

*The*  
VENERABLE  
– *and* –  
ADORABLE  
EUCCHARIST

A Study of the Lutheran Doctrine  
of the Lord's Supper in the 1500s

TOM G. A. HARDT

Translated by  
MARK DEGARMEUX

*Respectfully dedicated to  
Professor Hermann Sasse*



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# Foreword

TOM G. A. HARDT dedicated his 1971 doctoral dissertation to Professor Hermann Sasse. That dedication points to the genesis of *The Venerable and Adorable Eucharist* [*Venerabilis et Adorabilis Eucharistia*]. Later, in 1995, Hardt pointed to a specific writing by Sasse that began the journey which became this volume: “I had not reached the age of twenty-one when I wrote my first letter to Hermann Sasse, having read his *Vom Sakrament des Altars*, which raised some questions for me. I was at that time a student of history at the Royal University of Stockholm. . . . It was from Australia that the answer eventually came, an answer that in time would change not only my life, but the lives of others as well.”<sup>1</sup> The correspondence between the two continued until Sasse’s death in 1976.

Sasse has been referred to as a “lonely” or “stand-alone” Lutheran. The two-volume set of collected essays and letters of Sasse entitled *The Lonely Way* reflects the epithet that was applied to him. In the context of Confessional Lutheranism, the term describes one who professes the doctrines of Holy Scripture as set forth in the Lutheran Book of Concord and who is led for the sake of conscience to separate from a previous fellowship that has departed from a conscientious adherence to the Lutheran Confession. Sasse marked the time in 1948 when he could no longer stand with the Bavarian church in Germany and resigned his membership there. He then joined the *Evangelisch-lutherische Kirche* (*Altlutherische*), later accepting a position in Australia.

Much of Tom Hardt’s life was also lived under the mantle of “lonely Lutheran.” While at Sweden’s Uppsala University, Hardt and other like-minded

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1 Tom G. A. Hardt, “Hermann Sasse in His Letters,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 4, no. 4 (1995): 5. *Vom Sakrament des Altars* is a collection of Sasse’s essays on the Lord’s Supper that was published in 1941. It may be considered the forerunner of Sasse’s *This Is My Body*. See Ronald Feuerhahn and Matthew Harrison, eds., *The Lonely Way* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 2:11. When Hardt published a popular summary of his dissertation, he entitled it *Om altarets sakrament* in honor of Sasse’s *Vom Sakrament des Altars* (see below, p. vi n. 4).

Confessional Lutheran students formed a club devoted to studying Lutheran doctrine and piety. When Hardt concluded that it was impossible for him to be ordained by the Church of Sweden, the small group followed him and organized St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Since he could not accept ordination by the Church of Sweden, Tom was ordained by the congregation, following Philip Melancthon's conclusion in the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* that if the bishops are heretical or will not ordain pastors, the congregations would have to do it themselves.<sup>2</sup>

For the next forty years, Tom served as pastor of St. Martin's congregation. The congregation could not boast of much growth; it was isolated from the Church of Sweden and had no formal connection to any other church. Yet in his isolation, Hardt carried on a worldwide correspondence, serving not only those lonely Lutherans in Sweden but also faithful Confessional Lutherans the world over. Much of his correspondence was of a scholarly nature, but Hardt's weekly sermons in Swedish were read widely in Sweden and beyond and were appreciated for their faithful, Law-Gospel preaching.

Hardt was not without his detractors. He gave me a copy of his dissertation, *Venerabilis et Adorabilis Eucharistia*, apologizing that it had been sent originally to an Uppsala professor who returned it unread—with his condemnation of the book. With his tiny, insignificant congregation and lack of a well-paid academic position, Hardt was not highly regarded, but he understood this slight in the light of Jesus' dictum that “no prophet is accepted in his own country” (Luke 4:24). Yet outside Sweden, Hardt found many supporters and received praise for his theology of the Lord's Supper and his research skills.

In an essay for the fiftieth anniversary of St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Stockholm (1961–2011), Pastor Sten Rydh writes that “Tom Hardt's mentor was the great Lutheran theologian Hermann Sasse.”<sup>3</sup> It was a mentorship carried on almost completely by mail. Hardt emphasized his debt to Sasse in a preface to the English translation of *Om Altarets Sakrament*: “The Rev. Professor Dr. Hermann Sasse, North Adelaide South Australia, had helped me from the very beginning of my career as a scholar. . . . To the memory of my beloved Hermann Sasse I dedicate this book.”<sup>4</sup> While walking on the beach of a Swedish island, Hardt made it clear to me that his interest in exploring more deeply the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Altar was because of Hermann Sasse. When Tom

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2 See Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 341 (Treatise 72).

3 Sten Rydh, Några tankar kring Tom Hardts teologi, Evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Sverige, St. Martin's Congregation. [https://www.evluth.se/dokument/hardts\\_teologi.pdf](https://www.evluth.se/dokument/hardts_teologi.pdf). Accessed January 9, 2023.

4 Tom G. A. Hardt, *On the Sacrament of the Altar*, trans. Edward L. Rye (St. Catharines, Ontario: Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2007).

described feeling like a young student in the presence of a great teacher, I had a sense of what that felt like.

At various times, Dr. Hardt expressed his hope that the dissertation could be translated into English. In 1980, Hardt had his attorney draw up a legal document designating Bjarne and Erling Teigen his agents for any publication of his works in the United States. This was accomplished for a small summary of his dissertation intended for laity under the title *Om Altarets Sakrament*. While published in German translation in 1988,<sup>5</sup> when Hardt passed away in 1998 his dissertation had not yet been translated into English. Now, fifty years after its first publication, English readers have access to the results of Hardt's research. We are grateful to Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux for the translation.

We express our thanks also to the children of Dr. Hardt for granting permission to publish this book. The power of attorney for publishing Tom's writings ended with his death in 1998, and thus it became necessary to ask his heirs, whom I had learned to know while visiting the Hardts several times in the 1990s, to authorize publication.

The Hardt home, with four of the six children still living there, was a cordial, warm, busy household. Karin Hassler Hardt was not only an excellent hostess and homemaker but also a multilingual, with a master's degree in theology from Uppsala University. Rare is the scholar who can footnote the scholarship of his wife: Hardt cites Karin Hassler Hardt on Luther and the elevation of the Sacrament (below, p. 236 n. 6). The Hardt children were also multilingual, well-informed, and able to participate in the table talk. The evening meal with the Hardts was delightful, filled with wide-ranging discussion and family devotion that would include a Swedish hymn accompanied by one of the sons at the piano. We are most grateful to Dr. Hardt's children for making the translation and publication of this important theological research possible.

Erling T. Teigen, Professor Emeritus  
Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota  
Eastertide 2023

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5 Tom G. A. Hardt, *Venerabilis et adorabilis eucharistia: Ein Studie über die Lutherische Abendmahlslehre im 16 Jh.*, trans. Susanne Diestelmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).

