

THE INFLUENCE OF WILLIAM OF OCKHAM ON LUTHER'S EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY

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When Martin Luther confessed his belief in the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, he stood within the mainstream of 1500 years of biblical interpretation. In the Smalcald Articles of 1537 he put it this way:

We hold that the bread and the wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and that these are given and received not only by godly but also by wicked Christians.¹

When this article of personal confession became part of the confession of the Lutheran church, belief in the Real Presence became normative for all Lutherans.

But the mainstream of Christian thought had not only settled on the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper; it had also defined the how of Christ's presence, namely, transubstantiation. While belief in the Real Presence extended back to the ancient church, the theory of transubstantiation was more recent. It had arisen in response to the challenge of Berengar of Tours in the 11th century, who had denied the Real Presence on philosophical grounds. The reaction of the church's mainstream was to enforce belief in the Real Presence and to go a step further by settling on transubstantiation as the mode of Christ's presence. The term came into use in the 12th century, and it became Roman Catholic dogma at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. As we all know, Luther and Lutheran Christians retained the Real Presence but rejected transubstantiation and every other theory as to the how of the Real Presence. In that same article of the Smalcald Articles Luther says:

As for transubstantiation, we have no regard for the subtle sophistry of those who teach that bread and wine surrender or lose their natural substance and retain only the appearance and shape of bread without any longer being real bread, for that bread is and remains there agrees better with the Scriptures, as St. Paul himself states, "The bread which we break" (1 Cor. 10:16), and again, "Let a man so eat of the bread" (1 Cor. 11:28).²

The reason that Luther retained the Real Presence and at the same time rejected transubstantiation is the same: He was compelled to do so by the Word of God. In a letter of 1524 addressed to the Christians of Strassburg Luther admits he was tempted at one time to opt for less than a Real Presence. But then he goes on in a famous passage:

*But I am captured by the Word of God and cannot find a way out. The words are there, and they are too strong for me.*³

¹ *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed., Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), Part III, Art. VI, p 311, hereafter cited as Tappert.

² *Ibid.*

³ Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), p 81, author's translation of *Luthers Werke* 15 (Weimar, 1883 ff.), 394, 12 ff. Cf *Luther's Works*, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press and Fortress Press, 1955-1986), 40:68. *Luther's Works* is hereafter cited as *LW*.

Commenting on these words, Hermann Sasse says that "it was the Word of God and nothing else that made him a fervent believer in the Real Presence."⁴ Later Sasse writes: "We have no utterance of Luther's in which he expresses any doubt concerning the belief that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the Lord's Supper."⁵ The Word had compelled Luther to acknowledge the Real Presence.

Likewise, it was the Word of God—more accurately, the *lack* of a specific Word—which prompted Luther to drop the prevailing theory of transubstantiation. As he read over the eucharistic texts of Scripture he found nothing to warrant transubstantiation. Luther's first doubt about transubstantiation is contained in his treatise on *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, and the Brotherhoods* of 1519. He writes:

Christ . . . gave his true natural flesh in the bread, and his natural true blood in the wine, that he might give a really perfect sacrament or sign. For just as the bread is changed into his true natural body and the wine into his natural true blood, so truly are we also drawn and changed into the spiritual body⁶

The word translated *changed* is *vorwandelt* in German,⁷ a term associated with transubstantiation. But it is doubtful whether Luther here wants *changed* so understood, a fact brought out by these subsequent words:

There are those who practice their arts and subtleties by trying [to fathom] what becomes of the bread when it is changed into Christ's flesh and of the wine when it is changed into his blood and how the whole Christ, his flesh and blood, can be encompassed in so small a portion of bread and wine. It does not matter if you do not see it. It is enough to know that it is a divine sign in which Christ's flesh and blood are truly present. The how and the where, we leave to him.⁸

It seems, then, by the word *changed* Luther intended no more than what he later on intended by *in, with and under*, a simple affirmation that the Lord's body and blood were really and truly present in the Sacrament.

