

UNDERSTANDING FOUR VIEWS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

- Russell D. Moore
 - I. John Hesselink
 - David P. Scaer
 - Thomas A. Baima
-
- Paul E. Engle, *series editor*
 - John H. Armstrong, *general editor*



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LUTHERAN VIEW

Finding the Right Word

David P. Scaer

Sometimes the Lutheran position on the Lord's Supper is described by others as "consubstantiation," which etymologically means "one substance by the side of another." Along with bread and wine, recipients of the Supper receive Christ's body and blood. Lutherans rarely use this term and are more likely to use the phrase "the real presence" to describe their belief that the elements of bread and wine are actually Christ's body and blood and are given to and received by all who participate in the Lord's Supper. This commonly used phrase has its drawbacks, however. It can be used of the belief that Christ is only spiritually present in the Supper—not in his actual body and blood.¹ Not many Christians would dispute that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper according to his divinity, by the Spirit's power, or by being remembered. Crucial for Lutherans is that Jesus of Nazareth—born of the Virgin Mary, crucified and now raised from the dead—is given to the participants.²

One dictionary definition of consubstantiation fits the Lutheran view: "the substantial union of the body and blood of Christ with the eucharistic elements after the consecration"; another definition does not: "At the consecration of the Eucharist the substance of the body and blood of Christ coexists with the substance of the consecrated bread and wine." "Coexists" suggests, or at least allows, that Christ's body and blood lie side by side with the earthly elements without any essential communion between them.³

The Lutheran Confessions, in describing Christ's body and blood as being "in, with and under" the bread and wine, may have allowed others to use "consubstantiation" to describe this view. These prepositions were intended to affirm that the earthly elements were really Christ's body and blood and not to explain how earthly and divine elements were spatially related. In the earlier Lutheran Confessions, the three prepositions were not used together. Article Ten in the German edition of the Augsburg Confession says that "the true body and blood of Christ are truly present *under* the form [*Gestalt*] of bread and wine," a formulation which their Roman opponents found acceptable. In the Small Catechism, Luther used *under*: it "is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ *under* bread and wine." In the Large Catechism, he used two prepositions: the Sacrament of the Altar "is the true body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and *in* and *under* bread and wine." Article Ten of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession uses *with*: "the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present and are truly distributed *with* those things that are seen, the bread and the wine." If *with* by itself allows for consubstantiation, *in*, as Christ is *in* the bread and wine, suggests impanation, the belief that Christ's body is contained in the consecrated bread like a nut in a cookie. Used together, these prepositions affirm that the elements are actually Christ's body and blood and do not have spatial significance.⁴ Adequate is Luther's explanation that bread and wine "are truly the body and blood of Christ."⁵

LUTHERAN DISTINCTIVENESS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Justification by faith was the first characteristic doctrine that distinguished Lutherans from Roman Catholics, but the view on the Lord's Supper that separated them from the Reformed soon claimed equal prominence. Reformed interpretations of the Supper were not all of one kind, but common to all was the teaching that the bread and wine were not Christ's body and blood. Mere symbolical, memorial, or spiritual views that did not affirm Christ's bodily presence were not tolerable to Lutherans.⁶ They rejected the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, which held that substances of bread and wine were physically changed

into Christ's body and blood so that properties of bread and wine remained but not their substances;⁷ however, Reformed views were seen as more threatening.

To safeguard their position, Lutherans set forth three criteria for an acceptable definition of the Lord's Supper: (1) Christ's body and blood are received by the mouth and not just by faith or the soul. (2) Unbelievers, not just believers, actually receive Christ's body and blood. (3) Views contrary to this must be condemned.⁸ For Lutherans, *true* identified the sacramental elements with Christ's actual body and blood of Christ. In the distribution of the sacrament, *true* is included: "Take and eat; this is the *true* body of the Lord Jesus Christ." A mere spiritual view was unacceptable. *Reformed*

THE LORD'S SUPPER AMONG THE SACRAMENTS

Since Lutherans understand the Lord's Supper as a sacrament, the definition and number of sacraments come into play. Roman Catholics insist on seven and the Reformed on two. For Lutherans, this is an open issue,⁹ although most follow Luther in using the word *sacrament* only of baptism and the Lord's Supper. For Luther, baptism and the Lord's Supper are constituted by the word of God—i.e., by Jesus' institution—and involve earthly elements. Baptism lays the foundation for the Lord's Supper, which in turn points the believer back to baptism. What is born in baptism is nourished by the Lord's Supper.¹⁰

Rather than providing a prior definition of a sacrament and then deciding which church rites meet the criteria, the Augsburg Confession lets each rite stand on its own institution and be defined by its particular functions. This allows for a gradation from rites that have Christ's explicit commands to those instituted by the church. Penance and ordination can be sacraments because in them God works to create and strengthen faith, which is seen as one action accomplished by God through the Word, that is, through Christ and the gospel. Any number of rites can be called sacraments, but each has its own necessity, function, and promise.¹¹

Baptism provides for the foundation of Christian life, and the Lord's Supper is the goal. Emergency administration of baptism is required, but only regularly ordained ministers may

administer the Lord's Supper. Baptism, like birth, is a once-in-a-lifetime, unrepeatable event; as nourishment for the Christian life, the Lord's Supper is received regularly. Only the baptized may receive the Supper.

The Augsburg Confession discusses baptism in Article Nine and the Lord's Supper in Article Ten, but a general discussion on the sacraments only comes later in Article Thirteen—after the articles on confession and repentance.¹² In defining sacrament, the author of these confessions, Philip Melancthon, Luther's colleague at the University of Wittenberg, put the emphasis on God's presence in the ritual to forgive sins.¹³ Since for Luther, sacraments had to do with physical, tangible things, only baptism, administered with water, and the Lord's Supper, with the elements of bread and wine, qualified. He referred to them as the "two sacraments instituted by Christ,"¹⁴ but he spoke of penance as the practice of baptism¹⁵ and spoke of marriage in sacramental terms. Essential in either definition was that in the sacraments God works for the salvation of believers.

In baptism, the believer is incorporated into the body of Christ; in the Lord's Supper, one receives that body. Baptism is the presupposition for the Lord's Supper, which in turn is the fulfillment of the baptism—but both offered forgiveness. One cannot be substituted for the other; nor can the order be reversed. Even the most sincere unbaptized believers dare not be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Lutherans speak of the Word making the sacrament and of the sacrament as the visible Word. The Word creates faith by hearing, and this Word changes ordinary bread and wine into Christ's body and blood and creates and confirms faith. Baptism gives a new birth by the application of the Word in water and places the recipient in Christ's death and resurrection. In the Lord's Supper, Christ comes to the believer in bread and wine. If these distinctions remain unrecognized, Christians may falsely content themselves with only hearing the Word or receiving only one of the sacraments and thus deprive themselves of the benefits God intends for them.¹⁶

THE SACRAMENTAL GOD

Sacraments are not New Testament innovations but rather are the ordinary ways in which God came to his Old Testament

people even before the fall.¹⁷ He was present in the tree of life to establish communion with our first parents (Gen. 2:9) and later in the rainbow (Gen. 9:13) and in the sacrifices to forgive sins (Lev. 4:1–5:13). Thus the first Jewish Christians were already sacramental in their historical reflections and liturgical practices and were prepared for recognizing Christ's presence in bread and wine. The Passover (Exod. 12:1–30),¹⁸ the sacrifices, and the feeding with the manna in the wilderness (Exod. 16:1–36) were brought together and raised to newer and higher dimensions in the Lord's Supper. Paul explains the Lord's Supper against the background of the feeding with manna: "And all [our fathers] ate the same supernatural [NIV, spiritual] food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:3–4 RSV).¹⁹ The Evangelists use eucharistic language in their records of the feeding miracles.²⁰ The God who comes in the incarnation and the sacraments was already dwelling with Israel.