## CHAPTER 3

# *Possibile—Necessarium*

## Christology and Sacrament

As already presented, the repletive and diffinitive modes of presence of Christ's body are distinct from each other: the presence expressed in Christological terms is not immediately identical with the sacramental presence. In the literature, the author of the present investigation<sup>1</sup> and then Ragnar Holte<sup>2</sup> have emphasized this, against making the different modes identical. Holte gives a brief overview of the basis for research, where Vilmos Vajta<sup>3</sup> consistently maintains that the modes are identical, which again is questioned by [Carl Fredrik] Wisløff.<sup>4</sup> Holte finds that Vajta's interpretation has its immediate origin in [Reinhold] Seeberg,<sup>5</sup> who in his history of dogma, while analyzing Luther's *Great Confession* of the Supper, claimed that when Luther asserts a special diffinitive form of presence, he does not render his opinion without making a hypothetical argument, suited to the premises of the opponents. The idea of the sacramental presence as coinciding with the omnipresence can be

- 1 Hardt, "Dette är min lekamen," pp. 47ff. (review of Sasse, *This Is My Body*).
- 2 Holte, "Luthersk nattvardslära i ljuset av nyare exegetik och patristik," pp. 65ff. The same interpretation as in Hardt and Holte is found also in Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 2:210 [cf. *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:190].
- 3 Vajta, *Die Theologie des Gottesdienstes bei Luther*, pp. 176ff.
- 4 Wisløff, *Nattverd og messe*, p. 155. Holte (op. cit., p. 75 n. 3) asserts that Wisløff gives a "substantively destructive critique" of Vajta's identification of the modes of presence, but Wisløff considers an evangelical tension in Luther, and Vajta only latches on to the failure to pay attention to all the material: "*All this is seen correctly*, and Vajta's whole presentation is consistently thought out from the doctrine of ubiquity. The question is just whether Vajta's view allows itself to be joined with the *fullness* that is in the present material." Wisløff therefore cannot make an outright appeal to the critique that is put forth by Hardt and Holte.
- 5 Seeberg, op. cit., 4/1:471.

noted, to various degrees, in [Hans] Grass,<sup>6</sup> Peters,<sup>7</sup> [Hermann] Sasse,<sup>8</sup> and E. Thestrup Pedersen,<sup>9</sup> though these researchers do not at all agree. In a larger Christological work, Theodor Mahlmann has recently asserted that the sacramental presence for Luther really is distinct from omnipresence.<sup>10</sup>

Seeberg's view of the modes of presence as identical builds on the thought that Luther introduced a hypothetical alternative, that is, the diffinitive presence, "in order to make it clear to the opponents according to scholastic tradition that even if one maintains the local existence of the body of Christ in heaven, His bodily presence in the Supper would still be possible"; for this opinion he [Seeberg] appeals to WA 26:329f., 336f., and 414f. [cf. AE 37:219f., 224f., 270f.].

- 6 Grass, op. cit., p. 234: "According to the *Great Confession* on the Supper from 1528, the diffinitive and also the repletive modes of existence of Christ's body in the Supper are consistent"; cf. id., p. 62.
- 7 Peters, op. cit., p. 96. Compare here id., p. 63: "Reason can understand the word 'in'—Christ in the Word, in bread and wine—only in a physical way; it only knows the presence in space and time. Faith, however, 'accepts that "in" in this case means the same as above, outside of, through and through, and everywhere" (WA 26:341.17 [cf. AE 37:230]). This—Peters' separation here of the concrete restriction to space of the sacramental presence for an undefined "above, outside of," yes, "everywhere"—rests on the mistake of overlooking what Luther says in the cited passage about the intangibility of God's presence in *creation* (WA 26:341.1f. [cf. AE 37:229]: "That it is one person with the divinity, so it must also be higher, above, and outside of all other creatures")! By interpreting these words as a part of sacramental theology, Peters in addition prepared his later formulation (op. cit., p. 96): "Thus he has in a certain sense taken back his expression about the Lord's 'diffinitive' presence in the Sacrament."
- 8 Sasse, op. cit., p. 158. But Sasse feels that Luther did not dogmatize his doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's body and in later years did not come back to it (op. cit., pp. 283, 308). Compare above, p. 43 n. 37. The interpretation of Hardt and Holte, outside of Sasse's standpoint, in a certain sense would be correct about the older Luther.
- 9 E. Thestrup Pedersen (*Luther som skriftfortolker*, pp. 101f.) asserts: "It was asserted that Luther himself did not find any solution to question 2 [= What is the relationship between Christ's general omnipresence and His special presence in the bread and wine of the Supper?], which naturally also applies in a purely philosophical way." Id., p. 102 n. 28: "This viewpoint can be overstretched so that 'revelation' is only considered as uncovering of a condition previously unknown to man, though Luther's central understanding of 'revelation' is that it is one with God's new deed." Compare below, n. 10.
- 10 Mahlmann (op. cit., p. 171 n. 144) points out that behind the identification of the modes of presence in a number of researchers there is the depiction that Luther worked with ideas that were contradictory to one another: through the doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's body Luther is thought to have gone too far in his zeal for the sacramental presence and invalidated it. But it ought to be noted that Seeberg, Grass, and Peters, who are called upon for this, do not think that Luther was actually unsuccessful in his presentation; there is only an "apparent" lack of success (Peters, op. cit., p. 86), for the solution consists in the sacramental presence becoming the existential-subjective concretization of what has always been.

It is further asserted “that Luther himself states and admits that ‘in, with, under’ . . . can be misunderstood, that they could really first help the opponents as an occasion to misinterpret his doctrine (WA 26:442, 447 [cf. AE 37:300, 306]). This formulation, according to the ‘diffinitive,’ is not formed [*gebildet*] according to the authoritative ‘repletive’ way of thinking.”<sup>11</sup> Seeberg’s claim of the existence of a hypothetical argument is completely correct, but this still does not mean the diffinitive presence in the *Sacrament*, but the diffinitive presence in *heaven*, understood as opposite to and excluding a repletive presence, as an accommodation to the opponents! “If Christ’s body were likewise in one place in heaven (as they prattle), still all creatures may be here in front of Him and around Him, like bright, transparent air.”<sup>12</sup> With this, Luther simply goes back to the Ockhamist definition of movement and concept of presence, where being bound to a local, heavenly presence at the Father’s right hand did not exclude the sacramental presence. This, in and of itself, suffices as a possible explanation of the presence. In the same way, Aristotelian physics as making the presence possible is put forward by Luther at the Marburg Colloquy with Zwingli.<sup>13</sup> The doctrinal material of the past contains a rich collection of arguments for the possibility of the sacramental miracle, which Luther did not at all disdain to use—even if only secondarily. Luther’s own, nonhypothetically conceived view in this case, however, is that Christ is omnipresent even in His humanity and that this explains the presence. This *explanation* does not mean, however, a simple identification. It is of importance that here the occasion for the *repletive* presence of Christ’s body mainly comes to be put forward by Luther in connection with the *diffinitive* presence of the same body. Luther writes:

