

Because the distribution of and participation in Communion, or the Eucharist, is done in commemoration of the unique sacrifice of Christ, and because the sacrificial victim, who was once offered on the cross for our sins, is distributed and received there, it could for this reason, and with this explanation added, be called a sacrifice, even though Scripture does not so call it.⁴⁵

Chemnitz establishes that what is at stake for the Catholics is not a mere name, but the Tridentine teaching⁴⁶ that a true and actual sacrifice is offered to God in the Mass. The same Christ is said to be offered in an unbloody manner who once offered himself in bloody sacrifice on the cross. This is not the place to enter into the details of the Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass, which in the face of Protestant opposition has, since Trent, taken such pains to exclude the idea of a repetition of the sacrifice of Golgotha and thus to understand the sacrifice of the Mass as but a memorial, setting forth (*repraesentatio*) ["representation"], and appropriation of the sacrifice of the cross.⁴⁷ Suffice it here to say that among Catholic theologians themselves no unanimity has hitherto been reached on the relationship between the sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrifice of the cross. There is not even any clarity over the extent to which in the sacrifice of the Mass, the priest, the church, and Christ are subject and object of the offering.

The very prayers of the Mass themselves demonstrate that clarity exists only on the point that, since man presents the sacrifice of the Mass and God graciously accepts it, man cooperates in his own redemption. Our church, however, regards this as doing injury to the honor of Christ. For his glory consists in the fact that he procures our redemption acting entirely alone and without receiving any assistance from anyone else. In this sense, the Supper is for us the memorial of the sacrifice, concerning which it is written: "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Heb 10:14 [RSV]). Since it is much more than a memorial and since in it the eternal High Priest gives us his true body and his true blood to eat and to drink, the Sacrament of the Altar makes fully present for us the sacrifice Christ—and he entirely alone—offered on the cross in infinite love for sinners.

⁴⁵ Martin Chemnitz, *Examen Concilii Tridentini* (Preuss ed.; Berlin: Gustaf Schlawitz, 1861), 384; cf. the Kramer translation cited in the previous note, part 2, p. 445. JS

⁴⁶ [This teaching was formulated at] session 22. HS

⁴⁷ And yet the Roman catechism of 1565 again spoke of the sacrifice of the Mass as "renewing" (*instaurare*) the sacrifice of Calvary. HS

The official catechism of the Roman Church continues to affirm the teaching of the Council of Trent and quotes it directly to explain the doctrine of the Mass as sacrifice:

The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 1367) JS

PART 5: MARANATHA

In the Lord's Supper, the church looks back into the past to the historical hour of the first Supper in that room in Jerusalem "on the night when he was betrayed." At the same time, her gaze is directed to the future, to the great supper in the kingdom of God. Just as each Lord's Supper is a repetition of the first, even so it is at the same time a prolepsis of the heavenly meal Jesus himself had spoken of at the institution: "Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25 [RSV]; cf. Luke 22:18 and the parallel statements concerning the Passover lamb, Luke 22:16). Just as Jesus himself at the Supper looks into the future "until the kingdom of God comes" [Luke 22:18], "until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" [Luke 22:16], even so Paul says of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" [RSV].

The proclamation of Christ's sacrificial death is indissolubly connected with the prayer to the Exalted One that he would manifest his heavenly glory and enter into his lordship over the world. For only if Jesus was actually the Messiah could his death be the atoning sacrifice in the sense of Isaiah 53 and thus more than a hero's or martyr's death, or a moving farewell. The account of the disciples at Emmaus affords a most telling demonstration of the indissoluble connection in the faith of the nascent church between the statements that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in the entire OT, that he must die, and that he rose again. These statements express a single conviction. The Emmaus account makes it clear how this faith is bound up with the Supper. At the breaking of the bread, "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (Luke 24:31). The nascent church knew from Jesus himself that he was the suffering Messiah in the sense of Isaiah 53. This she understood in the Supper. From this perspective, proclamation of Christ's death and invocation of him as the returning Messiah belong indissolubly together in the primitive church's celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The origins of this invocation shine through the Emmaus story. Just as "Abide with us" [Luke 24:29] is still intended as a personal request but is nevertheless in truth already a prayer to the Exalted One, so likewise in the primitive church's invocation of Christ, the petition of the circle of disciples to their Master is in the process of becoming the church's prayer to her Lord now exalted at the right hand of the Father. A happy coincidence has preserved for us this most ancient prayer to Christ in the maranatha that still retains its original Aramaic form in the eucharistic liturgies⁴⁸ of the Pauline communities and of the *Didache* [10:6], while it already appears in the Greek language in Rev 22:20 ("Come, Lord

⁴⁸ One of the surest and most important results of recent research on the history of liturgy is the fact that the Supper of primitive Christendom fashioned fixed liturgical forms already at a very early date. These forms—and not the chaotic formlessness characteristic of occasional outbreaks of Enthusiasm—are the actual outcome of the workings of the Holy Spirit that Paul portrays in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. The

Jesus!"). Here we cannot discuss the significance of this ancient liturgical expression for the history of Christological dogma. The statement must suffice that the maranatha, which next to the Words of Institution is the most ancient portion of the eucharistic liturgy, belongs on account of its content to every celebration of the Lord's Supper. The church has been praying it for nineteen centuries. For nineteen centuries, she has been hearing the world's sneering question, which is also posed by the mockers who arise in her own midst: "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet 3:4 [RSV]).

