

Berthold von Schenk

Introduction

Last year at the ACELC conference in Kearney, MO, I referenced the name, Berthold von Schenk (1895-1974), in a footnote. Today I want to expand that footnote and briefly provide you a snippet of von Schenk's fundamental theological premise: catholicity. In addition, I will attempt to show how his understanding of "catholicity" shaped his teaching and practice of the Lord's Supper as well as the goal of the Christian life. Finally, I want to offer a critique of von Schenk's way of pushing "catholicity."¹

Dr. David P. Scaer of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, reviewed *Lively Stone: The Autobiography of Berthold von Schenk*. Dr. Scaer is correct when he states that this autobiography "is 'a must' for Missourians, especially for those who are interested in knowing how we evolved as a church body between the 1920s and the 1970s."² However, he could have said more. I would contend that to know *Lively Stone* and *The Presence*³ "are musts" for helping us understand why the LCMS is not united in her doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper to this very day. Consequently, I agree with C. George Fry and Joel R. Kurz that "the time seems right for a reappraisal of the person, the principles, the practices of the man."⁴

Berthold von Schenk was a passionate LCMS clergyman and scholar for whom I personally have great sympathy. After all, he wanted to be a faithful pastor and he wanted to give the people he served the highest of pastoral care through preaching, liturgy, and sacraments. He lamented and tried to stem the devastating tsunami of secularism in society and in the church. He wanted to make the Christian life very practical and useful. He had a high view of the office of the holy ministry but not to the exclusion or detriment of the holy and royal priesthood. He took seriously the Lord's mandate of making disciples through holy baptism and instruction. Consequently, he saw to it that mission, catechesis and parochial education were priorities in the congregations he shepherded.⁵

¹Previous critiques of which I am aware are as follows: Paul H. Burgdorf, "Chicago Tribune Airs the Matter of Rev. B von Schenk's False Teaching," *The Confessional Lutheran* XVI (December 1955), 143; Burgdorf, "Concerning the Matter of Rev. B. von Schenk's *The Presence*," *The Confessional Lutheran* XVII (March 1956), 28-29; Burgdorf, "*Una Sancta* Poses the Question 'What Is the Liturgical Movement?'" *The Confessional Lutheran* XVIII (June 1957), 64-65; Theodore Dierks, "The Liturgical Movement within the Lutheran Church: Its Romanizing Tendencies," *The Confessional Lutheran* XII (September 1951), 106-107; H. Richard Klann, "The Relation of the Liturgy to the Word," *Concordia Theological Monthly* XXIII:5 (May 1952), 321-341.

²*Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70:3-4 (July/October 2006), 377-378.

³*The Presence: An Approach to the Holy Communion* (New York: Ernst Kaufmann, Inc., 1945). Paul Robert Sauer has provided a revised edition (2010) through the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. "Sauer is as the pastor of the same church that von Schenk served in the Bronx from 1940 - 1961. He found a copy of *The Presence* at the church. 'Some books change your mind,' he told a group in a talk about von Schenk. 'This one changed my life.'" <http://www.alpb.org/presence.html> (accessed 28 January 2012).

⁴*Lively Stone: The Autobiography of Berthold von Schenk*, edited by C. George Fry and Joel R. Kurz (Delhi, NY: ALPB Books, 2006), 18. For example, von Schenk, when speaking about *The Presence*, remarked: "I did not repeat the old Missouri definitions in rationalizing the Lord's Supper ... I came to my conclusion on the Sacrament by experience," Idem, 86. He also believed that the "Holy Communion thus establishes the undivided Church and the union of all true believers. The frequent use of the Sacrament helps us to realize the *Una Sancta*," *The Presence*, 17. Consequently, closed communion, as practiced by Luther and orthodox Lutheranism is anathema because Communion "transcends all denominational lines," Idem, 16.

⁵The congregations he served were: Bethesda, Pine Lawn, MO; St. John's, Hoboken, NJ; Our Savior, Bronx, NY; St. Paul's, Oak Hill, NY.

Catholicity

Von Schenk considered himself to be an evangelical catholic in which “nothing Christian is alien to me”⁶ and in which “no communion has the right to say that they have all the truth.”⁷ However, he considered the Augsburg Confession to be the “truly catholic confession. No greater declaration of the catholic faith, apart from the ecumenical creeds, has been made which can compare with it.”⁸ Fundamental here for von Schenk is that this confession was not a letter of divorce. Instead, he saw it as a document that only seeks reconciliation and reunion. He praised its “irenic spirit” as well as its emphasis on what both sides have in common rather than what separates. Therefore, von Schenk wanted to use the Augsburg Confession as a tool for ecumenism because “there is no *damnatus* in the Augustana.”⁹

However, after 1530 the Reformation went downhill. According to von Schenk “the Reformation was unfortunate, unnecessary, and had negative results for both sides. It was also tragic, for it divided and sundere the resultant non-Catholic groups instead of uniting them. Thus, for Protestantism the results of ‘protesting’ brought only a sorrowful dichotomy, a separation from the Church.”¹⁰

Therefore, the Augsburg Confession must be used once again as the way for reunion with Rome and others because it speaks more of what Lutherans have in common than what separates. Any other confession just doesn’t cut it! Von Schenk asserted: “The egoism of confessions [e.g. Formula of Concord] should decline ... [and] make place for love which makes everything new.”¹¹ In addition, for the sake of catholicity Lutherans should “discover the truths, insights, and benefits inherent in Roman Catholic teaching and policy of the Counter Reformation period, as expressed in the statements of the Tridentine Council and also by such theologians as Odo Casel [a big time Liturgical Movement theologian!], Romano Guardini,

⁶C. George Fry and Joel R. Kurz, *Berthold Von Schenk (1895-1974) – Pioneer of Lutheran Liturgical Renewal* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 15. How von Schenk worked with this presupposition is clearly seen in *The Presence*, pp. 11-34, in which all kinds of theologians and their theological presuppositions (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Roman Catholic, etc.) contribute to von Schenk’s teaching, preaching, and conducting of the Lord’s Supper. For a more detailed review of what theological streams went into von Schenk, see *Berthold Von Schenk (1895-1974)*, 11-19. Three men in particular that influenced von Schenk are: Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925), Lars O.J. Söderblom (1866-1931), and his doctor father, Friedrich Heiler (1892-1967). Fry and Kurz note that von Schenk’s Hessian heritage of Lutheranism “to be both ‘obligated and faithful to the Wittenberg Reformation’ and yet ‘able to assimilate other influences to its own advantage.’ For that reason Hessian Lutheranism ‘has never gone into isolation, but, true to its historical heritage, it has rather sought to build bridges between the confessions.’ It was from his Lutheran legacy that von Schenk derived both nature and nurture,” Idem, 13.

⁷*The Presence*, 155.

⁸*Lively Stone*, 95.