For when I showed how Christ’s body is everywhere, since God’s right hand is everywhere, I did so for this reason . . . that I might still demonstrate one way in which it is possible with God that Christ is at the same time in heaven and His body is in the Supper, and [that He] reserved to His divine wisdom and power even more ways by which He is able to do the same, because we do not know the limit or measure of His power.<sup>14</sup>

This explanation in the *Great Confession* on the Supper is intended to expound the earlier *That These Words [This Is My Body]* where Luther wrote:

If Christ had never said these words “This is My body” nor placed them in the Supper, still these words “Christ sits at the right hand of God” enforce that fact that His body and blood may be in all other places, and here one does not need transubstantiation or changing of the bread into His body; it

11 Seeberg, op. cit., 4/1:471 n. 2.

12 WA 26:336.38f. [cf. AE 37:224].

13 WA 30/3:138.24.

14 WA 26:318.1ff. [cf. AE 37:207].

can still be, just as the right hand of God must not necessarily be changed into all things, though it is there or in them.<sup>15</sup>

The words “when *it is possible* with God” and “then it *may* be” (= “would be able”) contain the thought that the repletive presence of Christ’s body also includes the *possibility* of the diffinitive presence. The sacramental presence in the form of the co-presence of the heavenly and the bodily can therefore easily commence, whereby the change of substance is not necessary, since the sacramental coexistence has a parallel (“just as”) in the repletive presence [existing] in creation without this latter ceasing. Nothing in the text justifies the confusing of possibility and reality, “may be” and “is,” “may” and “was.”<sup>16</sup> Repletive presence is not diffinitive; it simply opens up the possibilities (“reserves . . . shows”). Luther’s careful precision in using the modal helping verbs should not be forgotten: “How often have you heard now that these two terms, *possibile, necessarium*, ‘may’ and ‘must,’ are farther apart than heaven and earth?”<sup>17</sup> This distinction, expressed in another context, includes a formulation that is essential for this problem.

In the controversy on the Supper, Luther asserted the repletive presence of Christ’s body to refute the Zwinglian insistence that “Christ’s body *must* not be in the Supper,”<sup>18</sup> *for a simultaneous presence of Christ’s body in two places is impossible*. This Zwinglian assertion and its premise are disproved through the repletive presence—of course, without appealing to the Words of Institution, which could not be used here since their literal meaning was rejected [by the Zwinglians] when they insisted on their absurd conclusions (the physical impossibility of simultaneous presence). In this dispute it is *not* necessarily the controverted, diffinitive presence that is proved, but a different one. The Zwinglians had relied on a universal impossibility as a logical main thesis in order to introduce the Supper in the middle thesis and its impossibility in the final thesis. It therefore became Luther’s task to attack the universal application of the main thesis; showing it to be invalid resulted in the possibility of the miracle of the Supper.

One must maintain that theses such as “So it (= the right hand of God) is certainly also in the bread and wine on the table”<sup>19</sup> are introductory theses in a longer argumentation. Luther is thereby only making a Christological statement with reference to the Scripture passages about the meaning of the elevation—

15 WA 23:145.13ff. [cf. AE 37:64].

16 Metzke (*Sakrament und Metaphysik*, p. 51) transcribes WA 23:145.13 [cf. AE 37:64]: “Even if He (= Christ) had not said the words ‘This is My body,’ He would still be in the bread and wine with His ‘body and blood’ . . . .” By changing “may” [*müge*] to “would” [*wäre*], Metzke makes the repletive and sacramental presence identical.

17 WA 23:169.1ff. [cf. AE 37:79]; compare above, n. 16.

18 WA 26:317.31 [cf. AE 37:207] [emphasis added].

19 WA 23:143.32 [cf. AE 37:64].

well to note, without making use of the *communicatio idiomatum*—in order, with these as argument, to be able to proceed in a way of thinking that did not yet reach its conclusion. After this Luther asks rhetorically, “What will be here now?” and answers, “It will be from outside: . . . that His body and blood then may be there.”<sup>20</sup> By doing this, Luther can thus proceed from the main thesis to the middle thesis and the final thesis.

Luther himself polemicizes against a naive equating of the two modes of presence. He maintains that the repletive presence “is in all places, but still at the same time is also nowhere and imperceptible, above and beyond all creatures. There is a difference between His presence and your grasping.”<sup>21</sup> What applies here is not merely distinguishing “in itself” as opposed to “for me,” through which the latter would become merely a subjective experiential assurance of what already existed. The divine presence *is* impossible to comprehend in itself: “It is not thus grasped and grabbed.”<sup>22</sup> These and similar concepts—“grasp,” “grab,” “gobble,” “guzzle”—have to do with the physical encounter with the sacramental eating of Christ’s body, which cannot come about in its divine, repletive form of existence. Just as Luther, in the section about concomitance, will show it to be “sorcery” to reject the thought of a presence of the divinity in the Sacrament,<sup>23</sup> supported by the axiom about the immutable divine nature, he maintains here the repletive presence’s exaltation and separation from creation, just as it clearly applies to the *un-incarnate divinity*:

Just as I say of the right hand of God: although it is everywhere, as we may not deny, yet because it is also nowhere, as is said, you cannot truly grasp it anywhere, unless it connects itself to you to summon you to a place. *But it does that when it comes to dwell in the humanity of Christ.* Then you find it indeed; otherwise you might sort through all creatures, grab here and there, and yet never find it again, even though it is truly there at the same time. For it is not there for you.<sup>24</sup>

*The repletive divinity could not be grasped and fetched with hands before it took on a physical existence through the incarnation in and through the circumscribed-diffinitive humanity.* The miracle of the Sacrament is an exact parallel to this: since Christ’s body at the ascension is swallowed up by the mist that surrounds the divinity, the tangibility is renewed through the onset of the diffinitive presence. Luther writes:

Thus also, since Christ’s humanity is at the right hand of God and now also is in all and above all things according to the manner of the divine right hand,

20 WA 23:145.13ff. [cf. AE 37:64].

21 WA 23:151.1ff. [cf. AE 37:68].

22 WA 23:151.11 [cf. AE 37:68].

23 WA 11:450.13f. [cf. AE 36:297]; compare below, chapter 6.

24 WA 23:151.17ff. [cf. AE 37:69f.] (emphasis mine).

so you will not so gobble and guzzle Him like cabbage and soup on your table, unless He wills it. Now He has also become imperceptible, and you will not grab Him, though He is in your bread. For it happens that He connects Himself to you and summons you to a particular table through His Word. . . . If you eat this [bread], then you eat My body, and *otherwise not*.<sup>25</sup>

First, the divine will and the words of consecration create the miracle, *which otherwise is not at hand, namely, the diffinitive presence*. This is also an obvious result of the precise distinctions with which Luther is working.

