

CONCORDIA SEMINARY

THE LITURGICAL CONFESSION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

IN FIVE REPRESENTATIVE ORDERS OF 16TH CENTURY LUTHERANISM

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Introduction

The Essential Mass and Fitting Ceremonies

“And, indeed, the greatest and most useful art is to know what really and essentially belongs to the mass, and what is added and foreign to it.”¹ So Doctor Luther wrote already in 1520 in his work *A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass*. In Lutheran theology what really and essentially belongs to the mass is two-fold²: the blessing of the bread and wine with the Words of Institution, and the faithful reception of the Lord’s body and blood.³

It might be supposed that such a simple view of what is “essential” in the mass would tend toward a liturgical impoverishment, a desire to remove everything that is non-essential until at last all that remains is the bare recitation of the Words of Institution and the reception of the sacrament. Certain of Luther’s own words in the early years of the Reformation seemed to incline to such a view:

And where the mass is used, there is true worship; even though there be no other form, with singing, organ playing, bell ringing, vestments, ornaments, and gestures. For everything of this sort is an addition invented by men.

When Christ himself first instituted this sacrament and held the first mass, there was no tonsure, no chasuble, no singing, no pageantry, but only thanksgiving to God and the use of the sacrament....

¹ “A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass, 1520” *AE* 35, p. 81 (*WA* 6, p. 354).

² This in contrast to Dom Gregory Dix who espoused the four-fold action which has been so influential in the modern liturgical movement. See *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Dacre Press: London, 1945).

³ So, for example, the classic words of the Large Catechism are cited in the Formula to assert that the Sacrament of the Altar essentially is: “the true body and blood of Christ in and under the bread and wine which Christ’s word commands us Christians to eat and drink.” ed. Theo. Tappert, *FC SD* VII, 20. p. 573.

Now the nearer our masses are to the first mass of Christ, the better they undoubtedly are; and the further from Christ's mass, the more dangerous.⁴

The point of those words is quite misunderstood, however, if they are not seen in their context as Luther clearing away the human accretions so that the sacrament itself might first be seen and rejoiced in for the divine reality which it is and gives. Once that had been accomplished, Luther returns to the matter of human ceremonies again and his tone is markedly different:

Therefore we must separate the mass clearly and distinctly from the prayers and ceremonies which have been added to it by the holy fathers. We must keep these two as far apart as heaven and earth, so that the mass may remain nothing else than the testament and sacrament comprehended in the words of Christ. What there is over and beyond these words, we are to regard—in comparison with the words of Christ—in the same way that we regard the monstrance and the corporal in comparison with the host and the sacrament itself. Such furnishings we simply consider *as additions for the reverent and fitting administration of the sacrament*.⁵

He expresses the same thought in the 1521 work *The Misuse of the Mass*:

We do not condemn the practice of conducting the sacrament with chasubles and other ceremonies; but we do condemn the idea that they are necessary and indispensable and are made a matter of conscience, whereas all things that Christ did not institute are optional, voluntary, and unnecessary, and therefore also harmless..⁶

Thus while Lutheran theology made a very clear distinction between what was essential in the eucharist by divine mandate and institution and what was nonessential, it nevertheless regarded many of the nonessentials as “reverent and fitting” additions, as complementary to the sacrament itself.⁷

This attitude toward the liturgy is profoundly helpful. It avoids the extremes of those who would elevate mere human custom to the level of divine authority and of those

⁴ “A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass, 1520” *AE* 35, p. 81 (WA 6, p. 354).

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 97, emphasis added. (WA 6, p. 367)

⁶ *AE* 36, p. 168. (WA 8, p. 511)

⁷ It should be noted that what the AC says regarding “church usages”(XV) is largely a repetition of the ideas Luther laid down in the early days of the Reformation.

who would dispense entirely with the liturgical treasures of the mass. This approach gave the Lutheran church the freedom to receive the liturgical heritage of the Church for what it truly is: reverent and fitting additions to the mass. It also gave the Lutheran Church a criterion by which to evaluate all ceremonies that have been added to the mass.

In the Reformation, all the ceremonies of the mass were subjected to intense scrutiny. Some were found wanting and were dispensed with as obscuring the Lord's own mandate and institution. Others were found to be most fitting and helpful in the way they furthered reverence for that mandate and institution. Still others were judged to be truly inconsequential—neither adding to reverence nor taking away from it.

Examples of the foregoing abound in Luther's writings of the early 1520's, writings of considerable influence for Lutheran liturgical theology. The entire canon of the Roman mass was weighed against the mandate of Christ and found wanting. Its emphasis on sacrifice was found to be obscuring of the sacrament itself: "Now since almost everyone has made out of the mass a sacrifice which they offer to God—which, without doubt, is the third and very worst abuse—we must clearly distinguish here between what we offer and what we do not offer in the mass."⁸ (Whatever may be called "sacrifice" among the human ceremonies [i.e., the "eucharistic" sacrifice, thanksgiving], precisely that which may never be designated as a sacrifice we offer is the body and blood of Christ.) "We should, therefore, give careful heed to this word 'sacrifice,' so that we do not presume to give God something in the sacrament, when it is he who gives us all things."⁹ Or again: "Do you not hear? Christ has sacrificed himself once [Heb. 7:27; 9:25-26]; henceforth he will not be sacrificed by anyone else. He wishes us to remember his sacrifice. Why are you then so bold as to make a sacrifice out of this remembrance?"¹⁰ "But in the mass the papists do

⁸ *AE* 35, p. 94. (WA 6, p. 365)

⁹ *AE* 35, p. 98. (WA 6, p. 368)

¹⁰ *The Misuse of the Mass, 1521* *AE* 36, p. 147. (WA 8, p. 493)

nothing but continually ride the words ‘we offer up, we offer up’ and ‘these sacrifices, these gifts.’ They keep completely quiet about the sacrifice that Christ has made. They do not thank him.”¹¹ Yet again, “I reject and condemn the canon as an enemy of the Gospel.”¹²

Luther and the Lutheran church have never denied that in the accompanying nonessential ceremonies there is sacrifice, but the sacrifice that is truly offered in the Supper is nothing less than ourselves.

What sacrifices, then, are we to offer? Ourselves, and all that we have, with constant prayer, as we say, ‘Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’

...And although such a sacrifice occurs apart from the mass, and should so occur—for it does not necessarily and essentially belong to the mass, as has been said—yet it is more precious, more appropriate, more mighty, and also more acceptable when it takes place with the multitude and in the assembly, where men encourage, move and inflame one another to press close to God and thereby attain without any doubt what they desire.¹³

Thus, in the eucharist, if we are compelled to speak of sacrifice, we must say with Luther that “we do not offer Christ as a sacrifice, but Christ offers us.”¹⁴ Yet such is manifestly not what the Roman canon meant by its “unbloody sacrifice.” In all Lutheran liturgies of the 16th century, the Roman canon was found wanting because of its intrinsic fascination with identifying the sacrifice we offer with Christ’s body and blood and so was removed.

Further, the prescription that the Words of Institution were to be said “secretly” by the priest in a language that the people did not speak was rejected as unfitting and at odds with the very intention of the divine institution and mandate. “But would to God that we Germans could say mass in German and sing these ‘most secret’ words loudest of all!”¹⁵

¹¹ *The Abomination of the Secret Mass, 1525.* AE 36, p. 313. (WA 18, p. 24)

¹² *The Misuse of the Mass, 1521.* AE 36, p. 187, (WA 8, p. 527)

¹³ AE 35, p. 98. (WA 6, p. 367)

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 99. (WA 6, p. 368)

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 90. (WA 6, p. 362)

The nature of the words as testament and promise, as nothing less than the Lord himself speaking to his people, led the Lutheran church to reject every attempt at hiding or obscuring them from the people of God. In faithfulness to the words of the dominical mandate the Lutheran church also rejected the administration of the sacrament in one kind; the doctrine of concomitance was held to be irrelevant, since the mandate clearly said: “Drink from this all of you.” Finally, the notion that the sacrament could be observed without the people receiving it was likewise rejected and set aside, and with that the adoration of the sacrament outside and apart from its use.

With such ceremonies rejected, what remained that the Lutherans held on to as fitting? Actually quite a lot! The Augsburg Confession makes the bold declaration:

Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. Actually, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence. Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained, except that German hymns are interspersed here and there in the parts sung in Latin. These are added for the instruction of the people, for ceremonies are needed especially in order that the unlearned may be taught.¹⁶

Among the mass ceremonies which the Lutheran churches maintained as being fitting and reverent additions to the essential sacrament are the following: the prefaces (at least for the major feast days), the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, the elevation (certainly for a time), the use of the mass vestments and altar ornaments, the use of the Lord’s Prayer as prayer of preparation, even the way that the priest turned to and from the altar. The German hymns that were “interspersed” almost certainly refer to the usual practice of singing “Gott sei gelobet” and “Jesus Christus Unser Heiland” and “Jesaja dem Propheten”. These were in almost universal use during the distribution in the 16th century.

Far from reducing the liturgy to what was theologically essential, the Lutheran church thus rejoiced freely to hold on to what was regarded as reverent and fitting for the mass, what highlighted and helped to focus upon the heart and core of the mass. What is

more, the Lutheran church in those years demonstrated that it did not hold on to the liturgy as a dead thing, but as a living heritage to which it freely contributed what it felt served the Gospel best in its own day. The use of the German hymns mentioned above was such a contribution. Further elaborations of the eucharistic liturgy included the following: the setting of the Words of Institution to the Gospel tone; the prescription that those words were to be sung aloud in the vernacular; the use of an exhortation to the communicants; an ordinary “communio” in Psalm 111; the writing of a number of post-communion collects, the universal rubric that the sacrament could not be celebrated where there were no communicants to receive it.

In the ceremonies she retained, in the ceremonies she added, the Lutheran church of the 16th century gave a solemn public confession of her doctrine regarding the holy eucharist. Her liturgy gives ample testimony to what she confessed and taught regarding the nature of the sacrament, its benefits, and its proper use. The examination of this liturgy as public confession is the burden and joy of this thesis.

Examining all of Lutheran liturgy in the 16th century would be a task too lengthy for the confines of a thesis,¹⁷ consequently this thesis will in large part restrict itself to an examination of the two foundational orders of Luther, the Latin and German Masses, and then three representative liturgies of the Church Orders: Olavus Petri’s Mass of 1531 (for the church in Sweden), Herzog Heinrich (1539-40, and its revision in 1580, for the church in Saxony), and the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Order (1569 for the church of the Duchy of Braunschweig). Luther’s orders hardly need an explanation to show their importance. A brief explanation of the background of the other orders might prove beneficial.

¹⁶ *AC XXIV, 1-3 Latin*. Tappert, p. 56.

¹⁷ Feuerhahn notes that just in the years between 1523-1555 no less than 135 Lutheran Agendas were published! See Ronald Raymond Feuerhahn’s *Luther’s Mass: Origin, Content, Impact 1521-1529. A Thesis Submitted for the M.Phil. Degree in the University of Cambridge*, May, 1980, p. 57.

The Petri Mass represents the foundation on which Swedish liturgy has been built since the Reformation. Conrad Bergendoff notes: “It can hardly be denied that the Mass of 1531 had a determining influence upon the character of the Swedish liturgical service into the present time.”¹⁸ Olavus Petri had been a student at Wittenberg from 1516 to 1518.¹⁹ He brought back to Sweden the evangelical teaching he had learned from Luther and his preaching soon was noticed and gained even royal approval.²⁰ Petri published a Swedish New Testament in 1526, a hymnbook, and a clerical manual in 1529.²¹ His *Swedish Mass* appeared in Stockholm in 1531, five years after Luther’s German Mass.²² It was remarkable in a number of points, but most of all it is unique in its provision of a full eucharistic prayer. It also has exerted some influence in the Lutheran Church in the United States, where many Lutherans are of Swedish descent.²³

The Herzog Heinrich Order of 1539/40 is of greatest importance in the history of the Missouri Synod, since it is very much her own heritage²⁴. The Synod’s first published liturgy in German (and, for that matter, in English) relied quite self-consciously on the Herzog Heinrich Order, and confess as much on their title pages. Herzog Heinrich has a quite interesting genesis. It was the death of Luther’s implacable foe, Duke George, that opened the door for the Reformation in Albertine Saxony.²⁵ Duke George had no son,

¹⁸ Conrad Bergendoff, *Olavus Petri and the Ecclesiastical Transformation in Sweden [1521-1552]: A Study in the Swedish Reformation*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1928) p. 159.

¹⁹ Reed, Luther D. *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947) p. 111.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, p. 112.

²² Ibid.

²³ See for example the numerous works of Frank Senn which deal with the subject of the Eucharist.

²⁴ Precht, Fred, ed. *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993) p. 92.

²⁵ Brecht, *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*, p. 287.

consequently his lands passed into the hands of his brother, Duke Henry who took the reins of government in hand on 17 April 1539.²⁶ Henry was already a member of the Smalcald League and on good terms with Elector John Frederick, his cousin.²⁷ With the Elector's encouragement, Henry undertook to introduce the Reformation in his own lands with the help of the Wittenberg faculty.²⁸ The bishops (notably of Meissen and Merseburg) did everything within their power to dissuade the Duke from this course of action, but they were unable to do so.²⁹ A visitation was initiated and Justus Jonas was recommended by Luther to head this up.³⁰ The visitation was begun on 21 July 1539 and completed on 26 August, but the visitors strongly recommended a follow up visitation. For that visitation, the initial Herzog Heinrich (Duke Henry) Agenda was prepared. It was dated 19 September 1539 and Justus Jonas' name heads the list of those who worked on it. Nevertheless, the Wittenberg visitors were not invited to participate in the second visitation. Rather, the Duke took their Agenda, handed it to his own theologians, and in a show of independence from Wittenberg introduced it on his own to Albertine Saxony.³¹ Regarding this order, Reed notes: "The approval and cooperation of the Wittenberg faculty gave it immediate recognition and influence far beyond Saxon boundaries."³² There is a consensus among liturgiologists that this Order is the direct heir of Luther's provisional services.³³

The Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Order is of importance because of its authors: it results from the joint contributions of Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae. The City of

²⁶ Lehmann, p. 81.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 82.

³⁰ Gustav Kawerau, ed. *Der Briefwechsel des Justus Jonas* (Hildesheim : G. Olms, 1964), p. 321.

³¹ Lehmann, p. 85.

³² Reed, p. 101.

