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Mass Without the Consecration?

**The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist Between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East
Promulgated 26 October 2001¹**

My deliberately provocative title, “Mass Without the Consecration?,” I owe to a high-ranking Catholic prelate who, upon hearing of the epoch-making decree of the Holy See recognizing the validity of the eucharistic sacrifice celebrated according to the original redaction of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari—i.e., without the Words of Institution—exclaimed in perplexity: “But how can there be Mass without the consecration?” The answer, of course, is that there cannot be. But that does not solve the problem; it just shifts the question to “What, then, is the consecration, if not the traditional Institution Narrative which all three Synoptic Gospels² and 1 Cor 11:23-26 attribute to Jesus?”

The 26 October 2001 Agreement

One of the basic tasks of the Catholic theologian is to provide the theological underpinnings to explain and justify authentic decisions of the Supreme Magisterium. That is my aim here. For the historic agreement on the eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East is surely one such authentic decision, approved by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Pope John Paul II himself. This decision tells Catholics who fulfill the stated conditions and receive Holy Communion at an Assyrian eucharist using the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, that they are receiving the one true Body and Blood of Christ, as at a Catholic eucharist.

Let us look at what this audacious agreement says, how it came about, and what made its approval possible. The text, entitled “Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist Between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East,” was promulgated on October 26, 2001, but bears the date of its approval, July 20, 2001. I consider this the most remarkable Catholic magisterial document since Vatican II. The purpose of this mutual agreement is pastoral: to ensure that the faithful of two Sister Churches that spring from the same ancient apostolic tradition not be deprived of

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Abbreviations used in the notes:

BELS 19 = B.D. Spinks (ed.), *The Sacrifice of Praise. Studies on the Themes of Thanksgiving and Redemption in the Central Prayers of the Eucharistic and Baptismal Liturgies*. In Honour of Arthur Herbert Couratin (Bibliotheca *Ephemerides liturgicae*, Subsidia 19, Rome 1981).

CPG = *Clavis patrum Graecorum*, 5 vols., ed. M. Geerard, F. Glorie; & *Supplementum*, ed. M. Geerard, J. Noret (Corpus Christianorum, Turnhout 1974-1998).

CPL = *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, ed. E. Dekkers, E. Gaar (Corpus Christianorum, series Latina, Steenbrugge 1995).

CSEL = Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.

DOL = International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy 1963-1979. Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (Collegeville 1982).

Dz = H. Denzinger, P. Hünermann, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (37^o ed., Freiburg-B./Basel/Rome 1991).

EDIL 1 = R. Kaczynski (ed.), *Enchiridion documentorum instaurationis liturgicae*, Bd. I: 1963-1973 (Turin 1976).

JTS = *The Journal of Theological Studies*.

OCA = *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*.

OCP = *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*.

OKS = *Ostkirchliche Studien*.

PE = A. Hänggi, I. Pahl, *Præx eucharistica*, vol. 1: *Textus e variis liturgiis antiquioribus selecti*, 3rd ed. by A. Gerhards and H. Brakmann (Spicilegium Friburgense 12, Freiburg Schweiz 1998).

SC = Sources chrétiennes.

SL = *Studia liturgica*.

² Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-21. The Johannine tradition paraphrases it in Jn 6:51.

the Bread of Life through the unavailability of a minister of their own Church. But pastoral in the context of two Sister Churches means also common, i.e., mutual: what kind of an agreement can be called an agreement if it is one-sided?

The Problem

The Catholic side, however, was faced with a problem that could only be resolved by the Supreme Magisterium: in the light of Catholic teaching on the importance of the Words of Institution in the eucharistic consecration, how can the Catholic Church authorize its faithful to receive Holy Communion at a liturgy lacking these central words? The problem, of course, comes not just from the fact that Addai and Mari does not have these words. If Addai and Mari had been written yesterday, Rome would have said, "Let's use a traditional text containing the Words of Jesus." But that is the precise point: Addai and Mari *is traditional*. Scholars are unanimous that it is one of the most ancient anaphoras extant, a prayer believed to have been in continuous use in the age-old East-Syrian Christendom of Mesopotamia from time immemorial. As such, it merited the respect Rome has always had for Tradition with a capital "T."