⁹Ibid. That is simply not true. For example: AC I “Rejected, therefore, are all the heresies [German] ... They [*Damnans*] condemn all heresies ... [Latin].” AC II “Rejected, then, are the Pelagians and others ... They condemn [*Damnans*] the Pelagians and others ...” AC V “Condemned are the Anabaptists and others ... They condemn [*Damnans*] the Anabaptists and others ...” AC VIII “Condemned, therefore, are the Donatists and all others ... They condemn [*Damnans*] the Donatists and others like them ...” AC IX “Rejected, therefore, are the Anabaptists ... They condemn the Anabaptists ...” AC X “Rejected, therefore, is also the contrary teaching ... They disapprove of those who teach otherwise ...” ect.

¹⁰Ibid., 143.

¹¹Ibid., 144.

Karl Adam, H. Küng, and others.”¹² Von Schenk, like many so-called evangelical catholics, considered the Reformation’s institutional separation from Rome as an unfortunate result of politics and a bullish insistence on *die reine Lehre*. A fundamental premise of an evangelic catholic is that as long as Rome concedes the preaching of the “gospel” or that some consensus on the “gospel” takes place with Rome, Lutheranism (institutionally) really has no reason to exist.

In a personal letter to Concordia Historical Institute (16 December 1972) he wrote: “I am not opposed to efforts of purity of doctrine.¹³ The chief objective of Synod is to regain our catholicity. This was Luther’s objective. ... This was my main objective in promoting the liturgical renewal.”¹⁴ Catholicity is von Schenk’s fundamental premise for all his work as a pastor. It is hooked with liturgical renewal. He wrote: “To this day there are very few people who have recognized that the heart and soul of the movement [liturgical movement] is the desperate struggle to be the Church and to restore catholicity to our Lutheran Church. As Johann Gerhard stated, ‘The church which is not catholic is not the Church.’ I was never inter-

¹²Ibid., 145. Just by checking the footnotes of *The Presence* the reader can see that von Schenk was influenced greatly by several Anglo Catholic and Roman Catholic scholars. One in particular was Father Vernon Johnson’s work, *The Heart of Religion*. It is my understanding that Johnson converted to Roman Catholicism from the Church of England: <http://www.catholic-chaplaincy.org.uk/vision-statement/the-catholic-chaplains> (accessed 30 January 2012).

¹³Von Schenk was very clear that the LCMS’s emphasis on pure doctrine had gone wrong and that he stood against it because of the dangers it presented. He considered most of the faculty at Concordia Seminary to be “weak as scholars, theologians, and teachers.” One of his professors at the St. Louis seminary was Franz Pieper, author of the three-volume *Christian Dogmatics*. Von Schenk called it “museum dogmatics,” *Lively Stone*, 29. He categorically stated: “There is little difference between the Church prior to the Reformation and Missourianism; *Werkgerechtigkeit* was substituted in one and *Lehrgerechtigkeit* in the other ... The effort at purity of doctrine deteriorated into a *Lehrgerechtigkeit* [sic] far more serious than work-righteousness,” Idem, 96. Cf. also Idem, pp. 85-86, 89, 92-93, 126, 149. Ironically, von Schenk was very “dogmatic” when it came to making sure that one did the liturgy and said the mass effectively. One had to have a sense of polarities, a sense of the artistry for worship, a sense of worship’s beauty, and a sense of the integrity of worship, *Berthold Von Schenk (1895-1974) – Pioneer of Lutheran Liturgical Renewal*, 31ff. Very revealing are these remarks for understanding von Schenk properly: “True religion is always an adventure to discover new meanings and truths,” Idem, 89, and, “Our understanding must go beyond mere words,” Idem, 93. “History is progress,” Idem, 99. “One should never build a fence around the Holy Spirit for He is the spirit of freedom ... The Holy Spirit knows no bounds; there is no limit to the insights He can give us. True theology knows no limitations,” Idem, 102. “Doubts and heresies are not sinful – these are part of development ... We still suffer from a sterile theology which hinders the work of the Holy Spirit,” Idem, 105. Consequently, von Schenk criticized the LCMS’s teaching of the Bible’s inspiration and authority as Biblicism. See Idem, Chapter X “Scripture and Doctrine,” 89-94. “Inspired, Scripture is also a tradition, for it was the product of human efforts as secondary traditions. Therefore, the Bible cannot stand by itself. A legalistic Biblicism produces a spirit which is profoundly opposed to the true Gospel and therefore not in the genuine Christian *schema*; in this manner, it may be a definite hindrance to the promulgation of the *kerygma*. It was not the intention of the early Reformation fathers to obliterate tradition, but rather to re-evaluate it in light of the Gospel. These individuals opposed all attempts to absolutize [sic] ecclesiastical customs and rightly so. In their efforts to remove one false absolute, however, they mistakenly created a new (and perhaps far more serious) one, the woefully insufficient formula *Sola Scriptura*,” Idem, 147.

¹⁴*Lively Stone*, 97 (note 163). “To understand von Schenk we have to drop all labels; to step outside our own boxes and be what von Schenk challenges us to be – catholic – in our thinking, in our seeing, in our living, in our loving, in our hoping, and in our belonging,” Idem, “Introduction,” 15.

ested in promoting Romanism or Catholicism but catholicity.”¹⁵ Liturgical renewal is key to such catholicity for von Schenk.

Von Schenk explained what this means:

I soon realized that our church was neither Christian nor Apostolic, and certainly not catholic ... I came to see that Christians were not only to meet to go through a ritual, but that the congregation which I served as pastor has to have *Leiturgia*, *Missio*, and *Diakonia*; these are triplets, and one can't exist without the other. The congregation is not the Church – the Body of Christ – without *Leiturgia*, and *Leiturgia* is defined by our Lord in a simple sentence: ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’ ... My objective was to have these three elements so that the parish would truly be the *ecclesia*, the Body of Christ.¹⁶

Leiturgia, as a mark of the church, is a specific form and order of liturgy for von Schenk, especially in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This specific form and order of the liturgy is a *sine quo non* for von Schenk. Without it a congregation is “neither Christian nor Apostolic and certainly not catholic.”

A catholic Lord's Supper: Experience / Discern the Mystery!

In order for the LCMS to be catholic, the teaching and practice of the Lord's Supper as well as the Lord's Supper's liturgy had to be revised. Von Schenk immediately went to work to do just that. It was revision not for revision sake “but as a means of revitalizing worship in the Lutheran churches today.”¹⁷ A noble pastoral goal!

The heart of such revitalization or liturgical renewal was the celebration the Lord's Supper every Sunday.¹⁸ This was an absolute necessity for von Schenk. He pushed such frequency mainly from what he learned from the Liturgical Movement in the Roman Catholic Church from the 19th and 20th centuries.¹⁹ Von Schenk asserted that the Liturgical Movement “is the greatest movement in the history of our church” because “it is the answer to the challenge to be the Church – the Body of Christ. Its objective is to restore catholicity to the Church. Each congregation has to be the Church; meeting together in the Name of Jesus, the congregation is indeed the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.”²⁰

What did von Schenk learn from the Liturgical Movement? He learned that the heart of *Leiturgia* and Lord's Supper in the catholic way is this: *mysterion*! He asserted: “The great sin in the systematic study of dogma is that the teachers have failed to realize the meaning of the word *mysterion*.”²¹

¹⁵Ibid., 53-54.

