

The Lord's Supper according to
the World Council of Churches

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The doctrine and use of the Eucharist presents modern Christendom and its impulses toward ecumenical consensus with a unique problem, for it is here that Christian churches are most obviously divided. Recent years have brought an ever increasing number of protocols offering various degrees of eucharistic "hospitality" between Christian groups, but such agreements have not generally been made on the basis of any significant degree of theological or liturgical consensus between the contracting denominations.¹ There are, in addition, some denominations which claim that no particular theological consensus is necessary or even desirable, and there are many groups which depart in one way or another from their traditional positions with regard to fellowship of the altar. Perhaps nowhere else is the piety of a particular church more clearly revealed than in its doctrine and use of the Eucharist. What is made of it and how it is used says much about what we believe about God and about ourselves, about the nature of the relationship between us, and about the nature of the Supper of which He is the Giver and we are the receivers and beneficiaries. In short, here we reveal our theological foundations and show clearly how we do our theology.

For Evangelical Lutherans the understanding of the Eucharist centers in what is given us in the bread and in the cup: "It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received. The contrary doctrine is therefore rejected" (Augustana X).² Thus, our confession of the Eucharist flows out of our confession of Him who instituted the Supper and gives His body and blood in it. He who is Giver and Gift is God made flesh, the Righteous One made sin and a curse for us, forsaken in His death and vindicated in His resurrection. He is Son of God from eternity and also Son of Man, born of Mary—one Person in two natures which are unconfused, unchangeable, indivisible, and inseparable.³ To confess that He is our Lord is to confess about ourselves that we are poor sinners and beggars before God who have nothing of our own to offer on behalf of ourselves or our world, whose call from God is to receive thankfully what He gives us in this Supper. To know and use the Gift aright comes of knowing and confessing the Giver.

To confess the presence of the body and blood of Christ is, for Lutherans, to confess the only Lord they know in the only way they know Him, in His incarnation—as the One who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, descended into hell, and on the third day rose again. It is this historical Lord who is Presiding Minister, Giver, and Gift; and the Supper He gives us is bound to the earth as He is Himself bound to them in His incarnation. He is not for us a Lord who once bore flesh and blood but bears them no longer. It is not some mythic figure who mystically confronts us in the Eucharist, for we have and know no merely mythic Lord. In the same way, the only Supper we know is the one He instituted at one point in history, in the night in which He was betrayed. Before that night there were sacred meals aplenty, both among God's Old Testament people and among the pagans, but never before a Supper in which the Lord had given men His body to eat and His blood to drink. This phenomenon began with His word of institution in which He took bread and wine and spoke powerful words over them to make them His body and blood. The Supper is always His Supper, and not the church's creation. It was instituted and established, as Luther reminds us, by Christ Himself, according to the will and command of His Father:

Now if you want to engage in a marvelous, great worship of God and honor Christ's passion rightly, then remember and participate in the Sacrament; in it, as you hear, there is a remembrance of Him, that is, He is praised and glorified. If you practice and assist in practicing this same remembrance with diligence, then you will assuredly forget about self-chosen forms of worship, for, as has been said, you cannot praise and thank God too often or too much for His grace revealed in Christ.⁴

Instruction in such worship comes from the words of Christ Himself, Luther reminds his readers. It is Christ who teaches us the nature of true *anamnesis*, how we are to remember Him by our preaching, praising, honoring, listening, and giving of thanks for the grace revealed in Christ. Such instruction teaches us how we are to make God our God—a God who does not receive from us but gives to us.

The essay on the Eucharist in the Lima Paper is meant to aid the churches of the world toward consensus in confessing and celebrating the Eucharist.⁵ It will fulfill this purpose only to the extent that churches are willing to study the Eucharist from the perspective from which the essay is formulated. Here the Eucharist is understood as a phenomenon, an event in the life of the church viewed primarily

from the perspective of its continuing celebration. The task before the churches is to make sense of this celebration, to cut through “much diversity in theological expression” to find a basis for a common understanding, expression, and use of the Supper. It is significant that the essay should choose to ground the Eucharist in the churches' own theological and liturgical expressions and usages, rather than in the divine institution of the Supper, for in the Lima Paper the accounts of the institution cannot be understood to be either the exclusive source or the continuing norm of the Eucharistic celebration. At most those accounts serve as a kind of historical justification and resource for theological and liturgical reflection. Here the Eucharist is the Lord's Supper only in a secondary and derived sense, for it is the event of the Eucharistic celebration itself which stands as the one fixed point. It is celebrated on the churches' own authority, and its celebration ought to be a testimony to the obligation toward reunion to which the social nature of the celebration impels us. The necessary result is that the essay must fail in its stated task of concentrating on those aspects of the Eucharist which have been directly or indirectly related to problems of mutual recognition. The essay avoids coming to grips with questions about the derivation and nature of the Gift and its relation to God and man. That the essay fails here is a serious indictment, for we cannot be satisfied with a document which refuses to come to grips with important issues in dogmatic and exegetical theology and the ecclesiastical traditions which enshrine them.

