christ, every one should let this stand and not interpret differently unless Scripture compels us thereto." (Col. 1003.) In his entire exposition Luther adheres unwaveringly to the words of institution, as well as to 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17 and 1 Cor. 11: 29, concerning which he firmly states that they teach the Real Presence in the Holy Supper.

What Luther and the earlier Lutheran Confessions had so clearly and ably set forth, was summarized with equal clarity in the Formula of Concord, Article VII, "Of the Holy Supper." We have here, in 128 paragraphs, a complete presentation of the Scriptural doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, with the antithesis given in sixteen propositions. Among the most significant declarations of the Formula of Concord on the Lord's Supper are the following:

Just as in Christ two distinct, unchanged natures are inseparably united, so in the Holy Supper the two substances, the natural bread and the true natural body of Christ, are present together here upon earth in the administration of the Sacrament. (§ 37, p. 985.)

There is indeed no doubt that He speaks of real, natural bread and of natural wine, also of oral eating and drinking, so that there

can be no metaphor, that is, a change of meaning, in the word "bread," as though the body of Christ were a spiritual bread or a spiritual food of souls. (§ 48, p. 989.)

Therefore also our dear fathers and predecessors, as Luther and other pure teachers of the Augsburg Confession, explain this statement of Paul with such words that it accords most fully with the words of Christ when they write thus: The bread which we break is the distributed body of *Christ*, or the common [communicated] body of *Christ*, distributed to those who receive the broken bread. (§ 58, p. 993.) Note here the emphasis: "is the distributed body of *Christ*."

The other eating of the body of Christ is *oral* or *sacramental*, when the true, essential body and blood of Christ are also orally received and partaken of in the Holy Supper by all who eat and drink the consecrated bread and wine in the Supper. . . . For in view of the circumstances this command evidently cannot be understood otherwise than of oral eating and drinking, however, not in a gross, Capernaïtic, but in a supernatural, incomprehensible way. (§§ 63 and 65, p. 995.)

That the elements of bread and wine may be consecrated or blessed for this holy use, in order that the body and blood of Christ may therewith be administered to us to be eaten and drunk, as Paul declares [1 Cor. 10:16]: *The cup of blessing which we bless*, which indeed occurs in no other way than through the repetition and recitation of the words of institution. (§ 82, p. 1001.)

That is the doctrine of the Real Presence as officially held by the Lutheran Church, for the Formula of Concord merely expounds at greater length what had been previously stated in the Large Catechism, in the Augsburg Confession, and particularly in the Smalcald Articles.

Recent developments with regard to the Lord's Supper indicate that various teachers in a number of Protestant bodies found it necessary to discuss the doctrine at some length, also with specific reference to Lutheran teaching. In his excellent monograph *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* Charles Porterfield Krauth summarizes his defense of the Real Presence against Reformed attacks in the words: "The Lutheran Church does not hold to any *local* presence of the body of Christ *in*, or any local conjunction of the body of Christ *with*, or any local administration of the body of Christ *under* the bread, or of His blood *in*, *with*, and *under* the Wine."¹⁰ This proposition is explained in the section just preceding, where we read:

The Lutheran Church denies that there is a *local* presence of Christ's body and blood, and if such a presence be meant, she would deny that there is any presence of them "in, with, and under the consecrated elements." Between us and the Reformed there never

10) Chapter X, p. 460. Thus transubstantiation, consubstantiation, impanation, subpanation are excluded.