¹⁶Ibid., 124-125.

¹⁷*Berthold Von Schenk (1895-1974)*, x.

¹⁸“At the outset it is again necessary by way of preface, to point out that we do not abolish the Mass but religiously retain and defend it. Among us the Mass is celebrated every Lord's day and on other festivals, when the sacrament is made available to those who wish to partake of it, after they have been examined and absolved,” Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XXIV, “The Mass,” in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 258:1 (hereafter cited as KW).

¹⁹For a brief historical sketch of the beginnings of the Liturgical Movement see Timothy C.J. Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement on American Lutheranism*, Drew Series in Liturgy, No. 3 (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1997), 1-26.

²⁰*Lively Stone*, 123.

²¹Ibid., 89.

What does this mean for the Lord's Supper? He put it this way:

We cannot approach the Sacrament by rationalizing it and think of it in terms of well-known doctrinal definitions, and say we fully understand it because we know the various theological opinions about it. It is a *Mysterium*. Gregory Nazienzen has stated it so well: 'To try to understand – is audacity; to believe – is piety; to behold – is blessedness.' Thomas A. Kempis' warning against 'Unnecessary searching in the profundities of the Sacrament if we do not wish to be submerged in the abyss of doubt and despair' is a good directive.²²

Theology, and this includes the Lord's Supper, is not so much about doctrine but about having an experience -- experiencing the mystery! "The fact which matters most is that He comes, not the way in which he comes."²³ Therefore, instead of pushing dogma, there "must always be adoration."²⁴ Adoration is essential for the revitalization of the church's catholicity.

Adoration of what? The body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper? Yes, and more! The whole Christ! The total Christ! This includes the church – the mystical body of Christ. "I realized that the congregation is only the Church when it is a Eucharistic Community which manifests the presence of the total Christ through Word and Sacrament ... My ministry became a great joy as I saw and experienced how my members grasped the idea of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and a living part of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church."²⁵

Adoration of the Lord's Supper as *mysterion* is this: discerning the body of Christ, that is, the church! Going to communion and being catholic is about realizing that the church is the mystical body of Christ! Therefore von Schenk stated:

if the Sacrament is celebrated at the early service, the pastor and the congregation are discerning the Body of Christ – the *ecclesia*. If the later service is only a preaching service, the Body of Christ is not being discerned – it is only a religious meeting, which no doubt has value, but it is not the Body of Christ. The handbook of the Church is St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, but we have misunderstood his arguments. 'Discerning the Body of Christ,' our exegetes taught concerning 1 Corinthians 11, means 'believing that the bread is actually the Body of Christ and the wine actually the Blood of Christ.' This is how they defined the Real Presence. What does 'discerning the Body of Christ' mean? It means that God's people meet in the Name of Jesus Christ, and that there at their head is the celebrating pastor. He represents Jesus among the people; without the ordained minister of God there can be no true celebration. People must be present, for the Body of Christ has many members. The Word of God must be proclaimed in the spirit of the teaching of the apostles. There must be an Offering, a collective giving and all that symbolizes – this is the *koinonia* ('fellowship') ... When the faithful gathered, they formed the Eucharistic Community, directed by the bishop, or presbyter, to manifest the total Christ and His total presence. St. Paul calls this meeting in the name of Jesus the Church – the continued Body of Christ. It has been taught that a person is unworthy if he does not believe that the bread is the true Body of Christ

²²*The Presence*, 11. Consequently, von Schenk did not contend that any one church had the entire truth. Therefore, he did not insist on any one particular doctrine of the Lord's Supper. He affirmed all the traditional 'doctrines' of the Eucharist. See *Berthold Von Schenk (1895-1974) – Pioneer of Lutheran Liturgical Renewal*, 38-39.

²³*The Presence*, 31.

²⁴*Lively Stone*, 89. "After I had my 'spiritual measles' and came to the realization of the significance of *mysterion*, I finally found peace theologically," *Idem*, 94.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 140.

and the wine the true Blood. This is not what St. Paul said ... St. Paul stated, however, that unworthiness consists in discerning the Body of Christ when the congregation does their liturgy. Exegetes, both Roman and Lutheran, again and again have stressed the sacred elements, while St. Paul doesn't have this in mind, nor does he limit himself to this concept. He sees the Body of Christ in the Eucharistic Community where the total presence of Christ is manifested. When St. Paul spoke of a worthy Communion, he insists that the Body of Christ – the Church – be discerned; he did not mean the bread and the wine.²⁶

Discernment for von Schenk is to experience the *mysterion*. “The Holy Mysteries of the Gospel are not to be rationalized and systematized, but realized.”²⁷ In the case of the Lord's Supper the point is to come into contact with the complete and total manifestation of Christ's body – sacramental and mystical. The congregation must see herself as the mystical body of Christ in order for the church to be truly catholic.

A catholic Lord's Supper: Pleading the Re-Presented Sacrifice

Something else happens at the Lord's Supper. It is essential for catholicity according to von Schenk. Again, the head (Christ) and his body (the church) are manifested in the Lord's Supper. The total Christ! The entire Christ! However, both Head and body (the total Christ) work in tandem in the *Leiturgia*! Synergy! Included, therefore, with such proper discernment of the *mysterion* is that at the Lord's Supper although “we cannot repeat the sacrifice which Jesus offered on Calvary ... we plead this sacrifice.”²⁸ Which sacrifice? It is the actual Good Friday sacrifice! It is “re-presented” in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper. Von Schenk contended: “He is present sacrificially in the gift of the cross and in the offering of the people. By this offering upon the altar, they are identified with the sacrifice on Calvary which is shown forth in the Mass.”²⁹

Von Schenk is very careful to say that Jesus is not sacrificed again but that “this sacrifice [we plead] is a solemn memorial offered to God the Father ‘according to His Son our Savior Jesus Christ's holy institution’ of the sacrifice which was offered upon the Cross. There is no new immolation of the Body of Christ, but a re-presentation of that immolation or anamnesis, a proclamation or memorial – of the Lord's death until He come.”³⁰ Consequently, when the pastor genuflects and elevates the host and the chalice as he faces the altar, “the offering of these consecrated elements to God the Father is a re-presentation of the Sacrifice of the Cross.”³¹ Von Schenk favorably quotes the Roman theologian Karl Adam: “In the Sacrifice

²⁶Ibid., 140-141.

²⁷Ibid., 142.

²⁸*The Presence*, 18.

²⁹*Lively Stone*, 150.

³⁰*The Presence*, 18.