With that context in mind, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity subjected the question to the study of experts. A preparatory document dated May 23, 1998, entitled "Pastoral Disposition for Eucharistic Hospitality between the Assyrian Church and the Catholic Church," was prepared, proposing that the Catholic Church recognize the validity of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari and giving the reasons why. This extraordinarily well-formulated document was then circulated among Catholic scholars deemed expert in the field. It was sent to twenty-six, I was told, an unusually large number. This was only prudent, considering the enormous significance and audacity of what was being proposed: a decision that would, in effect, overturn the centuries old clichés of Catholic manual theology concerning the eucharistic consecration. I received my copy of the working paper from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, of which I am a consultor for liturgy, accompanied by a letter of May 28, 1998, signed by the then Prefect, His Eminence Achille Cardinal Silvestrini, and Subsecretary Msgr. Claudio Gugerotti.

The document discussed the pastoral and ecumenical context, as well as what it calls the *dogmatic question* concerning the validity of Addai and Mari, a question, the document reveals, that in three letters from 1994-1997, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had repeatedly insisted needed further investigation. This dogmatic question is the focus of my interest here.

The document takes a forthright and courageous stand in favor of recognizing the validity of Addai and Mari, arguing, *inter alia*, from the apostolicity of the East-Syrian tradition and from Addai and Mari itself, placing its lack of an Institution Narrative in the context of the history of the eucharistic prayer, as well as in relation to the Assyrian eucharistic tradition concerning the Institution Narrative as reflected in the other two East-Syrian anaphoras, which do have the Institution.

The argumentation, fully *au courant* theologically and liturgically, can be summed up as follows:

1. The Catholic Magisterium teaches that the traditional practices of our Eastern Sister Churches are worthy of all veneration and respect.
2. Scholars are unanimous that Addai and Mari is one of the most ancient extant anaphoras still in use.
3. The consensus of the latest scholarship is that Addai and Mari in its original form never had the Institution Narrative. Contrary to earlier opinion, this is not a *hapax*: there are several other early eucharistic prayers that have no Words of Institution.³

³ See below at notes 10-20.

4. Though Addai and Mari may lack the Institution *ad litteram*, it contains it virtually, in explicit, if oblique, references to the eucharistic Institution, to the Last Supper, to the Body and Blood and sacrifice of Christ, and to the oblation of the Church, thereby clearly demonstrating the intention of repeating what Jesus did, in obedience to His command: “Do this in memory of me.”
5. This clear intention to express the links joining the Last Supper, the eucharistic Institution, the sacrifice of the Cross, and the oblation of the Church, is confirmed by the other Assyrian anaphoras, by all the East-Syrian liturgical commentators, as well as by the peculiar Assyrian tradition of the *malka* or Holy Leaven added to the eucharistic loaves as a sign of historical continuity with the Last Supper.

The final document sums up the doctrinal decision as follows:

In the first place, the Anaphora of Addai and Mari is one of the most ancient Anaphoras, dating back to the time of the very early Church; it was composed and used with the clear intention of celebrating the Eucharist in full continuity with the Last Supper and according to the intention of the Church; its validity was never officially contested, neither in the Christian East nor in the Christian West.

Secondly, the Catholic Church recognises the Assyrian Church of the East as a true particular Church, built upon orthodox faith and apostolic succession. The Assyrian Church of the East has also preserved full Eucharistic faith in the presence of our Lord under the species of bread and wine and in the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. In the Assyrian Church of the East, though not in full communion with the Catholic Church, are thus to be found “*true sacraments, and above all, by apostolic succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist*” (Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* §15).

Finally, the words of Eucharistic Institution are indeed present in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, not in a coherent narrative way and *ad litteram*, but rather in a dispersed euchological way, that is, integrated in successive prayers of thanksgiving, praise and intercession.

These three paragraphs reflect the progress in Catholic liturgical scholarship and ecumenical thinking that provided the historical and theological basis for such an agreement.

Ecumenical Scholarship

Let us begin with ecumenical scholarship.⁴ All scholarship worthy of the name is historico-critical, objective, fair, and representatively comprehensive. But *ecumenical* scholarship is not content with these purely natural virtues of honesty and fairness that one should be able to expect from any true scholar. Ecumenical scholarship takes things a long step further. I consider ecumenical scholarship a new and specifically Christian way of studying Christian tradition in order to reconcile and unite, rather than to confute and dominate. Its deliberate intention is to emphasize the common tradition underlying differences, which, though real, may be the accidental product of history, culture, language, rather than essential differences in the doctrine of the apostolic faith. Of course to remain scholarly, this effort must be carried out realistically, without in any way glossing over real differences. But even in recognizing differences, ecumenical scholarship seeks to describe the beliefs, traditions, and usages of other confessions in ways their own objective spokespersons would recognize as reliable and fair.