As already stated, in order to strengthen his thesis, Luther would have been able to make use of other arguments also, formed within Scholasticism, which did not know the main argument he now brings forward. Therefore, *in this conflict* the doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's body has the character of an ancillary proposition. The discussion about the Supper cannot fundamentally be carried out through this Christological controversy.<sup>26</sup> If Luther had made a mistake in the latter, the doctrine of the Supper would not fall, even though, conversely, the correctness of the Christological statements includes the possibility that the miracle of the Sacrament would be disputed by Zwingli.<sup>27</sup> This, of course, does not mean that the doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's body *as such* should have a hypothetical character, as Ernst Sommerlath<sup>28</sup> and Sasse asserted.<sup>29</sup>

Even if the term "ancillary construction," which is used by Sommerlath, has its application in one area where Luther only wants "to show in abundance,"<sup>30</sup> it

25 WA 23:151.25ff. [cf. AE 37:69, which translates the last phrase as "nowhere else"] (emphasis mine).

26 WA 26:318.27f. [cf. AE 37:203].

27 Mahlmann (op. cit., pp. 169ff.) gives a depiction of Luther's words cited here that actually conforms to the depiction above, which supports the view that was presented in 1960 by the author of this volume and was further developed in a mimeographed licentiate [pre-PhD] dissertation in 1966. But Mahlmann, whose main subject is not Luther but the later Christological controversy, does not develop his position from the differences given here among the three modes of presence as the starting point. He cites, however (p. 173 n. 152): "Which passages of Luther's Lord's Supper writings are the most difficult to interpret, one can indeed learn already from Johannes Hülsemann's *Calixtinischer Gewissenswurm*, Leipzig, 1653, which on pages 223–63 reproduces verbatim the crucial sections and provides an astute commentary in numerous marginalia." In a presentation whose brilliant analysis undoubtedly earns Mahlmann's praise, Hülsemann explains very clearly the "threefold presence of the body" (Hülsemann, op. cit., p. 245). Calixt, Hülsemann's opponent, "repudiated sainted Luther, if he would defend the way of stating the presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist through its ubiquity" (op. cit., p. 228), which goes against Luther's true meaning (op. cit., p. 234): "The mode of ubiquity is not the only mode of presence for Christ's body."

28 Sommerlath, "Das Abendmahl bei Luther," p. 120.

29 Sasse, op. cit., p. 341.

30 WA 23:129.31f. [cf. AE 37:55].

does not at all cover the role of the doctrine within Christology, as is apparent from chapter 2, above. The words of Aegidius Hunnius could be cited against the idea of Sommerlath and Sasse: “Therefore, the conclusion is very false when they argue in this way: ‘Luther thought that one should not bother to argue about the omnipresence in the Lord’s Supper; therefore, he felt that one should not argue about it at all, not even in the topic [*sede*] of the appropriate article.’ It is a fallacy of drawing a conclusion from something that is simply stated.”<sup>31</sup>

Since the thesis-hypothesis in question about repletive and diffinitive presence is discussed in this connection, Seeberg’s other argument can be taken up. Even this presentation—that Luther’s rejection of the formula “in, with, under” should affect the diffinitive presence—is based on a misunderstanding. The background is that Luther’s opponents asserted that he himself does not take the Words of Institution literally: “since we [Luther] say: The words ‘This is My body’ should be understood in this way: Under the bread is My body, or in the bread is My body, etc.”<sup>32</sup>

Luther answers, “But we are not thereby making any different, new text”;<sup>33</sup> but in order to ensure the sacramental presence, he is willing to give up the preposition-expressions, which the opponents find to show that Luther does not take the biblical “is” literally: “And where one would seek our approval even with such great force, or would show that the text ‘This is My body’ cannot mean what I say elsewhere: ‘Christ’s body is in the Supper,’ then we are ready and willing to have it retracted. Then it should not be said that way, but plainly

31 Printed in Chemnitz, *Fundamenta sanae doctrinae*, p. 120 (a later appendix to Chemnitz’s book); the same opinion in Wigand, *ibid.*, p. 117: “And he did not simply dismiss it either, but with the disclaimer [*secundum quid*]: in this matter. Also here: he is speaking, however, concerning the holy Supper.” It is thus important also in connection with Luther to distinguish the various loci, which are each entitled to their own logical and exegetical viability, as was the goal of Chemnitz and of Lutheran orthodoxy. Compare Mahlmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 223f., also p. 220 n. 1 (= pp. 220–23), where full clarity is given concerning Chemnitz’s mistake of ascribing to Luther a quotation from Melancthon on this point. The mistake, which does not have *substantial* significance, was pointed out by several of the Lutheran orthodox teachers, among others, Leonhard Hutter, with a large scholarly apparatus. Ahlberg (*op. cit.*, p. 252 n. 4) asserts that Ritschl (*Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, 4:8 n. 26) would have been unable to recognize the mistake in Chemnitz’s use of the quotation, which Ahlberg himself learned first through WA 48:236f., but the discovery is almost as old as the mistake. In modern literature before WA 48, it was most recently pointed out by Pieper (*op. cit.*, 2:227 n. 483). [Although not in the English edition, the footnote reads: “In *De duabus naturis*, p. 206, Chemnitz refers to a statement by Luther in the Jena edition (8:375), according to which Luther, too, wanted to employ the disputation about general omnipresence. Hutter, in *Concordia Concors*, pp. 31ff., shows that these words are not Luther’s but probably Melancthon’s. Hutter also explains to what extent Chemnitz could in good faith attribute the words to Luther” (*Two Natures in Christ*, p. 464).]

32 WA 26:264.34ff. [cf. AE 37:166].

33 WA 26:265.6f. [cf. AE 37:166].

and simply ‘This is My body,’ as the words stand there.”<sup>34</sup> It is these lines that got Seeberg to believe that Luther saw in [the phrase] “in, with, under” a possibility of falsely defining his doctrine of the sacramental presence diffinitively, and not, as would be correct, repletively, and that is why he rejected these prepositions. In the same work, Luther sees “in, with, under” as useful for denying the presence, in accordance with the reasoning that was used against him, and he lets the Enthusiasts shout about whether Christ used the actual expressions of locality: “Oh, how we would gladly believe if He had said, ‘This is My body.’ That would be stating it plainly and clearly. But now He says ‘in the bread, with the bread, under the bread,’ so it does not follow that His body is there. And thus they would imagine a thousand excuses and glosses on the words ‘in, with, under,’ even with grander appearance.”<sup>35</sup> “In, with, under” as a formulation<sup>36</sup> is only here in Luther, and then rejected, but in no way as asserting a particular form of presence in the Sacrament but as useful for denying any presence. Thus they were ready-made for the foundation of Seeberg’s idea, whose place in a generally accepted standard work granted him the greatest circulation.