Braunschweig, an independent and important city of the Hanseatic League, had embraced the Reformation in 1528. In that year, Bugenhagen had been invited in by the city council, had initiated a visitation, and had provided the city's first church order. While the city had joined the cause of the Reformation, the surrounding Duchy of Braunschweig most certainly had not. Duke Henry the Younger (the infamous "Hanswurst") was a vigorous opponent of the Lutherans. There had been political tension between the Duke and City prior to the Reformation, and this tension was only aggravated when the City embraced the Reformation.³⁴ The situation continued to deteriorate until Duke Henry was succeeded by Duke Julius in 1568. Already in 1554 Martin Chemnitz had been called to be coadjutor to the Superintendent of the City of Braunschweig (his longtime friend, Joachim Mörlin). In that capacity he helped his superior in providing neighboring Lüneburg with a Church Order in 1564.³⁵ When his Superintendent took a call to Prussia in 1567, Chemnitz was called by the city council to fill the position.³⁶ His writings had already earned him a considerable reputation, and it was natural that Duke Julius should turn to this remarkable theologian so near at hand to undertake the task of bringing the Reformation to the Duchy of Braunschweig. Within the first year of his reign, the Duke's plans for Braunschweig had been carried out.³⁷ The churches had been visited, a church order had been drawn up, a *corpus doctrinae* had been formulated, and peace had been arranged by Chemnitz between the Duke and the independent City of Braunschweig.³⁸ For the conduct of the visitation, Julius asked help from neighboring Reformation territories. Elector August sent his foremost theologian, Nicholas Selnecker in 1570, and Duke Christoph of Württemberg sent

³³ Reed, pp. 90,91. Note the position of this order in the chart "Principles Enunciated by Luther" on p. 91.

³⁴ Preus, p. 103.

³⁵ See Sehling VI/1, p. 533.

³⁶ Preus, p. 137.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 143.

³⁸ Ibid.

along his theologian, Jacob Andreae in 1568. Andreae and Chemnitz worked together in October of 1568 to produce the Church Order that would be used in the Duchy.³⁹ Each drew from the Church Order used in his respective area. Andreae brought with him the Church Order of Württemberg, 1559. Chemnitz had in hand the previously mentioned Lüneburg Order. In twelve days the new Church Order was ready.⁴⁰ As far as the ceremonies go, the Lüneburg Order was followed almost exclusively. The resulting Braunschweig Order, which represents the collaboration of the two great theologians of the Formula of Concord, will remain of abiding interest to Lutheran liturgiologists, especially because of the contents of the three exhortations to communicants provided in it.

These orders are each distinctively Lutheran in approach, and yet they demonstrate the great liturgical freedom in which the Lutheran church was born. In complete contrast to the Anglican approach, which sought unity in ceremony and tolerance in doctrine,⁴¹ the Lutheran church sought from the start a unity in doctrine and tolerance in ceremony⁴². This is evident from the Formula of Concord:

³⁹ Ibid, p. 150.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ This is at least the case in those formative years under Elizabeth I. Already in 1563, parliament reaffirmed the Act of Uniformity which legally enforced the use of the Prayer Book. Elizabeth's lack of concern about "doctrine" is perhaps best shown in her response to the papal bull that excommunicated her and those in her country who adhered to her claim to be head of the church. She assured her Roman Catholic citizens: "...her majesty's means is not to have any of them molested by any inquisition or examination of their consciences in causes of religion, but to accept and entreat them as her good and obedient servants." (Spitz, p. 527) Thus, if they showed themselves "good and obedient servants" by conforming to the use of the liturgy that had been prescribed by law, she had no intention of concerning herself with what they actually believed! Spitz notes: "Throughout Elizabeth's forty-five year reign, only 221 Catholics suffered death for their faith, compared with 290 Protestants who died during the five years of Mary's rule. Most of these were executed for treason rather than for heresy, a significant shift in emphasis, though the victims were quite as dead." (Spitz, p. 527)

⁴² Elert cites Brenz who can even so far as to regard lack of uniformity in ceremonies as an advantage: "because it leads to the realization that there is Christian freedom in unnecessary church customs.", *The Structure of Lutheranism*, p. 333. Luther, while arguing for Christian freedom in church customs, was far more cautious, and desired to provide at least "a common standard to assess and control the profusion of orders." "The German Mass" *AE* 53, p. 90.

We believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the familiar axiom, 'Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in faith.'⁴³

So from one principality to another the liturgies of the Lutheran church exhibited considerable flexibility in detail, while retaining a broad agreement in outline resulting from an underlying unity of doctrine.⁴⁴ Feuerhahn captures the spirit of these liturgies well when he writes: "a most characteristic feature of these *Kirchenordnungen* was the freedom in each locality with an adherence to the fundamentals. 'In the spirit of Luther' more than in direct imitation of his Masses describes the impact of his liturgical reform."⁴⁵

This approach to liturgy is founded in Luther's own fears of a return to the legalism he had experienced under the papacy, where humanly instituted ceremonies had been raised to the level of divine worship. Repeatedly his liturgical works show pleas such as the following words which begin the German Mass: "In the first place, I would kindly and for God's sake request all those who see this order of service or desire to follow it: Do not make it a rigid law to bind or entangle anyone's conscience, but use it in Christian liberty as long, when, where, and how you find it to be practical and useful."⁴⁶

⁴³ Tappert, *FC Ep X*, 5., pp. 493, 494.

⁴⁴ See the characterization of this in D. H. Tripp, "Protestantism and the Eucharist," in Cheslyn Jones, et al., eds., *The Study of the Liturgy*, Revised Edition, p. 298x: "Since the Reformation took place city by independent city and principality by autonomous principality, and since each local Reformation was laid down in a Church Order (*Kirchenordnung*), varying in size from the slim pamphlet to the 300-page folio, with a major section dedicated to the liturgy, the development of Lutheran liturgy from Luther is amazingly diverse, chiefly in fine details." p. 298. This great variety in details was carried over when the Lutheran churches were planted on American soil. In his *Christian Worship in North America*, James White is awed by the diversity: "The Lutheran sources make the study of Episcopal liturgy seem like simplicity itself. An unpublished Th.M. dissertation written by W.D. Steakelberg for Vancouver School of Theology requires 463 pages to catalog over two hundred service books... Indeed, it may be sheer madness to attempt a comprehensive survey of resources for the study of Lutheran worship in America...." p. 81.

⁴⁵ Feuerhahn, p. 60.

⁴⁶ *AE* 53, p. 61.

Most remarkable is the ease with which Lutheran liturgy in the 16th century is readily identifiable as such despite the numerous external variations and the great freedom with which the liturgical orders came into existence. Each of the liturgies to be examined in this thesis contains an approach to the Sacrament of the Altar that simply betrays itself as specifically Lutheran: an approach which highlights the real presence of Christ's body and blood, coupled with a complete repudiation of any notion of sacrifice; an approach that finds great joy in the forgiveness of sins as the gift the Supper bestows, and yet which solemnly warns of the dangers of misuse of the Supper.

This underlying dogmatic unity allows for us to see these discreet orders as a united (albeit a multiform) whole: a single *liturgical* testimony of the Lutheran church of the 16th century to her faith. Thus for the purposes of this thesis, these orders will be examined to determine how they carry forward this single liturgical confession of the sacrament as testament, real presence of Christ's body and blood, bestowing action of Christ, anamnesis, eucharist, communion, sacrament of faith, and the Gospel itself.⁴⁷

That the liturgy is at one with the doctrine of the Lutheran church as contained in her symbols and the writings of her premier theologians is as it should be: Orthodoxy always means both "right doctrine" and "right worship." These orders provide ample demonstration of the fact that both stand together; that they are not two separate entities, but two facets of a single reality. In her worship as in her teaching, the Lutheran church seeks to bear faithful witness to the life and salvation which have come into the world in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Savior of sinners, the hope of all creation.

⁴⁷ Such a categorization is not intended to describe rigidly discreet doctrines regarding the Supper. In fact, one category often slips into the next in the actual texts. Treating them as separate arises from a desire to do justice to the liturgical data, giving each piece its own voice. More could be said about the Supper, of course, but this much (it is hoped will be demonstrated) is at least unambiguously confessed in the liturgies that will be examined.

Chapter One: The Mass as Testament

The Liturgical Confession of the Sacrament as Bequest

What appears to have driven Luther's initial critique of the mass was his joyful discovery of the mass as Christ's testament, an insight which would have profound impact upon Lutheran liturgy. Before examining its liturgical confession, it may be helpful to trace its development in Luther. The first hint we have of this insight is in Luther's lectures on Hebrews from 1518. Chrysostom had said it, but had not seemed to realize the profundity of what he had said. "But Chrysostom also touches too briefly on why He made a testament, on what was to be received. This should have been discussed most of all."¹ Luther was lecturing on chapter 9, and using as his commentary a collection of homilies by the Golden Mouthed Preacher. Luther invited his students to go the way of this venerable theologian of the East:

Therefore let us follow Chysostom, who, investigating the distinguishing features of both testaments, says: 'For a testament is made when the day of death is near. Moreover, such a testament regards some as heirs but disinherits others. Again, a testament contains certain provisions on the part of the one who makes it and certain requirements to be met by the heirs, so that they may receive certain things and do certain things. Again, a testament must have witnesses.'²

This way of looking at the sacrament brought great joy to Luther as he began to probe further than the great father's words. Chrysostom fell short of linking those words to the sacrament. This Luther proceeded to do: "Chysostom says no more about the well-known fact that Christ made His testament when the day of His death was near. The evangelists, you see, relate unanimously that when Christ passed along the cup which had been blessed

¹ "Lectures on Hebrews" *AE* 29, p. 213.

by Him, He said: ‘This cup is the new testament in My blood’ and this at the Last Supper.”³

This was a joyful “a-ha” for Luther. As he draws it out, he observes: “Therefore one should know that He made a will and left immeasurable blessings, namely, the remission of sins and eternal life, when He made His completely trustworthy testament.”⁴ Pointing to the words recorded in Matthew 26:28-29, Luther rejoices: “With these most delightful words He bequeaths to us, not the riches or the glory of the world but once and for all absolutely all blessings, that is, as I have said, the remission of sins and the possession of the future kingdom.”⁵

Thus, the idea of the mass as testament was planted in Luther by way of Chrysostom and the writer of Hebrews. He was clearly aware that there was more here than the great father made of it. His further ruminations on this theme are next evidenced in 1520 in the work *A Treatise on the New Testament, That Is, The Holy Mass*.

Harkening back to a point learned from Chrysostom, Luther drew out the implications of not every vow being a testament, “but only a last irrevocable will of one who is about to die, whereby he bequeaths his goods, allotted and assigned to be distributed to whom he will.”⁶ To Luther that could only mean that every time Scripture refers to God making a testament, Scripture was confessing that one day God would die! Hence the very

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *AE* 35, p. 84.

word “testament” contained in itself the miracle of the Incarnation and the sacrifice of Christ: “a summary of all God’s wonders and grace, fulfilled in Christ.”⁷

Thus, in the Words of Institution, it is as if Christ said:

See, here, man, in these words I promise and bequeath to you forgiveness of all your sins and the life eternal. In order that you may be certain and know that such a promise remains irrevocably yours, I will die for it, and will give my body and blood for it, and will leave them both to you as a sign and seal, that by them you may remember me.⁸

In the Words of Institution, Luther is thus able to distinguish the six parts of a testament.

There is first the testator who makes the testament, Christ.... Second, the heirs to whom the testament is bequeathed, we Christians.... Third, the testament itself, the words of Christ—when he says, ‘This is my body which is given for you; this is my blood which is poured out for you, a new eternal testament.... Fourth, the seal or token is the sacrament, the bread and wine, under which are his true body and blood. For everything that is in this sacrament must be living. Therefore Christ did not put it in dead writing and seals, but in living words and signs which we use from day to day....Fifth, there is the bequeathed blessing, which the words signify, namely, the remission of sins and eternal life.... Sixth, the duty, remembrance, or requiem, which we are to do for Christ; that is, that we should preach his love and grace, hear and meditate upon it, and by it be incited and preserved unto love and hope in him.⁹

This view of the mass was at once liberating and illuminating. Luther could exclaim: “From all this it is now easily seen what the mass is, how one should prepare himself for it, and how observe and use it, and how many are the abuses of it.”¹⁰ The first abuse he attacks is the silencing of the life-giving Words of Institution. Instead of their being whispered by the priest, they should be “the most familiar, the most openly spoken among all Christians.”¹¹ He wishes that “we Germans could say mass in German and sing these

⁷Ibid. This is what lays the foundation for eventually confessing that the sacrament itself *is* the gospel.

⁸ Ibid, p. 85.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 86,87.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 86.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 90.

‘most secret’ words the loudest of all!”¹² The second abuse is the notion that the sacrament can be used apart from faith in a beneficial matter.¹³ The third abuse, the one which to Luther is greatest of all, was thinking of the mass as something which human beings offer to God: “For, to be brief and to the point, we must let the mass be a sacrament and a testament; it is not, and cannot be a sacrifice any more than the other sacraments...are sacrifices. Otherwise we would lose the Gospel, Christ, the comfort [of the sacrament], and every grace of God.”¹⁴

In *The Babylonian Captivity* of 1520, he acknowledges that the fight to understand the sacrament as testament is bucking a tradition that is rooted solidly in the fathers, but he argues that the fathers are not more ancient than Christ, who taught us the sacrament was a testament.¹⁵ “Let this stand, therefore as our first and infallible proposition—the mass or Sacrament of the Altar is Christ’s testament, which he left behind him at his death to be distributed among his believers.”¹⁶ Similarly, Luther’s *Sermo de Testamento Christo* of the same year rejoices that because of the testamental form of the promise, the death of Christ makes the forgiveness of sins bequeathed an irrevocable gift.¹⁷ Thus, the confession of the mass as testament underscores the Apostles’ declaration that “as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s *death* until he comes” (1 Cor. 11).

The Lutheran Confessions simply take up Luther’s convictions regarding the Supper as testament as the *de facto* doctrine of the Lutheran church. “Why is Christ’s ordinance changed, especially since he himself calls it his testament? If it is illegal to annul

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, p. 93.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 97.

¹⁵ *AE* 36, p. 36.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 37.