Humanly speaking, the delay of the ardently expected end of the world and return of Christ is possibly the severest disappointment ever experienced on earth. It remains one of the most plausible arguments for unbelief when people say that the NT was mistaken with the prophecy of the imminent return of Christ and draw the corollary that it has erred also with its statements that Jesus is the Christ and that his death is the death of the Lamb of God. What does the church say in response? She can give no answer other than that already delivered by the NT in response to this question, albeit to believers rather than to mockers: "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet 3:8–10 [NKJV]). The church can give no other reply. How is it possible for her to be content with this answer? How is it possible for her to avoid plunging into despair over the delay of the parousia, for her not to lose her faith on account of this? How is it possible for her to wait with unspeakable patience, as if the measurements and laws of earthly time did not exist for her, and yet with every moment to grow in joyful assurance of her cause?

Zion hears the watchmen singing,
And in her heart new joy is springing.
She wakes, she rises from her gloom.⁴⁹

ancient church's liturgical language grew out of the language of prophecy, of which *Didache* 10:7 still gives an indication. The image, still dominant today, of a formless primitive church with a formless Divine Service was thrust into the NT by enthusiastic pietism and needs to be revised in accordance with these facts. Already in the first century, the Divine Service had more similarity with the Mass of one of the Eastern churches than with the assembly of a Methodist community. In his shining work, *Messe und Herrenmahl* (1926), Lietzmann traced the origins of the Preface right back to the Pauline congregations. This—along with the Salutation, "The Lord be with you," and the Sanctus (Isa. 6:3), attested to in 1 *Clement* [34:6]—is thus to be regarded as a very ancient component of the liturgy. The entire sentence found in 1 Cor 16:22–23, "Maranatha! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you," which reoccurs in Rev 22:20–21, perhaps belongs to the ancient liturgy of the Supper. The formula "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be anathema" is also to be understood in this context as intending to warn unbelievers and the unworthy against participation in the Eucharist. The reason we know so little of the shape of the most primitive Divine Service is that Paul did not need to deal in his letters with matters of common knowledge. HS

⁴⁹ From stanza 2 of the hymn "Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying" (*Lutheran Worship* 177). JS

How is it possible for the church to feel the flow of time with such sentiments as these? What kind of hope is it that only becomes firmer and firmer with the delay of its fulfillment? How can one pray "Come, Lord Jesus!" Sunday by Sunday and day by day for nineteen hundred years and more?

All these questions find their answer in the Holy Supper. Because the church possesses this Sacrament, she can wait for centuries and millennia on end. The Supper bridges the space of time between Jesus' days on earth and his return. By us "upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11 [RSV]), it is celebrated between the ages of the world, that is, between the old aeon, which extends from the creation of the world to the last judgment, and the new aeon which has already begun with the resurrection of Christ as the firstfruits from the dead and goes on into blessed eternity. The Supper exists only "between the ages,"⁵⁰ where it is present for the church, which no longer belongs to the world and yet is still in the world. In the Supper, time touches eternity and the here and now meets the beyond. It is the meal of pilgrims, *cibus viatorum* ["food of travelers"], as our medieval fathers used to call it. It is eaten on the migration from the world to the kingdom of God, from time to eternity, from the here and now to the beyond.

The Supper is now received in much the same way as Israel ate the Passover—"your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover" (Exod 12:11 [RSV])—and was given manna and water from the rock on its journey through the wilderness (1 Cor 10:1 ff.). A type of the Supper can also be discerned in Elijah's finding bread and water under the broom tree: "And he arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God" (1 Kgs 19:8 [RSV]). Since the days of Paul, the church has continually invoked these OT types in explanation of the Sacrament, and, by so doing, she has constantly expressed the idea that the Supper is the *viaticum*,⁵¹ fodder for the journey between the worlds, between time and eternity. Already in this life, it gives us a share in the goods of eternal life: "And I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29–30 [RSV]; cf. Matt 19:28, which lacks any reference to the Supper). This promise holds good not only for the apostles but for all who, as members of the church, partake at the Lord's Table. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? . . . Do you not know that we are to judge angels?" (1 Cor 6:2–3 [RSV]). While the world hastens toward the last judgment, "those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9 [RSV]) are removed from the divine

⁵⁰ Sasse here likely alludes to the magazine *Zwischen den Zeiten*, which was the mouthpiece of the "dialectical theology" movement associated with Karl Barth in the 1920s. JS/RF

⁵¹ *Viaticum* is the Latin word for "food for the journey." When administered to a dying person, the Lord's Supper is said to be that person's food for his journey to heaven. RF

judgment of wrath (cf. also 1 Cor 11:31–32). The blessed world of the resurrection and eternal life awaits them, for to them applies the promise “he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54 [RSV]).