has been, there never can be, a controversy on so simple a point as this. The Lutheran Church maintains that there is a true presence of Christ's human nature, which is neither local nor determinate. The body of Christ which, in its own nature, is determinately in heaven, and is thus present nowhere else, nor will be thus present on earth till His second coming, has also another presence, diverse from the determinate, yet no less true. It is present through that divine nature into whose personality it has been received, and with which it has formed an inseparable union, whose lowest demand is the co-presence of the two parts. If there be a place where the human nature of Christ is not united with the second person of the Trinity, then there is a place where the second person of the Trinity is not incarnate. If this be granted, then the whole second person of the Trinity is unincarnate, for where God is, He is not in part (for He is indivisible), but He is entire. Then the second person of the Trinity is either not incarnate at all, or He is both incarnate and unincarnate; or there are two second persons of the Trinity, with one of whom the human nature of Christ is one person, the extent of the incarnation being commensurate with that of our Savior's body in heaven, and the other second person of the Trinity omnipresent, but not incarnate, all of which suppositions are absurd, and yet one or other of them must be accepted if the Lutheran doctrine be denied. The truth is that when we admit the personal union of the human nature with a divine nature, we have already admitted the fact in which the mystery of Christ's sacramental presence is absorbed. The whole divine person of Christ is confessedly present at the Supper, but the human nature has been taken into that personality and forms one person with it, hence the one person of Christ, consisting of the two natures, is present, and of necessity the two natures which constitute it are present. . . . If we are asked what is the kind of presence of the divine nature of Christ, we reply, it is a true, illocal presence, after the manner of an infinite Spirit, incomprehensible to us; and if we are asked what is the kind of the presence of the human nature of Christ, we reply, it is a true illocal presence after the manner in which an infinite Spirit renders present a human nature which is one person with it—a manner incomprehensible to us.

Another splendid testimony is that offered by Dr. Francis Pieper in his well-known *Christliche Dogmatik*, where he states, among others:

True, the expression *unio sacramentalis* is not found in Scripture. But the matter designated by the expression is taught as clearly in the Scripture as, for example, the ὁμοούσιος. Christ designates the bread which He offers in the Lord's Supper, as His *body* which is given for us. Since, now, the bread is not changed, but remains bread, as the Scripture reports, and since the unchanged bread is also the body of Christ, as Scripture likewise reports, therefore the Scripture teaches a combination, or unio, of the body of Christ with the bread, and this unio Luther and the Lutherans call the *unio sacramentalis*, because it is peculiar to the Lord's Supper. The expression is fully adequate. It does not have a mere "accessory" relation to the words of the Eucharist, as has been cor-

rectly said with a modern term, but expresses exactly what is said in the words of the Lord's Supper.¹¹⁾

In a collection of essays under the general title *Abendmahls-gemeinschaft?* edited by E. Wolf,¹²⁾ at least two of the contributors present the Scriptural, Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence correctly. Hopf summarizes this position as follows: "The Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper plainly states that there is not only a relation between the eating and drinking of the elements on the one hand and the reception of the body and blood of Christ on the other, as Calvin undoubtedly also teaches, but that, according to the words of the Lord and of the Apostle Paul, there must be a reference to an actual connection and communion (*Bindung und Verbindung*) of the body of Christ with the bread, of the blood of Christ with the wine." And a point made by Gollwitzer in the same collection is also worthy of careful consideration, namely, when he shows that the sacramental union in the Lord's Supper did not develop out of the Lutheran doctrine of the communication of attributes under the heading of Christology, but that it is based on the words of institution of the Sacrament: "The true proof of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper does not lie in the conclusions (*Konsequenz*) of Christology, but in the contingency of the institution."

The most recent comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of the real presence is found in the pamphlet by Reu, *Can We Still Hold to the Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper?*¹³⁾ A few significant sentences of this essay are pertinent at this point:

Whatever *κοινωνία* may mean, it can be used only then when the relation between two objects is expressed. So here bread and body of Christ are the two objects that mutually participate. It is bread, but bread that has part in the body of Christ; it is the body of Christ, but the body of Christ that has part in the bread; by taking the one we at the same time take the other. And the body of Christ, in which the disciples received part by receiving the bread, was the body that that night, when Jesus was betrayed, was about to be given into death for their sake." (P. 55.)

But even in Lutheran circles there were men, in recent decades, who found it necessary to express a dissenting voice with regard to the doctrine of the Real Presence as taught in the official Confessions of the Church. Thus Paul Althaus, in endeavoring to establish "the most profound sense of the old Lutheran doctrine of the real presence," puts his ideas in the following sentences:

Certainly the sacramental identity has a different meaning with us than in the old Lutheranism: there is no thought of the presence

11) Vol. III:399.

12) *Abendmahls-gemeinschaft?* Beiheft zur *Ev. Theologie*, 101. 132.