¹⁷ *WA* 9, p. 445.

a man's testament, it is much more illegal to annul Christ's."¹⁸ "We believe, teach, and confess that the words of the testament of Christ are to be understood in no other way than their literal sense..."¹⁹ "In the institution of his last will and testament and of his abiding covenant and union (*testament und steto während der Bündnus*), he uses no flowery language but the most appropriate, simple, indubitable, and clear words, just as he does in all the articles of faith and in the institution of other covenant [*Bund*] signs..."²⁰ In the confession of the Supper as Testament, the confessors discovered a powerful argument against the then-current Roman mutilation of the sacrament into only kind and the Reformed twisting of the words of the Supper into something other than what they say.²¹

What is the link, however, between the confessions including this doctrine and Luther's writings? It will be noticed by a careful study of the dates that whereas Testament dominated Luther's thinking in the early 1520's, its dominance faded in the middle of the decade and never returned in force again. Yet Chemnitz's work is filled with references to the Supper as "last will and testament" and so such language makes its way into the Formula. What stands in between Luther's early writings on Testament and the later theologians is precisely the liturgy. Whereas testament no longer dominated Luther's confession of the Supper (perhaps his controversy with the sacramentarians, who had no trouble with the idea of testament but certainly rejected the real presence of Christ's body and blood, led him to look for other ways of confessing the Supper), it remained a centerpiece of the Lutheran liturgy, heard every week by the people.

¹⁸ *Ap XXII*, 2, Tappert, p. 236.

¹⁹ *FC Ep*, VII, 7 Tappert, p. 482.

²⁰ *FC SD*, VII, 50, Tappert, p. 578. See BKS p. 988.

²¹ The entire book *This Is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959) by Hermann Sasse chronicles Luther's and the Lutheran Church's contention that any reading of the Words of Institution that results in a symbolic or spiritualizing of Christ's words does violence to those words.

This theology of the Supper as testament first came to liturgical confession in the Lutheran church in the German Mass. In the exhortation to communicants in the German Mass of 1526, an exhortation which made its way into any number of the church orders and most notably into Herzog Heinrich 1539-40, we find the following:

Friends in Christ, since we are here assembled in the name of the Lord *to receive his Holy Testament*, I admonish you first of all to lift up your hearts to God.... Secondly, I admonish you in Christ that you discern *the Testament of Christ* in true faith, and above all, take to heart the words wherein Christ imparts to us his body and blood for the remission of sins.²²

It was the work of Bryan Spinks to point out that in this exhortation we have an expansion and elaboration of the ancient *sursum corda*.²³ Of far greater import, however, than Luther's sensitivity to the old liturgical form is his desire to see that form used in the service of mass as testament. "Holy Testament" is the name given to the Supper in this exhortation, a name drummed into the head and heart of the people who weekly came to the mass. Nor is such a name unique to the exhortation. The church orders consistently refer to the Words of Institution as "the Words of the Testament."²⁴

Such a designation puts front and center before the Christian assembly the confession that it gathers as Christ's heirs for the primary purpose of receiving from him, not giving to him. The posture of worship at the heart of the eucharist is not our gifts to Christ, but Christ's gifts to us. He is at once testator and inheritance; he is the giver and what is given. He gives himself in his body and blood as the seal of forgiveness.

The Lutheran church thus teaches that the church's posture in worship is above all else a posture of reception, of heirs, and so of faith. Hence the words of the testament are to be heard "in true faith" and it is in faith that the bread and wine which are Christ's body

²² *AE* 53, pp. 78-80, (emphasis added).

²³ Spinks, p. 32.

²⁴ See for example the Herzog Heinrich Order, Sehling I/1, p. 272.

and blood are to be received as the guarantee and pledge of a heavenly inheritance.²⁵

Christ's own command is the warrant we have for so using and receiving "the Testament."²⁶

This confession of the eucharist as testament is what lies behind the surprising treatment which the Words of Institution receive in the Lutheran Church. For the vast majority of the church's existence, and for the vast majority of Christians, the Words of Institution are regarded as an institution narrative and so placed within the setting of a eucharistic prayer. Such has not been the dominant practice among Lutherans. Since the 16th century most Lutheran church orders have declined to set the Words of Institution within a prayer.

There were notable exceptions. It could be argued that Luther's own Latin Mass of 1523 joins the Words of Institution to the preface itself as a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father -- an argument bolstered by the prescription that they were to be sung in the Lord's Prayer tone.²⁷ Further, in the introduction to the German Mass of 1526, Luther makes it perfectly clear that this vernacular mass was not intended to supplant, but to supplement the Latin mass he had already provided: "It is not now my intention to abrogate or to change this service. It shall not be affected in the form which we have followed so far; but we shall continue to use it when or where we are pleased or prompted to do so."²⁸ Thus, Luther envisioned the two forms existing side by side. In the one, the Words of Institution were grammatically and musically joined to a brief prayer of thanksgiving; in the other, they

²⁵ *AE* 53, p. 80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "An Order of Mass and Communion", *AE* 53, pp. 27-28. Even though he numbered the *qui pridie*... separately from the Preface and suggested that "a brief pause" should intervene, the *qui pridie* is still grammatically part of the same sentence: "It is truly meet and right, just and salutary for us to give thanks to Thee always and everywhere, Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God, through Christ our Lord...Who the day before he suffered..."

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

stood alone. Yet another great exception to what became standard Lutheran practice was the Olavus Petri mass of 1531. This mass, provided for the Swedish church, followed the form of the *Formula Missae*, but provided an expanded form of the thanksgiving which led into the Words of Institution.²⁹ The Petri mass set Swedish Lutheran practice for over 400 years. These two examples should be sufficient to raise the question of whether those who regard a eucharistic prayer as *de facto* unLutheran truly have sufficient grounds to sustain their objections.³⁰ Luther and Petri, at least, would be highly surprised by such a notion!

If the inclusion of the Words of Institution in a eucharistic prayer cannot be simply dismissed as a theological defect, wherein are we to find the reason why this form which is preferred by the majority of the Church has been more often than not declined in Lutheranism?³¹ The liturgical use of the 16th century provides the answer: the sacrament was viewed *primarily* as testament. The Words of Institution were allowed to stand alone in their splendid isolation, because standing alone it was thought that they were more readily heard as Christ's last will and testament: announcing and conferring his benefactions upon his heirs. To safeguard such an understanding, the exhortation of the German Mass explicitly taught that the Church gathers to hear the Testamental words and to receive the gifts those words bestow with the body and the blood of Christ. It was the desire to use ceremonies which most clearly confessed the Gospel, encapsulated in the sacrament as Testament of Christ, that explains this unique preference in Lutheran liturgy of the 16th century.

²⁹ This will be examined in detail later when the sacrament as "thanksgiving" is explored.

³⁰ In this camp one surprisingly finds Hermann Sasse. See his essay on the consecration in *We Confess: the Sacraments* trans. by Norman Nagel (CPH, 1985), p. 130.

³¹ Reed writes: "Whether or not we believe that circumstances justified Luther's usual procedure, his decision determined the content and form of the classical Lutheran liturgy. The order he proposed became a characteristic and unique feature of Lutheran worship. Lutheran services in every land since Luther's time, with a few exceptions, have recognized the Reformer's leadership and have omitted extended prayers at this place. The Verba

The testamental understanding is further witnessed to in Lutheran liturgy in the post-communion collect which appeared first in the German Mass of 1526 and then became almost universal in Lutheran liturgy, at least as an option. This prayer begins with the words: “We give thanks to thee, Almighty God, that thou hast refreshed us with this salutary *gift*.”³² The confession of the Lord’s body and blood as saving and wholesome gift is testamental terminology. Who receives gifts? Heirs. Again, the posture of pure reception is expressed. That this reception is not passivity is shown by the fact that it enlivens to thanksgiving, together with the desire for stronger faith and more burning love.

Lastly, the testamental confession of the Supper is undergirded by the universal rubric in Lutheran liturgy that where the heirs are not gathered to receive the Testament, the Testament has no proper use. No communion may be held in a Lutheran church without communicants, no testament without heirs. That the holy eucharist is the testament of Christ is the clear confession, therefore, not merely of the Lutheran symbols but also of the liturgy of the Lutheran church in the 16th century.

followed by the Lord’s Prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer followed by the Verba, stand alone.” p. 347.

³² *AE* 53, p. 84, emphasis added.

Chapter Two: The Mass as Real Presence

The Liturgical Confession of the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood

If there is one point at which Rome, the Eastern Church, and the Lutheran Church are in complete agreement it is the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ. While Lutherans may not accept their answer to the question “how,” we are all at one when it comes to the “that” of the presence.¹ Neither Rome nor the East could find fault with the Augsburg Confession’s words: “It is taught among us 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 there distributed and received.”² Or the words of the Small Catechism, in answer to the question “What is the Sacrament of the Altar?”: “Instituted by Christ himself, it is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and to drink.”³ Or again the words of the Smalcald Articles: “We hold that the bread and the wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and that these are given and received not only by godly but also by wicked Christians.”⁴ Or the confession found in the Formula: “He was not speaking of a symbol of his body, or of a

¹ The “how” in Lutheran theology remains essentially in the Lord’s hands; the “that” is learned from the Words of Institution. Nevertheless, the Lutherans were confident in rejecting transubstantiation as being irreconcilable with the Scriptural testimony. “In addition to the words of Christ and of St. Paul...we at times also use the formulas ‘*under* the bread, *with* the bread, *in* the bread.’ We do this to reject the papal transubstantiation and to indicate the sacramental union between the untransformed substance of the bread and the body of Christ...For as in Christ two distinct and untransformed natures are indivisibly united, so in the Holy Supper the two essences, the natural bread and the true natural body of Christ, are present together here on earth in the ordered action of the sacrament, though the union of the body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine is not a personal union, like that of the two natures in Christ, but a sacramental union...” Tappert, *FC SD VII*, 35-38, pp. 575,576.

² Tappert, *AC X*,1, p. 34.

³ Tappert, *SC*, VI,1,2 p. 351.

⁴ Tappert, *SA III*,VI,1 p. 311.

representation or of his body in a figurative sense, or of the virtue of his body and the benefits which he had won for us by the sacrifice of his body. He was speaking of his true, essential body, which he gave into death for us, and of his true essential blood, which was shed for us on the tree of the cross for the forgiveness of sins.”⁵ Thus it is the indisputably clear teaching of the Lutheran Church that in the Sacrament of the Altar, the body that was born of the Virgin Mary and the blood which was shed on Calvary’s cross for forgiveness is what is present and united with the bread and wine.⁶

Nor is this confession merely a matter of doctrine alone; it is witnessed to above all in the historic liturgy of the Church. As the Lutherans received that liturgy they undertook to faithfully preserve this confession of the presence of Christ’s body and blood, and even to strengthen that confession.

It is well known that the Lutheran doctrine of the presence of Christ’s body and blood is built upon a simple and faithful confession of the Words of Institution. Thus the speaking or singing of those words before the people every Sunday was itself a powerful confession of that presence, and laid out for all to hear the basis for the church’s teaching regarding this: namely, Christ has said so. What he says is so, though our reason and our unwillingness to be nothing but given to, will never be able to comprehend that it is so.

In his Latin mass (1523), Luther joined the Words of Institution directly to the Preface.⁷ The result of this was that the *Sanctus* with the *Benedictus qui venit* fell after the consecration had taken place. In this new position, the ancient canticle becomes more than a venerable hymn of praise. It is transformed into a powerful confession of the real presence.

⁵ *FC SD VII,49*, Tappert, p. 578.

⁶ Already in Ignatius of Antioch we find this identification: “They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again.” *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 7*, SAGE Software, Albany Oregon, 1996.

⁷ *AE 53*, pp. 27,28.

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” is then a greeting cried out by the choir on behalf of the congregation to the one who has kept his promise and is now truly present in his body and blood under the form of the bread and wine upon the altar. To make this explicit, Luther prescribes that the elevation be performed during the singing of the “Blessed is he.”⁸ He notes that this is a “concession to the weak” but that it can be beneficial when it has been explained in sermons what the elevation truly means.⁹

The manner in which Luther understood the elevation is best witnessed to in the German Mass (1526). Here the traditional *Sanctus* and *Benedictus qui venit* have been replaced with a paraphrase of Isaiah 6: “Isaiah ‘twas the Prophet.”¹⁰ This chorale, known as the German *Sanctus*, recounts in detail Isaiah’s vision of the Lord. To sing that during the distribution is to confess that what happened to Isaiah is happening now to the assembled congregation. They too are confessing themselves to be in the presence of the Lord of hosts, before whom the seraphim ceaselessly sing their “holy, holy, holy.” Isaiah’s experience of the presence of God lead him to confess that he was undone, a sinful man. An angel flew to him with a coal from the altar and touched his mouth with the words: “This has touched your lips, your sin is taken away.” The parallel with the divine service in the Lutheran Church is quite obvious. Not a coal from the altar, but the very body of Christ, delivered to the congregation not by the hand of an angel, but by a minister of the Word, and yet the gift is the same: forgiveness. Thus the singing of “Isaiah” as a communion hymn is quite a powerful confession of the One in whose presence the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “The German Mass” *AE* 53, pp. 27,28.

congregation is assembled.¹¹ It is this hymn which Luther finds utterly congruent with a correct understanding of the elevation. He writes:

We do not want to abolish the elevation, but retain it because it goes well with the German Sanctus and signifies that Christ has commanded us to remember him. For just as the sacrament is bodily elevated, and yet Christ's body and blood are not seen in it, so he is also remembered and elevated by the word of the sermon and is confessed and adored in the reception of the sacrament. In each case, he is apprehended only by faith; for we cannot see how Christ gives his body and blood for us and even now daily shows and offers it before God to obtain grace for us.¹²

Note that Christ's body and blood are confessed to being present so that he may even be adored in the reception of the Sacrament.¹³ The priest holds up the elements, in effect announcing that Christ, unseen by human eye, is truly present here in his body and blood, which faith joyfully "amens" by coming forward for the distribution.

Almost without exception the Lutheran liturgies of the 16th century retain the singing of the *Agnus Dei*.¹⁴ This too, was understood as a confession of the real presence. The Church does not merely sing "about" Christ; rather, because he is present in the Supper with his body and blood, the church speaks to him: "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us...grant us peace." Reed notes:

In the Lutheran conception the Agnus is closely connected with the distribution and has a strongly sacramental interpretation. It is not so much a renewed confession of sin as a means of spiritual communion with the Christ who is directly addressed, not the Father. The text contains a threefold confession of Christ's vicarious atonement in fulfillment of prophecy (Is 53:7, 12; 1 Peter 1:19-20), and a prayer for the mercy and peace which his death on the cross has won for us (Eph. 2:13-17). Its address reverently recognizes Christ as the Savior of the world. Its petitions embrace all the

¹¹ Thanks are due to Bryan Spinks for pointing out this understanding in his work. Spinks, p. 36.