God's Word prompted Luther to confess the Real Presence. The lack of a specific Word prompted him finally to deny transubstantiation. Yet Luther himself acknowledged a particular influence on his conclusion. In his ground-breaking *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* of 1520, in the section dealing with transubstantiation, Luther recalled something he had once read:

Some time ago, when I was drinking in scholastic theology, the learned Cardinal of Cambrai gave me food for thought in his comment on the fourth book of the Sentences. He argues with great acumen that to hold that real bread and real wine, and not merely their accidents, are present on the altar, would be much more probable and require fewer superfluous miracles—if only the church had not decreed otherwise.⁹

Who was this "learned Cardinal?" He was Pierre d'Ailly (1350-1420), who was chairman of that session of the Council of Constance which condemned John Huss in 1415. More important, d'Ailly followed closely the thinking of William of Ockham (ca. 1285-1349), who had expressed reservations about transubstantiation.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 82.

⁶ LW 35:59, and fn. 27

⁷ *Vorwandelt* is the spelling in WA 2:749 in place of the modern *verwandelt* (ed.).

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 60, 61.

⁹ LW 36:28,29, and footnotes. Incidentally, the principle which d'Ailly makes use of here—an explanation involving fewer miracles is preferable to one requiring more—is a variation of what has come down to us as "Ockham's Razor."

Since the works of d'Ailly are not generally available, it is impossible to determine whether Luther understood d'Ailly correctly.¹⁰ But assuming Luther did understand d'Ailly correctly, a correspondence can be shown between the thought of d'Ailly and that of Ockham. In his treatise *De Sacramento Altaris*, in a section dealing with the mode of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, Ockham refers to and agrees with certain doctors who posit that

there is no contradiction involved in the statement that through divine power the substance of the bread may be able to remain with the body of Christ. And [this statement] seems to me more probable and more in accord with theology, because it rather exalts the omnipotence of God by detracting nothing from it, nor does it plainly and expressly imply a contradiction.¹¹

Then, having already quoted the church's teaching on transubstantiation, Ockham refrains "for the present" from a further discussion of the issue. What d'Ailly and before him Ockham were arguing for was basically the Real Presence without transubstantiation, Luther's mature position. Of course, Ockham and d'Ailly in the 14th and 15th centuries still felt obliged to bow to the collective wisdom of Mother Church, which had arrived at a different conclusion. Scarcely one hundred years later Luther did not feel the same necessity. His remarks on d'Ailly continue:

When I learned later what church it was that had decreed this, namely, the Thomistic—that is, the Aristotelian church—I grew bolder, and after floating in a sea of doubt, I at last found rest for my conscience in the above view, namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and real blood are present in no other way and to no less a degree than the others assert them to be under their accidents. I reached this conclusion because I saw that the opinions of the Thomists, whether approved by pope or by council, remain only opinions, and would not become articles of faith even if an angel from heaven were to decree otherwise [Gal. 1:8]. For what is asserted without Scriptures or proven revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed.¹²

For the sake of completeness it should be pointed out that Luther at this time (1520), while personally denying transubstantiation, was still willing to let it stand as an opinion of others. After arguing fervently for the Real Presence minus transubstantiation, citing approvingly the common people who "believe with a simple faith that Christ's body and blood are truly contained there,"¹³ he concludes:

At the same time, I permit other men to follow the other opinion, which is laid down in the decree, *Firmiter*, only let them not press us to accept their opinions as articles of faith (as I have said above).¹⁴

Until 1524 Luther's opponents were mainly the papists, but after that year he was drawn into battle with other reformers as well. In the case of the former the point of contention was Luther's denial of transubstantiation. With the latter the struggle centered on the Real Presence itself.

¹⁰ The editors of *LW* suggest a source, *LW* 36:28, fn. 59. Some of d'Ailly's works were published by his friend Jean Gerson (1363-1429) in Gerson's *Opera Omnia*, ed. L. E. Dupin (Antwerp, 1706), 5 vols. But the present passage is not among these works.

¹¹ T. Bruce Birch, *The De Sacramento Altaris of William of Ockham* (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1930), p. 187. Ockham attributes his thought to "the subtle doctor," i.e., John Duns Scotus (ca.1265-1308).