Vilmos Vajta, in a special monograph, went far beyond Seeberg by laying the omnipresence as a foundation for his concept of the sacramental presence in a completely different and very consistent way. In an analysis of Vajta’s procedure, further worthwhile observations about Luther’s opinion are made. Fundamentally, Vajta sees Luther’s doctrine of the omnipresence of the divinity as an exclusive expression of faith, impossible within the framework of a natural theology based on reason without the support of revelation. For support, Vajta cites Luther’s Jonah commentary from 1526: “His [people] are those who alone perceive that God is the kind of Lord who is almighty and in all places.”<sup>37</sup> Concerning these words, it can be said first and foremost that they give dimension to what was recently said about the impossibility of understanding the distinction between omnipresence and sacramental presence as a distinction between objectively and subjectively experienced presence, “in itself” and “for me.” Luther reckons that omnipresence can also be experienced subjectively as a comforting “for me,” even if it can never be grasped and touched with

34 WA 26:265.12ff. [cf. AE 37:166].

35 WA 26:447.22ff. [cf. AE 37:306].

36 Separate not simultaneous use of the three prepositions in Luther is reported by Sasse (op. cit., p. 161 n. 59). For the origin of the formulation as a confession of orthodox Lutheranism against Tileman Hesshusius, compare BS 983 n. 2, along with the portrayal in Salig, *Vollständige Historie der Augsbургischen Confession*, 3:451ff. Since the conditions under which the expression exists in Luther are not made clear, in the literature it often meets statements such as, for example, in Andrén (*Högmässa och nattvårdsgång i reformationstidens svenska kyrkoliv*, p. 48): “as Luther expressed the matter: ‘in, with, and under bread and wine.’”

37 WA 19:197.25f. [cf. AE 19:45]. Vajta, op. cit., p. 158.

hands and mouth. *Therefore, the special character of the sacramental presence can never be explained with what can be attributed also to the omnipresence.* Furthermore, Vajta's quotation is followed by a later statement [from Luther] that he does not cite: "The godless, however, do not feel and do not believe and know that God is in all places, though they likewise hear it said and in fact can repeat it."<sup>38</sup> In the context, Luther divides God's presence into a "natural" and a "spiritual" form: the natural presence is actually the fact that God fills everything, while the spiritual presence is found where the believers are, "who alone perceive" God's dominion through "Word, faith, Spirit, and divine service."<sup>39</sup> This presence, and this knowledge that constitutes it, is reserved for Christians as regenerated. It cannot be questioned that the unbelieving are by definition excluded from this Spirit-wrought knowledge of God's all-conquering presence, but this does not give any reason that the omnipresence in its natural form according to Luther could not be defined *intellectually*, even emphatically, in the very writing just invoked by Vajta: "The natural light of reason reaches so far that it regards God as good, gracious, merciful, and mild; that is a great light."<sup>40</sup> Here faith also comes with power to help: "For it believes the power and recognizes it."<sup>41</sup>

But nature is lacking in those two points that grace offers: faith that "God will be gracious not only to others but also to me,"<sup>42</sup> and faith in "whoever or whatever it is that is rightly called God."<sup>43</sup> The words "though they hear it said and can even repeat it" undoubtedly fit in this very thought pattern, which Luther developed elsewhere with the words about the philosophical knowledge of God: "One might speak of this as sniffing the existence of God without tasting it."<sup>44</sup> Omnipresence, for Luther, cannot be an exception to this type of

38 WA 19:197.26ff. [cf. AE 19:45].

39 WA 19:197.24 [cf. AE 19:45].

40 WA 19:206.12f. [cf. AE 19:54].

41 WA 19:206.17 [cf. AE 19:54].

42 WA 19:206.28f. [cf. AE 19:54].

43 WA 19:206.33 [cf. AE 19:55].

44 WA 46:668.33f. [cf. AE 22:152]; compare WA 21:509.6f. [cf. AE 78:4]: "For human reason and wisdom can still come so far on its own that it concludes (though weakly), that there must be a single, eternal divine being, which creates, sustains, and rules all things. Since it sees such a beautiful, excellent creation, . . . so wonderful, orderly, and certain . . . [it is] not possible that it should be made like thus or on its own. . . . And thus God must be acknowledged in creation, as St. Paul also says in Romans 1 . . ." The word "weakly" is not in opposition to the above-cited "a great light." In the exposition of Jonah, Luther stresses *when* the great light is weakened: "Thus you see here also that these people in the ship all know about God, but they have no certain God" (WA 19:208.21ff. [cf. AE 19:56]); "For their god lets them sink in the danger and cry out in vain, so that they completely despair and do not know where they would find a god who would save them" (WA 19:208.27ff. [cf. AE 19:57]); "As long as it goes well

for him and suits him, then he is bold, even above God and all that God is; and is so stubborn and harder than any anvil ever was. But if he begins to sink and despair, then there is nothing more timid" (WA 19:208.8ff. [cf. AE 19:57]). *The strong light becomes weak in dangerous tribulation*; that is, the perceived truth cannot be maintained when man becomes *emotionally* heartsick. This cannot be understood as if in dangerous situations what would otherwise be affirmed intellectually would be disputed *intellectually*. When Luther in the *Bondage of the Will* from 1525, the year before the Jonah commentary, is thought by Cleve (op. cit., p. 227, for example) to develop the thought that "God's omnipotence cannot be understood by natural reason," this is mistaken. (This is repeated also in Lohse, *Ratio und fides*, p. 63.) This builds on Luther's reasoning in the face of the world's obviously unfair course:

What do you think Demosthenes and Cicero thought when they did everything they could and got a reward of miserable destruction? And nevertheless this "unfairness of God" is strongly commendable and is brought into such arguments for which there is no rationale or can still be opposed to nature; it is very easily destroyed through the light of the Gospel and knowledge of grace, by which we are taught that the impious indeed flourish physically, but their soul is destroyed. (WA 18:785.11ff. [cf. AE 33:291])

It does not say here that the revelation of the immortality of the soul and punishment or reward after death strengthens natural reason's poor argument into intellectual viability. That would distort Luther's main thought. The light of the Gospel, the "knowledge of grace," does not convey intellectual arguments but *dogmas*, spirit-filled "*assertiones*": "Take away the assertions, and you have taken away Christianity. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is given from His heaven to explain Christ and to confess until death—unless dying for one's confession and assertion is not making a statement" (WA 18:603.28ff. [cf. AE 33:21]). These, the Spirit's dogmas, give strength to confess until death, which well-founded *thoughts* never offer. Luther knows that "Cicero and Plato elegantly argue about the immortality of the soul; their thoughts are very good" (WA 39/2:14.24ff. [cf. AE 38:249]), but he will argue that the man Cicero, as an affective [emotional] being, could not have been filled by the comfort of faith in God's gracious governance and omnipotence at his undeserved doom. The philosopher Cicero's "very good thoughts" were not of comfort at this moment. On the other hand, Luther does not insist that they were forfeited of strictly intellectual, objective worth. — Generally it ought to be said that the view of Luther's position toward natural theology should reflect an earlier conviction that Ockham's school, in which Luther is counted, denied the proof of God, and that Luther thus only carried out his school's traditions. The reversal that occurred in the question of Ockham (compare Junghans, op. cit., pp. 158, 219, 225, 230) also ought to come to Luther's aid. (Grane, *Contra Gabrielem*, p. 55 n. 8, criticizes [Erich] Seeberg, *Luthers Theologie*, 1:19, and Olsson, "Den naturliga gudskunskapens problem enligt den senmedeltida nominalismen," pp. 382ff., but does not explain possible consequences for Luther.) An early, correct judgment of Luther is in Arnold, *Zur Frage des Naturrechts bei Martin Luther*. And more detailed working out of this stance of Luther must bring consequences from the radical dissimilarity that is found between the young and the older Luther. *The former denies the latter's exposition of Romans 1 above*; compare WA 1:354.17f. [cf. AE 31:40], where Luther, within the framework of his doctrine of salvation from that time, promotes the thesis "Renunciation of the visible is the satisfaction that we owe to God," formulated by Bizer, "Glaube und Demut in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief," p. 68; compare Lohse, *Ratio und fides*, p. 12, about the natural knowledge of God as a self-righteous work of man, with an account of other researchers. For Luther's stance it

knowledge, the existence of which, in a different context, Luther asserted as different from revelation. *Thus it is not possible to see the assertion of omnipresence as a mere fact, as a specifically Christian characteristic.*