THE SACRAMENT BETWEEN ATONEMENT AND FORGIVENESS

The Lord's Supper brings its recipients face-to-face with Christ's death as the atonement so that sins can be forgiven. Christ's blood given in the Lord's Supper is first offered to God as the atonement: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Christ's blood is sacrificially shed or poured out from his body as an atonement to satisfy God's charge against sinners. With the demands of the old covenant satisfied, God establishes a new covenant in which forgiveness is offered for the sins of those who participate in the Supper. It is the new covenant or testament (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25).²¹

With his body and blood Christ is present in the church as the sacrifice to God for sin. What Christ sacrificed to God he gives as sacrament to his people. Sacrifice and sacrament are two sides of one reality. Appropriately in the liturgy the congregation greets Christ as the atonement for sin in the *Agnus Dei*: "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us." As the blood of lambs spared the Israelite boys from

death, so Christians are spared death by Christ's blood in the Lord's Supper. In this sacrament the church proclaims the Lord's death until he returns (1 Cor. 11:24–26) and confesses that his death is the sacrifice for their sins and those of the world (John 6:51). Believers are promised eternal life and the resurrection merited by Christ's death (v. 54).²² Unbelievers and those with unresolved sin meet him as judge. On that account, those who approach this Supper must do so with great care. In the sacrament atonement and judgment come together.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AS SIGN

Sacraments are signs to which God's Word is attached. The outward signs are affirmations that God is the Creator and point to the supernatural things contained in the sacraments—which indeed they are. They convey redemptive grace and signify that the Creator is at home in his creation. In the sacraments the Creator becomes one with his creation by taking on its forms. The sacramental union in which Jesus comes as bread and wine is one step beyond the incarnation in which God assumed flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. Corruptible created things become fit vehicles for the divine elements of Christ's body and blood. Rejected is the principle of *finitum non capax infinitum* ("the finite is incapable of holding the infinite"), an argument often raised against the Lutheran beliefs of Christ's presence in bread and wine and of God's giving of his full majesty to the human nature of Jesus (the *genus maiestaticum*). A philosophical axiom cannot be the basis of doctrine, but the terms of this axiom can be reversed to bolster the Lutheran position. It is not a matter of whether the finite is capable of the infinite but whether the infinite is capable of the finite (*infinitum capax finitum*). If this is not so, then the infinite is less than infinite.

Another axiom (namely, that only one object can occupy a particular place at one time) has no place in the Lutheran theology. Jesus can be present in one place—the local presence—but he is not bound by the ordinary rules of space and time—the illocal presence. His presence in the Lord's Supper is unique and is ordinarily called his "sacramental presence," since his body and blood are distributed by the ministers and devoured by the recipients. This is related to Jesus' omnipresence but not

identical to it. God is present in all things, but for salvation he is present in some things (i.e., the sacraments) and not others. In instituting the sacrament, Jesus sat with his disciples, who received him in bread and wine, and in the same moment was present wherever God was. Finding and worshiping him in things he has not designated is idolatry. God was found and worshiped in Jerusalem but not in Bethel.

Today he is present for our salvation in *things* called sacraments to test our faith in him by our accepting his invitation to meet him in these *things*. This he does preeminently in the Lord's Supper.²³ If we do not recognize him in the elements or if we refuse his invitation, we are guilty of unbelief and do not receive the benefits he places in the sacraments. Substituting other elements for bread and wine is an act of disobedience. Such a ritual can be sacramental in the sense that the Word of God is present, but it is not a sacrament instituted by Christ. Just as God was present in the man Jesus—and in no one else—for salvation, so Jesus is present in the bread and wine to make participants beneficiaries of the salvation God accomplished in him.²⁴

Luther used Augustine's definition that a sacrament was constituted by the Word's being joined to a physical element chosen by God—the Word that turned ordinary things into sacraments to forgive sins.²⁵ To illustrate this, Luther spoke of God's using a straw to bestow grace, though not suggesting that God had actually done or would do this.²⁶ He wanted to show what God's Word could do with ordinary things. The external elements of the sacraments as signs correspond to what the sacraments are and do. Like water in baptism, bread and wine are not arbitrarily chosen, but their external forms convey and correspond to the heavenly things they contain. Just as in baptism water symbolizes creation, birth, and destruction, bread is reminiscent of what humans must produce in the sweat of their brow to survive in a world of sin (Gen. 3:19). It is a reminder of our fallen condition and the necessity of eating Christ's body for salvation.

Fittingly, Jesus describes himself as "bread" (John 6:33, 35, 48, 51) and the "vine" (John 15:1), which is the source of wine. Until the Reformation, the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer ("Give us today our daily bread" [Matt. 6:11]) was widely understood as a reference to the Eucharist. It was a prayer to God

to give Jesus as the heavenly food. As we eat the bread, Jesus makes us his body and forgives us our debts. Wine anticipates heaven's joys, which already belong to believers in Jesus. He drinks of the fruit of the vine with us in the Lord's Supper and participates in the sacrament with us (Matt. 26:29).

Use of bread made without yeast is the most common practice among Lutherans. It recalls the Passover, when yeast was removed from the Israelites' houses. Another argument for the use of unleavened bread is that the Evangelists placed the institution of the Supper during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matt. 26:17; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:1).²⁷ Eastern Orthodox churches use leavened bread as a reminder that the Lord's Supper commemorates Easter, but the use of leavened or unleavened bread has not been divisive. More serious is the practice of substituting grape juice with additives for wine. Only grapes fermented as wine were available in the spring when Jesus instituted the Supper. Use of substances other than wine may be based on the idea that any alcoholic beverage, including wine, is not a fit sacramental vehicle or that the elements used are unimportant. If consumption of alcohol is a problem for some, wine with a lower alcohol content can be used.

FAITH AS THE WORTHY RECEPTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Lutherans are insistent that the validity of the Lord's Supper rests on Christ's command and not on faith.²⁸ As important as faith is for a worthy reception of it, Christ's word in instituting the Supper—not faith—makes it a sacrament.²⁹ Unbelievers and those with insincere faith who receive Christ's body and blood take them to their harm.³⁰ The man in Corinth living in open sin with his father's wife was harming himself. Without compromising the belief that the Lord's Supper's efficacy does not depend on faith, recipients are required to believe that Jesus is offered through the earthly elements, and only by this faith do they receive the forgiveness offered through them. Christ's body and blood are received by the mouth, but their benefits are received by faith. Since faith was required to receive the Lord's Supper, Lutherans maintained the practice of confession and absolution (or penance, as it was called). Luther did not ordinar-

ily call it a sacrament, as Melancthon did, but he had a place for it (the fifth of six parts) in his Small Catechism between the sections on baptism and the Lord's Supper. Confession with absolution was the lifelong practice of baptism and a requirement for receiving the Lord's Supper. Only the penitent who believed in the benefits of the Lord's Supper could receive it. Baptism, absolution, and the Lord's Supper were seen as a constellation.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AS THE FOOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Along with their insistence that the elements were Christ's body and blood, Lutherans spoke of this presence as supernatural, heavenly, and spiritual, though these terms were open to misunderstanding.³¹ Since the manna was called a spiritual food, the sacrament of the altar could hardly be less so. The sacramental eating was a spiritual one. Mouth and teeth devour Christ's body, but it remains intact.³² His body which was received by the mouth was "spiritually partaken through faith" in the Supper.³³ Reformed opponents held that with Christ's ascension into heaven and his session at the right hand of the Father, he could be spiritually but not actually present with his body and blood in the sacrament. Lutherans held that Christ's sitting at the Father's right hand had nothing to do with confinement to a space in heaven³⁴ but referred to his exercise of God's rule on earth.³⁵ The omnipresence of Christ's human nature provided a foundation for his sacramental presence but was not the evidence for it.

