

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. XXIV.

OCTOBER, 1920.

No. 4.

Up-to-Date Theology at Concordia Seminary.

At the opening of the St. Louis Seminary, on September 8, the President addressed the students on a most timely subject. In our time—these were the thoughts he elaborated—there is one qualification of theology that is stressed with unusual emphasis, *viz.*, that it must meet the demands of the times, and be up to date. At the same time we Missourians, so called, are charged with failing to meet this requirement of theology. The theology of the Missouri Synod has fallen under censure as being out of date. This charge lacks foundation. You, students of Concordia, will study with us a theology that is up to date, really up to date, both as regards form and contents.

As regards the form, a theology that is up to date requires principally efficiency in the various *languages* in which we have an opportunity and are called upon to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. That an adaptation to languages is necessary to an up-to-date church was foreshadowed by the events of the first Pentecost. Since there were gathered at Jerusalem on that day "men out of every nation under heaven," the Galilean orators on that festival day were impelled by the Holy Spirit not to speak Hebrew only, but to employ the various mother-tongues of their hearers—Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, etc. This method of adaptation we follow in our own work. In our country and under the conditions under which we have to do our work, two living languages in particular, the *German* and the *English*, are necessary—besides other languages—for our Gospel ministry. Accordingly, we are up to date in imparting

The Sacrificial Concept in the Eucharist of the Early Church.

The sentence: *Ho logos to agalma tes psyches*, — The word is the ornament of the soul, — which has been ascribed to Socrates, has its application also outside of the realm of pure philosophy. The liturgy of any church body is the expression, the ornament, of its soul, and is therefore inseparably connected with its doctrine. In many cases, the fixed form may become a dead letter, and yet the *cultus* will portray the state of the spirit of the church that uses it. Witness the example of the Anglican Church! It is, for this reason, extremely interesting to watch the expression of certain doctrines in the liturgical confessions. The Monophysites embodied their views in the Nicene Creed and in their prayers, principally by omission of passages previously in general use. The Arians wanted to insert only a single letter, and yet its inclusion meant the denial of a fundamental doctrine. And many of the denominations of our days have omitted the "*Descendit ad inferos*" as a misrepresentation.

Of great interest in the study of the early centuries of the Christian era is the growing prominence of the sacrificial aspect in the Eucharist and the emphasis accorded to this interpretation in doctrine and liturgy. The matter has been dealt

with at some length by Srawley, in his *Early History of the Liturgy* (chapter IX). Since, however, he presents the subject from the standpoint of the Anglican Church, it is advisable to use his arguments and conclusions with some degree of caution.

According to the institution of Christ, only one interpretation is possible for the celebration of the Eucharist, namely that of a sacramental offering and imparting of the mercies of God. Mention indeed is made of a sacrifice, but that was the vicarious sacrifice of the Mediator for the redemption of the world: My blood, which is shed for many, *to haima mou to peri pollon ekchynnomenon*, Matt. 26, 28. Mark 14, 24. Luke 22, 20; My body, which is given for you, Luke 22, 19. 1 Cor. 11, 24. This was the one, all-sufficient sacrifice of the New Testament, Heb. 9, 12. 26, this offering being expressly spoken of as a *prospherein* and as a *thysia*, Eph. 5, 2. Heb. 9, 26; 10, 14. Invariably, the sacrifice is spoken of as an act on the part of God and Christ, made for the whole world, for the entire *massa redempta*, whose benefits and blessings are given to the believers in the Holy Supper.

It was not long, however, before a subtle change was wrought in the idea of the Lord's Supper, by which the sacramental nature of the Sacrament was, by almost insensible degrees, shifted to the side of the celebrants and rendered sacrificial. This change is dimly foreshadowed even in the word Eucharist (*eucharistia* = thank-offering), which, in its later use, implied more than a simple thanksgiving. It was understood that the gifts of bread and wine, the first-fruits of the creatures, were offered in thanksgiving to God. In this sense it is used by Clemens Romanus. The author of the *Didache* applies the name *thysia*, sacrifice, to the rite. The words of Malachi: "In every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering" (1, 11), were applied to the Holy Supper, and a sacrificial character was impressed upon it.