So ecumenical scholarship seeks not confrontation but agreement and understanding. It strives to enter into the other's point of view, to understand it insofar as possible with sympathy and agreement. It is a contest in reverse, a contest of love, one in which the parties seek to understand and justify not their own point of view, but that of their

⁴ Here and elsewhere below in this paper I resume some ideas expressed earlier in R.F. Taft, “Ecumenical Scholarship and the Catholic-Orthodox Eucharistic Dispute,” *OKS* 45 (1996) 201-226, here 202-4; id., “Understanding the Byzantine Anaphoral Oblation,” in N. Mitchell, J. Baldovin (eds.), *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith. Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B.* (A Pueblo Book, Collegeville 1996) 32-55; id., “The Eucharistic Question in the Light of the Orthodox and Catholic Lex orandi Traditions,” in: Bradley Nassif (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Theology. Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1996) 210-237. For an essay on the “ecumenical method” *ante factum* as well as *ante vocabulum*, see C. Lialine, “De la methode irénique,” *Irénikon* 15 (1938) 1-28, 131-153, 236-255, 450-459.

interlocutor. Such an effort and method, far from being baseless romanticism, is rooted in generally accepted evangelical and Catholic theological principles:

1. The theological foundation for this method is our faith that the Holy Spirit is with God's Church, protecting the integrity of its witness, above all in the centuries of its undivided unity. Since some of the issues that divide us go right back to those centuries, one must ineluctably conclude that these differences do not affect the substance of the apostolic faith. For if they did, then contrary to Jesus' promise (Mt 16:18), the "gates of hell" would indeed have prevailed against the Church.
2. Secondly, the Catholic Church recognizes the Eastern Churches to be the historic apostolic Christianity of the East and Sister Churches of the Catholic Church. Consequently, no view of Christian tradition can be considered anything but partial that does not take full account of the age-old, traditional teaching of these Sister Churches. Any theology must be measured not only against the common tradition of the undivided Church, but also against the ongoing witness of the Spirit-guided apostolic Christendom of the East. That does not mean that East or West has never been wrong. It does mean that neither can be ignored.
3. An authentic magisterium cannot contradict itself. Therefore, without denying the legitimate development of doctrine, in the case of apparently conflicting traditions of East and West, preferential consideration must be given to the witness of the undivided Church. This is especially true with respect to later polemics resulting from unilateral departures from or developments out of the common tradition during the period of divided Christendom.
4. Those who have unilaterally modified a commonly accepted tradition of the undivided Church bear the principle responsibility for any divisions caused thereby. So it is incumbent first of all on them to seek an acceptable solution to that problem. This is especially true when those developments, albeit legitimate, may be perceived by others as a narrowing of the tradition, or have been forged in the crucible of polemics, never a reliable pedagogue.
5. Within a single Church, any legitimate view of its own particular tradition must encompass the complete spectrum of its witnesses throughout the whole continuum of its history, and not just its most recent or currently popular expression.
6. Finally, doctrinal formulations produced in the heat of polemics must be construed narrowly, within the strict compass of the errors they were meant to confute. In 1551 when Session 13, chapter 3-4 and canon 4 of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) defined that "immediately after the consecration (statim post consecrationem)," and "by the consecration (per consecrationem)," and "once the consecration is accomplished (peracta consecratione)," the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ (Dz §§1640, 1642, 1654), it was combatting those who denied that transformation, not making a statement about its "moment" or "formula."⁵

If we bear all these principles in mind, it should be immediately obvious that the Catholic Church could not but seek a positive solution to the perceived problem of the validity of Addai and Mari. From an historical and ecumenical point of view, on what legitimate theological and ecclesiological basis could Rome argue that an Apostolic Church whose Urancient principal anaphora had been in continuous use since time immemorial without ever being condemned by anyone, not by any Father of the Church, nor by any local or provincial synod, nor by Ecumenical Council nor catholicos nor patriarch nor pope—on what basis would one dare to infer, even implicitly, that such an ancient Apostolic Church did not and had never had a valid eucharistic sacrifice? This is not mere rhetoric; it is ecclesiology: the implications of such a negative verdict would be staggering.

⁵ N.P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London/Washington, DC 1990) 2: 695-7.

A Missing Institution Narrative?