Proof for Christ's presence in the sacrament came in the words of institution that effected it. It was not dependent on a particular understanding of his omnipresence or subcategory of it. By his ascension, Christ entered into the sacramental life of the church. Wherever the Lord's Supper is celebrated, he is completely there—God and man, body and soul. Distance in time and space does not separate Christ's institution of the Supper on Maundy Thursday from its subsequent celebrations. Where a pastor and a congregation are not available, believers may participate in it in a spiritual way by meditating on it. Lutherans may not receive the Lord's Supper in other churches, but they should meditate on its mystery and benefits.

Spirit and *spiritual* can be understood in a Platonic sense of only things of the spirit being real. Physical things are not real in themselves but shadows of the world of ideas. Similarly, the Reformed see the sacramental elements as symbols of divine things and attribute the union of believers with Christ not to their actually receiving his body and blood but to the Spirit. Lutherans rejected these views; however, the Spirit's role, along with that of the Father, in the Lord's Supper must be affirmed. Bread and wine are symbols but in the sense that they contain the realities of Christ's body and blood to which they point. They symbolize a present reality and not something outside of them.

As an adjective for the Holy Spirit, *spiritual* is also a proper word. The Spirit is active in the words of consecration to create faith in the recipients and thus the Lord's Supper is a *spiritual* meal. Though a Trinitarian invocation is not included in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper, as it is in baptism, it is no less a Trinitarian act. Prayers of the traditional Lutheran liturgy are addressed to the Father: "It is truly, meet, right, and salutary, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God."³⁶ Things created by the Father are transformed by the Spirit of Christ into his body and blood through which he works and confirms faith. In the Lord's Supper the *Creator Spiritus* comes as the sanctifying Spirit to turn things he created into instruments of salvation. He is present not in an action parallel to or alongside the sacrament but in Christ's words through the sacramental elements.

An argument for the Spirit's role in the Lord's Supper can be made from Paul's reference to the Israelites' partaking of the same *spiritual* food and drink, which was Christ (see 1 Cor. 10:3–4). This section introduces Paul's discourse on the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:14–22). Rather than translating *pneumatikon* as "supernatural," as the RSV does, it is better translated *spiritual*, as the NIV and the ESV do, as a reference to what the Holy Spirit did. The Spirit who provided manna and water as the sacraments for Israel works sacramentally for the church in bread and wine. Liturgies of the Orthodox Church give a prominent place to the Spirit in the *epiklēsis*, by which he is invoked on the elements to make them Christ's body and blood.³⁷ This is not the historic Lutheran custom, but the Apology takes note of this. In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit as God's creating agent

(Gen. 1:2) raises the created things of bread and wine to a higher and more sacred level in making them Christ's body and blood. Nevertheless, at the heart of the Lutheran arguments for Christ's presence in the Supper are the words of institution: "This is my body . . . this [cup] is my blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:26, 28). Through these words Christ effects the sacrament. The word *is* is taken literally and not figuratively. Words spoken by the minister do not have their power from him, nor do they possess an autonomous power—a kind of magic—but their power resides in Christ's institution.³⁸ The words of Christ are the Spirit's only vehicle to work salvation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

For nearly two centuries after the Reformation, the Lutheran church had a weekly Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper. This indicated its determinative role for Christian life and its importance for doctrine. Pietism and the Enlightenment had a damaging effect on Lutheran sacramental life. Even churches seriously committed to Luther's teachings offered the Lord's Supper no more than four times a year. Ironically, the church that defined itself by its doctrine of the Lord's Supper eliminated its practice, with few exceptions, from regular worship.

Today the majority of Lutheran congregations in the United States have a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. Its celebration on Sunday is not seen as mandated by the commandment requiring Sabbath observance but as the celebration of the Lord's resurrection. It transcends and encompasses the time and the space between its institution and its perfect celebration in heaven. Its celebration on any day, especially festivals or saints' days, is also proper. In the Supper, Christ is temple, priest, and sacrifice, so pilgrimages to shrines and efforts to restore Israel as God's people and reconstruct Jerusalem with its temple are rendered obsolete. Participants in the sacrament have come to the heavenly Jerusalem.³⁹

THE LORD'S SUPPER: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When Lutherans speak of *the* sacrament, they are most likely speaking of the Lord's Supper. Like other designations

(e.g., "the Lord's table" [1 Cor. 10:21]), it is taken over from the New Testament: "When you come together, it is not the *Lord's Supper* [*deipnon*] you eat" (1 Cor. 11:20, italics added). Use of this designation is more significant today in the light of historical doubts raised by critical scholars, who hold that Jesus may have joined his disciples for meals before his death, but its origins as a sacrament rest with his followers, who after death came to believe that he had risen. Memorial meals took on a sacred character in which bread and wine were eventually identified with Jesus himself.

Discussions among Christians about Christ's presence in the Supper must first agree that he instituted this meal as a sacrament. Without this historical conviction, the rite can hardly be called the *Lord's Supper*, and subsequent theological questions are rendered moot. Though called the *Lord's Supper* because it was instituted in an evening meal, it has since earliest times been celebrated in the morning, often at daybreak, to commemorate the resurrection. Its ritual terms were set forth on Maundy Thursday, but its origins rest in Christ's death as an atonement for sins. The Greek words translated "on the night he was betrayed" can also be rendered "on the night he was handed over" (1 Cor. 11:23)—i.e., God handed Jesus over to Satan so that by struggling with Satan and death Jesus might overcome them. By crucifixion his blood flows from his body so that both can become the heavenly elements of the sacrament. With his body and blood—i.e., as priest and sacrificial victim—Christ enters the assembly of believers to forgive their sins. Jesus is himself the Word who makes earthly elements his body and blood. Because he is all aspects of this sacrament, he is proclaimed in its every aspect (see 1 Cor. 11:26). Thus the *Lord's* people come together on the *Lord's* day to hear the *Lord's* word (i.e., the gospel), to pray the *Lord's* Prayer, and to gather around the *Lord's* table to receive the *Lord's* Supper. In all these actions and in the elements themselves Jesus is present. This meal is in every aspect the *Lord's* Supper.

Other designations for this sacrament also embrace biblical terms, though they may not have been in use in apostolic times precisely in the way we know them now. "Holy Communion" is commonly used among Lutherans. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ?"

The bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor 10:16 KJV, italics added). Those who receive the bread and the wine participate in Christ's body and blood, which provides the basis for communion with other recipients. By receiving the body of Christ, the church is constituted as a fellowship in his body. The sacrament is a *Holy Communion* because recipients share in the holy things of Christ's body and blood and through them have communion with one another and express a common faith. Without this, no real fellowship exists. Accordingly, Lutherans commune with only those who are penitent and share the same faith. Tragically, in the sacrament in which Christ unites believers to himself, and through him to others, the disunity among Christians caused by their differences becomes evident. Because Ulrich Zwingli could not say that the bread and wine of the Supper were really Christ's body and blood, Martin Luther refused to commune with him. Requiring that all recipients have a common faith is traditionally called "closed communion," after the ancient custom of dismissing those who were not eligible to receive the sacrament before the Lord's Supper was celebrated. "Open communion" — the practice of communing all who desire to participate in spite of grave differences — is more likely to be derived from understanding it as a community rite in which diverse beliefs are tolerated. A ritual practiced under these circumstances has a diminished sacramental character.

Luther in the Small Catechism called the Lord's Supper "the sacrament of the altar" — a term connected to how Lutherans place the cross or crucifix on their altars to symbolize Christ's death as a sacrifice for sins. "Altar" may have been used for the place from where the sacrament was distributed in apostolic times.⁴⁰ Even when the Supper is not celebrated, the altar as the place where Christ is in the celebration of the Lord's Supper is revered by bowing the head or kneeling.