¹² "The German Mass" *AE* 53, p. 82.

¹³ Luther deals extensively with the question of adoration in his 1523 treatise *The Adoration of the Sacrament*. He does not definitively reject or espouse adoration in the use of the sacrament, but leaves it free. A hint as to his own inclination, however, might be gleaned from passages like the following: "If you first exercise faith rightly, at the most important point, namely, with respect to the words, then the adoration of the sacrament will afterwards follow beautifully in its own place; and if it did not follow, that would be no sin." *AE* 36, p. 296.

¹⁴ Reed, p. 369.

blessings which his sacrificial death has procured for believers. The reference to Christ as a lamb recalls to the worshipper not only the sacrificial character of his death, but also his freedom from guilt, his patience and gentleness, and his voluntary submission to sufferings and death. Thus, the reception of the elements in the Holy Communion is intimately connected with our Lord's sacrifice on Calvary and its fruits, which are forgiveness and peace.¹⁵

Curiously, Reed puzzles over the difficulty this canticle has had establishing its historic position in the Anglican liturgy, when it is manifest that what the Anglicans objected to in the canticle was the confession that it made of the real presence of Christ's body and blood.¹⁶

Aside from the *Sanctus* and the *Agnus*, the Lutheran Church used two chorales extensively in the 16th century for the distribution. Significantly, neither hymn originated with Luther, although he did modify both of them. The first is the so-called hymn of Jan Huss: "Jesus Christ, our God and Savior."¹⁷ The second is "Let God be Blest".¹⁸ Both hymns contain unblushing confessions of the real presence of the Savior's body and blood. From the Huss hymn, the second stanza:

That we never should forget it
Gave he us his flesh to eat it

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 368-369.

¹⁶ It should not be forgotten that in the official Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, the so-called "Black Rubric" is still printed: "Whereas it is ordained in this office for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, that the Communicants should receive the same kneeling; (which order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgement of the benefits of Christ, therein given to all worthy Receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the holy Communion, as might otherwise ensue;) yet, lest the same kneeling should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinancy, be misconstrued and depraved: It is here declared, that thereby no Adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread or Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored; (for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians;) and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body to be at one time in more places than one." *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 262. If adoration of Christ in the sacrament is supposed to be heresy, there can be no room for the *Agnus*.

¹⁷ For the purposes of this thesis, the translation of Luther's hymns is that of George MacDonald found in *AE* 53, pp. 250,251.

¹⁸ *AE* 53, p. 252-253.

Hidden in this bit of bread,
And to drink gave us his blood.

Similarly, the first stanza of “Let God be Blest”:

Let God be blest, be praised, and be thanked,
Who to us himself hath granted
This his own flesh and blood to feed and save us.
May we take well what he gave us.
Kyrie, eleison.
By thy holy body without blame which from thine own mother Mary came
And by thy holy blood
Help us, Lord, from all our need.
Kyrie, eleison.

Both hymns thus make an unambiguous confession that what is received at the altar is nothing less than the flesh of Christ, hidden under the bread, and the blood of Christ, hidden beneath the wine. The second hymn explicitly identifies the gift received at the altar with the flesh and blood that came from Mary. This is what is received. The repeated “Kyrie” of the second hymn is also a confession of the presence of Christ. The Kyrie is never a call to a distant Lord, but to a present Lord.

In the admonitions to communicants which a number of the Lutheran liturgies made provision for, a clear confession of the presence of Christ’s body and blood is likewise evidenced. The foundational admonition from the German Mass makes the statement: “And that in this faith you then externally receive the bread and wine, i.e., his body and his blood, as the pledge and guarantee of this.”¹⁹ Here Luther characteristically simply identifies the consecrated bread and wine with the body and blood of Christ. In the Saxon churches, Luther’s exhortation was used exclusively. Others, however, were prepared for different areas. Chemnitz’ Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Order contains three exhortations, and none of them Luther’s.²⁰ Each, however, clearly exhibits the doctrine of the real

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 80.

²⁰ Sehling, VI,1 pp. 146-149.

presence of Christ's body and blood. In the first, which ultimately derives from Osiander,²¹ the exhortation begins: "My dearly beloved in the Lord, because we now prepare to contemplate and celebrate the Supper of our dear Lord Jesus Christ in which he nourishes us not in body but in soul with his flesh and gives us to drink his blood, each one of us should with great diligence examine himself..."²² The second exhortation, taken from Bugenhagen's original Braunschweig Order,²³ contains the following confession: "Here hidden from reason and known only to faith in the words of Christ, we are to eat and drink his body and blood, that we might not doubt his death and shedding of blood upon the cross for our certain salvation."²⁴ It is the third exhortation of this order, however, which expresses at greatest length the doctrine of the real presence of our Savior's body and blood.

Therefore we are to do as he has commanded us, that is, to eat his body and drink his blood... We ought also to believe what He has said. Namely, "This is my body, given for you; this is my blood, shed for you, for the forgiveness of sin." When we do as he bids us and believe, we receive according to his word his true body with the bread and his true blood with the wine, and with them all his merits and righteousness, that is: forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, the adoption as children, and eternal salvation.²⁵

The Petri mass as well confesses this real presence in its exhortation: "Dear friends, forasmuch as now the supper of Christ is here celebrated, and his worthy body and precious blood administered, it is advisable (as S. Paul teaches us) that we should (each in his place) examine ourselves."²⁶ Thus the exhortations in use in the Lutheran liturgy of the 16th century furthered the confession of the real presence of the Lord's body and blood,

²¹ See Andreas Osiander, Gerhard Muller, ed., *Gesamtausgabe* (Gutersloh: Gutersloh Verlagshaus, 1975), pp. 156-158.

²² Sehling, VI,1, pp. 146-147.

²³ See Bergsma, pp. 73-74 for this exhortation in its original wretched low German!

²⁴ Sehling, VI,1, p. 147.

²⁵ Sehling, VI,1 p. 148.

²⁶ Eric E. Yelverton, *The Mass in Sweden: Its Development from the Latin Rite from 1531 to 1917* (London: Harrison, 1920) p. 40.

excluding from it all spiritualizing that would have the people of God no longer trust the simple words and promise of Christ in his testament.

In the later Lutheran liturgies of the 16th century, the formula for distribution gained in importance. It is not mentioned in Luther's Latin or German mass (in the German mass, however, the *Verba* themselves apparently function as distribution formula), nor for that matter in the Herzog Heinrich order of 1539. It is, however, explicitly provided in the 1580 revision of Herzog Heinrich, and there we find: "In the distribution of the body of Christ, the servant of the church is to speak expressly and exactly these words: 'Take and eat; this is the body of Christ which was given for you; this strengthen and preserve you in faith to eternal life.' And in the distribution of the blood of Christ: 'Take and drink, this is the blood of Jesus Christ, which was shed for your sins; this strengthen and preserve you in right faith to eternal life.'"²⁷ Here the liturgy of the Lutheran church literally gives voice to her confession that what is placed in the mouth of the Christian is that which was born of Mary and hung upon the cross.

The Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Order of 1569 likewise gives specific instructions for the words to be spoken during the distribution of Christ's body and blood. This order reads as follows: "In order that in the distribution and sharing of the sacrament, our church servants should be as one and the people provided with a short reminder of what they are receiving in the use of this sacrament, we should abide by the simple words of Christ and in the distribution of Christ's body say as follows: 'Take and eat, this is the body of Christ, which was given for you.' And in the distribution of Christ's blood: 'Take and drink, this is the blood of the new testament, which was shed for you.'"²⁸ Thus, no parishioner or pastor is left in doubt about what the Lutheran Church teaches regarding the sacramental presence. The liturgy makes it clear.

²⁷ Sehling I,1, p. 369.

The distribution formula of the Petri mass runs: “The body of our lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto everlasting life. Amen.” Similarly with the cup: “The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.”²⁹

Also to be noted in this regard is the almost universal practice of the Lutheran church orders never to refer in the rubrics of the service to the consecrated bread and wine as anything other than the body and blood of Christ. Both German examples cited above are simply characteristic of this Lutheran practice.

The Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Order mentioned above further provides that in the distribution of the communion, “fine, clean, and noble towels be used when one distributes both the body and the blood of Christ.”³⁰ This provision for the use of such towels for the distribution is likewise a confession of the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the bread and wine. This Order advocates the practice specifically because of the greater reverence it displays towards our Lord’s presence.³¹ In fact, in the introduction to the Church Order we are told that in our churches those ceremonies are to be preferred that give solemn testimony to the high and holy and noble things that are happening in the divine service.³² The reverence with which Christ’s body and blood were to be handled corresponds to the well-known story of the aged Luther celebrating the Supper. As his hand shook, he spilled some of our Lord’s blood upon the floor. In great humility, he placed the chalice upon the altar,

²⁸ Sehling VI,1 p. 149.

²⁹ Yelverton, p. 41.

³⁰ “Und auf das die communion mit desto mehrer reverenz gehalten möge werden, sollen feine, reine, ehrliche tücher untergehalten werden, wenn man reicht beide, den leib und das blut Christi.” Sehling, VI/1, p 149.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, p. 143.

got down on his hands and knees and lapped up the spill.³³ Such was his faith in the real presence of Christ's body and blood.

In these manifold ways, the liturgy of the Lutheran church echoes her symbols in confessing the great joy that flows from the certainty of the real presence of Christ's body and blood under the bread and wine in the sacrament of the altar. Where Christ is, there faith finds "forgiveness, life, and salvation."

³³ Cf. the account of this in Sasse *We Confess the Sacraments*, p. 134.

Chapter Three: The Mass as Bestowing Action of Christ

Christ, the Giver of the Gifts

Luther had a robust confession of what Christ says, does and gives in the Supper: “We know, however, that it is the Lord’s Supper, not the supper of Christians. For the Lord not only instituted it, but also prepares and gives it himself, and is himself cook, butler, food, and drink.”¹ What happens from beginning to ending, is then all Christ’s. He prepares the food, he sets the table and serves the food, and is himself the food and drink he serves out.

The Formula of Concord echoes these thoughts of Luther when it provides us with the Lutheran doctrine of the consecration. Not surprisingly, it is not a Lutheran novelty, but hearkens back to the fathers.

No man’s word or work, be it the merit or the speaking of the minister, be it the eating and drinking or the faith of the communicants, can effect the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Supper. This is to be ascribed only to the almighty power of God and the Word, institution, and ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the truthful and almighty words of Jesus Christ which he spoke in the first institution were not only efficacious in the first supper, but they still retain their validity and efficacious power in all places where the Supper is observed according to Christ’s institution and where his words are used, and the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed, and received by virtue and potency of the same words which Christ spoke at his first Supper.

¹ *That These Words of Christ, “This is My Body,” etc. Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics*, 1527. AE 37, p. 142.

For wherever we observe his institution and speak his words over the bread and cup and distribute the blessed bread and cup, Christ himself is still active through the spoken words by virtue of his first institution, which he wants to be repeated.²

As Luther had gleaned much of his insight into Testament from the East³, so too the doctrine of the consecration is directly linked to the East and to the same father: St. John Chrysostom, this time from his *Sermon on the Passion*:

Christ himself prepares this table and blesses it. No human being, but only Christ himself who was crucified for us, can make of the bread and wine set before us the body and blood of Christ. The words are spoken by the mouth of the priest, but by God's power and grace through the words that he speaks, 'This is my body,' the elements set before us are blessed.⁴

So it is that the Lutheran church confesses that Christ is not merely present in his Supper with the body and the blood, but that he also is present and active in his Words of Institution, thereby blessing and hallowing the elements, causing them to be his body and blood.

This confession of the action of Christ has its corresponding witness in the liturgical service of the Lutheran church. The minister serves as the instrument through whom Christ speaks. This understanding shows up already in the Latin Mass. There, even though the

² Tappert, *FC SD*, VII, 74,75, p. 583.

³ See for example Marc Lienhard's *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ*, trans. By Edwin H. Robertson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), p. 386: "In the course of this study, we noted how much Luther was permeated by the thought of the Fathers of the church. First of all, St. Augustine must be cited, but also Athanasius, Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Gregory of Nazianzus."

⁴ *Ibid*, 76, p. 583. Given this confession of the Words of Institution spoken by the Incarnate Christ present in the Supper as that which accomplishes the consecration, it is surprising to encounter throughout the Eastern fathers and the Eastern liturgy an emphasis on the epiclesis as that which causes the real presence of Christ's body and blood. Perhaps John 6:63 provides somewhat of a "bridge" between the Lutheran and the Eastern Orthodox doctrine here. There, Jesus simply identifies the words he speaks as "Spirit and life." Thus, the Holy Spirit is intimately bound up with the Words of our Lord (as in the doctrine of inspiration) and so when we say that the Words of Institution are the consecration, we also confess that those words as words of Christ are "Spirit and life." Yet even with this background, the fact is that in the New Testament itself, there is no apparent connection ever made between the Holy Spirit and the Supper (unless one is to explain the obscure 1 Cor. 12:13 in this manner), quite in contrast to Baptism.

Words of Institution are in a prayer, they are specifically designated as “words of Christ.”⁵

Thus, he is confessed to be both the speaker and the consecrator.

Further, in the same mass, Luther speaks of the *Pax*:

But immediately after the Lord’s Prayer shall be said, ‘The peace of the Lord,’ etc., which is, so to speak, a public absolution of the sins of the communicants, the true voice of the Gospel announcing remission of sins, and therefore the one and most worthy preparation for the Lord’s Table, if faith holds to these words as coming from the mouth of Christ. On this account I would like to have it pronounced facing the people, as the bishops are accustomed to do, which is the only custom of the ancient bishops that is left among our bishops.⁶

The *Pax* is not to be understood then as a good-hearted wish on the part of the celebrant that the people may have peace, but when faith discerns the voice of Christ speaking through the celebrant the *Pax* is confessed as a gifting action of Christ himself: the bestowal of the forgiveness of sin. It is surprising, given such a vibrant insight into the *Pax*, that Luther dropped it in the German Mass and that it disappeared from almost all the church orders.

There may also be a hint of the action of Christ in Luther’s suggestion that the benediction be altered to the Aaronic benediction from Numbers 6. Luther notes that this is the benediction “which the Lord himself appointed.”⁷ The actual words from Numbers conclude: “So shall they put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”⁸ The priests spoke the words of the Lord, who with his words bestowed the blessing. Given Luther’s well-known predilection for a Christological reading of the Old Testament, he may well have heard in those words the promise of the Son of God himself. He, at any rate, gives his opinion that such a blessing Christ spoke to the disciples at the ascension.⁹

⁵ *An Order of Mass and Communion*, AE 53, p. 28.