In addition to the ecumenical principles just enumerated, the elements that rendered such a positive solution feasible result from the consensus of the best in contemporary Catholic scholarship on the eucharist and its theology. Earlier Catholic scholarship on Addai and Mari tended to argue *a priori* that since there could be no eucharist without the Words of Institution, the original text of Addai and Mari must perforce have once had those words. The prominent 17th century the French Catholic scholar of eastern liturgies, Eusèbe Renaudot (1613-1679), wrote that an anaphora without the Words of institution was “...totally unheard of in antiquity and contrary to the discipline...of all Churches.”⁶ In such a climate of opinion, scholarly research and debate concerned just where the Words of Institution must have been, and how they got removed.

But already half a century ago in Catholic scholarship, rumblings began to be heard against such arguments, which Alphons Raes S.J. (1896-1983) labeled an “apriorisme” and “insuffisantes.”⁷ Contemporary scholarship also completely rejects such an approach, and has no patience with theories based on suppositions of what must or must not have been. Today’s scholar starts with what is, and attempts to explain it—not explain it away. So scholarly opinion tends to respect a text as it is, and presumes that to be its pristine form until the contrary is proven.⁸ This prejudice in favor of the text is reinforced, in the case of Addai and Mari, by the unanimity of the manuscript tradition: not a single witness to this anaphora contains the Institution Account. Had the Institution Narrative once been part of the text only to be excised at a later date, it is unlikely that there would be not one single manuscript witness to the earlier redaction, nor any other reminiscence of the matter in the literature of the tradition. That silence would hardly have been possible in the light of the importance the classical East-Syrian liturgical commentators assign to the Institution Narrative in their eucharistic theology.⁹

Furthermore, although theories on the origins and evolution of the pristine anaphora remain in flux, one point of growing agreement among representative scholars, Catholic and non, is that the Institution Narrative is a later embolism—i.e., interpolation—into the earliest eucharistic prayers. For *pace* Renaudot’s mistaken assertion, not only Addai and Mari but several other early eucharistic prayers do, in fact, lack these words.¹⁰ Those generally listed include the 1/2nd century *Didache* 9-10¹¹ and the dependent *Apostolic Constitutions* (ca. 380) VII, 25:1-4;¹² the 2/3rd century apocryphal *Acts of John* 85-86, 109-110 and *Acts of Thomas* 27, 49-50, 133, 158;¹³ the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (†167)

⁶ “...inauditum prorsus antiquitus, & contra omnium Ecclesiarum...disciplinam”: *Liturgiarum orientalium collectio*, 2 vols. (Paris 1716) 2:579; (Frankfurt/London 1847) 2:573.

⁷ “Le Récit de l’institution eucharistique dans l’anaphore chaldéenne et malabare des Apôtres,” OCP 10 (1944) 216-226, here 220, 225.

⁸ For an extensive bibliography of scholarship on Addai and Mari until 1992, see A. Gelston *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* (Oxford 1992) 126-30, as well as his discussion, 5-28; to which add the more recent collected studies of B.D. Spinks, *Worship. Prayers from the East* (Washington, DC 1993).

⁹ The relevant texts are cited and commented by S.Y.H. Jammo, “Gabriel Qatraya et son commentaire sur la liturgie chaldéenne,” OCP 32 (1966) 39-52; cf. B.D. Spinks, “Addai and Mari and the Institution Narrative: The Tantalising Evidence of Gabriel Qatraya,” *Ephemerides liturgicae* 98 (1984) 60-67 = id., *Prayers from the East* 37-45.

¹⁰ Among innumerable modern studies on this issue, in addition to those cited below apropos of Addai and Mari, see, for example, G.J. Cuming, “The Shape of the Anaphora,” *Studia Patristica* 20 (1989) 333-345; G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London 1945) 197-98; J.R.K. Fenwick, *Fourth Century Anaphoral Construction Techniques* (Grove Liturgical Studies 45, Nottingham 1986); C. Giraudo, *Eucaristia per la Chiesa. Prospettive teologiche sull’eucaristia a partire dalla “lex orandi”* (Aloisiana 22, Rome/Brescia 1989) 345ff; E.J. Kilmartin, “Sacrificium laudis: Content and Function of Early Eucharistic Prayers,” *Theological Studies* 35 (1974) 268-287, here 277-8, 280; L. Ligier, “The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer: From the Last Supper to the Eucharist,” *SL* 9 (1973) 161-185, esp. 179; and, for a contrary opinion, E. Yarnold, “Anaphoras without Institution Narratives?” *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997) 395-410.