If the NT gives us to understand the Lord’s Supper along these lines, it follows that the sacramental celebration is, in a certain way, exempt from the conditions of earthly time and space. The Supper involves both the beginning and the end of the way. It involves both the first Supper, founded by Christ’s promise, and the final supper fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Yet nothing is altered in the Supper itself by the particular stage of wilderness wandering one happens to have reached; it does not matter whether the Supper is celebrated in the year 50 or 500 or 1500 or 2000. Each eucharistic celebration of the church is a repetition of the first Supper and a prolepsis of the final supper. Both these factors are expressed in the liturgy, the first by the faithful use of the Words of Institution, the second by our joining in the ancient Prefaces’ expression of the praise and adoration which, according to Holy Scripture, are offered to God by the angels and archangels, the powers and dominions, and all the hosts of heaven. This twofold reference explains both the timelessness of the eucharistic liturgy and also the fact that in the Supper we join with believers of all ages in the prayer of unshakable Christian hope, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus!” whereby we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

PART 6: *SANCTORUM COMMUNIO*

The Supper directs the believer’s gaze at once into the past and into the future, to the church’s historical beginning in this world’s time and to her eternal goal in the coming aeon of the kingdom of God. By doing so, the Supper acts as does nothing else to make believers aware of the church’s deepest essence. We cannot learn what the church is from theological books. Nor can we learn this only from sermons, even though it should continually be said to us in sermons and we should hear it there. Rather, faith in the church—that is, believing knowledge of what the church is according to her deepest essence—arises from our experiences at the celebration of the Supper. This was the place where the disciples understood the reality of the church for the first time. The nascent church awoke to self-awareness in the celebration of the “breaking of bread,” the “Eucharist.”

Just as the early Christian congregations gathered around the Supper in the countryside of Asia Minor and North Africa, and in cities from Antioch and Ephesus to Rome, so likewise the church’s altar has in all ages been the point of crystallization around which living congregations have assembled. In every respect, the Lord’s Supper has been the center of the church. It even determined the beginnings of canon law and of ecclesiastical organization: A presbyter is one who, at the Eucharist, has a right to one of the front seats by the altar; a bishop is one who leads the celebration; and a deacon is one who “serves at table.” The church’s whole *diakonia* [“service, ministry”] proceeds from the altar, just as the fellowship of Christian *brotherly love* grows out of the Sacrament, which is justly

called “Holy Communion.” All attempts to build Christian congregations without placing at their center the congregation-forming Sacrament of the Altar are just as much condemned to failure as are efforts to renew the Divine Service without renewing the Lord’s Supper. The sad experiences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in this area only confirm the lessons of the past. The enormous effort made in the area of church planting during recent generations must be regarded as a failure. It has produced a wealth of societies and card files, but not a single congregation.

Something similar must be said about the liturgical endeavors within Protestantism in recent times. They have produced liturgies galore for every conceivable taste, but they have hitherto proved unable to move people to go to church again in order to celebrate these liturgies. Where the custom of church-going has lapsed with the consequence that the Christian congregation is dead or dying, there is but one single means for getting people back to church. Hunger and thirst for the Lord’s Supper must be aroused in them. Whenever this hunger and this thirst awake—and it obviously does not lie within our power to awaken them—people go to church again. In an emergency, hunger and thirst for God’s Word can be satisfied in one’s chamber, at least according to the pietistic theory with which the Protestantism of the last two centuries has preached its own churches empty. Except in case of grave illness, however, the Sacrament of the Altar can only be received in the house of God. The renewal of the Christian congregation and her Divine Service therefore begins, in a way that most theologians today still find incomprehensible, when we once again seriously learn and teach what the NT and the catechism say on Baptism and the Supper. That our church is today experiencing the beginnings of such a movement belongs to the promising signs of our time.

How is this community-forming character of the Lord’s Supper to be explained? *Sociology* distinguishes two groups of human communities. The first comprises those structures of social life which have their origin not in the will of men but in the givens of human life. Not a voluntary decision but an accident of fate is responsible for one’s belonging to a family, a clan, a race, a tribe, or a people. These communities, which have a basis in nature, exist before the individual, who is born into them. Alongside these there are other communities that come into being through voluntary association. One joins a circle of friends, a society, or a political party through a voluntary decision. The individual here exists before the social structure in question. In this case, community is created by the will of particular “self-associating individuals.” The two groups of community structures are also to be found in the life of religious communities. The sociology of religion knows of religious communities that preexist the individual, who is simply born into the cultic associations that we meet in the paganism of all ages and which usually overlap with the family, the tribe, or the *polis* [“city”]. Alongside them this discipline knows of other associations that are formed by the will of individuals, such as the cultural societies of the Hellenistic mysteries or the faith community