⁶ *An Order of Mass and Communion*, AE 53, pp. 28,29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁸ Citation from the NKJV, Number 6:27.

⁹ *An Order of Mass and Communion*, AE 53, p. 30.

In the German Mass, the exhortation calls the people to give heed to the Testament in true faith, listening especially to the words “wherein *Christ* imparts to us his body and blood.”¹⁰ Christ is here explicitly confessed as the one who is active through the Words of Institution, imparting his body and blood. But Christ does not do this by speaking from heaven, but by speaking through his ministers. The conclusion to the exhortation in the German Mass expresses this arrangement: “*In his name* therefore, and according to the command that he gave, let us use and receive the Testament.”¹¹ “In his name” is simply theological shorthand for confessing the true actor who is masked by the human agency.¹²

In both Latin and German masses, the key action of Christ, then, is the speaking of the Words of Institution. This is acknowledged by Tripp: “Common to both [of Luther’s masses] is the centrality of the Institution Narrative—read, not as historical recital, but as ‘his own words’: that is, uttered by the present Word Incarnate, who says, ‘This is my Body...’, and therefore it is so, as he gives himself in grace.”¹³ The Words are heard in the Lutheran liturgy as words that do what they say, that create what they proclaim, precisely because they are heard as coming from the mouth of the Son of God, who “spoke and it was done.”

That Christ is the giver of the gift is confessed also during the distribution in the opening lines of “Let God Be Blest.”

Let God be blest, be praised and be thanked
Who to us himself hath granted
This his own flesh and blood to feed and save us.
May we take well *what he gave us*.¹⁴

¹⁰ *German Mass*, AE 53, p.80. Emphasis added.

¹¹ *Ibid*, emphasis added.

¹² One recalls the explanation of the Triune God’s name in baptism from the Large Catechism: “To be baptized in God’s name is to be baptized not by men but by God himself. Although it be performed by men’s hands, it is nevertheless truly God’s own act.” Tappert, *LC*, IV,10, p. 437.

¹³ D. H. Tripp, “Protestantism and the Eucharist,” in Cheslyn Jones, et al., eds., *The Study of the Liturgy*, Revised Edition, p. 297.

¹⁴ AE 53, p. 253. Original: “Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet, der uns selber hat gespeiset mit seinem Fleische und mit seinem Blute, das gib uns, Herr Gott, zu gute!”

The people would be left in no confusion regarding who had given them this miraculous food. They themselves confessed in their song that it was not the gift of the priest, nor of the church, but solely of the Son of God himself. The bestowal action is his. Likewise in the singing of the *Agnus*, Christ is confessed not merely as the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world, but as the one who is present and active, bestowing his mercy and his peace.¹⁵

In the theological groundwork which the German Mass lays for the continued practice of the elevation, the action of Christ is likewise explicitly confessed: “In each case he is apprehended only by faith, for we cannot see how Christ gives his body and blood for us, and even now daily shows and offers it before the Father to obtain grace for us.”¹⁶ Thus the action of giving the body and blood to the communicants is Christ’s action.

The Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Order begins its first exhortation with the reminder to the people that in the Supper of the Lord it is “our dear Lord Jesus Christ” who “nourishes us not in body but in soul with his flesh and gives us now to drink of his blood.”¹⁷ The second exhortation confesses that in the celebration of the Supper Christ is still active and speaking, when it exhorts the communicants to believe what he says and do what he tells them: namely, believe that the Supper is Christ’s true body and blood and then eat and drink this as his remembrance.¹⁸ The third exhortation likewise confesses that Christ is active in the Words of Institution, “therefore we are to do as He has commanded us.... We ought also believe what he has said.... When we do as he bids and believe, we

¹⁵ *AE* 53, p. 152.

¹⁶ *The German Mass*, *AE* 53, p. 82.

¹⁷ “unsers lieben Herrn Jhesu Christi...darin uns sein fleisch zu einer speise und sein blut zu einem dranke, nicht des leibes, sondern der seelen gegeben wird.” Sehling, VI,1, p. 146.

¹⁸ See Sehling, VI,1, p. 147.

receive according to his word his true body with the bread and his true blood with the wine....”¹⁹

Thus the Supper as Christ’s Supper, with him confessed as the active Lord who is busy giving out his gifts, albeit through the agency of his servants, is the confession of the Lutheran liturgy.

¹⁹ “Darumb sollen wir thun, was er uns befielet.... Wir sollen auch gleuben, was er gesagt hat.... Wenn wir solchs thun und geluben, so empfangen wir nach seinem wort seinen waren leib mit dem brodt und sein waren blut mit dem weine....” Selhing, VI,1, p. 148.

Chapter Four: The Mass as Anamnesis

The Feast of Remembrance

The Lutheran church teaches that the Supper of the Lord is an anamnesis, a remembrance. In doing so it not only recalls the words of our Lord “in remembrance of me,” but also the Apostle’s declaration that as often as we eat and drink the Lord’s body and blood we are proclaiming his death until his return. The full meaning of that remembrance is perhaps best explored in Luther’s writing of 1530 “Admonition Concerning the Body and Blood of Our Lord.” There he writes:

Carefully ponder and consider this word ‘remembrance’; it will say much to you and will appeal to you greatly. But I am not now speaking of any benefit or necessity which we may look for in the sacrament but of the benefit that accrues to Christ and God himself and how necessary it is to his divine glory and service that we use and honor it diligently. For here you learn that he invests this sacrament with his divine glory and ministry so that we should thereby remember him. But what does it mean to remember him other than to praise, to listen to, proclaim, laud, thank, and honor the grace and mercy which he has shown us in Christ? ¹

Thus, the remembrance of Christ in the Supper will be a remembrance of the Lord in his proper office as the Savior and Redeemer. This remembrance is so vital to the Supper that Luther can go so far as to say: “God instituted this sacrament chiefly for the sake of this remembrance, and this is the honor that he seeks and demands in it, for in Christ he wants to be acknowledged as our God.”² The remembrance in the Sacrament is then far more than a meditation upon the suffering of Christ:

¹ *AE* 38, p 105.

² *Ibid*, p. 111.

Rather, this is the remembrance of Christ when we teach and believe in the power and fruit of his suffering. This means that our work and merit are nothing, that the free will is dead and lost; it means that we are free from sins and become righteous only through Christ's suffering and death and that it is a teaching or remembrance of the grace of God in Christ and not a work accomplished by us before God.³

The anamnesis in the Supper is then a comprehensive remembrance of the hopelessness of the human race without the Redeemer, a confession of His coming into the flesh for our salvation, and a rejoicing in the sacrifice of the cross as the atonement for all sin. The Latin version of the Augustana speaks of such remembrance in Article XXIV:

Christ commands us to do this in remembrance of him. Therefore the Mass was instituted that faith on the part of those who use the sacrament should remember what benefits are received through Christ and should cheer and comfort anxious consciences. For to remember Christ is to remember his benefits and realize that they are truly offered to us; and it is not enough to remember the history, for the Jews and the ungodly can also remember this.⁴

The Formula speaks of the Supper in quite similar terms: “

After the Last Supper, as he was about to begin his bitter passion and death for our sin, in this sad, last hour of his life, this truthful and Almighty Lord, our Creator and Redeemer Jesus Christ, selected his words with great deliberation and care in ordaining and instituting this most venerable sacrament, which was to be observed with great reverence and obedience until the end of the world and which was to be an abiding memorial of his passion and death and of all his blessings, a seal of the new covenant, a comfort for all sorrowing hearts, and a true bond and union of Christians with Christ their head and with one another.⁵

Martin Chemnitz describes it as follows:

³ Ibid, p. 116.

⁴ AC XXIV, 30-32, Tappert, Latin, p. 59. “Sed Christus iubet facere in sui memoriam. Quare missa instituta est, ut fides in his, qui utuntur sacramento, recordetur, quae beneficia meminisse ac sentire, quod vere exhibeantur nobis. Nec satis est historiam recordari, quia hanc etiam Iudaei et impii recordari possunt.” BKS p. 94.

⁵ FC, SD VII, 44 Tappert, p. 577.

But what kind of remembrance is it? It is the kind in which for the restoration of your fallen and lost nature I (1) have assumed “body and blood,” that is, human nature, (2) have given My assumed body into death and shed My blood as a ransom for you, and (3) offer for you to receive in the Supper this body which has been given and this blood which has been shed, in order that this memory of Me, which is faith, may by this eating be more and more aroused, preserved, and confirmed in you. In this way the new covenant is applied, confirmed, and sealed to each person who eats in faith. Thus in the words of institution there is included in summary way the entire doctrine of the benefit, usefulness, and efficacy of this sacrament.⁶

Such a confession of the mass as anamnesis finds a corresponding witness in the Lutheran liturgies of the 16th century.

In the exhortation from the German Mass, the priest admonishes the people: “That you *remember* and give thanks for the boundless love which he proved to us when he redeemed us from God’s wrath, sin, death and hell by his own blood.”⁷ Thus the remembrance of Christ in the Supper is a remembrance of the boundless love that accomplished redemption for the human race when the human race was completely powerless to help itself. It is a remembrance that Christ accomplished this rescue only at the cost of the cross -- “his own blood.”

In the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel Order, such remembrance of Christ is expanded considerably. The exhortations are no longer brief, but expansive. In the first one, the priest after exhorting the people to self-examination proceeds to say:

But if we thus examine ourselves, we find in ourselves nothing but sin and death which we cannot do anything about. Therefore our dear Lord Jesus Christ has had mercy upon us and for our sake become a man, that He might fulfill for us the law and suffer what we by our sins have deserved. And that we might the more strongly believe this and rejoice, He took the bread after Supper....⁸

⁶ Chemnitz, *The Lord’s Supper*, pp. 186, 187.

⁷ AE 53, p. 80, emphasis added.

⁸ “So wir aber uns selbs prüfen, finden wir nichts in uns, denn sünd und todt, können uns auch selbst in keinen wege darauß helfen. Darauf hat unser lieber Herr Jhesus Christus sich uber uns erbarmet, is umb unser willen mensch geworden, das er vor uns das gesetz erfüllte und lidde, was wir mit unsern sünden verschuldet hetten, und das wir jha festiglich gleubeten und uns fröhlich darauf verlassen möchten, nam er nach abendessen das brot....” Sehling, VI, 1, pp. 146-147.

The words of Christ are then recited and a paraphrase given of each. Regarding the bread: “This is as though he would say, ‘That I became man and everything which I did and suffered was done for you, for your benefit, and as the sure sign of this I give you my Body to eat.’”⁹ Regarding the cup: “As if to say, ‘Because I have welcome you and taken your sin upon me, I will offer myself for your sins, pour out my blood, and obtain grace and forgiveness of sins, and thereby establish a new testament in which sins are eternally not remembered.’”¹⁰

The second exhortation from this order similarly celebrates the anamnesis of Christ.

My dearly beloved, it is constantly proclaimed to us through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ that we unknown to ourselves are poor, lost sinners, about which we can do nothing ourselves, being but flesh and blood, nor can we set ourselves free from the strict judgment of God and the power of the devil by our own reason or powers, for we have fallen through trespassing the command and will of God.

But God knows our weakness better than we ourselves, and has given to us as a gracious Father his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that we might be enlightened by his Gospel and set free from our sins by his death....

Yet, so that we do not forget or become indolent, as happens too easily, about such faith in the incarnation and death of Christ, he has given and commanded to us a special remembrance or proclamation of his death [1 Cor. 11:26], which we may use as often as we desire, in the external sacrament.

Here hidden from reason and known only to faith in the words of Christ, we are to eat and drink his body and blood, that we might not doubt that his death and shedding of blood upon the cross are our certain salvation. Regarding this we sing, read, preach, and hear as we are doing in this mass, and also afterwards speak of it and proclaim to one another, for our comfort and the salvation of many, according to the command of Christ: This do in remembrance of me.¹¹

⁹ “als wolt er sagen: Das ich mensch bin worden und alles, was ich thue und leide, das ist alles euer eigen, vor euch und euch zu gute geschehen, und des zu einem wahrzeichen gebe ich euch meinen leib zu einer speise.” Ibid.

¹⁰ “also wolt er sprechen: Dieweil ich mich euer angenommen und euer sünde auf mich geladen habe, wil ich mich selbs für die sünde opfern, mein blut vergossen wird zu vergebung der sünde erwerben und also ein neue testament aufrichten, darin der sünde ewig nicht soll gedacht werden.” Ibid.

¹¹ “Mein allerliesbsten, uns wird stets durch die predigt des evangelii Christi fürgehalten, das wir von uns selbs unwissen, arme sünders und verloren sein, und dieweil wir nicht mehr von uns selbs sein denn fleisch und blut, derwegen wir uns auch mit unserm verstande und

It is in the third exhortation, however, that the anamnesis achieves its fullest expression:

Since from the fall and trespass of our first parents, Adam and Eve, we have all fallen into sin and are guilty of everlasting death, and through such sin have grown weak and corrupted in both body and soul, so that we of ourselves can do no good thing, much less keep the commandments and will of God, and since according to the law we are cursed and ought to be eternally damned, as it is written in the book of the law, and though neither we ourselves nor any other creature in heaven or on earth could help us out of such sorrow and condemnation, God the Almighty has had mercy upon us.

Out of His inexpressible love, he has sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to take our nature upon him, taking flesh and blood from the Virgin Mary. On him were laid our sins and those of the whole world. He bore them for us as on the gallows of the cross he died, and on the third day he rose again, having atoned for our sin and that of our parents, again reconciling us to God the Almighty, so that we are not justified, made children of God, and will have eternal life and salvation.