"Eucharist," a term used in the *Didache*,⁴¹ has recently come into wider use among some Lutherans. Its adjective, "eucharistic" (from the Greek *eucharistos*, "thankful"), is the most commonly used one for this sacrament. Eucharistic theology and practice deals with teaching about the Lord's Supper. "Eucharist" is derived from the words of institution: "when he had *given thanks*" (1 Cor. 11:24, italics added; cf. Matt. 26:27).⁴² It is found

in the accounts of the miraculous feedings of the crowds (Matt. 15:36; John 6:11)—events the Evangelists use to prepare their hearers for the Supper's institution.⁴³ The word also occupies a prominent place in the Proper Preface, the introductory part of the Communion liturgy: "It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and places *give thanks* to you, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God." The entire service is eucharistic, the occasion in which the congregation thanks God for this inestimable gift of Christ's body and blood.

In Article 10 of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, it is called "the Mass," a term still used in northern European Lutheran churches but rarely in America. It is derived from *missa*, the Latin word for "depart" or "go," formerly the last words in the service. Once believers have received Christ's body and blood, no greater mysteries await them on earth. Luther questioned whether private Masses qualified as a sacrament, and he denounced the Mass as a priest's offering of Christ as a sacrifice for sins, especially for those of the dead. For him this was an abomination.⁴⁴ Also objectionable was the Roman argument that since Christ's blood was in his flesh, the laity did not have to receive the cup.⁴⁵ In some places this practice has been rectified. In spite of serious differences, Luther acknowledged that Roman Catholics really received Christ's body and blood.⁴⁶

WHAT ABOUT JOHN?

Martin Luther combined the words of institution from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul in his Small Catechism definition of the sacrament of the altar: "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus under bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us Christians to eat and drink." Strikingly absent is John, Luther's favorite evangelist. John 6 was used by the Roman Catholics to support giving only the host to the laity because blood is already in the flesh, a position compatible with their doctrine of transubstantiation. At Marburg in October 1529 in his dispute with Luther, Zwingli used John 6:63 ("the Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing") to his advantage in seeing the Supper in spiritual and not physical terms.⁴⁷ Luther focused the discussion on the words of institution, especially "is" (this *is* my body; this cup *is* the new covenant in my blood).

Perhaps out of loyalty to the Reformer, Lutherans have hesitated in using John 6 in their understanding of the Lord's Supper. This hesitancy was supported by John 6:63, which seemed to require that without receiving the Lord's Supper, a person could not be saved. Lutherans made an exception to John 3:5, which made baptism an absolute necessity for salvation. In spite of their avoidance of John's gospel in their eucharistic theology, Lutherans have used such phrases as "the bread from heaven" and "the bread of life" in their eucharistic hymns and devotion. Ironically, Lutherans may have deprived themselves of the most descriptive New Testament evidences for their position that recipients of the Supper actually eat Christ's body and drink his blood and that this sacrament is vital to the Christian life. Luther's claim in the Small Catechism that forgiveness, life, and salvation are given in the sacrament strangely mirrors the teaching of John 6:50, 54 that eternal life and the resurrection come with eating Christ's body and drinking his blood.

If Lutherans can overcome their historical aversions, they will find a wealth of evidences from the entire Johannine corpus (not just John's gospel) to support their doctrine that the earthly elements of the Lord's Supper are truly Christ's body and blood. With regard to Zwingli's use of the unprofitability of the flesh as evidence against a physical understanding of the Lord's Supper, this passage more likely refers to those who without the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit cannot accept that Christ is promising to give his body for food and his blood for drink. When Jesus began to speak in such fleshly terms, many turned away from him (John 6:66). Some still do.

true, it is equally true that a doctrine cannot be formulated in human language without engaging philosophical questions. Any statement contains certain tacit presuppositions that affect the formula. The debate over transubstantiation versus consubstantiation is in some ways the classic example. The theological term *transubstantiation* uses Aristotelian metaphysical categories to explain theologically the doctrine of real presence. The theological term *consubstantiation* is no different. What is different is that the term *consubstantiation* involves nominalist categories drawn from William of Ockham's critique of metaphysics, involving a shift from a metaphysical position of moderate realism to the conceptualist position that universals exist only in the mind. As a result, when Luther, who was an adherent of William's teaching, engaged the question of real presence, the philosophical system he used was a form of discourse tacitly "oriented toward human understanding rather than the object itself."¹ The problem for the theologian is not one of using philosophy to frame doctrinal formulations but one of using a poor philosophy to do so. Any philosophical system used to express a revealed religion such as Christianity must have the necessary capacities to handle the subject. One way to examine the history of dogma is to evaluate the philosophical system that systematic theologians have employed to explain and explore the faith. Many of the failures of the modern period in dogmatic theology are the result of theologians employing systems that are not up to the task.²

Notes: Chapter 3: Lutheran View (David P. Scaer)

1. For a history of the ambiguity of the phrase, see Albert B. Collver, "Real Presence': A Confession of the Lord's Supper—The Origin and Development of the Term in the Sixteenth Century" (PhD Diss., Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, Mo., 2001). Calvin did not deny the real presence but only the Roman Catholic and Lutheran understandings of the phrase (p. 335 in Collver's dissertation).

2. See the first verse of Martin Luther's eucharistic hymn, "O Lord, We Praise Thee": "May Thy body, Lord, born of Mary, That our sins and sorrows did carry, And Thy blood for us plead In all trial, fear, and need: O Lord, have mercy!" (*The Lutheran Hymnal* [Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1941], no. 313).

3. For a discussion of why Lutherans do not use consubstantiation to describe their position, see Norman E. Nagel, "Consubstantiation," in *Hermann Sasse: A Man for Our Times?*, ed. John R. Stephenson et al. (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1998), 240–59. The term was used by the Crypto-Calvinists, those

Lutherans who after Luther's death secretly wanted to introduce a Reformed interpretation of the Lord's Supper (pp. 250–51). Consubstantiation might be described in Christological terms as "Nestorian," referring to two disconnected substances lying side by side (p. 243).

4. See the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, VII.38; Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VII.3. All references to the Lutheran Confessions are found in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 599.

5. Large Catechism, V.14, in *Book of Concord*, 468.

6. "For 'spiritually' means to them [the Reformed] nothing more than 'the spirit of Christ' that is present, or 'the power of the absent body of Christ, or his merit'" (Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VII.5, in *Book of Concord*, 504–5).

7. See Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VII.22, in *Book of Concord*, 505, 22.

8. Rejection of the Reformed position was included in both the Latin and German texts of the Augsburg Confession (X.2).

9. See Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIII.2: "But we do not think that it makes much difference, if for the purpose of teaching, different people have different enumerations, as long as they properly preserve the matters handed down in Scripture. After all, even the ancients did not always number them in the same way."

10. See Large Catechism, V.4, 23, 24, in *Book of Concord*, 468, 470.

11. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIII.6, 14, sees confirmation, extreme unction, and marriage as church rites and allows for them to be called sacraments in a lesser sense.

12. Article XIII of the Augsburg Confession does not list the sacraments.

13. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XIII.3, defines sacraments as rites commanded by God to which the promise of grace has been added. It seems as if Melancthon understands some rites instituted by the church as having divine approval. This allowed for a broader definition in allowing which rites could be called sacraments. (The Apology was written as direct response to the Confutation in which the Roman Catholics set forth both their agreements and disagreements with the Augsburg Confession.)

14. Large Catechism, IV.1, in *Book of Concord*, 456.

15. See *Book of Concord*, 360–61. This is titled "How Simple People Should Be Taught to Confess." "A Brief Exhortation to Confession" is included at the conclusion of the Large Catechism (not included in *The Book of Concord*).

16. Karl Barth had no place in his monumental *Church Dogmatics* for the Lord's Supper simply because whatever benefit might be attached to it was already found in baptism. By concentrating on the forgiveness of sins as the constituent factor in the Lord's Supper, Lutherans may move close to that position.

17. For more discussion, see Jonathan Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 21–22.

18. Paul speaks of Christ as the Passover or Paschal Lamb in the context of eucharistic practice (1 Cor. 5:7).

19. The connection between manna and the Lord's Supper is made in John 6:48–51, but a eucharistic interpretation of this passage is not beyond dispute, as discussed below.