¹² *LW* 36:29.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 35. *Firmiter* refers to the decree of Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council: "There is one universal church of all believers, outside of which no one at all is saved; in which He is both priest and sacrifice, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the species of bread and wine, when the bread is transubstantiated by divine power into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood." See Birch, p. 185.

The challenge to the Real Presence, which emanated from Karlstadt, Bucer, Oecolampadius, Zwingli and many lesser lights, took a variety of forms, more than we can be concerned about here. But repeatedly Luther's opponents made use of the argument from Christ's ascension: If Christ has ascended to the right hand of God, then how can he also be on earth in the bread and wine of his Supper? For Luther's opponents, the correct understanding of the Lord's Supper seemed a simple matter of letting Scripture interpret Scripture. Jesus' statement, "This is my body," was, they said, literally unintelligible. Fortunately, it did not have to be taken literally. Scripture informs us that Jesus left this earth, making his presence in the bread and wine obviously impossible. Therefore, Scripture itself indicates that Jesus' words are not to be understood literally—spiritually or figuratively perhaps—but not literally, they maintained.

Luther was not impressed with this use of Scripture to interpret Scripture. Instead, he accused his opponents of rationalism. In 1527, in a treatise *That These Words of Christ, "This is My Body" Etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics*, he rails against Oecolampadius:

This is the rancor and hatred of natural reason, which wants nothing to do with this article and therefore spits and vomits against it, and then tries to wrap itself in Scripture so that it may avoid being recognized. Not a single article of faith would remain if I followed the rancor of reason.¹⁵

And again:

With this rancor, however, my dear fanatics prepare the way for the virtual denial of Christ, God, and everything. In part, already, they have made a start at believing nothing at all. They follow the fancy of reason, which they expect to lead them aright.¹⁶

In Luther's view his opponents had come across a phrase, "This is my body," which on its face was unreasonable. Their reaction had been to find a reasonable solution. Luther would have none of it.

In meeting his opponents' challenge to the Real Presence Luther again fell back upon the plain Word of Scripture. How did he know that Christ's body and blood were really in his Supper? Answer: Christ said so. No other proof, no other Scripture to interpret Scripture was necessary:

Now do you demand Scripture from us, dear fanatics? Here it is: "Take, eat, this is my body." Torment yourselves for now with this text; later you shall have more.¹⁷

But what about the article that Christ sits at the right hand of God in heaven? Would that not indicate that Christ had left this earth and could not be in the Sacrament? Luther countered:

Take notice and listen to us. Christ's body is at the right hand of God; that is granted. The right hand of God, however, is everywhere....Therefore it surely is present also in the bread and wine at table. Now where the right hand of God is, there Christ's body and blood must be, for the right hand of God is not divisible into many parts but a single, simple entity.¹⁸

"The right hand of God is everywhere"—we can hardly appreciate the impact of this insight anymore today. It marked the end of the medieval spatial concept of heaven.¹⁹ God's right hand was everywhere, and if Christ had gone to his Father's right hand, then his body and blood were everywhere too, even in the bread and wine of his Supper.

¹⁵ LW 37:53.

¹⁶ LW 37:53.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 50.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp 63,64.

¹⁹ Sasse, p 159.

Luther even anticipated an obvious objection to his reasoning:

By this kind of talk perhaps I shall now attract other fanatics who would like to trip me up, arguing: If Christ's body is everywhere, ah, then I shall eat and drink him in all the taverns, from all kinds of bowls, glasses, and tankards.²⁰

But Luther was not intimidated, because

it is one thing if God is present, and another if he is present *for you* (italics added). He is there for you when he adds his Word and binds himself, saying, "Here you are to find me"....So too, since Christ's humanity is at the right hand of God...you will not eat or drink him like the cabbage and soup on your table, unless he wills it....This he does in the Supper, saying, "This is my body," as if to say, "At home you may eat bread also, but...when you eat this, you eat my body, and nowhere else. Why? Because I wish to attach myself here with my Word, in order that you may not have to buzz about, trying to seek me in all places where I am."²¹

The right hand of God is everywhere *that it wishes to be*, and Christ is right there with it. So if it wants to be in this bread and wine rather than in that cabbage and soup, then Christ is really present also. The proof lies in the plain Word of Scripture: "This is my body."