13) Wartburg Press, Columbus, Ohio, 1941.

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of a heavenly substance in the bread and the wine—"flesh and blood of Jesus," which are given to us, are the power of obedience to Him, the power of His being given into death, or still better, since there are no saving powers which can be severed from Him, the living Lord, "flesh and blood" is Himself as the One Crucified for us, whose giving Himself for, since He is Himself the Risen, the Living One, has an immediate presence and in this presence may be taken hold of in the bread and wine. We are therefore not dealing with the presence of His natural revelation (*Naturseite*) of the personal manifestation of the Lord (in this sense), but with the bodily manifestation of His personal, atoning presence as of the One who was crucified for us."¹⁴⁾

And a very similar "explanation" has recently appeared in America, in an article entitled "A Review of the Traditional Lutheran Position on the Lord's Supper." It is interesting to find that the writer of this article, while apparently, like Althaus and others, retaining the idea of the Real Presence, disavows the argumentation of the Formula of Concord. It must be remarked, at least in passing, that the reader is apt to be suspicious of a theological writer who states that "John anticipated the cleansing of the Temple, though, according to the other apostles, it took place not long before His Passion," whereas John 2:20 offers an unmistakable proof for the fact that this was a first cleansing of the Temple, forty-six years after Herod had begun to rebuild the sanctuary; a suspicion which is increased by the insistence upon John 6 as a text dealing with the Lord's Supper, whereas competent theologians since the days of Luther have shown this exegesis to be untenable;¹⁵⁾ and one is shocked to find that a "rediscovery of the Gospel" is credited to such "scholars as Charles Clayton Morrison of the *Christian Century* and Reinhold Niebuhr."¹⁶⁾

The author of this article states his own position on the Real Presence in the words:

It is not, therefore, unbiblical and, therefore, not un-Lutheran to hold that the Real Presence in the Holy Communion is not lost when one holds that, as the mouth receives the consecrated elements of bread and wine, Christ Himself is present, to assure the penitent recipient of the forgiveness of sin, to covenant to him the kingdom, and to feed his soul. (P. 348.)

The reception of Himself with the blessings He wrought for us when His body was broken in death for us, when His blood was shed for us, when thus His life was given as a ransom for many: that is the real presence which does not require the mystifying, mind-baffling theological speculation of *Christ's real, essential body and blood being received with the mouth*. The new testament, or covenant, in Christ's blood is founded on His death—

14) *Die lutherische Abendmahlslehre in der Gegenwart*, p. 46.

15) See, for example, Dau, "The Eucharistic Interpretation of John 6," in *Theol. Quarterly*, XVIII: 159 ff.

16) *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*, Vol. XVII: 352 ff., 359.

His broken body and shed blood — not on the eating and drinking of that body and blood *with the mouth.* (P. 350.)

That the human body, through the mouth, receives the "true and essential body and blood of Christ" while assimilating through the process of metabolism only the vehicle that conveys them, the bread and wine, is a *theologoumenon*, a metaphysical proposition which should not be *central* in the explanation of the Holy Supper. The Real Presence is not conditioned by the "in, with, and under" literalism. Christ is there; the fruits of Calvary are there. Through the Sacrament they are conveyed. Speculation regarding the method should not be an article of faith. (P. 356.)

Needless to say, with such argumentation Marburg becomes a farce on the Lutheran side, and the Lutheran Confessions on this doctrine are disavowed.

But what does Scripture say? The words of institution are clear and simple: τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου . . . τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου. Matt. 26:26, 27; Mark 14:22, 23; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25. In St. Paul's account as well as in that of Luke the second phrase is given in a more complete form: "This cup is the new testament in My blood," thus including immediately the purpose and the benefit of the Sacrament. Whatever figurative language one may undertake to find, in metaphor and synecdoche, in the nouns employed in the text, the force of the simple copula "is" cannot be weakened. Nor can this be done by a resort to the alleged Aramaic formula which our Lord may have used at the time of institution, for the inspired accounts which we have before us are in Greek. We are bound to say, with Luther: "*Das Wort steht zu gewaltig da.*"