20. See, e.g., Matthew 15:36 (italics added): "Then [Jesus] *took* the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had *given thanks*, he *broke* them and *gave* them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people" (cf. Matt. 26:26–28).

21. Lutherans are more likely to translate the Greek word *diathēkē* as "testament" rather than "covenant" to carry the idea that Christ instituted this rite before his death as his will. "Testament" and "covenant" can have overlapping meanings, though the word is ordinarily translated into English as "covenant."

22. See Small Catechism, V.5–6, in *Book of Concord*, 362. Here Luther says that with forgiveness of sins comes life and salvation.

23. Luther sees Matthew 11:28 ("Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened") as an invitation to the Lord's Supper (see Large Catechism, V.66, in *Book of Concord*, 473).

24. Notice John 6:53: "Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'"

25. See Large Catechism, IV.18, in *Book of Concord*, 438: "hence also it derives its essence as a sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught: *Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*. That is, when the Word is added to the element or natural substance, it becomes a sacrament, that is, a holy and divine matter and sign" (see also Large Catechism, V.18, in *Book of Concord*, 458, with regard to the Lord's Supper; Smalcald Articles, V.1, in *Book of Concord*, 320, with regard to baptism).

26. See Large Catechism, IV.8, 12, in *Book of Concord*, 457–58.

27. Paul points to an unrepentant sinner in the congregation as yeast in the context of the Lord's Supper. His argument would not be understood unless that congregation was using unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper. Reference to Christ as the "Passover lamb" supports this view (1 Cor. 5:7).

28. Article VII.3 of the Epitome of the Formula of Concord explicitly rejects the teaching that faith "effects and creates the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper" (*Book of Concord*, 580).

29. See Large Catechism, V.6: "Do you think God cares so much about our faith and conduct that he would permit them to affect his ordinance? No, all temporal things remain as God has created and ordered them, regardless of how we treat them" (*Book of Concord*, 467).

30. See Large Catechism, V.69, in *Book of Concord*, 474; the Epitome of the Formula of Concord (VII.37) also rejects as an error the teaching that unbelievers do not receive Christ's body and blood (*Book of Concord*, 508).

31. See Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VII.15.6, in *Book of Concord*, 506: Christ's body and blood is received "not in a Capernaïtic fashion but rather in a supernatural, heavenly way because of the sacramental union of the elements."

32. See Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VII.26, in *Book of Concord*, 507.

33. Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, VII.114, in *Book of Concord*, 613.

34. Though Reformed theologians generally understood the session at God's right hand to support the view that Christ's body was confined to one place, Zwingli agreed with Luther that this was figurative speech "by which one understands that Christ Jesus is equally powerful with the Father" (Gottfried W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought* [Leiden: Brill, 1981], 177). Reformed differences with Lutherans came from a worldview influenced by Renaissance humanistic thought.

35. See the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VIII.17, in *Book of Concord*, 511.

36. From the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1918).

37. In the first edition of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (called the Quarto), Melancthon specifically referred to this. "It is seen in their [Greek (Orthodox)] canon of the Mass, in which the priest clearly prays that the bread may be changed and become the very body of Christ," referring to the *epiklēsis* in early Eastern liturgies (see *Book of Concord*, 184 n. 269).

38. See Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VII.8, in *Book of Concord*, 505.

39. Hebrews 12:22–24 places the Lord's Supper in a heavenly dimension: "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." This theme is picked up in one of the offertories in *Lutheran Worship*: "I will take the cup of salvation and will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem."

40. Though the phrase "the sacrament of the altar" is not derived from the New Testament precisely in this way, the artifact from which the Lord's Supper was served was called an "altar": "We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat" (Heb. 13:10). In the context, those who minister at the tabernacle are the priests who offer sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple, which is called a tabernacle, or tent, because it will soon pass away. The altar from which these priests are not permitted to eat is the one from which Christ's body and blood is offered to his followers.

41. A late first- or early second-century catechism.

42. The term *Eucharist* is not without its problems since it puts the emphasis on what the congregation does by remembering and thanking God and not on what God gives. It was the term favored by Zwingli.

43. In my *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church* (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2004), I have presented a number of allusions to the Lord's Supper in this gospel (pp. 157–99).

44. See Smalcald Articles, II.1, in *Book of Concord*, 301.

45. Article 21 of the Augsburg Confession expressly addresses this issue by pointing out that according to ancient church custom, the chalice was distributed to the laity. Along with transubstantiation, the practice of withholding the cup from the laity was condemned by the Lutherans (see Epitome of the Formula of Concord, VII.21–24, in *Book of Concord*, 507).

46. This was a moot issue for Roman Catholics, since for them Lutherans do not possess a valid ministry and so what they celebrated was no sacrament at all.

47. For a Lutheran perspective on this debate, see Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), esp. 232–34.

Notes: Chapter 3: A Reformed Response (I. John Hesselink)

1. The *Short Treatise* is found in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954).

2. Concerning this incident, see B. A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 286–87 n. 53.

3. B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 140.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *A Common Calling* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1993). Lutheran-Reformed dialogue originally took place in 1962–1966. The results were published in *Marburg Revisited* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966). A statement of concord—the Leuenberg Agreement—between Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe was published in 1973.

6. Cited in *A Formula of Agreement*, 9.

Notes: Chapter 3: A Roman Catholic Response (Thomas A. Baima)

1. Heinz Robert Schlett, “Nominalism,” in *Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Seabury, 1975), 1086.

2. For a full treatment of this subject from the viewpoint of a philosopher, see Mortimer J. Adler, *The Four Dimensions of Philosophy: Metaphysical, Moral, Objective, and Categorical* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

A LUTHERAN RESPONSE

David P. Scaer

Offering these chapters from different perspectives brings to light not only unresolved historical differences but areas in which one tradition can enhance that of the others. My hope is that our discussions will not simply reiterate Reformation-era differences, but Russell Moore opens this door by putting forth Zwingli's view as the Baptist position. This takes matters back to the impasse at the Marburg Colloquy of October 1529 at which Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Luther could not agree on the Lord's Supper. The Lutheran Reformers were asked to tolerate Zwingli's views so that the princes could form a united front against armies of the emperor and pope, who were intent on eradicating their reformations. In spite of the threat, Luther did not capitulate to Zwingli's memorial view of the Lord's Supper.

This was only the tip of the iceberg. Agreement on the first fourteen and the first two parts of the fifteenth article of faith proved to be superficial, especially on Christology. Zwingli was influenced by the Renaissance humanism, with its revival of Neoplatonism, which allowed neither Christ's human nature to embrace his divine nature nor the sacramental bread to be recognized as his body. In Reformed churches, including baptistic and paedobaptist ones, Zwingli's view that Christ is present by way of memory in the Lord's Supper exists side by side with Calvin's belief that Christ is present spiritually. In spite of their differences, Zwingli and Calvin agreed that the elements could not be identified with Christ's body.

Since Marburg, the Reformed have sought Lutheran recognition of both Zwingli's and Calvin's views, but confessional Lutheran churches have not reciprocated. Recognition of Zwingli's position that the Lord's Supper is hardly more than a memorial meal and a sign would be a surrender of the Lutheran belief that the elements of bread and wine become Christ's body and blood in this sacrament.

Lutherans can agree with Russell Moore that the Lord's Supper is a memorial, a sign, and proclamation, within a constellation of other signs in both the Old and New Testaments. Memory or recollection of Christ's death belongs to the celebration of the sacrament. From the beginning, God provided signs to evoke the memory of past events as evidences of his mercy. So Moore rightly understands the Lord's Supper as the culminating act of God's feeding his people, to which belong the manna given to Israel in the wilderness and Christ's miraculous feeding of the thousands.