³¹Ibid., 18-19. Von Schenk laments the failure of the Reformation to incorporate the laity in this experience. “Unfortunately the Reformation, although an improvement in the theology of the laymen, did not bring about a realistic improvement, for the Lutherans, merely substituted the theologian and preacher for the priest; the laity still remained either a mere spectator or auditor at the Mass and his liturgy was not restored to him. Hence, there has been a genuinely tragic loss of a functioning priest at the offering of the Sacrament. The offering was the acme of the ancient liturgies in the embryonic Church. When the layman receives his complete role in the liturgy, when he again participates in full dignity as a priest, he will know why he must be present at the celebration of the Eucharist. Absence from the Mass is a blatant denial of the baptismal vow and the priesthood. The layman must know that he offers himself as an identification of himself with the Sacrifice of Calvary, shown forth at the Communion of Saints,” in “A Lutheran Looks at the Ecumenical Problem,” *The Catholic World*, 218, (accessed from Von Schenk File, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO). “Thus by our offering of self, by our commitment, we are identified

of the Mass we are not merely reminded of the Sacrifice of the Cross in a symbolical form. On the contrary the Sacrifice of Calvary, as a great supratemporal [sic] reality, enters into the immediate present. Space and time are abolished. The same Jesus is present Who died on the Cross. The whole congregation unites itself with His holy sacrificial will and through Jesus present before it, consecrates itself to the heavenly Father as a living oblation. So the Holy Mass is a tremendously, real experience of the reality of Golgotha.”³² Elsewhere von Schenk stated: “At Communion we are actually on the mount called Calvary.”³³ Consequently, von Schenk teaches: “In Communion, as nowhere else, the believer is caught up in this great continual act, this timeless offering of the one sacrifice on the Cross.”³⁴

Fundamental for von Schenk is that the liturgy must be a ritual re-presentation of the story of Jesus, in particular Good Friday, through the church’s act of thanksgiving. After all, for him that is precisely how the early church did it and understood worship. Worship is the *eucharistia* – the offering of the thankful commemoration or prayerful narrative by which the Lord’s Good Friday offering of himself is actualized over and over again at each service.

A catholic Lord’s Supper: The Prayer of Consecration

In order for this re-presentation of Good Friday (experiencing the *mysterion*) to take place and for the LCMS to truly be catholic, von Schenk introduced what he called “the full liturgy of Word and Sacrament ... a complete liturgy.”³⁵ That means, of course, to reverse and repair the traumatic theological malpractice and liturgical crippling perpetrated on the church by Dr. Luther!

What did Dr. Luther do in his revisions of the Lord’s Supper’s liturgy? At the consecration point he eliminated the Roman Canon that put the Words of Institution in the prayers and emphasized the sacrament not as a promise / testament but as a sacrifice.³⁶ The liturgical direction in the Roman Canon of the mass was upward – from man to God! The primary emphasis was the offering up of the body and blood to the Father as an atoning sacrifice for the living and the dead. Dr. Luther took all this out and let the Words of Institution stand alone as the Lord’s address / promise and giving to the communicants.

Regarding Dr. Luther’s revision of the Lord’s Supper’s liturgy von Schenk asserted: “What a pity it was when the liturgy was castrated. Luther’s greatest blunder was his writing of the Mass [1523 & 1526]. He

with the great sacrifice shown forth at the altar,” in “Protestant Liturgical Renewal and the Quest for Unity,” *The American Benedictine Review*, 190, (accessed from Von Schenk File, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO)..

³²*The Presence*, 29-30.

³³*Ibid.*, 90.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Lively Stone*, 125.-126.

³⁶“That utter abomination follows which forces all that precedes in the mass into its service and is, therefore, called the offertory. From here on almost everything smacks and savors of sacrifice. And the words of life and salvation are imbedded in the midst of it all, just as the ark of the Lord once stood in the idol’s temple next to Dagon ... Let us, therefore, repudiate everything that smacks of sacrifice, together with the entire canon and retain only that which is pure and holy, and so order our mass ... All that matters is that the Words of Institution should be kept intact and that everything should be done by faith,” 1523 “An Order of Mass and Communion,” LW 53:25-26, 31. See also 1525 “The Abomination of the Secret Mass,” LW 36:311-328.

was out of his element.”³⁷ In fact, taking the Words of Institution out of the relative clause of prayer(s) of praise, petition, and thanksgiving was unthinkable for von Schenk. He lamented profusely the purging of the congregation’s praying by Dr. Luther and the Reformation: “We have only a recitation of the Words of Institution as the Consecration – really a bit of magic. There is no prayer of thanks to the God Who raised our Lord from the dead, no remembrance (*anamnesis*) of His whole life, His conception and birth, nor of His ascension and the hope of his coming. The Holy Spirit, that unknown personality of the Trinity, is completely left out; there is no epiclesis. Does this not show an amazing emphasis on dogma to the exclusion of the life in Christ?”³⁸

As a result of Dr. Luther’s revision of the liturgy at this particular point, the Reformation failed and the Reformation was stunted, to say the least, in her catholicity. Dr. Luther’s replacing the Eucharistic Prayer or The Prayer of Consecration with the Lord’s Prayer was absolutely “unforgiveable” for von Schenk!³⁹

Von Schenk, however, comes to the rescue! Von Schenk brings back catholicity! “All that was necessary was the restoration of the full liturgy. It was the first task I set myself to do, to write a truly catholic liturgy.”⁴⁰ In order to do that you can’t rely on Dr. Luther or the Reformation. You do liturgy as if a Reformation didn’t take place! “I found my sources in the post-Apostolic liturgical practices. I restored the Prayer of Consecration ... The Prayer of Consecration must have these parts: the Thanksgiving, the Words of Institution, the Remembrance, and the Invocation of the Holy Spirit.”⁴¹ The Words of Institution could never stand alone for von Schenk. They had to be in the context of praying (Prayer of Consecration) that included Thanksgiving, Remembrance, and Epiclesis.

All this is so that the entire body of Christ can plead the Good Friday sacrifice! That’s the point of having this “full liturgy!” Von Schenk asserts: “on the Cross the sacrifice was perfectly offered. Now our Lord continually pleads this sacrifice. At the Altar the Christian Church pleads the same offering which our Lord is continually offering in heaven, only now under the veils of bread and wine.”⁴²

In addition, not just the event of Good Friday gets represented but “each mass is a recapitulation of the entire life of Christ”⁴³ or a perpetual Memorial of Christ’s total life.⁴⁴ “These mysteries continue in the sacraments of the church.”⁴⁵ By “mysteries” von Schenk means Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. This is why in von Schenk’s Prayer of Consecration all these events are to be narrated! After all, von Schenk contends that it is in the Lord’s Supper that the communicant experiences a representation of all these events. The Lord’s Supper is the way for the communicant to experience all of Christ’s life, not as a doctrine, but as a reality, a life-changing reality and a world-changing reality! This can only happen with the Prayer of Consecration (Eucharistic Prayer) because its job is to render the saving event(s) present as well as Jesus with the event(s)!

A catholic Lord’s Supper: Union With God

³⁷*Lively Stone*, 127.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 130.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 129

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 127.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 127-128.

⁴²*The Presence*, 90.

⁴³ *Berthold Von Schenk (1895-1974) – Pioneer of Lutheran Liturgical Renewal*, 39-40.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁵“Protestant Liturgical Renewal and the Quest for Unity,” 191.

There is another reason why von Schenk insisted that the Lord's Supper be celebrated every Sunday with the "full catholic liturgy" just mentioned. It is so that the communicant can eventually reach his destiny that has been blocked by the selfishness or lovelessness of sin. What is this destiny? It is union with God who is love.