The eucharistic discussion in the Lima Paper is developed under three headings: (1) “The Institution of the Eucharist” ; (2) “The Meaning of the Eucharist”; (3) “The Celebration of the Eucharist” The first section identifies the Eucharist as a Gift from the Lord to the church, but this identification indicates that here the term “Eucharist” is being used to indicate the food of the Lord's Supper, the *Eucharistia*.⁶

All that the WCC can establish on the basis of the New Testament reports of the institution is that this “Eucharist” is a gift from the Lord, and it is on this basis that it can be said to derive from Him. The continuing significance of the Eucharist, however, is neither derived nor developed from the reports of the institution in Paul (First Corinthians), Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but it is instead derived, at least in part, from the motif of meals both in the life of Jesus and in the history of God's saving activity among men. Consequently, we celebrate this Eucharist mindful of the important role that suppers play in the history of salvation and, in particular, in the life and ministry of Jesus. The answer to the question “What is this Supper?” cannot be sought only in the words and actions of this one, isolated supper kept in the night of Christ's betrayal, central though that event is; it

is instead found in the role that suppers play in the ministry of Jesus (that is, as parabolic actions illuminating aspects of the Kingdom). By approaching the Eucharist in this way the essay seeks to circumvent questions about the priority of the words of institution and their place in the understanding of the Eucharist today.⁷ The essay does not seek to come to terms with the question of whether or in what sense the present Eucharist really derives from the Last Supper at all. Instead, the essay employs an “event”—centered, phenomenological approach in which the operative question is “What do we understand ourselves to be doing when we celebrate the Eucharist?” because in this way the celebration can be salvaged without our having to struggle with the question of the relationship of our Eucharist with what happened in the Upper Room.

Further, the Eucharist stands in a special relationship to the celebration of the Passover commemoration of God's saving deliverance of Israel and to the covenant meal celebrated on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24). It is within the perspective of these meals that the Eucharist comes to be understood as the new covenant parallel, and like the earlier meals it stands as a mark of identification of God's people, a mark of profession clearly seen by themselves and others. The new celebration commemorates God's saving deliverance in Christ's death and resurrection and is itself the pre-figurement of the eschatological Banquet of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). Here Christ commands His disciples, as the continuing people of God, to remember and encounter Him in a “sacramental meal.” The impact of this encounter is such that it brings us into immediate contact with God's love. This love was evident and manifest in Jesus, and here and now it is communicated to us through symbolic words and actions, just as in the night of His betrayal Jesus attached great meaning to His symbolic words and actions. In other words, the significance of what Jesus says and gives in the Supper is to be sought not so much in the particular words He has spoken and the actions which accompany those words, but in the recognition that here we have entered the world of parabolic actions where nothing is quite the way it seems and where what is signified is the unfolding of the love of God. It is hard to avoid the impression that the essay simply stirs together rather uncritically all the diverse interpretations promoted by the last one hundred years of critical scholarship, and lays it all before us without any careful sifting or straining—in a kind of ecumenical eucharistic stew.

The second section of the eucharistic essay of this Lima Paper is concerned with the quintessential meaning of the Eucharist. It is defined as the sacrament of the gift of salvation which God makes to

us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This gift is communicated to us through our communion *in* (not, however, *of*) the Body and Blood of Christ. Bread is one thing; Body is quite another. Here we are dealing on two levels—on the earthly, we are eating bread and drinking wine; on a higher, more spiritual, level we are sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ, in the sense that we are being encountered by the reality of Christ's personal presence. All that the WCC can say is that in the eating and drinking of the earthly elements in the Eucharist, Christ grants us communion with Himself. It cannot, however, be said to be a bodily eating of His Body and Blood. The gift is personal fellowship with Christ, mediated by God the Holy Spirit through our action of eating and drinking bread and wine, but it is in no way directly linked with the bread and wine that are eaten and drunk. The blessing is in the communion, but not in what is eaten and drunk as such. Thus, what makes this bread and wine different from other bread and wine is, first, its representative character (it is said to stand for the present creation, human labor, and the fruit of labor) and, secondly, the context of the meal in which it is used. Through this eating and drinking God renews the members of the church, here described as the Body of Christ. In the Eucharist every baptized Christian receives assurance of forgiveness—but not forgiveness as such, according to what the WCC understands as Christ's *promise* in Matthew 26:28. The Christian at the same time receives the pledge of eternal life, according to John 6:51-58 as construed by the WCC. (This WCC exegesis is, of course, quite fallacious. For John 6 clearly makes no reference to bodily eating, and Matthew 28 makes no promise but rather proclaims forgiveness in the contents of the cup, that is, His blood shed for many.)