A full understanding of this rite requires seeing it within the broad scope of salvation history. Old Testament signs point forward to the Lord's Supper. The Supper embodies such past events as the Passover and the sacrifices, and it points to the complete union of God with his people at the end of time. However, such signs are more than memory devices, because Christ is present in all these signs, giving grace, salvation, the Holy Spirit, and himself to create union with the Father. Jesus was already present in the Old Testament signs, but the Lord's Supper is the pinnacle of all signs because the one who was born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, and raised from the dead is actually present with his sacrificial body and blood in the bread and wine. It is the most sacred of signs, because the signs correspond to the divine realities they contain. What the reading of the Gospels causes to be recalled in the church's memory becomes present, tangible, edible reality in the Lord's Supper. All of the events of Christ's life recorded in Scripture pour into the moment of the sacrament so that he who is remembered in the hearing of believers takes on form in bread and wine and is received not only by mouth into the body but also into the soul. In this sacrament the memory of Christ becomes reality so that he is really with us in every aspect of the celebration, including the elements.

Zwingli's view is sometimes called the *anamnēsis*, taken from Christ's words of institution: "do this in remembrance [*anamnēsis*] of me" (Luke 22:19). This cannot only mean that we remember him but, in following the pattern of the Psalms, that we also ask God to remember his promises to us. As we remember Christ in the sacrament, we ask God to remember the promises he made in Christ to forgive us. After all, prayer

is reminding God of his love to us—and this is most appropriate as he looks at us through Christ, who is embodied in this sacrament.

Challenges to Lutheran views not only come in formal ways from Reformed churches who desire fellowship with Lutheran churches but also from evangelicals who share with Lutherans a commitment to biblical authority, inspiration, and inerrancy but who remain Zwingli's and Calvin's heirs in their doctrines of Christ and the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper. Alliances with them require that distinctive Lutheran doctrines of the regenerative power of baptism and of the Lord's Supper as Christ's actual body and blood be submerged to serve a greater unity against destructive methods of biblical criticism. Though Luther is revered in Reformed churches, including Baptist ones, for his doctrine of justification in opposition to Rome, his views on the Lord's Supper are as intolerable as the Roman Catholic view. Identification of the elements with Christ's body and blood falls under the Reformed censure of forbidding idolatry, which comprises their second commandment. Any reference to the "bread god" to describe the Catholic doctrine of the Lord's Supper also targets the Lutheran view.

For Zwingli, both baptism and the Lord's Supper had historical and eschatological significance in pointing back to what God had done and ahead to what God was going to do, but God was not present in the rites and its elements—hence they were not essential for salvation. It is hard to avoid the implication that one sacramental sign can be substituted for the other and that the order of their administration is a matter of indifference. Today's Baptists, like Zwingli, regard both rites as memorials, signs and proclamations, making baptism's function virtually indistinguishable from that of the Lord's Supper. Thus within a Zwinglian context, it is not surprising that the Lord's Supper can be given to one without baptism. These rites may be necessary by way of command and so properly called ordinances rather than sacraments—a word implying that in them God is granting salvation.

The Lord's Supper is the proclamation of Christ's death, but it is a proclamation bringing the historical moment of the cross into the present. If the Lord's Supper is a proclamation and memorial only in the sense that the hearers recall information

about a past event or figure in history, then it is hardly distinguishable from or more useful than a sermon. For Lutherans, the sermon, the proclaimed Word (i.e., the gospel), is Christ himself and is in this sense sacramental. He who is present in preaching and enters the ears of his hearers invites them to receive him by their lips and mouths in the sacrament.

Lutherans can agree with Moore that those leading immoral lives are excluded from the Lord's Supper, but with the understanding that a sense of guilt for sin and unacceptability by God rather than a sense of moral rectitude best equips one for receiving the Lord's Supper. This sacrament is not an ordinance in the sense of the Ten Commandments but an institution that forgives sins committed against the law. In following ancient church practice, closed communion for Lutherans means excluding unbelievers and those who have not been baptized or belong to churches with erring beliefs—especially about the Lord's Supper. Baptist practice, on the other hand, allows the unbaptized to receive it.

Since the Lord's Supper in a Zwinglian sense is understood as hardly more than a memorial or sign without real content, instructions about its administration, recipients, and elements are not pressing issues. A layperson is as qualified to administer the rite as an ordained minister. Grape juice is as acceptable as wine, though the preference of the former over the latter seems motivated more by principles of the prohibition movement than biblical reasons. Wine that gladdens human hearts (see Ps. 104:15) is the fit vehicle for Christ's blood, by which we are taken into the mystery of the atonement in which are embedded the glories of heaven. In some Reformed, and embarrassingly Lutheran, churches, beverages other than wine, such as soda or orange juice, are substituted. Where Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper with regard to its elements, beliefs, administrators, and recipients is not followed, it is compromised.

Moore eloquently declares that "in the Lord's Supper, both the restoration of Eden and the recognition of human sin coincide in a ritual meal" (p. 32). Following this line of reasoning, we can say that all prior Old Testament rituals are assumed into this sacrament so they initiate a participation with Christ that will be completed when the one whom we devour with our mouths will be seen by our eyes. As valuable as bringing the

full biblical panorama into a discussion on the Lord's Supper is, a word might have been said about Zwingli's position vis-à-vis Luther in interpreting the word "is" in the phrase "this is my body" as "signify." (Calvin agreed with Luther on "is" but took body to be Christ's "spiritual body.")

Now for a personal note. Perhaps the vast majority of Lutheran pastors in receiving members from churches that adhere to Zwinglian or Calvinist teachings on the Lord's Supper often discover that these members did not hold Reformed teachings but already held to the Lutheran belief that the ordinary elements of bread and wine are those extraordinary things of Christ's body and blood. In other words, they actually believe Christ's words, "This is my body." Of course, the reverse is also tragically true of both Lutherans and Catholics who do not believe that the elements are Christ's body and blood, as surveys indicate. This should serve as a reminder that every sermon accompanying the celebration of the Lord's Supper must contain this teaching.

A LUTHERAN RESPONSE

David P. Scaer

Each theological tradition is entitled to define its terms, including the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, as it sees fit. Since the Reformed do not identify the elements of bread and wine with Christ's actual body and blood, they understand real presence differently from the Lutherans, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics who do make this identification. According to the Reformed, believers receive Christ spiritually by faith in their souls and do not receive his body and blood with the mouth. Unbelievers do not receive Christ, though by participating in the sacrament they may cause offense or commit a sacrilege.

In working for rapprochement with the Lutherans, the Reformed have used terms familiar to Lutherans but with different meanings. "Real presence" belongs to that conciliatory vocabulary. Fortright sacramental discussion has been hampered in Germany by rulers forcing Lutherans into united territorial churches with the Reformed. After failing in the early seventeenth century, Prussian rulers succeeded in 1830 in imposing on Lutheran congregations liturgies allowing for the Reformed spiritual understanding of the Lord's Supper. In distributing the sacrament, pastors were no longer allowed to use the Lutheran formula, "This is my body," but were to say, "Christ said, 'This is my body.'" This indefinite formula allowed for the Reformed view that Jesus was present in a spiritual manner only and not in the bread.

The largest American and European Lutheran and Reformed churches have recently signed agreements allowing their members to receive Communion in each other's churches and stating that the other's views on the Lord's Supper are acceptable.

In these situations, Lutheran distinctions regarding the Lord's Supper are eventually replaced by Reformed understandings. In the minds of many, including the intellectually elite, Lutherans and Reformed are lumped together as Protestants, and past differences are seen as no more than petty historical squabbles. Martin Luther's views are seen as no different from John Calvin's. In German churches, statues and stained-glass windows of Luther, Calvin, and even Ulrich Zwingli are placed side by side as if their reformations were theologically unified. The last holdout for the classical Lutheran position are those churches that adhere to the Lutheran Confessions, of which most are in fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

With the Reformed doing their best to entice Lutherans to join them in one fold from the Reformation on, a Lutheran doesn't have to wonder what Hesselink has in mind when he writes that "Calvin had a high view of the sacraments, as high in most respects as Luther's" (p. 60). Really? When the contents of the chalice were spilled, with tears in his eyes Luther got down on his knees and licked up Christ's blood. He excommunicated a priest who placed the consecrated hosts in the same place as unconsecrated ones. It is hard to imagine Calvin doing this.