Von Schenk described it this way. "Our destiny is supernatural. We must be caught up with the divine love."⁴⁶ "The great destiny of man is UNION with God," and "the Cross made this possible."⁴⁷ The cross, of course, can only begin to be a reality in your life when you attend the Lord's Supper, participate in its representation as the total body of Christ (Head together with his body the church), and plead the Good Friday sacrifice to the Father in the restored catholic liturgy with all its proper parts! Only then does God's Calvary love exude through you and transform you so that you too can be drawn up into divine love himself. "Calvary which unites men with God also draws them up to divine love" and this divine love needs to permeate the communicant in order to change his life and the world's.⁴⁸

Again, one of the fundamental reasons to go to Communion for von Schenk is to have the experience of Christ's entire life so that you can be transformed by divine love and then begin the process of being united with God. The events of Christ's life have to become realities for people in order to "lift us up" into mystical union with God via the love received in this *mysterion*. "God came down to earth to lift man up to Himself."⁴⁹

Unification with God is the default position and direction of humanity. Always trying to climb the ladder, if you will, in order to reach the top: beatific vision. Von Schenk put it this way: "the most precious longing of the heart is to be at one with God ... This union with God through our Lord Jesus Christ is to be so real, so complete, that the very love with which the Father loves the Son, that is, the very divine Love itself, the love of Bethlehem, the love of Calvary, is to RADIATE IN AND THROUGH US. That is our destiny. There can be no other destiny than this. We are to be completely at one with God that our weak love is caught up with His divine love."⁵⁰ You eventually reach this goal because your love "was made perfect in His love" and you stand in glory because you are "purified from all that is not love."⁵¹ This is a huge reason why Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper according to von Schenk. It is the bond "to connect us to heaven, to make a connecting line, a link between heaven and earth."⁵²

He doesn't deny that faith is important but faith certainly is not enough in such a continuum. Love is the key! "We must be caught up with the divine love."⁵³ Like attracts like. Consequently, divine love received in the Lord's Supper radiates and begins to perfect you (sanatively transforming the loveless sinner and the world) as you make the upward trek to achieve union with God with the help of the Lord's Supper and the divine love that fills you there. "Heaven is love triumphant."⁵⁴ Elsewhere von Schenk wrote: "The only thing which can satisfy man's heart is to love God so completely that man becomes the channel of the divine love to his fellowmen. The only love which will affect our fellowmen is the supernatural love ... This

⁴⁶*The Presence*, 49.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 48.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 46.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 121.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 120.

is This is the one thing we must ever seek in Bethlehem [at the Sacrament] – that Bethlehem begets in us that divine love – a selfless, supernatural love, which is the Bethlehem love, a love which alone can ease the heartache of this world.”⁵⁵

To repeat: genuine catholicity for von Schenk is having the experience of the *mysterion* via the Lord’s Supper. Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost must be actually experienced by the communicant. These events must become a reality for the communicant. The Lord’s Supper is “Christmas” and “if your vision of faith is clear enough, you will see at the Altar not merely bread and wine, but the Christ-Child, the Word made flesh.”⁵⁶ Or:

at the Altar we touch Calvary ... and Calvary becomes a reality ... We see it all ... The Lord’s Supper is not the symbol of the death of Christ, but it is the personal appropriation of the person of Christ in His death. The Communicant takes the crucified Savior into Himself [sic] as the bread and wine serve as carriers. ‘They become under the operation of the Holy Ghost the means of transcendent realization of the death of Christ, who takes him, penetrates him, and assimilates him to himself.’ ‘He becomes a part of Christ.’ This is what Paul meant when he said: ‘Is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ?’ (1 Cor. 10).⁵⁷

Indwelling of Christ

Consequently, Christ in you is another sure and certain sign that the church is catholic for von Schenk. “The real test is if her members are in conscious union with Jesus Christ.”⁵⁸ He put it this way as well: “Christ’s resurrection is wholly meaningless unless He is risen in me. I must be Christ’s resurrection.”⁵⁹ “I must know that He lives in me.”⁶⁰ That comes by the Lord’s Supper. The source for Christian living is the experience through the Lord’s Supper that “the Resurrected Christ Himself [is] in us.”⁶¹ In addition, you are to experience the *mysterion* of Pentecost at the Lord’s Supper. Von Schenk asked: “Is Pentecost merely an event in history or a perpetuation of the Eternal Energy? It is of course both. Its significance, however, is the latter.”⁶²

The essence of the Christian’s existence in the world is the “Indwelling Christ” who “wants to come into the life of His believers and live His life in them.”⁶³ When the Christian “surrenders” and “yields,” the *intra nos* Jesus or “Presence of God”⁶⁴ is the power for victorious living. When you go to Communion you are to believe, “without doubt, that the Lord Jesus Christ is filling your entire life ... and when you have this conviction, this consciousness of the indwelling Christ, then Christ is no longer One who merely ‘inhabits eternity’ and to Whom you turn in times of trouble ... but He has taken full possession of your very being, body, soul and spirit. Thus you will begin your day, face your problems and difficulties, and say, ‘He is in me,’ ‘I cannot fail, for it is not I, but Christ in me.’”⁶⁵ The Christian life is not necessarily to “struggle

⁵⁵Ibid., 47. “And this love alone can save society,” Idem, 47.

⁵⁶Ibid., 55.

⁵⁷Ibid., 90 (von Schenk quotes Olin A Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, 431).

⁵⁸Ibid., 150.

⁵⁹Ibid., 100.

⁶⁰Ibid., 107.

⁶¹Ibid., 108.

⁶²Ibid., 138.

⁶³Ibid., 161-162.

⁶⁴Ibid., 161-169.

against them [sins]" because what really makes the difference is to "practice the presence of God on our lives."⁶⁶ This is the secret to victorious living!

The Lord's Supper is the means by which the indwelling of Christ is given to the Christian. Therefore, the entire liturgy or "worship" has to be geared to cultivate the life of Christ in the Christian. "The worshipper," according to von Schenk, "offers himself as an empty chalice for God to fill,"⁶⁷ so that "the true liturgical spirit has for its source the intimate union with Jesus Christ."⁶⁸ The Christian goes to the Lord's Supper in order to receive the "sacred deposit," namely the indwelling of Christ. "The method," according to von Schenk, "is the mystic reproduction in us of the life of our Lord ... The means consist in a participation in the Christian mysteries as a means of grace."⁶⁹

A Critique:

Letting the Lord Have His Say!

"LISTEN TO HIM [Jesus]!" (Matthew 17:4-5; Mark 9:5-7; Luke 9:33-35) is the Father's explicit mandate on the Mount of Transfiguration. Consequently, regarding the Lord's Supper one starts with the *Verba Domini*. That, of course, is not where von Schenk starts. His point number one is experience and what others say! "We need more than the spoken word."⁷⁰ "She [the church] knows by sacred and incommunicable experience ..."⁷¹ "We cannot approach the Sacrament by rationalizing it and think of it in terms of well-known doctrinal definitions, and say we fully understand it because we know the various theological opinions about it."⁷² He does not let the Lord have his say! This is a fundamental, deep-seated flaw with von Schenk.