The discussion of the significance of the Eucharist makes it clear that the Lima Paper understands the Eucharist not simply as the Lord's gift to the church, but also as the cultic ceremony and ritual celebration in which this food is blessed and administered, the unified action of the church. This action can best be considered, according to the essay, by a consideration of five specific aspects of the words and actions which immediately surround the administration: (1) Thanksgiving to the Father; (2) Memorial of Christ; (3) Invocation of the Spirit; (4) Communion of the Faithful; and (5) Meal of the Consummation. The nature of the Eucharist as gift is, in fact, dependent upon the action of the church in her celebration under these various aspects. This, according to the perspective of the essay, is the real object of our Lord's command when He says, "This do!" And here the basic orientation of the document becomes most clear—the Eucharist is

a parabolic action by which the church actualizes herself as the Body of Christ. God's gift is also the result of our right action; it is the way by which we actualize and realize the gift—not by simple and faithful eating and drinking, as though this were the essential thing that our Lord wanted us to do, but rather by a total eucharistic action (which culminates in the eating and drinking, to be sure, but which comprises much more than that).

The five aspects of the Lima Paper are, then, the action of the church by which the Eucharistic actions is accomplished. The first aspect comprises her giving of thanks to God, for it is by this that she proclaims and celebrates the work of God by word and action. The Eucharist (i.e., the total action) thanks God for all that He has done in creation, redemption, and sanctification, for everything He is presently doing in both the church and the world in spite of our sins, and for everything that He will do in the future to bring the Kingdom to fulfillment. The Eucharist is the church's great *Berakah* by which she blesses God for all His benefits. According to the WCC, furthermore, the church utters and acts out her praise on behalf of all creation, as creation's representative, for present in every celebration is the world which God has reconciled—in the bread and wine, in the persons of the worshipers, and in their prayers for themselves and their intercessory prayers for all the world. Such a great sacrifice of praise to God is possible for us only through, with, and in Christ, in the Eucharist. Now, by means of her offering up of bread and wine, the church realizes the world's great and final goal—the offering of the Great *Thanksgiving*, an offering and hymn of praise of the Creator within the universal fellowship which is ours in the Body of Christ, the kingdom of justice, love, and peace in the Holy Spirit.

Here the essay very properly accents the general eucharistic character of the church's worship and praise, but it unduly restricts that eucharistic element to the celebration of the Eucharist. Such thanksgiving and sacrifice cannot be restricted to the Eucharist, lest we run the danger of relating our own spiritual sacrifice with the appropriation of Christ's sacrifice through the communion of His body and blood. To concentrate on the Eucharistic celebration as the locus of our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving gives the impression that it is by means of our communion that we actively take part in Christ's sacrifice. And this further obliterates the important distinction between what Christ has done for us and given us and our receiving and using the fruit of it. Actually, nowhere in the New Testament is Holy Communion ever referred to in sacrificial terms.⁸

In addition to her giving of thanks, according to the Lima Paper, the church makes a memorial of Christ in her Eucharist. Under this

second aspect the Eucharist is understood to be the living and effective *sign* of the unrepeatable sacrifice of the crucified and risen (!) Christ which is operative on behalf of mankind. By its liturgical celebration the Eucharist renders this sacrifice efficacious in the present moment and makes it possible for the sacrifice to accomplish its purpose on the basis of "the biblical idea of memorial." No reference is supplied to provide us with biblical examples, for it is in fact a notion of re-presentation developed by the Benedictine monk, Dom Odo Casel, to which reference is being made. According to this theory, Christ and His work (including His incarnation, servanthood, ministry, teaching, suffering, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, and the sending of the Spirit) are made effectively present through the liturgical action, to grant us communion with the person of Christ.⁹ In this eucharistic *anamnesis* Christ is at work in His celebrating church both by *representation* and *anticipation*. By means of her liturgical action (and not, significantly, by means of Baptism, absolution, or preaching) the church proclaims God's mighty acts and promises in such a manner that the effect of those acts and the promises attached to them are made present in and for the church. She gives thanks for God's great benefits and pleads that all mankind may receive these blessings. The *anamnesis* presents Christ's working anew to the Father in the church's Great Thanksgiving and anticipates the fulfillment of that work by her intercessory prayer for all creation. According to this perspective, the presence in this world and among us of the saving effects of Christ's person and work is not the result of the preaching of the Gospel and its reception into open ears and believing hearts, but it is instead dependent upon the ritual activity of the church is her eucharistic celebration. By this means the church now uses symbolic words and actions which point beyond themselves to render present the saving effects of the work of Christ.