In trying to locate Calvin closer to Luther than Zwingli, Hesselink claims that Calvin did not look favorably on Zwingli's "memorialist" or "purely symbolic" interpretation of the Supper, which, he adds, was "sharply rejected by Martin Luther" (p. 59). Left unsaid is that Calvin did not disown Zwingli and that their successors accepted each other's positions in the *Consensus Tigurinus* in 1549. Zwingli's view of the sacrament as a sign or memorial may still not measure up to Calvin's view that with it the Spirit communicates spiritual gifts to believers, but both are acceptable in Reformed churches and not cause for division. Calvin may have had a higher place for the sacrament than Zwingli did; but for both, the sacramental bread remained nothing more than bread.

Like Calvin, Lutherans can speak of a spiritual reception of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but for Lutherans it is subsequent to and dependent on the oral reception of his body and blood in the bread and wine. (The Reformed cannot, as Lutherans can, look at or handle the consecrated bread and say that this is Christ. Since Christ for the Reformed is confined to a spatially

defined heaven, the Spirit replaces him or, at best, links Christ's flesh to the believer. Christ's divine nature, but not his human nature, may be present with the elements. In advancing his view that Christ is in a spatial heaven where faith can find him, Calvin condemned the Lutheran position (see *Inst.* IV.17.16–20). Unacceptable to the Reformed is the Lutheran insistence that Christ's divine nature works through the human nature and is fully present in it.

Some years ago, a Reformed theologian, later a president of a prestigious seminary in New England, alerted me to a foundational difference in that the Reformed go first to God to find Jesus. Lutherans take a reverse route and go through Jesus to find God. True enough, but Lutherans take one step further in going through baptism and the Lord's Supper to find Christ. In encountering Christ in the sacraments, they encounter the Spirit and the Father and come to know God as Trinity.

Like the Reformed, Lutherans speak of the sacraments as signs. For Lutherans, the signs point to the divine realities contained within them. Calvin eschews Zwingli's view that the divine realities are remote from the elements and instead holds that they signal the Spirit's working along with the sacraments and the rites. However, the elements themselves are devoid of the Spirit or divine gifts. Sacraments can be the occasion for the Spirit's works, which are made operative only by faith. Lutherans agree that faith is the only means for receiving the sacrament's benefits, but faith neither contributes to the sacrament's reality nor detracts from Christ's presence in it. By celebrating the rite, an assembly identifies itself as believers, but, contrary to Calvin's teaching, faith does not create or contribute to the character of the rite as a sacrament. For Lutherans, an unbeliever receiving the sacrament comes into an intimate relationship with Christ not as redemptive atonement but as judge, and so compounds God's judgment on him. By his unbelief, he offends not only the church but Christ, whom he has taken into both his body and soul.

Speaking of Christ's spiritual presence is just as ambivalent as speaking of his real presence. To emphasize his belief, Luther held that participants in the sacrament received not only Christ's resurrected body, which might allow for a spiritual, noncorporeal body, but the body born of the Virgin Mary.

Christ's taking on the forms of bread and wine had a prior pattern in the incarnation. Lutherans agree that by the Holy Spirit the bread becomes Christ's body by being embedded in Christ's words of institution. This is a Trinitarian work in which all the divine persons are present. In this sacrament the Spirit is present as the *Spiritus Creator*, finishing the work of creation first in the incarnation and then the Lord's Supper, not as a surrogate or replacement for the man Jesus Christ but with him. Through the Spirit's action in the Word on the bread and wine, the Father gives them to us as the body and blood of the crucified and risen Christ. The Reformed belief that the risen Christ is spatially restricted at the Father's right hand, which is seen as a place or location, virtually requires that the Spirit be the major agent in the sacramental action. He possesses the omnipresence denied to Jesus' human nature. This means that any Reformed definition of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament has to be radically different from a Lutheran understanding.

One can appreciate Hesselink's desire to bring the Reformed view as close to Luther's as possible. This he does by noting that Calvin can say "Christ's flesh enters into us to be our food" (p. 63). What might be an otherwise acceptable view to Lutherans is counterbalanced by Calvin's "resist[ing] the notion that the body and blood of Christ are contained in the elements" (p. 64). Calvin and the Reformed do not say Christ's flesh and blood enter through our mouths. Rather this happens only in our souls. For unbelievers receiving the sacrament there is no actual eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. The Spirit "sends down the efficacy of his flesh," but not Christ himself who is contained in a place in heaven (p. 66). Lutherans do not recognize a spatial distance between heaven and earth, but heaven manifests itself on earth in the sacraments so that not only Christ's benefits but Christ himself, body and soul, God and man, are present in the Lord's Supper.

In defining the Lord's Supper, Lutherans and the Reformed make use of many of the same terms and phrases but understand them differently. This is especially true of the real presence, but beneath the surface they have different views on atonement, justification, and sanctification. Their differences with regard to the Lord's Supper are only the tip of the iceberg.

A LUTHERAN RESPONSE

David P. Scaer

Thomas Baima rightly understands Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper within the wider context of the three divine persons. Trinitarian communion is expressed in the incarnation and then in all the sacraments through which Christ makes the church his body. Lutherans can affirm that "God and humanity are united by means of the actions of the Holy Spirit, which we call the sacraments" (p. 122).

In the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and confession and absolution are listed as sacraments; though for Luther, absolution was the practice of baptism and in this sense sacramental. Other rites recognized as sacraments by Catholics are also practiced by Lutherans as evangelical proclamations of grace to create and confirm faith. None carry the law's threats, but those who refuse them deprive themselves of grace.

Lutherans can agree that the Lord's Supper is the pinnacle to which the baptized are directed by preaching; however, for Lutherans, baptism remains effective throughout the believer's life and remains for him or her the foundational sacrament from which the church emerges. Baptism is never past tense or replaced by other sacraments or rites but determines faith's boundaries.

Baima warns his fellow contributors about referencing Hebrews in responding to his exposition of the sacrament as a sacrifice (p. 125). This opens a door to discussing his definition of the sacrament as the *anamnēsis*, "where the same offering, the same priest, and the same sacrifice are present" (p. 125). Certainly in the Supper Christ is present as offering, priest, and sacrifice.

As baptism is participation (communion) in Christ's death and resurrection, so the Lord's Supper is communion in his sacrifice by receiving his body and blood by which Christ made the sacrifice.

Sacrifice effects sacramental efficacy. What is offered to God as sacrifice is given to us as sacrament. Sacrament and sacrifice are two different sides of one reality. Christ's death is a onetime historical moment, but this sacrifice or atonement for sin is an eternal reality before God, which determines how he deals with the world. The one sacrifice for sin corresponds to only one Eucharist, which manifests itself wherever Christians celebrate it. No one but God can offer up Christ as a sacrifice, and Christ alone distributes his sacrifice as sacrament to his people. As Christ's servants, ministers are only his instruments in distributing the sacrificial benefits in the sacraments, but their persons do not contribute to the sacrament's essence and effects.

In all aspects of the sacrament—its institution, content, and administrators—it is the *Lord's* and not the church's Supper. Christ's involvement in the sacrament belongs to his promise to drink the fruit of the vine with his disciples in his Father's kingdom, which came with his resurrection. Rather than seeing the Lord's Supper as an aid to man's physical weakness, Christians ascend in the Lord's Supper to the highest glory on earth. Christ becomes part of us and we become part of him. This mysterious sacramental union between God and his church reflects the more mysterious incarnational union of God and humanity in Jesus. In the Formula of Concord (1577), the culminating confession in the Book of Concord, the article on Christ is placed right after the one on the Lord's Supper. One informs the other, and a defect in one signals a defect in the other.