Another mistake Vajta makes is when he asserts concerning omnipresence that it is made understandable by the Last Day.<sup>45</sup> Behind this thought is the idea that only the present age, imprinted by sin, would require the sacramental concretization of the divine presence, but that sinless, restored man would always know and experience the reality that previously required the function of the elements.<sup>46</sup> Ontologically this touches on the same presence, just taken with varying degrees of insight. Luther again insists that finding God in things is a sin of the heathen: “You are committing idolatry.”<sup>47</sup> Even if, for Luther, omnipresence can be experienced subjectively as comforting, it is inaccessible to the created intellect, [even] apart from the corruption of sin: “It is beyond the nature and reason even of all the angels in heaven, known and familiar only to God.”<sup>48</sup> Not even angelic knowledge in its sinlessness is able to comprehend what can never be comprehended by creation.

The defect in Vajta’s depiction becomes especially clear when, while making the distinction between the Roman and Reformed doctrines of the Sacrament, it says, “The ‘local’ [presence] or the ‘speculative’ presence form the opposite of the real presence of Christ. These characterize the theology of the Papists and the Enthusiasts, respectively.”<sup>49</sup> *The idea that Luther would have imagined the Roman concept of the presence as “local” is incorrect.* Rather, Luther defends Scholasticism and the Roman Church on this point, against the Enthusiasts who bring forth the very allegations that Vajta puts in Luther’s mouth: “For the sophists speak correctly about this when they say: There

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ought especially to be observed that Luther consciously (WA 1:355.16ff. [cf. AE 31:42]) joins *Plato* (compare Link, op. cit., p. 225): “not only in this, that he praises Plato compared to Aristotle, but also in the substantive use of Platonic thinking.” The Platonic features have, above all, been underscored by Hunzinger (“Luthers Neoplatonismus in der Psalmenvorlesung von 1513 bis 1515,” p. 73): “It is the Neo-Platonic thought-world of Augustine that experiences an unexpected revival here in Luther’s lectures on the Psalms.” A development from Platonic rejection of the visible as intermediary insight to outright natural theology inserts itself into the development that Bizer (*Fides ex auditu*) drew up from universalistic theology of humility (“renunciation of the visible”) to exclusively Christian faith in the means of grace and salvation.

45 Vajta, op. cit., p. 167: “For nothing more is secret or hidden in God’s essence.”

46 Vajta, op. cit., p. 161: “The captivity of man under sin is the reason God is present for us only in His incarnate Son, though He is everywhere.” Page 177: “Even before bread and wine are used in the Supper, Christ is in the natural gifts by reason of His omnipresence. It is only man in his sin who cannot recognize Him.”

47 WA 19:492.24 [cf. AE 36:342].

48 WA 26:336.22f. [cf. AE 37:223].

49 Vajta, op. cit., p. 170 n. 43.

are three ways of being in a place: *localiter* or circumscribed, *diffinitive*, and *repletive*.<sup>50</sup> “For they [the Enthusiasts] knew that we never taught this . . . that we did not think of Christ in the Sacrament locally . . . for the Papists also had never taught this . . . as we also hold and still teach . . . [the doctrine of the diffinitive presence follows]. No, God be praised, such great fools we are not, even [when we were] the holy Church under the papacy.”<sup>51</sup> “For they [the Enthusiasts] knew very well that neither the Papists nor we had taught that. . . . But thus the Papists, yes, not the Papists but the holy Christian Church, and we with them, teach . . . that Christ’s body is not there locally . . . but definitively.”<sup>52</sup> “Therefore, the Enthusiasts are wrong, as well as the glosses in the divines, when they criticize Pope Nicolaus of pressuring Berengar into such a confession that he says he would press and tear the true body of Christ with his teeth. Would to God that all popes had dealt in such a Christian manner in all points as this pope. . . .”<sup>53</sup> With these latter words Luther rejects even a great part of the medieval commentators of “*Ego Berengarius*” as too *spiritualizing*. Parallel to these expressions are Luther’s words about the adoration of the elevated Sacrament, which were attacked by Karlstadt: “Here, I say, Dr. Karlstadt is not wrong, but his conscience knows that he is obviously lying concerning the pope. For he is also a sophist and has both learned and taught the theology of the higher schools and of the pope. Now nowhere does the pope teach that one should say to the form of the bread: ‘My God, You are gracious to me.’”<sup>54</sup> One must characterize Vajta’s depiction of Luther’s demarcation against Roman Church doctrine on the Sacrament as thoroughly misleading. Here Luther is put forward with citations from, among others, the *Great Confession* as well as his shorter *Confession of the Supper*, which are two decades apart and therefore show the consistency in Luther’s view. They

50 WA 26:327.20ff. [cf. AE 37:214f.].

51 WA 54:145.7f. [cf. AE 38:301].

52 WA 54:153.17ff. [cf. AE 38:301, 293]. It is peculiar that Luther ascribes to all of Scholasticism the diffinitive presence that was foreign to Thomas Aquinas. Actually Luther let his procedure be defended, as an expression that all of Scholasticism rejected the *local* presence. In this context, Luther cited Thomas’s [hymn] *Lauda Sion*: “Whether one or thousands eat; All receive the self-same meat; Nor the less for others leave” [translation by E. Caswall, *Lyra Catholica*]. WA 54:146 n. 1 comments: “The hymn ‘O Lord, We Praise Thee’ [*Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet*] is common,” an incorrect reference, since Luther expressly appeals to the sequence of the Corpus Christi Mass (“Mass of the ‘Holy True Body’”) (WA 54:146.1f. [cf. AE 38:293]), which is *Lauda Sion*. WA’s commentator was misled by the pre-Reformation origin of “O Lord, We Praise Thee” [*Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet*], sung in connection with *Lauda Sion*; compare WA 35:183 and Luther’s own words about its use, WA 38:245.23 [cf. AE 38:206] (“at the Sacrament, yes, in *procession*”).

53 WA 26:442.39ff. [cf. AE 37:300].

54 Vajta, op. cit., p. 180.

show how Luther did not at all criticize the Roman concept of the sacramental presence as “local,” but rather he shows himself as partaking of the scholastic doctrinal tradition in which the voice of the holy Church is heard.