¹¹ SC 248:180 = PE 66.

¹² SC 336:52-55.

¹³ PE 74-79

14;¹⁴ the 4/5th century *Papyrus Strasbourg Gr. 254*;¹⁵ the eucharistic prayer on two 7/8th century Coptic Ostraca, *British Library Nr. 32 799* and *Nr. 33 050*;¹⁶ and the Ethiopic Anaphora of the Apostles, as Gabriele Winkler has recently demonstrated.¹⁷ Furthermore, it seems probable that ca. 150, Justin Martyr's eucharistic prayer did not have them either.¹⁸ In addition, Cyrille Vogel lists six eucharistic prayers in the apocrypha without any trace of an Institution Narrative,¹⁹ and at least twenty-one later Syriac anaphoras either lack the Words of Institution completely (8 anaphoras) or partly (4), or give them in a form considered defective (9)—e.g., in indirect discourse.²⁰

Already in 1928, Anglican liturgical scholar Edward C. Ratcliff challenged the notion that Addai and Mari once had the Institution Narrative,²¹ and later (1950) argued that the *Sanctus* was the conclusion to the primitive anaphoras,²² a possibility raised earlier (1938) by the great German Benedictine orientalist and comparative liturgiologist Hieronymus Engberding, who had proposed that the presanctus of the Urtext behind the Greek Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom and the related Syriac Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles was once a complete eucharistic prayer.²³ Other authors like the French Jesuit Louis Ligier, Professor of liturgy at the Pontifical Oriental Institute and Gregorian University in Rome, resumed and developed this idea. In Ligier's hypothesis, the Institution/Anamnesis block in the anaphora would be a later embolism framed by the general thanksgiving and its common concluding acclamation "In all and for all we hymn you, we bless you, we thank you, and we pray to you, Our God."²⁴ The *Sanctus*, in turn, would be a still later enrichment of this structure.²⁵ Gabriele Winkler of Tübingen has carried this

¹⁴ F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca* (Subsidia hagiographica 8a, 3rd ed. Brussels 1957) §1556; ed. H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford Early Christian Texts, Oxford 1972) 12-15.

¹⁵ PE 116-19.

¹⁶ H. Quecke, "Das anaphorische Dankgebet auf den koptischen Ostraka, B.M. Nr. 32 799 und 33 050 neu herausgegeben," OCP 37 (1971) 391-405; cf. K. Gamber, "Das koptische Ostrakon London B.M. Nr. 32 799 + 33 050 und seine liturgiegeschichtliche Bedeutung," OKS 21 (1972) 298-308.

¹⁷ G. Winkler, *Das Sanctus. Über den Ursprung und die Anfänge des Sanctus und sein Fortwirken* (OCA 267, Rome 2002) 162-68, 171-72; cf. also 85-86, 92-93, 96, 128, 143; eadem, "A New Witness to the Missing Institution Narrative," to appear in M.E. Johnson, L.E. Phillips (eds.), *Studia Liturgica Diversa. Essays in Honor of Paul F. Bradshaw* (Studies in Church Music and Liturgy, Portland: The Oregon Catholic Press) 117-128.

¹⁸ *Apology* I, 65, 67, PE 70.

¹⁹ C. Vogel, "Anaphores eucharistiques préconstantiniennes. Formes non traditionnelles," *Augustinianum* 20 (1980) 401-410.

²⁰ A. Raes, "Les paroles de la consecration dans les anaphores syriens," OCP 3 (1937) 486-504; Giraud, *Eucaristia per la Chiesa* 350-59.

²¹ E.C. Ratcliff, "The Original Form of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari: A Suggestion," JTL 30 (1928) 23-32 = id., *Liturgical Studies*, ed. A.H. Couratin, D.H. Tripp (London 1976) 80-90 (cf. also other relevant studies in the same anthology of his works). On Addai and Mari see also S.Y.H. Jammo, "The Quddasha of the Apostles Addai and Mari and the Narrative of the Eucharistic Institution", in *Syriac Dialogue* (Vienna 1994) 167-181; P. Hofrichter, "The Anaphora of Addai and Mari in the Church of the East—Eucharist without Institution Narrative", *ibid.*, 182-191; most recently S.Y.H. Jammo, "The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari: A Study of Structure and Historical Background," OCP 68 (2002) 5-35.