The promotion of this understanding of memorial is the central point of the Lima Paper; all that follows rests largely upon this second aspect of the church's celebration of the Eucharist, the commemoration. It rests upon an understanding of what our Lord is commanding us to do when He says, "This do," which is not only different from, but antithetical to, what we confess and teach to be a faithful understanding and doing of Christ's command. It is clear that Christ wants something to be done, but according to the church's confessions, that command encompasses the whole action of the sacrament in which the bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, and received by eating and drinking. By this means the Lord's death is proclaimed in the church, and all this must be kept entire and unchanged (SD VII,83f.). But according to the position of this essay, the action of

the rite, considered under the aspects of thanking, remembering, invoking, communing, and anticipating comprises the *anamnesis* which properly memorializes what God has done for the salvation of the world and renders it present and effective. This *anamnesis*, and not our Baptism, stands also as the foundation of all Christian prayer, for here Christ empowers us to live with Him, suffer with Him, and pray through Him as justified sinners who now freely fulfill His will. According to this understanding, we pray from the eucharistic commemoration, not our Baptism, and all our living and holy sacrifice is formed and nourished in the eucharistic cultus, in which we are here and now sanctified and reconciled in love and made the servants of reconciliation. In Christ, and with all His saints and martyrs, we are here renewed in the covenant which is sealed by His blood. This *anamnesis* is the engine which drives all prayer, preaching, and thanksgiving. While centering its attention on the church's action in celebrating the Eucharist, the Lima Paper still wishes to maintain and affirm that the words and actions of Christ in the institution do uniquely stand at the heart of the church's eucharistic celebration. The meal is the sacrament of His body and blood, the sacrament of His real presence. The words which He has spoken declare His real, living, and active presence in the Supper. This presence does not indeed depend upon faith, but needs to be discerned by faith.

Since the doctrine of the real presence is so central to Lutherans, this apparent affirmation of that doctrine needs to be closely examined. It must first be asked how the real presence is to be understood. Since it was this point which was at issue between Luther, Carlstad, Zwingli, and Oecolampadius, it should be determined just what was at stake in that controversy. Was it the question of whether or not Christ is really present in His Supper? Actually, no one argued in favor of a doctrine of the unreal presence or the real absence. The issue was not whether Christ is really present, but rather in what that presence consists, that is, what is the mode of His presence and the relation of that presence to the material elements.

This question was not new; it was already being asked over a thousand years before Luther and Zwingli. The shape of the question is already anticipated in the statement of Irenaeus about the two realities in the Eucharist: the earthly and the heavenly. It is in Augustine that we are confronted by a well-developed discrimination between these two realities on the basis of Neo-Platonism. Augustine discriminates between the outward sign (the material element) and the invisible content (the grace of God) of which the material elements are a sign (*pignus*). From the standpoint of the outward sign, the

sacrament is a material symbol of an invisible content, and the material symbol is honored and revered for the sake of that content. The visible sign is what is seen by the eye, and the invisible content is what is understood in the mind. In addition to the natural likeness or similarity of the sign to its invisible content, it is the interpreting word spoken over the element which makes it an effective sign or symbol. "Verbum accedit elementum et fit sacramentum"—a phrase which in a slightly altered form ("accedat") is used by Luther, once in the Schmalkald Articles in reference to Baptism, and twice in the Large Catechism in reference both to Baptism and the Supper. By this Augustine understands that the real power of the sacrament is in the word which is heard and believed; the power is not in the element itself—a position which Luther found most congenial. But Augustine's Neo-Platonic orientation inclines him further toward a purely symbolic view of the sacrament, although he wants still to say that something real and effective happens in the administration of the sacrament. In Baptism there is a real and effective forgiving of sins, and in the Eucharist there is a real and effective refreshment. God works through the sacraments effectively, but in themselves they are simply symbols. Thus, what Christ calls His body in the sacrament is, in fact, the sign of His body, but at the same time, the personal nature of the fellowship with God which is effected through the Supper makes it a real and effective gift—a position later taken up, against Luther, by Oecolampadius.

Still unresolved, however, was the question of the relation of the material element to the uncreated grace of God: how can the grace of God be related to earthly and material elements? Various solutions were offered—Hugo and Bonaventura saw the element as pointing by natural similarity to the grace communicated (water washes; bread nourishes). Thomas recognized this as a begging of the question and sought to resolve the matter by a distinction between the principal cause (God Himself and the instrumental cause (moved and driven by the principal cause)).¹⁰ The question was not really resolved, and the reformers inherited it.

In their attacks on Luther's insistence on a bodily presence of the body and blood of Christ in the material elements, the opponents argue from the Augustinian framework they inherited from the schoolmen. They build on the thesis that a bodily presence of Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine is not possible, necessary, worthy of Christ's glory, or even desirable. The physical body cannot communicate spiritual benefits. The bread can be only the symbol, sign, signification, or figure of that body which is now enthroned in heaven.

The movement of the pious heart must be away from the earthly and material to the real, but in no way a bodily presence.