Once again, God's Word in Scripture had been sufficient to prove the reality of the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. But Luther's opponents had used human reason to deny the literal understanding of "This is my body." At the heart of his response to his opponents, Luther showed that even human reason did not necessarily deny the Real Presence, in fact, might even support it. Logic could be used to support the Real Presence, even if Luther knew he did not need logic's support. Sasse seems to have accurately captured the mind of the Reformer:

[Luther's] belief in the Real Presence rests solely on the words of Christ. He was well acquainted with the scholastic theories on the Eucharist. He himself had to make use of them . . . when he had to refute the objections of adversaries that the doctrine of the Real Presence was nonsense. But important as such ideas from medieval theology and philosophy might become for him as means of apologetics, they never became the basis of his convictions.²²

We have an instance of Luther's use of medieval philosophy in that same treatise of 1527. Notice particularly his use of the terms "circumscribed and determinate" and, "uncircumscribed and immeasurable" to describe first his opponents' and then his own position:

The Scriptures teach us, however, that the right hand of God is not a specific place . . . but . . . , at one and the same time can be nowhere and yet must be everywhere For if it were at some specific place, it would have to be there in a circumscribed and determinate manner, as everything which is at one place must be at that place determinately and measurably, so that it cannot meanwhile be at any other place. But the power of God cannot be so determined and measured, for it is uncircumscribed and immeasurable, beyond and above all that is or may be.²³

The use of such terminology shows the influence of scholasticism upon Luther, quite likely, as we shall see, the scholasticism of William of Ockham.

²⁰ LW 37:67.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp 68,69.

²² Sasse, p 107.

²³ LW 137:57.

Little is known about the life of Ockham. He was born near London sometime between 1280 and 1290.²⁴ He studied at Oxford and seems to have fulfilled all the requirements for the degree of *Magister Theologise* but was prevented from holding a chair because of opposition to his thoughts. This same misfortune plagued him all his life. About 1327, Ockham's order, the Franciscans, was torn by a dispute over the holding of property, some friars favoring it, others demanding absolute poverty. Ockham sided with the latter group; and when the pope sided with the former, Ockham denounced papal power in a series of treatises. For this he was excommunicated, and all his writings condemned. There is some uncertain evidence that he made peace with the church toward the end of his life. He died at Munich about 1349, perhaps a victim of the Black Death. He is considered the founder of the last pervasive school of medieval philosophy, nominalism, or the *via moderna*, which, briefly, was noted for its skepticism of reason's powers and the church's pronouncements. It is crucial to note that Erfurt, Luther's alma mater, was considered a center for Ockhamist scholasticism.

The general influence of Ockham on Luther has been known for some time, though it has rarely been studied in specific instances. In his *Table Talk* Luther himself states:

The Terminists [another name for Nominalists] is the name of a school in the universities to which I belong. They oppose Thomists, Scotists, and Albertinists, and are called Occamists [a variant spelling], from Occam their founder Occam is a wise and sensible man, who endeavored earnestly to amplify and explain the subject.²⁵

Melanchthon, in his *Life of Luther*, states that Luther "read Occam much and long and preferred his acumen to that of Thomas and Scotus."²⁶ Harnack, in *The History of Dogma*, overstates Luther's reliance on Ockham when he writes that Luther "called in the aid of Occam's Scholasticism...in order to establish the Christian faith in respect to the Doctrine of the Real Presence."²⁷ We have shown instead that the plain Word of God was sufficient to establish the Real Presence for Luther. Nevertheless, with this caution, Harnack is substantially correct. Perhaps these remarks of Heinrich Boehmer summarize the situation best:

Early in the summer of 1515 the Reformer summarily refers to the Okkamists [another variant spelling] as "hog theologians." One might conclude from this that he had even then severed connections for all time with Okkam and his fellows. But such a conclusion would be overhasty. Luther never quite got through with the hog theologians. In a measure he remained an Okkamist during his whole life.²⁸

Boehmer then specifically cites Luther's teaching about the Eucharist as an example of Ockham's influence. Later, Boehmer says flatly: "It is therefore downright impossible to comprehend Luther's theology, in fact his whole point of view of life, without continually bearing in mind that he passed through the school of the 'moderns.'"²⁹