That we may be sure of this and never forget his great, inexpressible love and kindness, Jesus Christ, as he was about to begin his sufferings, instituted his Supper, giving to his beloved disciples his own body to eat and his blood to drink and said to them—and to all Christians—that it is his body given for them and his blood shed for them, for the forgiveness of sins, and that as often as they eat and drink of it, they should do so for his remembrance and, as St. Paul says, to proclaim his death until he comes again on the Last Day as judge of the living and the dead.¹²

vermögen nicht können loß machen auß dem gestrengen gericht Gottes und von der gewalt des teufels, darin wir gefallen sind durch die ubertretunge der gebott und des willen Gottes, so hat Gott unser unvermögen baß erkant denn wir und hat vor uns gegeben als ein gnediger Vater seinen eingebornen Son Jhesum Christum, das wir durch sein evangelium erleuchtet und durch seinen todt erlöset würden von unsern sünden.... Doch das wir nicht vergessen oder trag würden, als wir leider werden, zu solchem glauben der menschwerdung und des todes Christi, hat er uns auch ein besonder gedechtnis oder verkündigung seines todes [1 K 11,26], so oft wir wollen, befohlen, das wir auch im auswendigen sacrament, der vernunft verborgen, alleine dem glauben aus dem worte Christi bekant, essen sollen und trinken sein leib und blut, das wir jha nicht zweifeln sollen, sein todt und blutvergiessung am kreuze sei unser gewisse seligkeit. Davon sollen wir singen, lesen, predigen, hören, gleich auch davon reden und untereinander verkündigen, uns zu trost und vielen zur seligkeit, nach dem bevelch Christi: Solches thut zu meinem gedechtnis [1 K 11,25].” Ibid., p.147.

¹² “Nachdem wir durch den fall und ubertretung unser aller eltern, Adam und Eva, sein in sünde gefallen und des ewigen todes schuldig worden, auch dur solche sünde unser leib und seelen dermassen geschwecht und verdorben sein, das wir auß uns selbs unichts guts thun können, viel weniger die gebott und willen Gottes halten und derhalben nach dem gesetz Gottes verflucht und ewiglich verdampt sollen sein, wie geschrieben steht im buch des gesetzes, und aber wir uns selbs, noch kein creatur im himel und auf erden auß solchem jammer und verdamnuß hat helfen können, so hat sich Gott der allmechtige uber uns

In this exhortation we find the full remembrance of which Luther spoke: a clear confession of the hopeless plight of man, the great love and mercy of God in sending Christ to take on flesh and blood, the sacrifice of the cross, the resurrection from the dead, the return as judge, and all gathered into the context of the Lord's Supper.

Similar to that remarkable anamnesis is the remembrance of Christ found in the singular eucharistic prayer from the Petri Order of 1531. Here, the anamnesis is not spoken to the people but in prayer to the Father, nevertheless it is so remarkably parallel in thought progression to the final Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel exhortation that it seems at least possible that Chemnitz and Andreae had it before them as they were working. It reads as follows:

Verily it is meet right and blessed that we should in all places give thanks to thee, holy lord, almighty father, everlasting god, for all thy benefits, and especially for that one that thou didst unto us, when we all by reason of sins were in so bad a case that naught but damnation and eternal death awaited us, and no creature in heaven or on earth could help us, then thou didst send forth thine only-begotten son, Jesus Christ, who was of the same divine nature as thyself, didst suffer him to become a man for our sake, didst lay our sins upon him, and didst suffer him to undergo death instead of our all dying eternally, and as he hath overcome death and risen again into life, and now dieth nevermore, so likewise shall all they who put their trust therein overcome sins and death and through him attain to everlasting life, and for our admonition that we should bear in mind and never forget such his benefit, in the night that he was betrayed....¹³

erbarmet und aus unaußsprechlicher liebe seinen einigen Sohn Jhesum Christum in diese welt gesandt und ihn menschliche natur, fleisch und blut von der jungfrau Maria lassen annehmen, auf ihne alle unser und der ganzen welt sünden gelegt, der sie auch für uns getragen und am galgen des kreuzes gestorben und am dritten tage wieder auferstanden ist und damit die sünde und ubertretung unser eltern und unser selbs gebüset und uns Gott dem allmechtigen wiederumb versönet hat, das wir nun gerecht und kinder Gottes werden und das ewige leben und seligkeit haben sollen. Damit wir nun solches desto gewisser sein und dieser grossen, unaußsprechlichen barmherzigkeit, lieb, un wolthat nicht vergessen solten, so hat Jhesum Christum in dem abendmahl, als sein leiden angehen solte, seinen lieven jüngern seinen leib zu essen und sein blut zu trinken gegeben und zu ihnen und allen Christen gesagt, das es sein leib sey, der fur sie gegeben, und sein blut, das fur sie vergossen sey zu vergebung der sünden, und das sie solchs, so oft sie also essen und trinken wurden, solten zu seiner gedechtnuß thun und, wie S. Paulus [1 K 11,26] sagt, seinen tod darbey verkündigen, biß er widerkomen wird am jünsten tage, zu richten die lebendigen und die todten." Ibid, p. 147-148.

¹³ "Sannerligha är thet tilbörlighit rät och saligt, ath wij alstädhes tacke och loffue tich helighe herre, alzmechtig fadher ewighe gudh for alla thina welgerninga, och erkannerliga

Perhaps because the anamnesis in the canon of this liturgy was so full, the reading of the exhortation to the people was made optional.¹⁴ The exhortation of the Petri service does nevertheless contain further anamnesis:

And chiefly hath our Lord commanded us to use this sacrament for a remembrance of himself, namely that we should herewith remember his worthy death and bloodshedding, and consider that this hath been done for the remission of our sins. So now he willeth herewith that we shall not forget such his great benefit, but steadfastly cleave unto it with all thanksgiving, that we may be free from sins.¹⁵

But the anamnesis of Christ was not limited to the exhortations or the Verba. It was also sung in the hymns that accompanied the distribution of the Lord's body and blood. The Huss hymn expresses all the thoughts of the exhortations:

Jesus Christ, our God and Savior,
Turned away God's wrath forever,
By his bitter agony
Helped us out of hell's misery.¹⁶

Here is the hymnic confession of the helpless state of humanity and the expression of God's love in the gift of his Son. The second verse makes the memorial explicit:

That we never should forget it
Gave he us his flesh to eat it,

for then tu bewijste oss, thå wij alle for syndene skul så illa uthkompne wårom, at oss icke annat stodh före vtan fordömelse och then ewighe dödhen, och intit creatur antingen j himmelen eller på iordenne kunde oss hielpe, Thå uthsende tu thin eenfödda son Jesum Christum som war samma gudhdoms natur medh tich, lät honom warda en menniskia for wora skuld, lagde våra synder uppå honom, och lät honom lijda dödhen j then stadhen wij alle ewinnerligha döö skulle, Och såsom han offueruan dödhen och stodh vp jgen till lijffz och nw aldrih meera döör, så skola och alle the som ther uppå förlata sich, offueruinna syndena och dödhen och få ewinnerlighit liiff genom honom, och oss till een formanig at wij sådana hans welgerning till sinnes tagha och icke forgåta skulle, om natten thå han förråden..." Yelverton, p. 37,38, translation is also by Yelverton.

¹⁴ See Yelverton, p. 40. "Then he turns to the people and gives this exhortation, if he think it necessary, and time permit it."

¹⁵ "Och haffuer wor herre enkannerlig befalet oss bruka thetta sacramentit sich till åminnelse, thet är, at wij här medh skole j hogkomma hans werdugha dödh och blodz vthgiutelse, och betenkia at thet till våra synders foratelse skedt är, Så wil han nw här medh at wij sådana hans stora welerning icke forgåta skole, vtan stadeligha halla oss ther widh medh all takseyelse, ath wij kunne våra synder quitte warda." Ibid, p. 40.

¹⁶ *AE* 53, p. 250. Original: "Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der von uns dem Gotteszorn wandt, durch das bitter Leiden sein half er uns aus der höllen Pein."

Hidden in this bit of bread,
And to drink gave us his blood.¹⁷

Similarly, the second stanza of “Let God Be Blest” is anamnetic:

The holy body is for us laid lowly
Down in death, that we live holy;
No greater goodness he to us could render,
To make think of his love tender.
Kyrieleison.
Lord, thy love so great hath in thee wrought
That thy blood to us hath marvels brought,
Of our debt paid the sum,
That God gracious is become.
Kyrieleison.¹⁸

There was another musical piece in common use (prescribed in the revision of Herzog Heinrich 1580¹⁹) for the distribution and that was Luther’s setting of Psalm 111.²⁰ This piece was apparently chosen for the distribution precisely because it celebrated “remembrance.” The fourth verse reads in German: “He hath instituted a memorial of his wonders.”²¹ And directly links up with verse 5 stating that God gives food to those who fear him and he will always remember his covenant. The Lutheran church cannot but see in these words of the psalmist a fitting description of the remembrance which Christ instituted when he established the Sacrament as his perpetual memorial.

The remembrance of Christ is not the vain celebration of a show or a celebration for the sake of example, the way plays celebrate the memory of Hercules or Ulysses. It is rather the remembrance of Christ’s blessings and the acceptance of them by faith, so that they make us alive. So the Psalm says (Ps 111:4,5), ‘He has caused his wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful. He provides

¹⁷ Ibid. Original: “Daß wir nimmer des vergessen, gab er uns sein Leib zu essen, veborden im Brod so klein, und zu trinken sein Blut im Wein.”

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 253,254. Original: “Der selig Leichnam ist für uns gegeben zum Tod, daß wir dadurch leben; nicht größer Güte konnt er uns geschenken, dabei wir sein solln gedenken. Kyrieleison.”

¹⁹ Sehling, I,1, p. 369.

²⁰ See *AE* 53, pp. 181-183.

²¹ Ibid, p. 181.

food for those who fear him.’ This means that in the ceremony we should acknowledge the will and mercy of God.²²

Finally, in the 1580 revision of Herzog Heinrich, that collect which Thomas Aquinas had composed for the feast of Corpus Christi reentered Lutheran usage as an alternate post-communion collect.²³ In this classic prayer, the Lord’s Supper is confessed as a wonderful sacrament that is a “memorial of your sufferings.”²⁴

To summarize, then, the liturgies of the Lutheran church of the 16th century expressed the anamnesis of Christ in a variety of forms and words. Despite this variety, the central content of this anamnesis remain constant: the hopeless plight of humanity, the boundless love of the Father resulting in the incarnation of the eternal Son, his sacrifice for our salvation, his resurrection and return, and the wondrous gift of Christ’s body and blood in the Supper as the perpetual memorial of this great redemption, sealing to those who eat in faith the forgiveness of sins.

²² *Ap* XXIV, 72, Tappert, p. 262.

²³ See Sehling I,1, p. 369.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter Five: The Mass as Eucharist

Thanksgiving in the Lutheran Liturgy

“And when he had given thanks.” The initial giving of the Lord’s Supper was in the context of our Lord’s own thanksgiving to the Father. From the ancient church, the Lutheran church inherited and welcomed the name “Eucharist” to describe the Supper, for the gift of the Lord Jesus’ body and blood for the forgiveness of all sin is precisely that which calls forth the church’s continual and eternal thanksgiving to the Father¹.

Commenting on this in the Apology, Melancthon cites a quote attributed to Cyprian:

There are also statements about thanksgiving, like the beautiful statement of Cyprian about the godly communicant: ‘Piety distinguishes between what is given and what is forgiven, and it thanks the Giver of such a generous blessing.’ That is, piety looks at what is given and at what is forgiven; it compares the greatness of God’s blessing with the greatness of our ills, our sin and our death; and it gives thanks. From this the term ‘eucharist’ arose in the church.²

This is quite in the spirit of Luther who wrote in his “Admonition Concerning the Sacrament”:

The remembrance is indeed supposed to be a sacrifice of thanksgiving; but the sacrament itself should not be a sacrifice but a gift of God which he has given to us and which we should take and receive with thanks. For this reason I think that the ancients called this office *eucharistia* or *sacramentum eucharistie*, that is, a thanksgiving. For in this sacrament we should thank God according to the command of Christ, and we should use and receive this sacrament with thanks.³

¹ See for example Chemnitz’ frequent designation of the Sacrament by this name in his monumental *Examine* and in his *De coena Domini*.

² Tappert, *Apology XXIV*, 76. P. 263.

³ “Admonition Concerning the Sacrament” 1530 *AE* 38, pp. 122-123.

With the sacrament itself confessed as the gift God gives, Luther is free to receive the parts of the liturgy handed down which focus on the thanksgiving. He writes:

As a result of such an understanding I believe that many hymns were included and retained in the mass which deal with thanksgiving and praising [God] in a wonderful and excellent way, as for example, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Alleluia, the Lord's Prayer, the Preface, the Sanctus, the Benedictus, and the Agnus Dei. In these various parts you find nothing about a sacrifice but only praise and thanks. Therefore we keep them in our mass. Particularly the Agnus Dei, above all songs, serves well for the sacrament, for it clearly sings about and praises Christ for having borne our sins and in beautiful, brief words powerfully and sweetly teaches the remembrance of Christ.⁴

With a chuckle to himself, Luther marvels thus at the ways of God: "In short, God has wonderfully arranged it so that essentially the priest reads secretly the evil parts of the mass which deal with sacrifice and works, and this is called the secret mass, but whatever is publicly sung by the choir or the multitude is essentially a good thing and a hymn of praise."⁵

Thus the Lutheran church's retention of the old mass songs is to be understood from their inherent value as thanksgiving, eucharist, evoked by Jesus Christ. When we examine the actual liturgy of the Lutheran church, it becomes manifest that it is replete with thanksgiving from start to finish, but especially in that part of the service devoted to the Supper.

Luther's Latin mass begins its eucharistic section with the ancient call of the Preface. After the Salutation and *Sursum*, comes the call to thanksgiving. "Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God" says the priest.⁶ The people respond: "It is meet and right."⁷ The priest continues: "It is truly meet and right, just and salutary for us to give

⁴ Ibid, p. 123.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "An Order of Mass and Communion" 1523 *AE* 53, p. 27.

⁷ Ibid.

thanks to Thee always and everywhere, Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, through Christ our Lord...”⁸ After a brief pause the priest continues with the Institution. While the Proper Preface is lost in such an arrangement, what is actually confessed is remarkably powerful. All thanksgiving to the Father through Christ is then linked simply and directly to the Words of Institution. That Christ gives his body and his blood for the forgiveness of sins and bids us receive this gift is regarded as the cause for the endless jubilation of the church, which, indeed, it truly is. Following the Words of Institution in this service, the choir continues with the *Sanctus* and the *Benedictus* with elevation. In this position these hymns are not only confessions of the real presence but above all the response of thanksgiving that is called forth by the gift of Christ. Thanksgiving is also sounded at the end of this service, where Luther replaces the *Ite missa* with the *Benedicamus domino*, with its response of *Deo gratias*.⁹

In the German mass, Luther has paraphrased the *Sursum* and the call to thanksgiving, but they are still present. In the exhortation, the words ring out: “I admonish you in Christ...that you remember and give thanks for his boundless love.”¹⁰ The thanksgiving in this service continues with the singing of the hymn “Let God be blest.” The entire first stanza of which is pure thanksgiving and praise to the Lord who is present with his body and blood.¹¹ In addition, for this service Luther penned one of his greatest contributions to the liturgy: his post-communion collect. Here the note of thanksgiving is sounded loud and clear: “We give thanks to thee, Almighty God, that thou hast refreshed us with this thy salutary gift.”¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁰ “The German Mass” 1526 *AE* 53, pp. 79, 80.