And lest men be led astray from the truth by a false interpretation, the Holy Spirit caused the Apostle Paul to dwell more fully on the mystery of the Real Presence, as we see in 1 Cor. 10:16, 17 and 1 Cor. 11:27-29. He plainly states that the cup of consecration is the *κοινωνία* of the blood of Christ and that the bread of the Eucharist is the *κοινωνία* of the body of Christ. The presence of Christ by virtue of this *κοινωνία* is so real to the Apostle that he declares: If any eats this bread or drinks this cup unworthily, he is guilty of *the body and of the blood of the Lord.* And he repeats the thought by emphasizing that the unworthy communicant eats and drinks damnation to himself by not discerning or distinguishing τὸ σῶμα.

Evidently the interpretation of the entire text hinges on the word *κοινωνία*, and those who do not, or will not, understand the Real Presence have made every attempt to have it signify a mere *communication*, or a *participation* in the wider sense, as it is often used in the classics in the meaning of *association* or *partnership*, also in the New Testament, in Heb. 13:16 and elsewhere. But this

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does not change the fact that in the great majority of cases in the New Testament the word *κοινωνία* clearly and unmistakably means participation in the narrower sense, *communion*, as Luther and the Authorized Version have it. It does indeed, secondarily, imply that those who partake together of the consecrated elements participate in the blessings of the Eucharist. But the word as applied to the relation between the bread and wine of consecration and the body and blood of Christ can mean only, as even Kittel explains it, "an intimate fellowship."

An unbiased reading of a whole series of New Testament texts should compel the student of Scripture to accept Kittel's definition. (Compare also Reu's explanation as given above.) Thus, in 1 Cor. 1:9 we have the *κοινωνία*, or fellowship, of Jesus Christ; in Phil. 1:5, fellowship in the Gospel; in Phil. 2:1, fellowship of the Spirit; in Phil. 3:10, fellowship of His sufferings; in 1 John 1:3, 6, 7, fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. An examination of the verb *κοινωνέω* and of the adjective *κοινός* will also compel us to accept the connotation heretofore connected with the words, an understanding which is strengthened by a reading of John 17:11 ff. *Κοινωνία*, then, in the passages connected with the Sacrament, cannot mean transmutation or transubstantiation, nor even the less objectionable terms consubstantiation, impanation, substitution, since these would still imply an identification locally.¹⁷⁾ *Κοινωνία* is not the same as *ἰσότης*, equiformity, or *ἐνότης*, union of identity, or, as the classical writers explain it, *συμπάθεια πρὸς ἀλλήλους*, but, in the happy designation chosen by Ignatius of Antioch, *ἔνωσις*, an active noun denoting "becoming united with," "a combination into one union," without giving up essential characteristics. There is a perfect explanation of this miraculous *κοινωνία* in the statement of our Lord, in John 10:30: I and My Father are one, *ἐν ἑσμεν*, not *εἷς*, which would denote identity, but the neuter pronoun, which clearly refers to an intimacy of fellowship which is without parallel in all the world. Thus the word *κοινωνία*, correctly rendered by the synonym *ἔνωσις*, gives us the idea of the Real Presence in the Holy Supper.

But there are other factors which corroborate the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist. One is christological in nature, and is closely connected with the fact of the *κοινωνία* in the Sacrament. The Reformed view could not reconcile the fact of Christ's body being both in the elements and in heaven. But Luther was bound to hold, according to Scripture, that if Christ is at all present in the consecrated elements during the distribution, He is also essentially and substantially present, although not locally confined, for Christ is always true man and true God. The clear doctrine

17) See CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, Vol. XIII: 378—388.

of the communication of attributes provided the full background for the doctrine of the Real Presence. In his great classic *Dass diese Worte Christi "Das ist mein Leib" noch fest stehen* Luther puts the situation as follows: "Here Christ walks on earth, and the entire Godhead is personally and substantially present in Him on earth. Now tell me: How can it be true that God be at the same time totally substantially present in the person of Christ, in many places altogether and entirely? . . . If this is true and incontrovertible according to faith that the Godhead is in Christ essentially, personally, for Himself, present in so many places, and that He is yet at the same time in heaven with the Father, it follows that He at the same time is everywhere and essentially, personally fills heaven and earth and everything with His own nature and majesty."¹⁸⁾