The question of the relation of the material to the divine rests not only or even primarily in the doctrine of the sacraments, however, but in the incarnation. If it is a real incarnation such as is proclaimed by John and Paul and confessed at Chalcedon, then here the created and uncreated are brought into perfect communion in the person of the Son of God. The uniqueness of Luther's contribution to the sacramental discussion is the way in which he relates the sacramental union to the personal union of the two natures. In this communion of attributes the divine is not so much hidden behind or beneath as revealed in its conjunction with the earthly. It is a union completely without analogy. As the whole *pleroma* of God is pleased to dwell in the bodily flesh of Jesus Christ, so is the bodily flesh of the Son of God—born of Mary, bruised and crucified, dishonored and despised, and now gloriously risen—present in the Eucharist, precisely in the bread and in the wine. Luther's purpose is here to cut through the dilemma posed by Neo-Platonic ontology and the theological opinions derived from it—especially the utter dichotomy it posits between the divine and the human. The question, as Luther sees it, is whether our understanding of the divine is developed independent of the incarnation of Christ or from it. If independent of the incarnation, then that incarnation itself would have to be viewed from the dichotomy, and any real communication between the divine and human natures in the person of Christ would have to be denied. We would be left with a Christology with a tendency toward Nestorianism and plainly away from Cyril and Chalcedon. As it is, Luther never tires of confessing that apart from Christ our picture of God is enshrouded in shadows.

The question about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is not answered adequately when it is affirmed that it is a real presence or even a sacramental presence, Zwingli, for his part, is willing to say, "The sacrament is the sign of the true body." But to this he then adds, ". . . therefore it is not the true body." The fact is that the terms 'sacrament' and 'sacramental' themselves have no fixed and invariable sense. Indeed, when Zwingli uses the term, and as well when it is used in the Lima Paper, it is easy to understand this in the Augustinian sense of "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." It was in this sense that Olevian, one of the fathers of the Heidelberg Confession could completely alter the sense of Luther's definition of the Sacrament of the Altar.

Luther said, "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself." ("Es ist der wahre Leib und Blut unsers Herrn Jesu Christi, unter dem Brot und Wein uns Christen zu essen und zu trinken von Christo selbs eingesetzt.") Olevian, on the other hand, said, "It is the sacrament of the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink in true faith, instituted to His glory and our comfort by Christ Himself." ("Es ist das Sakrament des wahren Leibes und Blutes unseres Herrn Jesu Christi, mit Brot and Wein uns Christen in wahrem Glauben zu essen und zu trinken von Christo selbst zu seiner Ehre und unserem Trost eingesetzt. ")¹¹

The third aspect of the eucharistic celebration according to the Lima Paper, is the invocation of the Holy Spirit, who makes the crucified and risen Christ really present in fulfillment of the words of institution. The essay affirms that the promise (not declaration) of these words is central to the celebration, yet that the event as such has its true origin and fulfillment in the Father; it is accomplished by and in the Son, and the Holy Spirit makes it both possible and effective. Again we are caught in the dichotomy between earth and heaven; in the mystery of the Triune God it is supposedly the Holy Spirit who bridges the gap and makes the historical words (not the historical body and blood!) present and alive. Assured by Jesus' promise, the church prays to the Father for the Spirit to make the eucharistic event a reality. By means of Christ's words and the Spirit's power, according to the WCC, the bread and wine become sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood, for the purpose of communion and in order to provide us a foretaste of the Kingdom by giving us the life of the new creation and the assurance of the parousia. In reality, to put it simply, a clear word by which Christ declares His presence where and when His word is kept and used is replaced by an elaborate *schema* of transactions within the communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit upon which we are not permitted to speculate.

The tradition of the Western Church has called the words of institution *Verba Consecrationis*. This is a position already articulated by Ambrose of Milan. It is emphatically affirmed in Article VII of the Formula, which quotes not a Western theologian, but no less than John Chrysostomos, whose name is given to the liturgy most often used in Eastern Orthodox churches:

Christ himself prepares this table and blesses it. No human being, but only Christ himself who was crucified for us, can make of the bread and wine set before us the body and blood of Christ.

The words are spoken by the the mouth of the priest, but by God's power and grace through the words that he speaks, 'This is my body,' the elements set before us in the Supper are blessed. Just as the words, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,' were spoken only once but are ever efficacious in nature and make things grow and multiply, so this word was indeed spoken only once, but it is efficacious until this day, and until his return it brings it about that his true body and blood are present in the church's Supper.¹²