However, the Reformation was precisely about that! Therefore, the *Verba Domini*, the Words of Institution, are precisely what the Small Catechism gives in the sixth chief part!⁷³ The Lord's Supper, instituted by the Lord Jesus himself, is his true body and blood with the bread and wine for us Christians to eat and drink. How do you know that? For that we are to hear the *Verba Domini*! According to the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to the disciples and said: "Take and eat; this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup [of wine] after supper, gave thanks, gave it to them and declared: "Drink of it all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood that is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."

The Small Catechism lets the Lord have his say! To know what the Sacrament of the Altar is, what it gives, and who is worthy, we are referenced to the *Verba Domini*.

⁶⁵Ibid., 163.

⁶⁶Ibid., 163-164.

⁶⁷Ibid., 170.

⁶⁸Ibid., 173.

⁶⁹Ibid., 173-174.

⁷⁰Ibid., 104.

⁷¹Ibid., 159.

⁷²Ibid., 11.

⁷³Compare the Small Catechism's treatment of Baptism and Confession where the Lord's mandate and institution words are the focus – the main thing!

What benefits do we receive? The answer comes from the *Verba Domini*: “These words, ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,’ shows us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? The *Verba Domini* answer that question too. “Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: ‘forgiveness of sins.’”

Who receives the Sacrament worthily? Again, the answer comes from the *Verba Domini*. “Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words ‘for you’ require all hearts to believe.”

The “do this in remembrance of me” is to eat the bread/born of the Virgin-crucified- risen-ascended body and drink the wine/ born of the Virgin-crucified- risen-ascended blood with the mouth. The “doing” is actually receiving from the Lord. All gift. Categorical gift! Gospel! Evangelical! From the *Verba Domini* Dr. Luther asserted: “this sacrament is the gospel.”⁷⁴

Pro te! Getting the gospel right is getting the pronoun right – just as the Lord himself promises: “for you.” Therefore, Dr. Luther affirmed: “this is a true God who gives and does not receive, who helps and does not let himself be helped ... In short, he does and gives everything, and he has need of no one; he does all things freely out of pure grace without merit, for the unworthy and undeserving, yes, for the damned and lost. This kind of remembrance, confession, and glory he desires to have.”⁷⁵ Consequently, Dr. Luther maintained: “Language cannot express how great and mighty these words are, for they are the sum and substance of the whole gospel.”⁷⁶

Here is the heavyweight evangelical emphasis: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins!” With such forgiveness from the very words of Christ there is life and salvation! This is the eschatological new! The Last Day judgment ahead of time! The judgment is: acquittal! It is the justification of the ungodly! His word of promised does and gives what it says! Oswald Bayer notes that “‘life and salvation’ is to be construed in the fully eschatological sense: the Lord’s Supper effects deliverance from the last judgment – from perishing eternally.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴1523 “Adoration of the Sacrament,” LW 35:289.

⁷⁵1530 “Admonition Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Our Lord,” LW 38:107. This truth flows from who God is and what he does: “These are the three persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has,” 1528, “Great Confession,” LW 37:366. See also LC II, KW 433:24; 434:26; 439:64-65; 440:69.

⁷⁶1523 “The Adoration of the Sacrament,” 36:277.

⁷⁷*Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, translated by Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 272, note #79. “For in this sacrament he offers to us all the treasures he brought from heaven for us ... For here in the sacrament you are to receive from Christ’s lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and brings with it God’s grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense and power against death, the devil, and every trouble,” LC V, KW 473:66; 474:70. You “should hold it [*Verba Christi*] to be a living, eternal, all-powerful Word that can make you alive, free from sin and death, and keep you so eternally; that brings with it everything of which it speaks, namely, Christ with his flesh and blood and everything that he is and has,” 1523 “Adoration of the Sacrament,” LW 35:278.

Faith, created and sustained through the Lord's words, receives this gift beneficially. Faith too is the eschatological new! The new creation is spelled this way: F-A-I-T-H, *vita passiva*, the highest worship according to the gospel!⁷⁸ All this is according to the Lord's words by which he institutes this sacrament. He does and gives exactly what he says with his words. For the one who speaks is the Lord himself who created all things by his spoken word! "These words were spoken by the mouth of God."⁷⁹ Consequently, in the Lord's Supper, fundamentally, "we give nothing to Christ, but only receive from him."⁸⁰

Prior to the writing of the Small Catechism Dr. Luther was quite emphatic about listening only to the Lord's words regarding this Sacrament. In 1520 Dr. Luther wrote: "We must turn our eyes and hearts simply to the institution of Christ and this alone ... for in that word, and in that word alone, reside the power, the nature, and the whole substance of the mass ... For in these words nothing is omitted that pertains to the completeness, the use, and the blessing of this sacrament."⁸¹ In 1523 he stated: "the chief and foremost thing in the sacrament is the word of Christ ... Everything depends on these words."⁸² "If we desire to observe mass properly and to understand it, then we must surrender everything that they eyes behold and that the senses suggest ... until we first grasp and thoroughly ponder the words of Christ, by which he performed and instituted the mass and commanded us to perform it. For therein lies the whole mass, its nature, work, profit, and benefit."⁸³ "Everything depends, therefore, as I have said, upon the words of this sacrament ... We see, then, that the best and greatest part of all sacraments and of the mass is the words and promise of God, without which the sacraments are dead and are nothing at all."⁸⁴

In addition, from the *Verba Domini*, Dr. Luther learned that the Lord's Supper is "Christ's testament."⁸⁵ When you know what is a last will and testament then you know what is the Lord's Supper! "A testament, as everyone knows, is a promise made by one about to die, in which he designates his bequest and appoints his heirs ... A testator is a promiser who is about to die."⁸⁶ Jesus testifies to his death (body and blood given and shed), identifies the inheritance (forgiveness of sins), and designates the heirs (for you) in the *Verba Domini*! Therefore, "the mass is nothing else than a testament."⁸⁷

Accordingly, Dr. Luther was adamant that the Lord's Supper together with the *Verba Domini* not be a prayer! He declared:

We must let the mass be a sacrament and testament; it is not and cannot be a sacrifice any more than the other sacraments ... are sacrifices. Otherwise we should lose the gospel, Christ, and the comfort, and every grace of God. Therefore we must separate the mass clearly and distinctly from the prayers and ceremonies which have been added to it by the holy fa-

⁷⁸Apology of the Augsburg Confession, IV, KW 128:49; 144:154.

⁷⁹1528 "Great Confession," LW 37:307.

⁸⁰1520 "Treatise on the New Testament," LW 35:93.

⁸¹1520 "The Babylonians Captivity of the Church," LW 36:36, 37.

⁸²1523 "The Adoration of the Sacrament," LW 36:277.

⁸³1520 "A Treatise on the New Testament, That Is, the Holy Mass," LW 35:82.

⁸⁴Ibid., 88, 91. "We shall first learn what is of greatest importance, namely, that the chief thing is God's Word and ordinance or command ... Mark this and remember it well. For upon these words rest our whole argument, our protection and defense against all errors and deceptions that have ever arisen or may yet arise," LC V, KW 467:4; 468:19.