What seems to be a clear instance of Ockham's influence on Luther's Eucharistic theology—clearer than Ockham's influence filtered through d'Ailly which we described earlier—is contained in Luther's *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* of 1528, sometimes simply called the "Great Confession." It appeared after four years of bitter literary attacks from the Reformed, and it was intended by Luther to be his most comprehensive statement on the Sacrament. Not until 1544 in his *Brief Confession on the Holy Sacrament* did Luther return to this theme, and then it was merely to show that his views had not changed.³⁰

²⁴ I am relying here on a resume of Ockham's life found in Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M., ed., *Ockham Philosophical Writings* (New York: Nelson, 1957), pp xi-xvi.

²⁵ Birch, p xxiii.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p nom.

²⁸ Heinrich Boehmer, *Luther in the Light of Recent Research*, trans. Carl F. Huth, Jr. (New York: The Christian Herald, 1916), p 87.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 88, 89.

³⁰ I am relying here on the introductory remarks by Robert H. Fischer in *LW* 37:156-58. Cf. *LW* 38:301.

Again, as in the treatise of 1527, Luther took issue with his opponents' contention that the doctrine of Christ's ascension precluded the Real Presence in the Supper. But this time Luther went further than in the previous year. He maintained that his opponents' position was inspired by reason, not by faith, and was in fact based on the "first mode of being," also called the "local" or the "circumscribed" mode, as taught in the schools for 300 years. At this point Luther might easily have dismissed his opponents' position as an intrusion of reason into matters of faith. But he did not take this route. Instead, in effect, he decided to fight fire with fire: His opponents had used reason to *deny* the Real Presence; he would for the moment use reason to *defend* it. He states:

God has and knows various ways to be present at a certain place, not only the single one of which the fanatics prattle, which the philosophers call "local." Of this the sophists [Luther's term for scholastic philosophers] properly say: There are three modes of being present in a given place: locally or circumscriptively, definitively, repletively.³¹

Then Luther proceeded to explain each mode for his readers. In the first case

an object is circumscriptively or locally in a place . . . if the space and the object occupying it exactly correspond and fit into the same measurements, such as wine or water in a cask, where the wine occupies no more space and the cask yields no more space than the volume of the wine.³²

In the second case

an object is in a place definitively...if the object or body is not palpably in one place and is not measurable according to the dimensions of the place where it is, but can occupy either more room or less. Thus it is said that angels and spirits are in certain places....The space is really material and circumscribed...but that which occupies it has not the same length, breadth, or depth as the space which it occupies.³³

Luther's opponents, he charged, made use of the first mode to deny the Real Presence. Christ, they said, since his ascension, was *locally* present in heaven at God's right hand, and so could not be on earth in the bread and wine. But, said Luther, this *is* to ignore the second mode, which says that a body can be present in a place *definitively*, in a place regardless of the dimensions of the place. Accordingly, Christ's body and blood could be in the bread and wine, as indeed he said he was. Luther drew on two analogies to explain *definitively*:

This was the mode in which Christ's body was present when he came out of the closed grave, and came to the disciples through a closed door....There was no measuring or defining of the space his head or foot occupied when he passed through the stone....He took up no space...but the stone remained stone, as entire and firm as before, and his body remained as large and thick as it was before....Just so, Christ can be and is in the bread, even though he can also show himself in circumscribed and visible form wherever he wills....For as the sealed stone and the closed door remained unaltered and unchanged, though his body at the same time was in the space entirely occupied by stone and wood, so he is also at the same time in the sacrament and where the bread and wine are, though the bread and wine in themselves remain unaltered and unchanged.³⁴

³¹ *Ibid*, pp 214, 215.

³² *Ibid*, p 215.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p 216.

Incidentally, it was remarks like the preceding which caused Luther's opponents to accuse him of teaching consubstantiation, a charge sometimes still made against him and Lutherans. But Luther did not teach consubstantiation for the same reason he did not teach transubstantiation: That would have meant describing the how of Christ's presence, about which there is no word in Scripture.