The demarcation against the Enthusiasts, as it is portrayed by Vajta, is correct insofar as they rejected the real presence in favor of a “speculative,” that is, nonreal, presence. But the kind of demarcation is mischaracterized: “They [the Enthusiasts] had a Deistic view of God, the idea of a God enthroned in exalted majesty, separated from His creation. This view of God affected their Christology so that they even understood revelation in Christ falsely.”<sup>55</sup> The basis for Vajta’s view has already been noted: here, in this case, accusations were raised of having obscured the specific Christian revelation of God’s omnipresence. But no support for this asserted distinction can be found in Luther.<sup>56</sup> Luther never charged the opponents with such an elementary error as denying God’s omnipresence. Grass has collected citations from Zwingli (and Calvin) that show how Luther’s opponents clearly acknowledge the omnipresence of the divinity.<sup>57</sup> That applies also to Karlstadt, who writes: “The question whether Christ,\* according to His divinity, is here or there is a question of whether Christ is in all creatures according to His divinity. That is foolish, for God is

55 Vajta, op. cit., p. 180.

56 Possibly Vajta’s idea can be deduced from the following argument of Luther not cited by him, WA 23:131.9ff. [cf. AE 37:55–56]:

If we now ask them [the Enthusiasts] here what they call the right hand of God, where Christ sits, I expect that they will rave about . . . an imaginary heaven, where there is a golden throne and where Christ sits next to the Father in a robe and golden crown. . . . For if they did not have such childish, carnal thoughts about the right hand of God, they would certainly not let it be disputed that the body of Christ is in the Supper. . . . From these childish thoughts, then, it must further follow that they bind God Himself to a place in heaven on the same golden throne, because there is no God outside of Christ. . . . From that it will follow even further that we and all creatures also sit on the same throne of God, perhaps like lice and flies in His robe, because Paul says, Acts 17[:28], “We are of His kind, and in Him we live and move and have our being.”

In this ridiculous *deductio ad absurdum*, the premise is Luther’s thesis about the mode of the state of union (“no God outside of Christ”), which, if it were accepted by the opponents, would extract from them the conclusion that if Christ’s body were not omnipresent, neither would God be, and also God’s right hand would have repletive existence, whereby finally creation would be forced by God’s presence into a locally understood heaven (the folds in God’s robe). This depiction is obviously rhetorical and is not making a claim of reproducing the opponents’ meaning.

57 Grass, op. cit., p. 54.

\* [Translator’s note: There seems to be some dittography here. I have removed the first “in all creatures,” which doesn’t appear in other sources.]

in hell as well as in heaven and fills all creatures.”<sup>58</sup> It is impracticable that with Vajta the distinction is over against the Enthusiasts in regard to the attributes of the divinity (“Deistic view of God”), as if Luther’s dogmatic contribution consisted of teaching the omnipresence of the divinity. Vajta overlooks the fact that the controversy applies only to the type of union between Christ’s two natures. The little interest Vajta devotes to the specifically Christological question comes from the fact that he has the omnipresence of Christ’s humanity begin with the ascension.<sup>59</sup>

An omnipresence defined in this way is considered by Vajta to be identical with the sacramental presence.<sup>60</sup> In this way, *faith* becomes a constitutive factor for the sacramental presence, for it is faith that discerns the presence that always exists:

This sacramental unity is promised in the Word and received in faith. Therefore, *Word and faith* are essential prerequisites for the spiritual presence of Christ in bread and wine. When Luther emphasizes this, on the one hand he distances himself from the view that can assert the presence of Christ separate from the believing reception of the earthly elements bound

58 Karlstadt, *Dialogus oder ein gesprechbüchlein von dem gewlichen unnd abgöttischen missbrauch / des hochwirdigsten sacraments Jesu Christi* (1524), fol. AIVa; also StL 20:2318.

59 Vajta, op. cit., p. 164. It ought to be noted that the text, WA 14:28.11ff. [cf. AE 30:153], cited in *ibid.*, n. 25, does not deal with the ascension but [with] Christ’s transfiguration on Tabor. Systematically, such revelations of glory have greater weight for Luther than for Scholasticism, with its rejection of the exaltation of the humanity to divine power; compare above, pp. 45–46 n. 48, on Thomas’s definition of the transfiguration. André (op. cit., p. 194) sees Johan III’s introduction into Sweden of the festival of Christ’s transfiguration as an un-Lutheran, Romanizing innovation, centered “around the divine nature’s shining through the human nature.” *This definition lets Lutheran and scholastic theology trade places completely.* It applies identically to André’s opinion (op. cit., p. 195) about Marian days, “this pointed localizing of what is holy.” The Lutheran understanding of the Ephesine *theotokos* is more drastic than the Roman, which is a natural result of Luther’s Christology reproduced above. What is noteworthy in Johan III’s fight for setting the Festival [of Transfiguration] on August 6 is instead *the connection to the papal calendar*, which would thereby commemorate through a festival of indulgences of the same dimension as Corpus Christi the battle of Belgrade in 1456, won by the efforts of the papal see; compare *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada europeo-americana* 63:853, s.v. “Transfiguración,” but which during the Middle Ages was unable to enforce this date; compare *Enciclopedia cattolica* 12:440, s.v. “Transfigurazione”; compare also de Waal, *Die Verklärung auf Thabor in Liturgie und Kunst*, p. 298. André’s explanation refers to a view of the omnipresence that conforms to Vajta, according to which Luther would have produced a view directed against the Roman “localizing” and purified of physical attributes.

60 For support, Vajta (op. cit., p. 159) invokes WA 23:145.13ff. [cf. AE 37:64] (“Even if Christ had never said the words ‘This is My body’ . . .”) with the same mistaken explanation as refuted above, p. 9, text near n. 35 [Swedish edition, p. 16].

to the Word (Rome), and on the other hand from a view that relegates faith to a heavenly gift beyond the elements (Enthusiasts).<sup>61</sup>

[Vajta writes:] “Therefore, the presence of Christ is a presence for the believers. God deals in earthly means, to which He adds His Word. Only faith can connect the two. . . .”<sup>62</sup> This presence, for faith, in Vajta[’s writings] is inserted into a defined systematic context: “The hiddenness in the Sacrament means waiting for the Spirit of God, who is not bound to the external means but is given through them ‘where and when it seems best to God.’”<sup>63</sup> Thus Luther’s doctrine of the sacramental presence is transformed into its direct opposite. Luther endeavors to distinguish words of Christ that presuppose faith in order to be actualized and the kind [of words] that get results “irrespective of a believing use [of them].” To the latter belong the words of the Sacrament, and the battle for their independence from the faith of the communicants is the battle for the reality of the Sacrament in Luther’s theology.