⁸⁵LW 36:37.

⁸⁶Ibid., 36:38.

⁸⁷1520 "Treatise on the New Testament," LW 35:87.

thers. We must keep these two as far apart as heaven and earth so that the mass may remain nothing else than the testament and sacrament comprehended in the words of Christ.⁸⁸

Dr. Luther makes this very clear again his 1520 “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church.” “For not the mass but the prayers are offered to God ... Therefore these two things – mass and prayer, sacrament and work, testament and sacrifice – must not be confused ... the former descends, the latter ascends.”⁸⁹ Dr. Luther did have a prayer of thanksgiving. It is the post-communion collect.⁹⁰ It does not make present once again Christ on the cross nor does it mediate the actuality of salvation BUT IS ONLY A RESPONSE TO CHRIST’S GIVING in the way he promises according the Words of Institution.

It is very important to understand that a reformational turn with regard to the *Verba Domini* is that they are a proclamation or address to the congregation! Prior to the Reformation the *Verba Domini* were recited or directed to the elements of bread and wine for the sake of the transubstantiation! That’s precisely why the *Verba Domini* could be said quietly for only the priest at the high altar to hear! It didn’t matter if the congregation heard Christ’s words because they were not addressed to them.

All that changed with the Wittenberg Reformation! The Words of Institution are the “living words of Christ [*lebendig wort*].”⁹¹ They are living because Christ is talking to you – making you a promise: “desire what Christ has promised you in them.”⁹² Again, in the Words of Institution Jesus speaks “to you and to all, ‘This is my blood, a new testament by which I bequeath you forgiveness of all sins and eternal life.’”⁹³ In his words “he is there for you ... and binds himself, saying, ‘Here you are to find me.’ Now when you have the Word, you can grasp and have him with certainty and say, ‘Here I have thee, according to thy Word.’”⁹⁴ Through these words “God makes a pledge to us and gives us grace and mercy.”⁹⁵ The words are a preaching of the gospel to sinners! The goal of such preaching is: faith – faith in what he promises and gives through his word.

When von Schenk insisted on embedding the *Verba Domini* in the prayers of the church (Prayer of Consecration and all its parts), he made a fundamental mistake whether he knew it or not. The blunder is Nestorian in nature, namely, that Christ is absent. Working from this essential faux pas more errors are made. In order to get Christ and his work of the cross back into the lives of folks, his words, *Verba Domini*, have to be changed, altered or improved upon somehow!

⁸⁸Ibid, 35:97.

⁸⁹1520 “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” LW 36:56.

⁹⁰“We give thanks to you, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore you that of your mercy you would strengthen us through the same in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.” *Lutheran Service Book*, 166. Also see Also see LW 53: 137–138 as well as *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), 6: 329–332 for information regarding the context and usage of this collect.

⁹¹1520 “Treatise on the New Testament,” LW 35:88.

⁹²Ibid., 35:89.

⁹³Ibid., 35:88.

⁹⁴1527 “That These Words of Christ, ‘This Is My Body,’ Ect., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics,” LW 37:68.

⁹⁵1520 “Treatise on the New Testament,” LW 35:92.

How do you do that? WELL, YOU SUBSTITUTE JESUS' WORDS WITH YOUR OWN WORDS! You make the *Verba Domini* into a prayer! Prayer(s) that narrate the events of his life – what he has done – and then what we need to do – plead the sacrifice as Christ's total body – and offer a Eucharist! The fundamental essence of the Eucharistic Prayer in the way that von Schenk pushed it is that it is the sure-fire way of getting the absent Jesus and all the major events in his life RE-PRESENTED and put before folks front and center once again!

As a result, the Lord's promise of forgiveness (gift) is reversed. *Donum* or *beneficium* via the Lord's *extra nos* words gets turned into our doing – our sacrifice (*sacrificium*) in tandem with Christ – for our salvation!⁹⁶ When von Schenk contended that such praying, such pleading the sacrifice, must be done, he has become a self-appointed preacher! He has substituted man's words (prayer) for the *Verba Domini* that are PROCLAMATION AND PROMISE! What do you call such a move? I know what Dr. Luther and the Lutheran Confessions called it: ENTHUSIASM! SCHWÄRMERIE!⁹⁷

Against von Schenk and those who go to the Lord's Supper to have a mystical Good Friday experience of Christ's death on the cross through passionate remembrance via prayer, Dr. Luther made some extremely helpful distinctions from the *Verba Christi*. In his 1525 benchmark work "Against the Heavenly Prophets," Dr. Luther taught:

We treat the forgiveness of sins in two ways. First, how it was achieved and won. Second, how it is distributed and given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. But he has not distributed or given it on the cross. He has not won it in the supper or sacrament. There he has distributed and given it through the Word, as also in the gospel, where it is preached. He has won it once for all on the cross. But the distribution takes place continually, before and after, from the beginning to the end of the world ... If now I seek the forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the cross, for I will not find it there. Nor must I hold to the sufferings of Christ, as Dr. Karlstadt trifles in knowledge and remembrance, for I will not find it there either. But I will find in the sacrament or gospel the word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the cross ... Everything depends on the Word.⁹⁸

The fact of Christ's suffering on the cross is one thing. The beneficial use of it is another. This is very important for diagnosing what we encounter in von Schenk. In a most telling remark from his 1528 "Great Confession," Dr. Luther is quite clear. He states: "they [his opponents] consider the fact and the application to be one and same, and thereby reduce themselves to folly and shame. *They fail to see that in the*

⁹⁶See the helpful paper by John T Pless, "CAN WE PARTICIPATE LITURGICALLY IN THE ATONEMENT?" Theology of Christian Worship Conference Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, MN 22-23 June 2008.

⁹⁷"In short, enthusiasm clings to Adam and his children from the beginning to the end of the world – fed and spread among them as poison by the old dragon. It is the source, power, and might of all the heresies, even that of the papacy and Mohammed. Therefore should and must insist that God does not want to deal with us human beings, except by means of his external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such a Word and sacrament is of the devil. For God even desired to appear to Moses first in the burning bush and by means of the spoken word; no prophet – not even Elijah or Elisha – received the Spirit outside of or without the Ten Commandments; John the Baptist was not conceived without Gabriel's preceding Word, nor did he leap in his mother's womb without Mary's voice; and St. Peter says: the prophets did not prophesy 'by human will' but 'by the Holy Spirit,' indeed, as 'holy people of God.' However, without the external Word, they were not holy – much less would the Holy Spirit have moved them to speak while they were still unholy. Peter says they were holy because the Holy Spirit speaks through them," Smalcald Articles III.8, KW 323:9-13.

⁹⁸LW 40:213-214. See also his 1528 "Great Confession," LW 37:192-193.

Supper the application of the passion, and not the fact of it, is concerned."⁹⁹ When people confuse *factum* and *usum* Dr. Luther says they are like "filthy cooks" and that "dissension and uncertainty" develops as well as all kinds of error.¹⁰⁰ No wonder we are not united in the LCMS. After all, this distinction is not applied in von Schenk's teaching.