At the same time Luther distinguishes between the omnipresence of Christ and His special presence in the consecrated elements of the Eucharist. In his *Sermon vom Sakrament des Leibes* of 1526 he clearly states the difference between Christ's omnipresence, by virtue of His word, in all places, "although not in the manner as here in the Sacrament, where He attaches His body and blood by the word to the bread and the wine, to be received also bodily."¹⁹⁾

This introduces the other factor which compels us to hold the doctrine of the Real Presence, namely, that of soteriology in the specific sense. If the Reformed viewpoint were correct, we could hardly understand the emphasis placed on the "for you," "for many." Symbols, tokens, signs, remembrances, in themselves do not convey the blessings of salvation to men. But in the words of institution the "Take, eat"; "Drink ye all of it" are definitely connected with the assurance "For you." And the relative clauses "Which was given for you"; "Which was shed for you" compel every honest searcher for the truth to accept the Real Presence as a fact. When Helmut Gollwitzer, in an article entitled "Die Abendmahlsfrage als Aufgabe kirchlicher Lehre," asked the question: "Who, even if he wanted to, would dare, in view of the present-day exegetical situation, simply to take over the words of our Lutheran fathers?" Hermann Sasse replied with a counterquestion: "If we, with good reasons, are of the opinion that a careful exposition of the statements of the New Testament on the Holy Supper on the part of the fathers of our Church in the sixteenth century is still more correct than the opinions of modern exegetes—is that really a subordination of Scripture to the Confession?" And this question he follows up with the declaration: "Up till now no new biblico-exegetical discovery has become known which would compel us to

18) Weimar Ed., Vol. 23:138—140; St. Louis Ed., Vol. 20:808, § 111.

19) Weimar Ed., Vol. 19:492; St. Louis Ed., Vol. 20:743, § 24.

solve the question of the Lord's Supper in a different manner than it is solved in our Confessions."²⁰)

If we ask, at the end of this brief overview: What, then, is the Real Presence? our answer is this: It is neither transubstantiation, nor consubstantiation, nor impanation, nor subpanation, inasmuch as each of these terms implies a physical, unscriptural conception of the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood; but it signifies that there is a fellowship, or communion, of the consecrated earthly elements, which do not change their substance, with the body and blood of the Savior, in a miraculous manner which has been termed the sacramental presence or union, so that in, with, and under the consecrated bread the very body of the Savior, and in, with, and under the consecrated wine His very blood are distributed, and thus received by all communicants, not qualitatively or quantitatively or locally, nevertheless truly, essentially, and substantially. As the Godhead permeated and possessed the body of the Son of Mary without being localized in it, so the true body and blood of Christ permeate and possess the consecrated elements in the Lord's Supper, in a real, substantial presence, without being localized in each morsel of bread or sip of wine. And this doctrine, like all other doctrines of Holy Scripture, is a matter of faith, as Samuel Kinner correctly sang:

Though reason cannot understand,
 Yet faith this truth embraces;
 Thy body, Lord, is everywhere
 At once in many places.
 How this can be I leave to Thee,
 Thy word alone sufficeth me,
 I trust its truth unailing.

(Lutheran Hymnal, 306:5)

P. E. KRETZMANN

The Argument in Support of the Hades Gospel

The Hades theologians deny that man's death puts an end to the period of grace and offer a lot of proof for their thesis that God provides opportunities for hearing the Gospel in Hades. Let us examine 21 of these arguments.

1. Their *locus classicus* is 1 Pet. 3:18 f.¹⁾ This text states, they say, that Christ "preached the Gospel unto the spirits in prison."

20) Asmussen, Hans (and others), *Abendmahlsgemeinschaft*, p.140, note 16.

1) Plumptre: "The *locus classicus* of the inquiry is the memorable passage in 1 Pet. 3:18-20. . . . The suffering of Christ for sin availed to bring to God some, at least, of those who had thus disobeyed" (*The Spirits in Prison*, pp. 111, 114).