Then Luther went on to explain and make use of the third mode of being:

In the third place, an object occupies places repletively, i.e., supernaturally, if it is simultaneously present in all places whole and entire, and fills all places, yet without being measured or circumscribed by any place, in terms of the space it occupies. This mode of existence belongs to God alone....This mode is altogether incomprehensible, beyond our reason, and can be maintained only with faith, in the Word.³⁵

But then it occurred to Luther that if this mode belonged to God, i.e., the Father, it also belonged, by virtue of the union of the Father and the Son, to the Son as well. If the Father could fill all places (recall, "the right hand of God is everywhere"), yet not be circumscribed in any one place, the Son could too. If the Father could, if he willed, enter bread and wine and say, "You will find me here," then the Son could say, "This is my body and my blood." Thus, through this third philosophical mode of being, Luther found additional rational support for the doctrine of the Real Presence. In his summation he touches on all three modes:

[Christ] can surely show himself in a corporeal, circumscribed manner at whatever place he will, as he did after the resurrection and will do on the Last Day [mode one]. But above and beyond this mode he can also use the second, uncircumscribed mode, as...he did at the grave and the closed door [mode two]. But now, since he is a man who is supernaturally one person with God,...it must follow that according to the third supernatural mode, he is and can be wherever God is and that everything is full of Christ through and through [mode three].³⁶

Yes, in fact, "God may have and know still other modes whereby Christ's body can be in a given place. My only purpose was to show what crass fools our fanatics are when they concede only the first, circumscribed mode of presence to the body of Christ...."³⁷

Once again, Luther did not feel he needed the support of reason, whether through the second or the third mode of being, or any other way, to defend the Real Presence. The Word, and faith in the Word, were sufficient. But since his opponents presumed to use reason to disprove Christ's presence, Luther would show them that even the logic of the philosophers could serve to prove it.

When one undertakes to show the influence of Ockham on Luther, one runs immediately into a roadblock: Most of the Ockham *corpus* is still in Latin, and on top of that, is only recently becoming accessible in a modern edition.³⁸ The bulk of Ockham's Eucharistic teaching comes from three sources: a) his *Commentary on the Books of the Sentences* by Peter Lombard, especially Book Four; b) the *De Sacramento Altaris*, also entitled the *De Corpore Christi*; and c) the *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, or "Various Questions." Of these works, only the second, the *De Sacramento Altaris*, is in English.³⁹

Using this second source, listen first as Ockham argues against the use of mode one (the "local" or "circumscriptive") to describe the presence of Christ's body in the Supper:

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Cf. Tappert, *Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, VII, pp 98 ff., which repeats this description of the three modes.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p 218.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p 223.

³⁸ The only complete edition in modern type is *William of Ockham, Opera philosophica et theologica*, Philotheua Boehner, et al., eds. (Bonaventure, N.Y.: Cura Instituti Franciscani, Universitatis S. Bonaventurae, 1974 ff.), Vol 1 ff.

³⁹ See note 11.

Moreover, although the body of Christ may be really and truly contained under the species of bread, yet it is not circumscribed in a place in the sacrament of the altar.⁴⁰

The Reformed had contended that Christ was locally circumscribed in heaven, and therefore could not be in the bread and wine, i.e., there was no Real Presence. Here Ockham, like Luther later, granted that Christ's body was not present according to mode one ("circumscribed in a place"), but this did not mean that it was not present at all, only that it was present in a different mode.

After quoting approvingly from the church fathers Jerome and Hilary, Ockham says:

From these passages it is clearly gathered that the whole Christ is in the whole host, and the whole [Christ] is in a part [i.e., all of Christ is in every part of the host]; from which it follows that the body of Christ is not confined or circumscribed in a place.⁴¹

Again, Christ's body is not in the Supper according to mode one ("not confined or circumscribed in a place"), yet his body is in the Supper. In what way? After cautioning his readers "not to limit the divine power according to the mode of natural causes"⁴² (compare this with Luther's remark, "God may have and know still other modes whereby Christ's body can be in a given place," quoted above), Ockham uses the same examples Luther himself was to use, when he explained mode two (the definitive, cf. above):