¹¹ See *AE* 53, p. 253.

¹² *AE* 53, p. 84.

The Herzog Heinrich Order makes provision for the exhortation from the German mass to be used on ordinary Sundays, with its call to thanksgiving. On the festivals, however, the exhortation falls away and the Latin preface is to be sung (at least in the cities and where there are school children).¹³ With this restoration of the Proper Prefaces, the thanksgiving to God in the Lutheran liturgy was enriched. Latin prefaces were provided for the following: Nativity, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity, and even one for “general Sundays,” raising the possibility that even on non-festival days the Preface might have resumed its historic position.¹⁴ In these prefaces one finds the various facets of redemption celebrated, always centering on the fact that all our thanksgiving is on account of Christ, his person and his work for us. As in the German mass, the hymns during distribution include “Let God be Blest” with its robust thanksgiving. Although Luther’s collect is not printed out, it is surely what is meant by “the collect.”¹⁵ This is made explicit in the 1580 order.¹⁶ Thus thanksgiving also rang out in the Saxon services.

As in Saxony, in Braunschweig the Latin prefaces were sung in the cities on the feast days. Further, in two of the exhortations provided, the note of thanksgiving rings clear: “In doing this we should remember his death and thank him from the heart.”¹⁷ Again, “Therefore we are to do as he has commanded us, that is, to eat his body and drink his blood, remembering and giving thanks for his great kindness in reconciling us to God the heavenly Father, and rescuing us from sin, death, and eternal damnation.”¹⁸ Here too

¹³ Sehling I,1 p. 271.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 274.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 271.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 369.

¹⁷ Sehling VI,1 p. 147.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 148.

the usual hymns of praise and thanks are sung during the distribution, and Luther's collect of thanksgiving prayed immediately before the benediction.¹⁹

In the Petri Mass, the preface was extended into a prayer of thanksgiving and remembrance which ultimately culminated in the Words of Institution, thus linking the cause of all thanksgiving to the Supper even as the Latin mass of Luther had done. In the exhortation from this mass, the communicants were again reminded that the Supper is given them precisely so that they might "steadfastly cleave unto it with all thanksgiving."²⁰ Uniquely, the Swedish order does not give thanks again following the reception of the sacrament. Instead a brief prayer is offered that as the people have partaken of the sacrament so they may partake of God's eternal honor and glory.²¹

In her prayers as in her praises and her admonitions, the Lutheran church thus faithfully carried forward the heritage of thanksgiving at the Supper which she inherited from the fathers. Moreover with the clarification of the church's sacrifice as being pure thanksgiving in response to the gift God gives of the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins, the Lutheran liturgy was able to return to the joy of the supper as eucharist which characterized so much of the worship of the early church.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 149.

²⁰ Yelverton, p. 40.

²¹ Reed, p. 116,

Chapter Six: The Mass as Communion

The Unity of the Church

The emphasis that the Lutheran church laid upon the necessity of each individual confessing personal faith might be thought to reduce the sacrament to a mere individual matter. There are statements in Luther that might be thought to tend that way. “Where there is a divine promise, there every one must stand on his own feet; his own personal faith is demanded....Even so each one can derive personal benefit from the mass only by personal faith. It is absolutely impossible to commune on behalf of anyone else.”¹ Similarly in the 1526 treatise “The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ against the Fanatics”

Luther states:

When I preach his death, it is a public sermon in the congregation, in which I am addressing myself to no one individually; whoever grasps it, grasps it. But when I distribute the sacrament, I designate it for the individual who is receiving it; I give him Christ’s body and blood that he may have forgiveness of sins, obtained through his death and preached in the congregation. This is something more than the congregational sermon; for although the same thing is present in the sermon as in the sacrament, here there is the advantage that it is directed at definite individuals. In the sermon one does not point or portray any particular person, but in the sacrament it is given to you and to me in particular, so that the sermon comes to be our own.²

What has become here of the sacrament as that which creates the communion of the church?

Luther certainly gave fine expression to the communal aspect of the mass in his *Sermon on the Blessed Sacrament* of 1519. There he echoes the ancient picture from the *Didache*:

¹ *Babylonian Captivity*, 1520. AE 36, p. 49.

For just as the bread is made out of many grains ground and mixed together, and out of the bodies of many grains there comes the body of one bread, in which each grain loses its form and takes upon itself the common body of the bread; and just as the drops of wine, in losing their own form, become the body of one common wine and drink—so it is and should be with us, if we use this sacrament properly. Christ with all his saints, by his love, takes upon himself our form, fights with us against sin, death, and all evil....

O this is a great sacrament, says St. Paul, that Christ and the church are one flesh and bone. Again through this same love, we are to be changed and to make the infirmities of all other Christians our own; we are to take upon ourselves their form and their necessity, and all the good that is within our power we are to make theirs, that they may profit from it. That is real fellowship, and that is the true significance of this sacrament. In this way we are changed into one another and are made into a community of love.³

Although freighted heavily with an Augustinian approach to the sacrament from which he has not yet been extricated, these words of Luther express the solid fact that by sharing in the body and blood of Christ in the Supper, Christians are bound together not only with their Lord, but also with one another. This is a fact which Luther did not lose sight of.

In a sermon published in 1524, Luther repeats in greater depth the same thoughts.

We believe that the true body and blood of Christ is under the bread and wine, even as it is. Here we see one thing and believe another, which describes faith. For when we hear the Word and receive the Lord's Supper we have merely a word and act, yet by it we embrace life and every treasure, even God himself. Likewise love is pictured in these signs and elements. First of all in the bread. For as long as the grains of wheat are in a pile on the ground, each is a body separate for itself, and is not mingled with the others; but when they are ground they all become one body. The same thing takes place with the wine. As long as the berries are not crushed each retains its own form, but when they are crushed they all flow together and become one drink. You cannot say, this is the flour from this grain, or this drop from that berry; for each has entered the form of the other, and thus was formed one bread and one drink.

² *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ against the Fanatics*, 1526. AE 36, pp. 348, 349.

³ *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods*, 1519. AE 35, p. 58.

This is the interpretation of St. Paul in 1 Cor 10,17: ‘Seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread.’ We eat the Lord by the faith of the Word which the soul consumes and enjoys. In this way my neighbor also eats me: I give him my goods, body, and life and all that I have, and I let him consume and use it in his want. Likewise, I also need my neighbor; I too am poor and afflicted, and suffer him to help and serve me in turn.

Thus we are woven one into the other, helping one another even as Christ helped us. This is what it means spiritually to eat and drink one another.⁴

There is probably no more beautiful depiction of the reality of the mass as communion in the Lutheran church than that which Luther penned in 1533 in his treatise “The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests.” In the following words, Luther gives voice to what faith beholds when it looks at the mass:

For God be praised, in our churches we can show a Christian a true Christian mass according to the ordinance and institution of Christ, as well as according to the true intention of Christ and the church. There our pastor, bishop, or minister in the pastoral office, rightly and honorably and publicly called, having been previously consecrated, anointed, and born in baptism as a priest of Christ, without regard to the private chrism, goes before the altar. Publicly and plainly he sings what Christ has ordained and instituted in the Lord’s Supper. He takes the bread and wine, gives thanks, and distributes and gives them to the rest of us who are there and want to receive them, on the strength of the words of Christ, ‘This is my body, this is my blood. Do this’ etc.

Particularly we who want to receive the sacrament kneel beside, behind, and around him, man, woman, young, old, master, servant, wife, maid, parents, and children, even as God brings us together there, all of us true, holy priests, sanctified by Christ’s blood, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and consecrated in baptism. On the basis of this our inborn hereditary priestly honor and attire we are present, have, as Revelation 4 pictures it, our golden crowns on our heads, harps and golden censors in our hands; and we let our pastor say what Christ has ordained, not for himself as though it were for his person, but he is the mouth for all of us and we all speak the words with him from the heart and in faith, directed to the Lamb of God who is present for us and among us, and who according to his ordinance nourishes us with his body and blood. This is our mass, and it is the true mass which is not lacking among us.⁵

Further, Luther was quite aware that the Supper wrought far more than the communion of those gathered at one celebration.

⁴ *Confession and the Lord’s Supper*, 1524. *Lenker*, vol. 2, p. 213.

Thus we eat and drink with the whole of ancient Christendom from one table; and we receive with them the same one ancient sacrament; we have done nothing new or different. Consequently, we are one church with them, or as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, ‘one body’ and ‘one loaf’ since we eat of one loaf and drink of one cup....we are one church with the ancient church, in one sacrament.⁶

Thus for Luther mass as communion embraced both the fact that it was a celebration of the many becoming one through the sharing in the one body of Christ, and the living out of such unity through loving service to one another. Or, as it is expressed in the Formula, “a true bond and union of Christians with Christ their head and with one another.”⁷

Chemnitz similarly expresses the communal aspect of the mass in these words:

Finally, the Eucharist is not only a figurative admonition concerning our mutual, fraternal fellowship and love for one another, in the way that bread is produced from many grains and wine from many grapes, as Augustine says, *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus* 26. But because Christ in the Supper joins Himself most intimately to us by that very nature with which He is our Head, namely, by His body and blood, at the same time through this assumed nature of His, which is akin to ours, He will work powerfully and efficaciously in the believers, so that, because our Head Himself is among us, we also may be members of one another. For we being many are one body because we all partake of that one bread which is the body of Christ, and we all drink into the one Spirit.⁸

The foregoing contrasts remarkably with the actual state of the mass at the dawn of the Reformation, when the mass had become anything but a communion. Merely to gather and “hear” mass was deemed enough; seeing the elevation replaced receiving Christ’s body and blood. Indeed, even in the absence of any communicants, the mass was held; instead of the people’s communion, the priest quite frequently received the sacrament alone. Against such practice, the Lutheran confessors spoke with great clarity:

⁵ *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* 1533. AE 38, pp. 208, 209.

⁶ *Against Hanswurst*, 1541. AE 41, p. 195.

⁷ *FC SD*, VII, 44, Tappert, p. 577.

⁸ Chemnitz, *The Lord’s Supper*, p. 193.

Inasmuch, then, as the Mass is not a sacrifice to remove the sins of others, whether living or dead, but should be a Communion in which the priest and others receive the sacrament for themselves, it is observed among us in the following manner: On holy days, and at other times when communicants are present, Mass is held and those who desire it are communicated. Thus the Mass is preserved among us in its proper use.⁹

Already in the Latin Mass, the restoration of mass as communion was underway. It was evidenced clearly in the following instructions:

Then, while the Agnus Dei is sung, let him [the liturgist] communicate, first himself, and then the people. But if he should wish to pray the prayer, ‘O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who according to the will of the Father,’ etc., before communing he does not pray wrongly, provided he changes the singular ‘mine’ and ‘me’ to the plural ‘ours’ and ‘us.’ The same thing holds for the prayer, ‘The body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve me (or thy) soul unto life eternal,’ and ‘The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life eternal.’¹⁰

What stands behind such changes is the recognition that the mass is a communion, a uniting of Christ with his whole church. It cannot be an individual’s celebration, and though only an individual can receive it for himself he does not receive it alone. Luther gives instruction that the concluding prayer be altered to the plural as well: “The following one may also be read: ‘May thy body which we have received...(changing to the plural number)...who livest and reignest world without end.’”¹¹

In the German Mass, the communal nature of the sacrament is stressed from the start of the eucharistic portion of the liturgy by the address to the communicants. What is implicit is that if there are no communicants to be addressed, then there is no mass to be celebrated. Further, the communicants are led through the paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer with its constant “our” and “us.” Thus, when the church gathers for the mass, the communicants approach the altar not as mere individuals but as God’s “needy children on earth.”¹² Thus God is approached in prayer not by a collection of individuals, but by those

⁹ AC XXIV, 34,35. Tappert, p. 60.

¹⁰ *An Order of Mass and Communion*, 1523. AE 53, p. 29.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *The German Mass*, 1526. AE 53, p. 79

who have been gathered by baptism into the church precisely as a family. Further, during the distribution as the prescribed hymns were sung, the communal aspect remains steady, even if in the background: the Agnus with its “have mercy upon *us*,” the plural form of both the hymn of Huss and “Let God be blest”. The latter especially highlights the communion that results from the mass in its final verse:

God on us all his blessing free bestow now,
That in his ways we may go now!
Brotherly troth and fervent love ensuing,
Never so thy supper ruing.
Kyrieleison.
Let thy Holy Ghost not forsake us,
Grant that of a sane mind he may make us,
That thy poor Christendom
Into peace and union come.
Kyrieleison.¹³

These same thoughts are again gathered up in the post-communion collect with its request that the congregation be strengthened by the salutary gifts received not merely in faith toward God, but also “in fervent love among us all.”¹⁴

In Herzog Heinrich, the mass is designated with the Latin term “Communio.”¹⁵ All the features mentioned above regarding the German mass were also in play in this order. Further, this order makes explicit in the village churches that where there are no communicants, the service will simply not include the celebration of the mass.¹⁶ The lack of a similar provision for the city churches is explained by it being inconceivable to the composers of the order that in a city on a given Sunday no one should wish to commune! Although it is strictly beyond the confines of this thesis, the 1626 revision of the Herzog Heinrich added in one of its exhortations, the following:

¹³ *AE* 53, p. 254.

¹⁴ *AE* 53, p. 84.

¹⁵ Sehling, I,1, p. 271.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 272.

For just as many grapes were gathered together to become one wine when mingled with each other, and just as many kernels were milled to become one meal, one bread, one loaf so we all through faith in Christ are one in love, through brotherly love for the sake of Christ our Savior, who has so greatly loved us, making us all one body, drink, loaf and bread. And let us love one another not only with empty words but in deed and in truth as John teaches, without any deception. The Almighty, merciful God and Father of our dear Lord Jesus Christ help us all to that end through His Holy Spirit. Amen.¹⁷

Thus even the old language from the *Didache* had a continuing liturgical expression in the Lutheran orders.

Most important, however, was that with Herzog Heinrich the restoration of the prefaces for festivals resulted in the use again in Lutheran liturgy of the phrase: “therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven.” The communion that takes place in worship is far greater than the communion of those present with Christ and with one another. It is never less than the communion of the gathered assembly with Christ and the whole church in heaven and on earth.

In Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, the exhortations made explicit the mass as communion. The first exhortation reminds the people:

In doing this we should remember his death and thank him from the heart, and each take up his cross and follow the Lord, and above all things love one another just as Christ has loved us. For there is only one bread and we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread and drink from the one cup. In order that we all together may partake of this holy sacrament worthily....¹⁸

The second exhortation states:

¹⁷ *Cassimiriana*, 1626, p. 32.

¹⁸ Sehling, VI,1, p. 146.

For such faith and into such salvation we were baptized, so that we might remain in it and so we abide in Christ and he abides in us. And so we continually and without ceasing spiritually eat by faith the body and drink the blood of Christ. That is, we become one body with him and one with him when we believe that he has given his body into death for us and shed his blood for us on the cross. And so we leave behind all false teaching, all sin, trials, and troubles for eternal salvation, from which we learn the benefits of Christ, whose love and patience we should practice towards our neighbor and also towards our enemies.¹⁹

The third exhortation likewise mentions in its call to prayer for worthy reception, “that we might forgive our enemies and love our neighbors and do good to all.”²⁰

In its post-communion collect, the Petri order confesses the communion which is the aim and fruit of the sacrament:

O lord almighty God, who hast suffered us to be partakers of thy sacrament, we beseech thee that thou wilt likewise suffer us to partake of thine eternal honour and glory together with thee and all thine elect saints, through our lord Jesus Christ, thy son, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the holy spirit in one godhead from everlasting to everlasting.²¹

Thus, the liturgy of 16th century Lutheranism did not neglect the communal aspect of the mass. It gave expression both to the communion with the body and blood of Christ which creates the unity of the church, and to the fact that such communion finds its fulfillment in the loving service rendered each to each. Further, by the retention of the prefaces, it kept before the Lutheran church the vision of the greater communion in which each local community of Christ participates: the one church in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 147.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 148

²¹ Reed, p. 116.

Chapter Seven: The Mass as Sacrament of Faith

The Proper Use of the Mass

The Augsburg Confession states that the sacraments of Christ are “signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. For this reason they require faith, and they are rightly used when they are received in faith and for the purpose of strengthening faith.”¹ Thus faith is regarded by the Lutheran church as indispensable in the use of all sacraments, and that includes the Sacrament of the Altar. In answering the question who receives the sacrament worthily, the Small Catechism declares: “Fasting and bodily preparation are a good external discipline, but he is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: ‘for you’ and ‘for the forgiveness of sins.’ On the other hand, he who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared, for the words ‘for you’ require truly believing hearts.”² The Formula of Concord reaffirms this same doctrine:

We believe, teach, and confess that there is only one kind of unworthy guest, namely, those who do not believe. Of such it is written, ‘He who does not believe is condemned already’ (John 3:18). The unworthy use of the sacrament increases, magnifies, and aggravates this condemnation (1 Cor. 11:27,29).

We believe, teach, and confess that no genuine believer, no matter how weak he may be, as long as he retains a living faith, will receive the Holy Supper to his condemnation, for Christ instituted the Supper particularly for Christians who are weak in faith but repentant, to comfort them and to strengthen their weak faith.

¹ Tappert, *AC XIII*: 1,2 pp. 35, 36.

² *Ibid*, *SC VI*: 10, p. 352.

We believe, teach, and confess that the entire worthiness of the guests at this heavenly feast is and consists solely and alone in the most holy obedience and complete merit of Christ, which we make our own through genuine faith and of which we are assured through the sacrament. Worthiness consists not at all in our own virtues or in our internal and external preparations.³

Further, it is clear from the Lutheran confessions that the terms “genuine faith” and “living faith” mean precisely a faith which does not and cannot exist side by side with impenitence. Again the Formula:

We believe, teach, and confess that the contrition that precedes justification and the good works that follow it do not belong in the article of justification before God. Nevertheless, we should not imagine a kind of faith in this connection that could coexist and co-persist with a wicked intention to sin and to act contrary to one’s conscience. On the contrary, after a person has been justified by faith, a true living faith becomes ‘active through love’ (Gal. 5:6). Thus good works always follow justifying faith and are certainly to be found with it, since such faith is never alone but is always accompanied by love and hope.⁴

Martin Chemnitz, in his *Enchiridion*, makes specific application of this to the Supper. When he addresses the question of how the body of Christ, in which dwells life itself, could become the cause of death in the unworthy, he states:

That does not result from this, that the Lord’s body *per se* is a deadly poison, but that they who eat unworthily sin against the body of Christ by Epicurean security and impenitence, and do it wrong by their unworthy eating, and, as it were, tread [it] underfoot. For thus they become guilty of that body in which life dwells, like Judas, who betrayed that body—like the Jews, who tried to bury it with stones—like Pilate, who condemned it with the death sentence—like the soldiers who scourged and crucified that body of life. For life is indeed in the flesh of Christ, but it does not work life in unbelievers but only in believers, just as also the Gospel is an odor unto life for believers, but for unbelievers [an odor] unto death (2 Co. 2:15-16). And power is given to Christ not only to quicken believers, but to judge unbelievers. (Jn 5:21-22).⁵

³ Ibid, *FC, Ep VII:18-20* p. 484.

⁴ Ibid, *FC, Ep III:11* p. 474.

⁵ Chemnitz, p. 131.

Thus, what in itself is life and salvation can become poison and death *where there is no living faith* (that is, a faith that shows itself alive by the intention to live a better life by God's grace).

What the Lutheran Confessions here declare to be the doctrine of the Lutheran church regarding the necessity of genuine faith for the beneficial use of the sacrament and a warning against its misuse in unbelief is a matter which had no liturgical expression in the services the Lutheran church inherited from the Western catholic church.⁶ What was judged to be lacking the Lutheran church thus proceeded to place directly into her service. The confession that living faith is a necessity for the beneficial use of the sacrament came to explicit confession in the exhortations to the communicants, in the prescription of the communion hymn of Huss, and in the post-communion collect.

The German mass indeed exhorted the people to discern the Testament of Christ “in true faith, and above all, taking to heart the words wherein Christ imparts to us his body and blood for the remission of our sins.”⁷ In this, however, the German mass is remarkably weaker than the exhortation which Luther drafted the same year and sent to Hausmann as a replacement for the prefaces:

Dearest friends in Christ: You know that our Lord Jesus Christ, out of unspeakable love, instituted at the last this his Supper as a memorial and proclamation of his death suffered for our sins. This commemoration requires firm faith to make the heart and conscience of everyone who wants to use and partake of the Supper sure and certain that Christ suffered death for all his sins.

But whoever doubts and does not in some manner feel such faith should know that the Supper is of no avail to him, but will rather be to his hurt, and should stay away from it. And since we cannot see such faith and it is known only to God, we leave it to the conscience of him who comes and admit him who requests and desires it.

⁶ This is not the case in the Eastern liturgy where the old cry: “Holy things for the holy ones!” rang out weekly. The response was one of faith: “One is holy.” Cf. especially the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

⁷ *The German Mass*, AE 53, p. 80.

But those who cling to open sins, such as greed, hatred, anger, envy, profiteering, unchastity, and the like and are not minded to renounce them, shall herewith be barred [from the Supper] and be warned faithfully lest they incur judgment and damnation to their own souls, as St. Paul says [1 Cor. 11:29].

If however someone has fallen because of weakness and proves by his acts that he earnestly desires to better himself, this grace and communion of the body and blood of Christ shall not be denied to him. In this fashion each must judge himself and look out for himself. For God is not mocked [Gal. 6:7], nor will he give that which is holy unto the dogs or cast the pearls before swine [Matt. 7:6].⁸

The German Mass prescribed the use of the Huss hymn which goes into great detail expounding the doctrine of the proper reception of the Supper:

Whoso to this board repaireth,
Take good heed how he prepareth.
Who unworthy thither goes,
Thence death instead of life he knows.

God the Father praise thou duly,
That he thee would feed so truly,
And for ill deeds by thee done
Up unto death has given his Son.

Have this faith, and do not waver,
'Tis food for every craver
Who, his heart with sin opprest,
Can no more for its anguish rest.

Such kindness and such grace to get,
Seeks a heart with agony great.
Is it well with thee? Take care,
Lest at last thou shouldst evil fare.

Lo, he saith himself, 'Ye weary
Come to me and I will cheer ye;
Needless were the doctor's skill
To the souls that be strong and well.

"Hadst thou any claim to proffer,

⁸ *An Exhortation to Communicants, 1525* AE 53, p. 104 This exhortation did eventually make its way into use in Saxony. It was included in the 1526 Cassimirianna edition of the Herzog Heinrich service. That Luther should end this exhortation with a citation of Matt. 7 shows his almost unselfconscious relying on the Fathers, for from the Didache onward that word of Christ has been applied to the distribution of the sacrament and is the standard patristic text cited for the practice of closed communion. Applying the term "holy thing" to the Supper might also be the root of the technical term "holy things" which is still used in the Eastern liturgy, mentioned above.

Why for thee then should I suffer?
This table is not for thee,
If thou wilt set thine ownself free.”

If such faith thy heart possesses,
And the same thy mouth confesses,
Fit guest then thou art indeed,
And this food thine own soul will feed.

Fruit of faith therein be showing
That thou art to others loving;
To thy neighbor thou wilt do
As God in love hath done to you.⁹

In this hymn the people or the choir sang every week that the Supper can bring death to the unworthy and so careful preparation is called for and the one, true manner of worthy reception is a crushed heart that turns from sin to the Savior for pardon and for healing.

The exhortations from Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, likewise bear explicit witness to this doctrine faith receiving a blessing and unbelief a curse. The first exhortation expresses it as follows: “...each one of us should with great diligence examine himself as St. Paul [1 Cor. 11,28] says, and then eat of this bread and drink of this cup. For none should receive this holy sacrament except he who is hungry of soul, who knows his sin and fears God’s wrath and death, and who hungers and thirsts after righteousness.”¹⁰ Similarly, the second exhortation:

Now, whoever wants to eat and drink this sacrament worthily is to attend to two things: He should first believe what Christ says and then do what Christ commands. He says, ‘This is my body which is given for you; This is my blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ This is what we are to believe. But he commands, ‘Take, eat, and drink of it all of you and remember me.’ This is what you are to do according to his gracious word and mandate.¹¹

The final exhortation, which is truly the superior exhortation in every way, also excels in its confession of the doctrine of worthy reception:

⁹ *AE* 53, pp. 250, 251.

¹⁰ Sehling, VI,1, p. 146.

We ought also believe what he has said. Namely, “This is my body, given for you; this is my blood, shed for you, for the forgiveness of sin.” When we do as he bids us and believe, we receive according to his word his true body with the bread and his true blood with the wine, and with them all his merits and righteousness: that is, forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, the adoption as children, and eternal salvation. But let only those who hunger and thirst for righteousness go to this most holy sacrament; that is, those who confess their sins, who are sorry for them, and who have the intention to do better, and as far as possible live according to God’s will. Therefore, let a man examine himself, and if he find such a disposition go to the sacrament boldly, for he receives it worthily. And though he is weak, yet still believing, let him go to the sacrament. God will have patience. “A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.” He is pleased with but the beginning of faith. Yet we should pray as in the Gospel: ‘Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.’ But whoever is not sorry for his sins and has no intention of bettering himself, but plans to continue in open sin and lust, let him stay away from the sacrament, for he receives it to his judgment, as St. Paul says.¹²

The exhortation from the Petri mass is likewise explicit in its confession of the doctrine of worthy preparation:

As we then examine ourselves rightly, if we consider our great trespasses and sins, hunger and thirst after the forgiveness of our sins, which is offered unto us in this sacrament, if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, and hereafter intend to amend ourselves, turn again from sins and live a good and righteous life. In such thing we must carefully examine ourselves, else do we not worthily approach thither.¹³

A unique feature of the Braunschweig Order is the distinct interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer in the mass as a prayer for a worthy, that is, faithful and life-transforming, reception of the sacrament. Each of the three exhortations provided in that order make this explicit. In the first exhortation: “In order that we all together may receive this holy sacrament worthily in real and true faith and repentance according to the foregoing

¹¹ Sehling, VI,1, p. 147.

¹² Sehling, VI, 1 p. 148.

¹³ Yelverton, p. 40.

exhortation, let us call on God the Father in the name of Christ and from the heart reverently pray the Our Father.”¹⁴ The second exhortation concludes:

But in order that the Almighty God and merciful Father would give to us richly his Holy Spirit, that we may devote ourselves with all our heart through his grace to these two things, and so receive the sacrament worthily and for the strengthening of our weak faith and the betterment of our sinful lives, let us call upon him and pray from the depths of our hearts in the name of Christ a reverent Our Father.¹⁵

The third exhortation, typically more expansive, concludes:

Now then, as we are gathered together to observe the Supper of our Lord and to receive his body and blood, in order that we may do so worthily, that our faith may be strengthened, that we might live more according to God’s will, that we might forgive our enemies and love our neighbors and do good to all, let us call on God our Father through Jesus Christ and pray together the holy Our Father.¹⁶

Thus, whatever option was used in regard to the exhortation (and in this order the exhortation was never omitted, even when the preface was sung), the people were weekly reminded that in the Lord’s Prayer they were praying precisely for that genuine and living faith without which the sacrament can only bring harm.

Finally, the post-communion collect, which first appeared in the German Mass and was from that point on included in the vast majority of the Lutheran church orders, explicitly confesses that the proper fruit of the sacrament is the strengthening of faith and the increase of love. “We beseech thy mercy to strengthen us through the same in faith toward thee, and in fervent love among us all.”¹⁷ Thus the sacrament is not only to be used in faith, but also for the purpose of strengthening and nourishing faith, which cannot help but also be kindling greater love.

¹⁴ Sehling, VI,1 p. 147.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 148,149.

¹⁷ *German Mass AE* 53, p. 84.

Thus, in the exhortations, in the hymnody, in the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer, and in the use of the post-communion collect, the Lutheran church made up for a deficiency she perceived in the mass inherited from the middle ages. It appears that the frequent practice of using either preface or exhortation, resulted over the years in a declining use of the exhortation as the prefaces reestablished their historic position. The result has been in most modern Lutheran liturgy a return to pre-Reformation silence on the matter of a liturgical expression of what constitutes worthy reception.¹⁸

¹⁸ The recent publication of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* provides a refreshing return to the older Lutheran practice.