Modern liturgical scholars like to claim that the Roman Mass must have "lost" the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, very early. Actually, we do not have any clearly identified Roman mass which ever included such an invocation. It is not possible for us to see in the so-called Apostolic *Tradition of Hippolytus* the Roman mass of the second century in the absence of any convincing evidence to give it such authority or even to clearly identify this Hippolytus. The work appears to come from Egypt-rich ground for the development of a prayer of invocation. Investigations into liturgical documents of the same period and milieu have revealed at least three stages of liturgical growth leading finally to the so-called classical *epiclesis*: (1) a prayer for the Holy Spirit to prepare the communicants to receive worthily; (2) a prayer for the Holy Spirit to prepare the communicants and to bless the bread and wine to be used in communion; and finally (3) the invocation of the Spirit to work a change in the bread and wine and make them the bearer of spiritual grace.¹³ The theological rationale for the *epiclesis* has always been the special concern and province of Eastern Orthodox theologians, whose opinions on this subject have never been raised to the level of dogma. A Lutheran should be concerned about how the assertion of the importance of such an invocation either clarifies or further obscures the whole matter of the relation of the element to the blessing and the priority of the words of institution. If such a prayer is advocated as a necessary asking of the Spirit to make something earthly the bearer of a spiritual content, or if the advocate argues that the words of institution are not in themselves life-giving, active, and powerful words which are able to do what they say, then the inclusion of such a prayer, much more any insistence upon it, is highly questionable, and perhaps even a blasphemy.

The fourth aspect of eucharistic celebration, according to the Lima Paper, is the communion of the faithful, which both nourishes the life of the church and at the same time fosters communion within the body of Christ which is the church. Here the predominant dimen-

sion is horizontal rather than vertical. It is supposedly the common sharing of the bread and the cup that makes us one with Christ and with each other; it is our common activity which demonstrates the fellowship of the church. That is to say, oneness is predicated on the common activity of the worshipers for whom the eucharistic ceremony is a community-creating event. Unfortunately the community-creating aspect of the celebration, which is identified by such "liturgical ceremonies" as the mutual forgiveness of sins, common eating and drinking in the Supper, and the extension of the fellowship through the taking of the elements to the infirm and the imprisoned, create a social dimension and obligation which, from the perspective of Lutheran theology, creates a clear Law emphasis. There is, in fact, no Gospel emphasis in the description of the communion of the faithful in the Lima Paper. Furthermore, there is no reference to Christ or the Gospel creating a new social ethos, but rather only a calling into question of all existing social, economic, and political inter-relationships and a call to reform on the basis of a supposed social nature of the eucharistic celebration.

In its fifth and final aspect, according to the Lima Paper, the Eucharist shows and offers a foretaste of the eschatological rule of God over all things in the final renewal of creation, signs of which are said to be evident already in the reformation of the present social order. Here the Eucharist, as God's Gift, is said to bring a new reality into this present world which serves to transform us into the image of Christ and make us His witnesses. This happens by example and imitation; the pattern of the eucharistic celebration is supposedly the heavenly pattern which we are called to approximate through our own celebration. Here again the social dimension and its resulting ecumenical imperative are the predominant impulses which call all existing arrangements into question and place them under judgement.

The final section of the eucharistic essay in the Lima Paper is concerned with the practical ordering of the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist, with special attention to the twenty-one elements which ought to be included on the basis of the previous discussion. Special attention is given to the role of the clergyman as both president, who stands in the name of Christ, and as representative of the connection between the local community and other such groups within the universal church. Frequent, even weekly, celebration is advocated as a fitting celebration of the resurrection and to deepen Christian faith. Attention is given to the question of reservation, which is justified at least in so far as it aids in the communion of the sick and absent. Finally, the hope is expressed that common usages will in themselves

hasten the day when divided churches will visibly unite around the Table of the Lord.

I have expressed apprehension over the Lima Paper. It fails to speak with one voice even in so elementary a matter as providing an adequate definition of the Eucharist. That it fails to offend is a tribute to its manner of presentation rather than its positive contents. Failing to ground the "eucharistic" celebration in the specific words and deeds of Christ in the night of His betrayal, the document's authors are unable to ground its continuation in the "This do!" which He spoke, but must instead regard that continuation as something deduced from the nature of the celebration itself.

That the Lima Paper may appeal to us is a testimony to the fact that we are no longer reverent auditors of the words of Christ in the Supper, have forgotten our catechism, and have lost track of the terms of the eucharistic controversies which still cry out for resolution. What the paper offers us is a far cry from what we have confessed to be the nature, benefit, and gift of the Sacrament. What is lost in this presentation is a more than simply an adequate statement of the *manducatio indignorum* or *impiorum*. Here we are faced with a Eucharist that preaches law, with no warmth or joy in it. What the WCC has portrayed is far from what Luther so simply describes in his characterization of the true Christian mass:

. . . God be praised, in our churches we can show a Christian a true Christian mass according to the ordinance and institution of Christ, as well as according to the true intention of Christ and the church. There our pastor, bishop, or minister in the pastoral office, rightly and honorably and publicly called, having been previously consecrated, anointed, and born in baptism as a priest of Christ, without regard to the private chrism, goes before the altar. Publicly and plainly he sings what Christ has ordained and instituted in the Lord's Supper. He takes the bread and wine, gives thanks, distributes and gives them to the rest of us who are there and want to receive them, on the strength of the words of Christ: "This is my body, this is my blood. Do this," etc. Particularly we who want to receive the sacrament kneel beside, behind and around him, man, woman, young, old, master, servant, wife, maid, parents, and children, even as God brings us together there, all of us true holy priests, sanctified by Christ's blood, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and consecrated in baptism. On the basis of this our inborn, hereditary priestly honor and attire we are present, have, as Revelation 4 [: 4] pictures it, our golden crowns on our heads, harps and golden censers in our hands; and we

let our pastor say what Christ has ordained, not for himself as though it were for his person, but he is the mouth for all of us and we all speak the words with him from the heart and in faith, directed to the Lamb of God who is present for us and among us, and who according to his ordinance nourished us with his body and blood. This is our mass, and it is the true mass which is not lacking among us.¹⁴

Endnotes

1. *Kirche und Abendmahl I: Studien und Dokumentation zur Frage der Abendmahlsgemeinschaft im Luthertum*, ed. Vilmos Vajta, and *II Kirchengemeinschaft. Umfang und Grenzen der Kirchengemeinschaft in Leben und Praxis der lutherischen Kirchen in Lateinamerika, Asien, Afrika und Australien, sowie der lutherischen Minderheitskirchen in Europa*, ed. Paul E. Hoffman and Harding Meyer, give a history and documentation of agreements between Lutherans, Reformed churches, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, etc. Cf. also Marc Lienhard, *Oekumenische Perspektiven II: Lutherischereformierte Kirchengemeinschaft Heute*. The Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogues have led to concrete recommendations, now acted upon, among the majority of American Lutheran churches and the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. allowing for joint celebrations for the purposes of fostering a closer alliance and the development of theological and liturgical consensus between the communions involved.
2. "Von dem Abendmahl des Herren wird also gelehrt, dass wahrer Leib und Blut Christi wahrhaftiglich unter der Gestalt des Brots und Weins im Abendmahl gegenwaertig sei und da ausgeteilt und genommen werde. Derhalben wird auch die Gegenlehr verworfen:" Rejected also is the notion that the parallel Latin text confesses a different understanding: "De coena Domini docent, quod corpus et sanguis Christi vere adsint et distribuantur vescentibus in ceona Domini; et improbant secus docentes." Cf. Wilhelm Neuser, "Der Abendmahlsartikel der Confessio Augustana" in *Die Abendmahlslehre Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung (1519-1530)*.
3. The reference is to the *asynchytos*, *atreptos*, *adiaretos*, *achoristos* in the classical Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon.
4. LW 37, 25.
5. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper 111, Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1982), generally known as the Lima Paper.
6. Here it must be assumed that the term "Eucharist" is used in the manner of the earliest sub-

apostolic fathers. Justin Martyr calls the food of the Supper *Eucharistia*, “of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh” (*First Apology*, 66). And Irenaeus uses the same term in a similar, yet somewhat more developed sense: “For as the bread which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity” (*Against Heresies*, IV, 18).

7. Such questions were raised on the basis of modern critical scholarship already in the last century. Albert Schweitzer summarized the attempts to establish the origins of the Eucharist and its original meaning in *Das Abendmahl im Zusammenhang mit dem Leben Jesu und der Geschichte des Urchristentums* (1901). He noted two major approaches: (1) attempts to underscore the memorial-aspect of the Supper, according to which what Jesus did in the Last Supper is seen as a symbolic action which points to His passion—a view which accepts the authenticity of the New Testament accounts of the origin of the Supper, but not its repetition; and (2) attempts to lay the central emphasis on the receiving of the bread and wine as the act of communion—a view which explains the repetition of the rite but seems at the same time to erode any continuity with the Last Supper. Schweitzer's own view is eschatological.

In the continuing discussion the frankly modernist views of Loisy (*Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, 1908) and others tended to center the development of the Eucharist in Paul, seeing it primarily as a means of mystical communion or oneness with the crucified Christ while Adolf von Harnack (*Brot und Wasser: Die eucharistischen Elemente bei Justin*) saw the origin of the Supper in Christ Himself, who feeds the soul to symbolize forgiveness of sins and sanctify earthly life, but found no specific command to repeat the action. Juelicher saw only a parable teaching that the death of Jesus is a fount of blessing (“Zur Geschichte der Abendmahlsfeier in der ältesten Kirche,” *Theologische Abhandlungen, Karl von Weizsäcker gewidmet*, 1892).

Han Lietzmann, in *Messe und Herrenmahl* (1926), posited the independent development of two Suppers in the early church. The first, based on Jewish family meals which Jesus observed with His disciples, was continued in the church in Jerusalem as the Breaking of Bread in a joyful expectation of His coming again, with no direct connection with the words and events in the Upper Room. This supper became the basis of the *Agape*. The second type of meal developed from Paul's theological reflection on the Last Supper and finds its center in the incorporation of the Christian into Christ.