From the *Verba Domini* there is no promise of having the "experience" of the re-presentation of an event (Good Friday) or other events (Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost). In addition, Jesus does not say that the "do this" includes the church pleading Christ's Good Friday sacrifice in the elevation of the host and the chalice as well as the Prayer of Consecration. Against such teaching Dr. Luther taught: "When we ought to be grateful for benefits received, we come arrogantly to give that which we ought to take. With unheard of perversity we mock the mercy of the giver by giving as a work the thing we receive as a gift, so that the testator, instead of being a dispenser of his own goods, becomes the recipient of ours. Woe to such sacrilege!"¹⁰¹ "The same thing cannot be received and offered at the same time."¹⁰²

In addition, since von Schenk does not let the Lord have his say with his own words (*Verba Domini*), the Christian cannot be content to simply cling to the Lord's words (faith) but he must use the Lord's Supper to fulfill his fundamental desire: achieving union with God! Such a virtue (union with God) as the goal of one's life as von Schenk pushed it, is precisely the problem. It is a way of salvation the runs in the way of the law (a legal scheme -- measurements) – improvement and increasing of divine love having its way in you. This is not the gospel. God doesn't need your love. Your neighbor, however, does!

The fruit of the Lord's speaking, giving, and promising in the Lord's Supper certainly bears fruit. There is *unio mystica*.¹⁰³ The church certainly is the body of Christ. Faith gives birth to love.¹⁰⁴ All this is fruit not

⁹⁹LW 37:193 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 37:194.

¹⁰¹1520 "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," LW 36:48.

¹⁰²Ibid., 36:52.

¹⁰³See Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, translated by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 154-176. "We must correctly explain the argument regarding the indwelling of the essential righteousness of God in us. To be sure, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells through faith in the elect, who have become righteous through Christ and are reconciled to God. (For all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who moves them to act properly.) However, this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith, which St. Paul treats [Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 22, 25; 2 Cor. 5:21] and calls *iustitia Dei* (that is, the righteousness of God). Rather, this indwelling is a result of the righteousness of faith which precedes it, and this righteousness [of faith] is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance of poor sinners by grace, only because of Christ's obedience and merit," FC SD III, KW 571-572:54.

¹⁰⁴"Forgiven and renewed, we offer ourselves once again to God, not in mystery and ritual at the altar but in the gritty realities of the poor and the mission fields of our neighborhoods and work places," Paul Ro-rem in "The End of All Offertory Processions," *Dialog* (Fall 1996), 249. Dr Luther speaks similarly in a 1527 letter to John Hess. In the letter he speaks about how Christians are to help the sick: "I know for certain in that this work is pleasing to God and all angels when I do it in obedience to his will and as a divine service Godliness is nothing but divine service, and divine service is service to one's neighbor," *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, edited by Theodore Tappert, (London: SCM Press, 1955), 238-239. Dr. Luther also wrote: "The fruit of the Gospel and "the fruit of the sacrament [of the altar] . . . is nothing other than love . . . As he gave himself for us with his body and blood in order to redeem us from all misery, so we too are to give ourselves with might and main for our neighbor. This is how a Christian acts. He is conscious of

the tree! Here the order is important. As we have seen in all the above the *Verba Domini* are primary. The Words of Institution as promise must never be made secondary to human love. Dr. Luther warns about this. He stated that with fanatics: love is primary – God’s Word secondary – “making them secondary to human love ... as if God must yield to men.”¹⁰⁵ Dr. Mark Mattes put it very well: “Christ-as-promise [in the Sacrament], which relates to accused, lost, and damned sinners to whom God grants his favor in Christ (as a happy exchange), and in so doing gives or donates his very being to us: ‘It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me.’ Or ... God is so for us in Christ that he becomes one with us (exchanging his righteousness for our unrighteousness).¹⁰⁶

Von Schenk’s emphasis of going to the Lord’s Supper in order to be radiated with divine love is at odds with the *Verba Domini*, especially the words “given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” Consequently, the Christians is referenced not to an external and certain word from the Lord that preaches what he did for him on the cross and gives him in the Sacrament, but to what God is doing in him (*intra nos*) – his own loving which is never sufficient or certain.

Von Schenk is more Augustinian, medieval and Roman Catholic in his way of speaking, conducting, and applying the Lord’s Supper and its corollary, justification [continuum from vice to virtue, sin to sanctification], than Lutheran. For von Schenk love has become the chief article. Consequently, the gospel is confused for a law! Therefore, what he taught is neither evangelical (grounded in the divine promise of forgiveness for Christ’s sake) nor catholic (giving witness to the universal faith)!

After all, what we confess of Christ is what we confess in the Lord’s Supper! Dr. Luther put it this way: “What is the whole gospel but an explanation of this testament? Christ has gathered up the whole gospel is a short summary with the words of this testament or sacrament. For the gospel is nothing but a proclamation of God’s grace and of the forgiveness of all sins, granted us through the sufferings of Christ, as St. Paul proves in Romans 10 and as Christ says in Luke 24[:46-47]. And this same thing ... is contained in the words of this testament.”¹⁰⁷ The saving suffering is Christ’s! Not yours in conformity with Christ! The achievement of salvation by Christ is *extra nos*! Not a process that God works in man (*intra nos*) via love in order to achieve union with an absent God that gets re-presented in the Lord’s Supper’s Eucharistic Prayer.

Brothers and sisters, I beg you. Learn your Small Catechism! Let the Lord have his say! What he says he gives! His body and his blood for the forgiveness of your sins! With that forgiveness you have life and salvation! That is his promise. Faith lives on and from Christ’s gracious speaking and giving *extra nos* and

nothing else than that the goods which are his are also give to his neighbor. He makes no distinction, but helps everyone with body and life, goods and honor, as much as he can,” 1526 “The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ – Against the Fanatics,” LW 36:352-353. He also states that the “use” of the sacrament is “for the glory of God and the good of the neighbor,” 1526 “Preface to the German Mass,” LW 53:61. Another scholar put it this way: “We, not the Sacrament, are the sacrifice. But we live from the gifts of God’s grace; that is, we are led through them from death to life. Sacrifice finds expression in just this. This event finds expression in worship through thanksgiving, praise, creed, and witness. But a true sacrifice is only this when it is consecrated through faith by daily walking in baptism, that is, walking in fear and faith, death and resurrection.” Carl Wisloff, “Worship and Sacrifice,” *The Unity of the Church: A Symposium*, edited by Vilmos Vajta (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1957), 164–165.

¹⁰⁵1527 “That These Words of Christ, ‘This Is My Body,’ Ect., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics,” LW 37:27.

¹⁰⁶Mark Mattes, “Catholic and Evangelical; not Roman Catholic, nor Evangelical,” a paper given at the Lutheran Free Conference (November 9, 2011), 4.

¹⁰⁷1520 “Treatise on the New Testament,” LW 35:106.

pro te. From the *Verba Domini* the old Adam daily dies with all sin and evil desires and the new man emerges and arises to live before God in righteousness and purity forever – the righteousness and purity of Christ himself. Now that's renewal! That is evangelical and catholic!

In the Name of Jesus.

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