Irenaeus plainly teaches this sacrificial aspect, when he says of the cup: "Which the Church receives from the Apostles.

and offers through the whole world to that God who supplies us with sustenance, as first-fruits of His gifts in the new covenant. . . . Moreover, we offer to Him, not as though He is in need, but rendering thanks to His dominion, and sanctifying the creature. . . . So the Word Himself gave the people the command to make offerings, though He did not need them, that they might learn to serve God" (Srawley, 225). In a similar manner Origen writes against Celsus: "But we, giving thanks to the Maker of the universe, eat also bread, which is offered with thanksgiving and prayer for the things that have been given, which bread becomes through the prayer a *kind of holy body* and one that hallows those who use it with right purpose." (*Ibid.*)

The bare sacrificial element is thus augmented by the idea of a change in the bread and wine, by virtue of which they become a holy body, the body and blood of Christ. This content of the Eucharist is still considered to be a spiritual one, although Alexandrine teachers speak of the "body of the Logos." But the terminology becomes more and more objectionable. Tertullian speaks of the bread as the *figura* of Christ's body. Cyprian says that the blood of Christ is "shown forth" (*ostenditur*) in the cup. Both of these teachers speak of a "sacrifice" in the Eucharist; but while Tertullian still employs the word in the earlier sense of the people's offering, Cyprian definitely conceives of the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Lord's body and blood. (Srawley, 133.) The terms, "to offer the Eucharist," "to offer sacrifice," "to partake of the sacrifice," are freely used.

Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Mystagogic Catecheses*, made use of a more definite and pronounced terminology. He writes: "Before the sacred invocation of the Trinity bread and wine in the Eucharist are simple bread and wine; after the invocation, however, the bread becomes the body, and the wine, the blood of Christ" (Kliefoth, *Die urspruengliche Gottesdienstordnung*, 2: 69). Optatus of Milevis was just as pronounced in localizing the presence of the body and blood of Christ.

The altar is with him "the seat of the body and blood of Christ," the place "where His body and His blood used to dwell for certain moments of time," and the chalices "carry the blood of Christ." (Srawley, 142.)

The same idea is found in the writings of Ambrose, with certain doubtful features. He says, in his instructions to the catechumens: "*Ista autem esca, quum accipis, iste panis vivus, qui descendit de caelo, vitae aeternae substantiam administrat; et quicumque hunc manducaverit, non morietur in aeternum; et est corpus Christi.*" This would in itself not be objectionable, were it not for the fact that he teaches a mutation: "*Noli igitur et tu secundum naturam interpretari, quod praeter divinitatis naturam est; nam et si credas a Christo carnem esse susceptam,—et offeras transfigurandum corpus altaribus, non distinguas tamen naturam divinitatis et corporis, et tibi dicitur: Si recte offeras, non recte autem divides, peccasti.*" In another instance he uses the expression: "*Benedictione etiam natura ipsa mutatur*" (Kliefoth, *op. cit.*, 2: 229. 230). Jerome held practically the same views, for he demands a veneration of the altar and all the sacred vessels because of their association with the host. He writes: "*Discant, qui ignorant, cruditi testimoniis Scripturarum, qua debeant veneratione Sancta suscipere, et altaris Christi ministerio deservire, sacrosque calices et sancta velamina et cetera, quae ad cultum dominicae pertinent passionis, non quasi inania et sensu carentia sanctimoniam non habere, sed ex consortio corporis et sanguinis Domini eadem, qua corpus ejus et sanguis, majestati veneranda.*" (Kliefoth, *op. cit.*, 3: 32.)