Traditionally in their Communion liturgies Lutherans have no *epiklēsis*, that part of the Eastern Orthodox rites in which the Spirit is invoked on the elements to make them Christ's body and blood. This exclusion is for historical and not theological reasons. It was not part of the Catholic rites preserved by Lutherans. The Spirit is present and at work in the Lord's Supper, as he is in preaching and all sacraments and church rites, with the understanding that he is there with Christ as God and man and not as a replacement or surrogate for a Jesus confined to a spatial heaven.

Yes, the sacrament is food for the soul but also for the body. Its content is not only the crucified but also the resurrected Christ, who makes us participants in his resurrection and guarantees our own. Souls of unbelievers have no faith to be nourished by this sacrament, but their bodies devour the body and blood of him who judges unbelief. Their participation brings them before God's judgment seat. To avoid this horror and in the hope that people would in faith receive this sacrament, early Christian churches dismissed the unbaptized before the Eucharist. For this reason and to express the unity of faith, most Reformation churches shared Communion only with those of their own fellowship. This is still the common practice of most Roman Catholic churches and those Lutherans adhering to their confessions.

The Council of Trent (1545–1560) intended to refute what Catholics considered the Lutheran heresy regarding Christ's real presence. Baima quotes its first canon on the sacrament of the Eucharist (from the thirteenth session):

"If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained, but says that he is in it only as a sign or figure or by his power, let him be anathema." (p. 126)

This document was answered in detail by Martin Chemnitz in his monumental *Examination of the Council of Trent*, in which he wanted to show where Lutherans disagreed but also where they agreed with it. The canon is acceptable, as long as "in" did not refer to impanation—the belief that the body is contained like a nut in a cookie—or transubstantiation. Lutherans had used similar language in speaking of Christ's body and blood "in" the bread and wine and adding in other documents the prepositions "with" and "under." The Augsburg Confession declares, "The true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper." Multiple prepositions affirmed Christ's presence in the Supper but not in the sense of other objects that occupy one space at a time.

For this reason, the Reformed rejected the Lutheran position. Matters could rest with simply repeating Christ's own

words that the bread is his body and the cup is his blood. Luther based his defense against Zwingli on *est*, the Latin for "is." Whatever biblical arguments are brought into the debate, at least the words of Jesus should be front and center.

Baima softens Trent's "anathema" on those who do not accept this view by comparing it to a physician's diagnosing of a disease before prescribing the medicine (pp. 126–27). However, the Lutheran Confessions similarly condemn those who hold that Christ is only spiritually present or that it is no more than a sign or memorial. Some views are simply intolerable!

Not unexpectedly, as a Roman Catholic theologian, Baima wants to omit the "Roman" before Catholic (p. 119 n. 2). However, Rome compromises its catholicity in elevating its pope above all other bishops, ministers, and churches. Recent pontiffs have worked toward détente with Orthodox patriarchs and have allowed members of that fellowship to commune in their churches, but the Orthodox have not reciprocated.

Transubstantiation is a peculiarly Western philosophical definition of the Eucharist that simply cannot be equated with the Orthodox view. Baima compares transubstantiation to transfiguration (pp. 128–29). This may distort the eucharistic mystery. As the Greek word *metamorphōsis* suggests, Christ's human form was transformed so that in and through it his divine nature was manifested. It does not mean that his human nature was replaced by the divine nature—a comparison Baima uses in explaining transubstantiation. In his transfiguration, Jesus was as much man as he was in the state of humiliation, and, similarly, in the Lord's Supper his body and blood are present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine without replacing them. Just as the man Jesus is God, so the bread is his body.

Baima notes that the views of others, including the Orthodox, should also have an airing (p. 119). Their exclusion was perhaps a matter of space or the fact that their views aren't much different from those expressed therein. Like the Baptists, many Pentecostal churches reject infant baptism and share with them views on the Lord's Supper that are in line with Zwingli's. Baima does not mention the Episcopalians. Their rich eucharistic practice places them with Lutherans and Roman Catholics in the Catholic tradition, but their Thirty-nine Articles are readily recognized by the Reformed as Zwinglian and Calvinist. This

is an enigma not only to those on the outside but perhaps also to them.

Claiming that Lutheran belief does not allow Christ's presence to extend beyond the liturgical celebration needs elaboration (p. 127). Taking the sacramental elements from the church to the homebound with the recitation of the words of institution was common. By hearing church bells intoned at various parts of the service, including during the words of institution, those confined to their houses participated. Only enough hosts were consecrated for those receiving the sacrament, and at the end of service, the contents of the chalice were consumed by the ministers. A mixing of consecrated and unconsecrated hosts was not allowed. For this, Luther excommunicated a minister under suspicion of Zwinglianism.

Lutherans objected to the Roman practice of carrying the sacrament in processions and its use in the evening benediction. At the imperial diet of 1530, from which emerged the Augsburg Confession, upon pain of death the Lutheran princes defied the command of Charles V to take part in the *Corpus Christi* procession. Lutherans worship Christ wherever he is, including the sacraments, and thus Luther genuflected before the baptismal font and the sacrament. Christ is not tucked away in some distant heaven, but at God's right hand he is among us in preaching and the sacraments. Like the Orthodox, Lutherans know of no devotion of Christ apart from the sacrament.

By receiving the Lord's Supper at the altar and not in the pews, Lutherans affirm their belief that with the consecration earthly elements at the altar become Christ's body and blood, and so appropriately they kneel to receive them. From the Small Catechism, Lutherans learn to call it "the sacrament of the altar." Sacramental distribution in the pews makes it appear that this is the church's supper, which is made a sacrament by the faith of believers. Perhaps the current Roman practice of having laypersons distribute the sacrament in the aisles and not at the altar will be evaluated by the current pontiff, who seems to be committed to reaffirming traditional theology and practices.

Under the influence of American Protestantism, with its Reformed bent, many Lutheran congregations have replaced the common cup with individual glasses. With concerns over communicable diseases, this practice is widespread. To express

the church's unity, tradition-minded Lutherans are returning to the common cup. In the Roman Confutation, Roman Catholics accepted the Lutheran position that the earthly sacramental elements were Christ's body and blood. Further discussion may still uncover closer agreement, but the matter may be moot. Since Lutheran ministers are not ordained by bishops in fellowship with the pope, they do offer a sacrament that conveys Christ's body and blood. Ironically, Lutherans are often lumped together with the Reformed, whose views they reject and who in turn reject Lutheran views as too close to Rome's.

Perhaps the arguments offered here will suggest to some that the title describing the Roman Catholic view—"Christ's True, Real, and Substantial Presence"—is also applicable to the Lutheran view. Since the Lutheran doctrine, which maintains that Christ's body is accessible through bread, best corresponds to the incarnation in which God is accessible through the man Jesus, Lutherans may have a better claim to it.

Notes: Chapter 4: Roman Catholic View (Thomas A. Baima)

1. Paul A. Basden, ed., *Exploring the Worship Spectrum* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

2. I leave the adjective "Roman" aside because the Catholic Church is composed of twenty-two autonomous ritual churches, only one of which follows the Roman Rite. The doctrinal position I present is held by all of them. In a number of places, I will also refer to the Orthodox churches.

3. Among the official websites I recommend are *www.vatican.va* (the Holy See), *www.fides.org* (the news service of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples), *www.usccb.org* (the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), and *www.archchicago.org* (the Archdiocese of Chicago).

4. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

5. Christomonism, as the word suggests, is a monist view of God where Christ equals God. Usually a practical rather than theological heresy, Christomonists believe that Jesus is God and then ignore the truth that God is Trinity. Whenever they use the word *God*, they mean "Jesus."

6. 2 Peter 1:4.

7. 1 Corinthians 12:27.

8. CCC, 1113–30.

9. See Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993).

10. CCC, 1210–1666.

11. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

12. See Revelation 7:11.