The best summary of this material is in the first chapter of Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic*

Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic (tr. by A. G. Hebert from the Swedish *Nattvarden i evangeliskt gudstjänstliv*, 1926), 1930. "Therefore a study of the eucharistic rite in the churches of the Reformation cannot avoid the consideration of the problem of the Eucharist and the Gospel. The problem resolves itself into two principal questions: (i) Can the eucharist of the church still be derived from the action of Jesus in the night that he was betrayed? (ii) Can any particular view of the rite be established on the basis of the New Testament evidence as the norm and standard by which all subsequent developments are to be judged?" (p. 2).

8. This point is made by Carl Fr. Wisloff in "Worship and Sacrifice" *Lutheran World* 56, 345-455, Wisloff points out Luther's insistence on a proper distinction between the Sacrament itself and the service of liturgy in which the Sacrament is received and used.
9. Dom Odo Casel, *Das christliche Kultmysterium*, defines the church's liturgical action as a mystery by which Christ's redemptive action is made to be present in the worshipping community's action. By this means the community is made to participate in the saving act and its effects.

Oliver K. Olson, "Contemporary Trends in Liturgy Viewed from the Perspective of Classical Lutheran Theology" (*Lutheran Quarterly*, 25, p. 128), notes the affinity between Casel's theory and that of Zwingli—not surprising, considering the latter's plainly humanist orientation. Olson farther quotes Gottfried Lochner: "Still it must first be recognized that 'remembrance' is no intellectual occurrence and does not awaken the association with the past, but awakens the association of the present. *Memoria*, according to St. Augustine, represents, as does *anamnesis*, according to Plato, the soul-power of present reactualization (*Vergegenwaertigung*), and thereby of the consciousness itself; it is often coterminous with consciousness. 'Recalling,' in this tradition, refers not to our ability to place ourselves back into a near or far past, but the way that a past event is transferred into our present time and becomes contemporary with us and efficacious among us. Zwingli thinks in the categories of this platonic-augustinian anthropology; the power of the present re-actualization (*Vergegenwaertigung*) of Christ's death as our salvation lay for him not in our souls, but on the basis of the eternal effectiveness of the Lord's sacrifice in the Holy Spirit; the receptive organ is faith, or the conscious contemplation of the same."

Luther, for his part, also speaks of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, identifying it not with the ritual action of the congregation (important though that action is), for right praise and thanksgiving adorns and decorates God, and nothing more. Outward decoration, vesture, and ceremonies should, however, never themselves be called divine worship, for right praise and thanksgiving consists in the use of the sacrament, that is in the faithful eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. In this way he who worships holds to the right understanding of Christ's remembrance and performs two important priestly acts: (1) he submits himself to God's instruction and ordinance and (2) he keeps Christ in remembrance and perseveres in that remembrance. He both thanks God in Christ and confesses Christ openly before the world. "By thanking, praising, and glorifying God he performs the most beautiful sacrifice, the supreme worship of God, and the most glorious work, namely, a thank offering. With his confession before men he does as much as if he preached and taught people to believe in Christ" *LW*38, 108.

Luther's understanding of "remembrance" is discussed by Gottfried G. Krodel in "The Great Thanksgiving of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship: It is the Christians' Supper and not the Lord's Supper," *The Cresset: Occasional Paper I* (1976), 16ff.

10. Hugo of St. Victor (d. 1142) speaks of the material element openly and sensibly pointing on the basis of its institution to an invisible and spiritual grace which it contains by virtue of its consecration. Bonaventura develops his position along similar lines, positing that the natural element points by similarity to the grace given (i.e. water washes and bread feeds). For neither of them does the element contain grace, but it is a symbol or seal which reminds us that God has promised that, where and when the seal is used, He will accompany its use with His grace. Thomas Aquinas rejects this as no real solution, since it still does not get at the question of how something created can communicate something divine. His answer is a distinction in the agent cause between the principal cause (which works by the power of its form, as fire causes something to become hot by virtue of its own heat) and the instrumental cause (which works by the motion whereby the principal cause moves it, as a chair is not like the axe by which it is hewn, but like the ides in the mind of the one who hews it with the axe). ---We must allow that there is in the sacraments a certain instrumental power of bringing about the sacramental gifts" (11.62.1.4).
11. Hermann Sasse, *Corpus Christi: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der abendmahlskonkordie*, p. 58.
12. *De Proditione Iudae, 1,6*, quoted in the Formula of Concord, SD, VII, 76
13. Arthur Voobus traces the development of the "trend of sacramental magic" in *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*, pp. 94-99.
14. *LW* 38, 208- 209.