Moreover, we similarly hold that an angel is definitively a whole in any place and in each part of it None of the faithful ought to say that two bodies...may not be able to exist at the same place through divine power. For the Savior, Jesus Christ, entered thus into the midst of the disciples when the doors were closed....⁴³

For the most part, Ockham is content with this second mode as the explanation of the Real Presence. This is the conclusion of Gabriel N. Buescher, who has done one of the few studies of Ockham's eucharistic teaching. Summarizing Ockham's position, Buescher states:

Faith teaches us that the body of Christ is present as a whole in the whole host and as a whole in each part thereof. Hence, He is neither commensurate with the respective parts of the host nor with the space immediately surrounding the species. However, what is not commensurate part for part with the surrounding parts of space, but is present as a whole to the whole space and as a whole to each part thereof, is *not circumscriptively* [mode one] *but definitively present* [mode two] For Ockham, the Christ in the Eucharist is equally as perfect, whole and integral as the Christ Who is in heaven (emphasis added).⁴⁴

With this conclusion of Buescher, Sasse concurs when he says simply, "As a rule, [Ockham] is satisfied with the *esse definitiva* [i.e., the *definitive*] for the body of Christ."⁴⁵

In Ockham's works to which I had access for this study I was unable to find a direct reference to mode three (the *repletive*). Sasse maintains, however, that Ockham taught mode three, and that "there are some passages in which Ockham tentatively suggests that the presence of the body of Christ may come under this

⁴⁰ Birch, p 189.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* For a discussion of the whole Christ, see Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), III, pp 355-357. Pieper distinguishes the Lutheran from the Reformed and Roman understandings of the "whole Christ."

⁴² *Ibid.*, p 191.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p 193.

⁴⁴ Gabriel N. Buescher, *The Eucharistic Teaching of William of Ockham* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1950), pp 75, 76.

⁴⁵ Sasse, p 158.

category."⁴⁶ In support of this Sasse quotes from another work of Ockham, the *Centilogium: Corpus Christi potest esse ubique, sicut Deus est ubique*.⁴⁷ Sasse concludes: "It was Luther who, on the basis of his Christology, understood the Real Presence in this way," i.e., mode three.⁴⁸

But Luther must have felt very uncomfortable using these scholastic modes of being to describe what he knew from God's Word was indescribable. It might be Ockham's style to try this, and Zwingli's style too, but it was not his own. He had been drawn into this kind of talk when his opponents had not been satisfied with plain Scripture and had insisted on using reason. He would show them as quickly and as clearly as possible that they did not have reason on their side, and then he would get back to solid ground, Scripture alone.

In October of 1529, in a small castle overlooking the town of Marburg, the matter of the Real Presence caused the final split in the Evangelical camp. Here Luther would not be sidetracked into rational speculation. As Sasse reconstructs the debate, we hear Luther say:

The Word says, first, that Christ has a body—that I believe. Furthermore, that even this body has ascended to heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God—that I also believe. The Word says in the same way that this body itself is in the Lord's Supper and is given us to be eaten—this also I believe. For my Lord Jesus Christ can easily do it when He desires to, and in His words He testifies that He will do it. On these words I shall rely steadfastly until He Himself, by another word, says something different.⁴⁹

When Oecolampadius tried to divert Luther into a discussion of modes, Luther retorted:

I do not want to hear mathematical distinctions in this connection. For God, as the Aristotelian philosophers also admit, can cause one body to be either in one place only, or in several places at the same time, or outside of every place, or He is even able to bring it about that several bodies are simultaneously in one place Therefore I will not anxiously discuss the mode of presence . . . because this is quite irrelevant. I do not, therefore, demand such arguments of reason, but clear and valid words from Scripture.⁵⁰

To the very end Luther remained a theologian of the Word, to which high calling we also aspire. Yet he did not live in a vacuum any more than we do. At Erfurt, and in debate, he was surrounded by the words which man's wisdom teaches (1 Cor 2:13), even as we are deluged by the same. But the influence of these words ended where the influence of the Word began.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* It should be acknowledged, however, that Buescher, p xvii, considers the *Centilogium* spurious.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 250, 251.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p 251.