The command words are of two kinds: some, where faith is bound to them, as in Matthew 21, about moving a mountain, and in the last chapter of Mark, concerning the signs that should follow the believers. Now if someone without faith speaks such words to the mountain, “move,” and boasts that he is doing it from the command words, then it does not happen because Christ Himself binds faith to the command word. The other [kind of command words] are when faith is not bound to them, as these words

61 Vajta, op. cit., p. 187.

62 Id., p. 171. The quotation continues: “and possibly bring it about that the commanding word lets the earthly gifts become a blessing,” which does not mean, however, that faith is necessary merely for a *proper* reception. Vajta lets the presence and the blessing coincide. Under appeal to Ragnar Bring’s denial of a Lutheran consecration in “On the Lutheran Concept of the Sacrament,” in *World Lutheranism of Today*, the context is directed against the Roman doctrine, which is presented like this: “The power of the consecration transforms the elements into the body and blood of Christ and *effects* Christ’s presence. The blessing of the sacramental act can be allocated to a person, without himself being in the struggle between faith and unbelief” (ibid.). Luther’s doctrine is said to be that the presence “is not a presence that man can have in his hand and can bring to God as a means of atonement.” But Luther teaches this presence “in the hand” (WA 30/3:561.3, 19, 21) and does not at all refute the sacrifice of the Mass by disputing the presence being accessible by hand on the altar.

63 Vajta, op. cit., p. 173 n. 53. This latter Latin quotation from the Augsburg Confession (BS 58.7f. [cf. AC V 2]) is cited by Vajta according to modern, mainly Barthian practice, without regard to its context, which reads: “For through the Word and Sacraments the Holy Spirit is granted, *who effects faith* where and when it seems best to God, in those who hear the Gospel.” “Where and when” thus applies to the monergistically defined awakening of faith and not at all to the character of the means of grace as Spirit-bearing instruments. These words refer even less to the sacramental presence, which is identical neither with the awakening of faith nor the Spirit, without being directed by Luther to that part of the means of grace that is designated as the sign and which is part of the irreversibility of the Gospel.

in the Supper, “Take, eat,” for here even the unworthy and unbelieving eat Christ’s body, as did even Judas and many of the Corinthians.<sup>64</sup>

This clear view of the consecration in Luther Vajta tries to correct as an expression of a merely revelatory act, appealing to Luther’s words: “Yes, we also do not say that His body comes into existence out of the bread, but we say that His body, which was made long ago and has long existed, is there when we say, ‘This is My body,’ for Christ does not command us to say, ‘Let My body come into being’ or ‘Make My body,’ but ‘This is My body.’”<sup>65</sup> But these words do not say that Christ’s body was present long before the consecration, but that Christ’s body, which was created and came to be long ago (in the Virgin’s womb), is present *when* the holy words are spoken. This formulation of Luther’s is completely understandable against the double background of Scholasticism and Zwingli’s attack on Luther. Vajta completely overlooks this dogmatical-historical fact. Luther here is defending himself against Zwingli’s attack (“as this spirit [Zwingli] accuses us”),<sup>66</sup> in which he asserts that Luther revived the former papistic doctrine of the creation of Christ’s body out of the bread.<sup>67</sup> Luther confesses here a transformation that brings Christ’s body to the Sacrament while rejecting a transformation that produces Christ’s body. In a different context, he shows that he is familiar with these distinctions and how one comes to teach a newly created, growing body of Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>68</sup> Only with these perspectives do Luther’s words become understandable. Properly understood, through the statement that Christ’s body “is there when we say, ‘This is My body,’” they confirm that Luther even here

64 WA 26:287.34ff. [cf. AE 37:188].

65 WA 26:287.27f. [cf. AE 37:187]; Vajta, *op. cit.*, p. 184 n. 91. The citation is more extensive in Vajta, who cites in addition WA 38:240.1ff., 248.28ff. [cf. AE 38:199], where the consecration is said to occur not through the work of men, which of course Vajta’s thesis does not show.

66 WA 26:287.26f. [cf. AE 37:187].

67 CR 92:585.16ff.: Luther is supposed to be of an “opinion of the pontificates who once taught that ‘Do this in remembrance of Me’ (1 Cor. 11:24) ought to be referred to the body: Make My body out of, or in, the bread in remembrance of Me.” The word *facere* [“do/make”] in the command to commemorate would thus for Luther mean creating Christ’s body, according to Zwingli’s view. Zwingli knows that this doctrine is no longer (“once”) found in the Roman Church.

68 WA Br 9[:443–44].10ff., no. 3629, Supplement: “The conversion of the bread into the body of Christ, that is, the essence of the bread is transformed into the body of Christ, just as food is transformed into my flesh and blood. Now since some seem to have thought wickedly that Christ’s body would actually be transformed into so much bread and wine in itself in the whole world daily that He might finally become so big and fat that heaven and earth would be too narrow for Him, so now, more glorified, His body cannot be added to nor subtracted from. Therefore, they have thought differently . . .”

insists on his doctrine of the special, sacramental, diffinitive presence in the host by virtue of an act of consecration.

The critique by Vajta showed how definitions, applied improperly, could completely distort Luther's doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's body and the presence in the Sacrament of the Altar. At the same time, with increasing clarity, Luther's doctrine took shape as a well-thought-through, coherent quantity. The latitude that the investigation by Vajta is allowed to assume is further motivated by a remarkable connection to the history of ideas. Certainly this attempt to interpret Luther is a modern innovation from a definite, modern, systematic position, but in certain essential parts it has a background in the expositions of Luther's doctrine by the Melanchthonian school during the 1500s. As shall be presented here, Melanchthon's doctrine of the Sacrament includes not only an actual departure from Luther but also a not-infrequent claim of being an *interpretation of Luther*. Without questioning the originality of the stream of thought that found its impact in Vajta's contribution to Luther research, one can regard it as reasonable that the ease with which he could make the claim of acknowledgment is offered by the not-insignificant influence of Melanchthonianism or Philippism on the development of Protestantism.

## MELANCHTHON

In the year 1530, Melanchthon stated the Lutheran doctrine of the Supper on one occasion in this way: "II. Although we say that Christ's body is really present, nevertheless Luther does not say that it is present locally, as in some bundle, by being circumscribed, but in that mode by which the person of Christ or the whole Christ is present in all creatures."<sup>69</sup> This statement deserves to be placed as an introduction to this section about Melanchthon. *In this short thesis, Melanchthon identified himself with Luther, as well as confessing the real presence, embracing the doctrine of the omnipresence of Christ's body, and equating the sacramental and repletive presence. According to the opinion that the present volume will maintain, here is the solution of the dogmatical-historical problem that Melanchthon's doctrine of the Supper presents. The crucial point is the very equating of omnipresence and sacramental presence.* This stance has consequences later within the other loci in the doctrine of the Supper, as shall be reviewed in the following chapter and through which the interpretation presented below gains further evidence.

Connected with the thesis now presented, in a certain sense, are the statements of a similar meaning in Albert Herrlinger, who in 1879 presented the only summary monograph up to now on *Die Theologie Melanchthons*. He asserts that, for a time, Melanchthon embraced Luther's doctrine of the omnipresence of

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69 CR 2:224.