Even Augustine shares the phraseology of his contemporaries, although his concern is more for the emphasis upon the real presence than upon any transfiguration or mutation. He says: "*Sicut ergo secundum quendam modum sacramentum corporis Christi corpus Christi est, sacramentum sanguinis Christi sanguis Christi est, ita sacramentum fidei fides est.*" (Kliefoth, 2: 135.) Incidentally, however, he naively recites a supposed miracle, namely that a blind boy had been healed

by placing a consecrated wafer on his eyes. He also speaks of the Eucharist as the "sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ." He even developed a theory, closely connected with the practise of offering the Eucharist for the souls of the departed, maintaining the propitiatory character of the sacramental sacrifice. (Srawley, 143. 241.)

The doctrinal position of the teachers of the Church was reflected in its liturgy, the liturgies showing the more primitive cast being the less objectionable in this respect. The Clementine Liturgy; in its prayer of invocation, has the following passage: "We offer to Thee (*prospheromen*), King and God, according to Thy command, this bread and this cup, and give thanks (*eucharistountes*) . . . , that Thou mayest look upon the offered gifts (*ta prokeimena dora*) . . . , and send Thy Holy Spirit upon this sacrifice (*epi ten thysian lauten*) . . . that He show—or change—(*apophene*) this bread as the body of Thy Christ and this cup as the blood of Thy Christ." (Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, 21.) In the Liturgy of St. James the passage is shorter: "According to Thy compassion we offer to Thee, Lord, this fearful and unbloody sacrifice (*anaimakton thysian*), and pray," etc. (p. 53.) In the Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites the words are the same: "We offer Thee this fearful and unbloody sacrifice." (p. 87.)

In the forms which have retained more of the primitive simplicity, the expressions are milder. The Ethiopic Liturgy has: "We offer Thee this bread and cup" (p. 190); the Liturgy of the Abyssinian Jacobites: "We confess Thee and offer unto Thee this bread and this cup, giving thanks unto Thee" (p. 233); and the Liturgy of the Nestorians: "And may there come, O my Lord, Thine Holy Spirit and rest upon this offering of Thy servants and bless it and hallow it" (p. 287).

On the other hand, the Byzantine rite and the later Occidental forms show a very pronounced tendency to emphasize the sacrificial element in the Eucharist. Thus the Liturgy of the Armenians, which had been composed under influence from Constantinople, has these passages just before the fraction:

“Come, and purify, and quicken us, O Thou who sittest with the Father and art here sacrificed: vouchsafe to give us of Thine immaculate body and of Thy precious blood. . . . Let us taste in holiness of the holy, holy and precious body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who, having come down from heaven, is being distributed among us.” (pp. 448. 449.) In the *Epiklesis* of the Greek Church, the consecration takes place with the following words: “Deacon: Bless, O Lord, the holy bread. Bishop: And make it the precious body of Thy Christ. Deacon: Amen. Bless, O Lord, the holy cup. Bishop: And that, which is in the cup, to be the precious blood of Thy Christ. Deacon: Amen. Bless, O Lord, both. Bishop: And change it through Thy Holy Spirit.” (Alt, *Der kirchliche Gottesdienst*, 230.) But the strongest expression of the sacrificial character in the Eucharist is found in the Canon of the Mass as now in use in the Roman Catholic Church. The first prayer reads: “*Te igitur, clementissime Pater, per Jesum Christum filium tuum supplices rogamus et petimus, ut accepta habeas et benedicas haec dona, haec munera, haec sancta sacrificia illibata; imprimis, quae tibi offerimus pro ecclesia tua sancta catholica.*” (Alt, p. 249.) And after the consecration, the expression is used: “*Sanctum sacrificium, immaculatam hostiam.*” (p. 252.)

The evidence presented shows that the purely sacramental character of the Holy Supper was given a sacrificial tinge by the obtrusion of the idea of offering. The situation was complicated still more by extending the doctrine of the presence, not only to include the real, spiritual, or sacramental presence, but also the localized, physical presence of Christ, involving a physical change in the earthly elements. And, finally, it was boldly asserted that this transfiguration or conversion was made for the purpose of offering the body of Christ as an unbloody sacrifice for the sins of the living and of the dead, thus preparing the way for the dogma of transubstantiation as promulgated in 1215.