²² E.C. Ratcliff, "The Sanctus and the Pattern of the Early Anaphora, I: *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 1 (1950) 29-36; II: *ibid.* 125-134 = id., *Liturgical Studies* 18-40. Ratcliff repeats his ideas in a letter of Oct. 23, 1961, to A. Couratin, published in "The Thanksgiving: an Essay by Arthur Couratin," ed. by D.H. Tripp in BELS 19:23-4. On Ratcliff's views, see also B.D. Spinks, "The Cleansed Leper's Thankoffering before the Lord: Edward Craddock Ratcliff and the Pattern of the Early Anaphora," BELS 19:161-178; id., *The Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer* (Cambridge 1991) 4-7. See also the more recent summary of views and discussion in R.F. Taft, "The Interpolation of the Sanctus into the Anaphora: When and Where? A Review of the Dossier" Part I, OCP 57 (1991) 281-308; Part II, OCP 58 (1992) 82-121, here I, 291-98; id., *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond* (Variorum Collected Studies Series CS494, Aldershot/Brookfield 1995) ch. IX; id., *Il Sanctus nell'anaphora. Un riesame della questione* (Rome 1999); on the latter, see the critical review of G. Winkler in *Oriens Christianus* 85 (2001) 283-84; and her seminal new study, *Das Sanctus*.

²³ H. Engberding, "Die syrische Anaphora der zwölf Apostel und ihre Paralleltexthe einander gegenübergestellt und mit neuen Untersuchungen zur Urgeschichte der Chrysostomosliturgie begleitet," *Oriens Christianus* 34 = ser. 3 vol. 12 (1938) 213-247, here 239, 241.

²⁴ For the text referred to, see F.E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford 1896) 88.10-16, 178.18-19, 329.9-10, 438.12-14; G.J. Cuming, *The Liturgy of St. Mark*, edited from the manuscripts with a commentary (OCA 234, Rome 1990) 43.9; A. Gerhards, *Die griechische Gregoriosanaphora. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Eucharistischen Hochgebets* (Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 65, Münster 1984) 34.193-4; PE 226, 236, 267, 271, 287, 290, 296, 305, 307, 312, 317, 322, 329, 335, 339, 352, 364, 377, 384, 393; cf. J.-M. Hanssens, *Institutiones liturgicae de ritibus orientalibus*, vols. II-III (Rome 1930, 1932) 3:451-2 §1321.

²⁵ L. Ligier, "The Origins of the Eucharistic Prayer: From the Last Supper to the Eucharist," SL 9 (1973) 161-185, esp. 167, 171ff, 177-80, 183.

research further, proposing that the Sanctus was present from the beginning in such ancient anaphoras as UrBasil²⁶ and the Syriac (Addai and Mari) and Ethiopic Anaphoras of the Apostles. Neither of the latter two, however, originally had an Institution Narrative.²⁷ Finally, present expert opinion on the *Apostolic Tradition* holds that the Institution and Anamnesis/Oblation may have been added to its Anaphora not earlier than the 4th century.²⁸ *So there is not a single extant pre-Nicene eucharistic prayer that one can prove contained the Words of Institution*, and today many scholars maintain that the most primitive, original eucharistic prayers were short, self-contained benedictions without Institution Narrative or Epiclesis, comparable to the *Didache* 10 and the papyrus *Strasbourg 254*.²⁹

All this shows that scholarship on the eucharistic prayer has been rich and intensive for a generation, and even if some remain skeptical of one or another hypothesis or conclusions,³⁰ there is consensus on at least one point: I know of not one single reputable contemporary scholar on the topic, Catholic or non, who would hold it as certain that the Words of Institution were an integral part of the earliest eucharistic prayers over the gifts. Jesuit Cesare Giraudo, one of the major figures in the area by anyone's criteria, calls it "una questione aperta" whether the original eucharist included Jesus' Words.³¹ Anthony Gelston, summing up the contemporary consensus, notes

the not inconsiderable evidence that the wording of the Christian Eucharistic prayer remained far from fixed until at least the beginning of the third century. There is no hint of a tradition that the actual content of Jesus' thanksgiving at the Last Supper was remembered, transmitted, and repeated at the celebration of the Eucharist. What was done in remembrance of Jesus was the offering of thanks, but not according to a fixed formula.³²

Interpreting the Tradition: *theologia prima*—*theologia secunda*

How, then, are we to interpret liturgical texts? What do our anaphoras mean? They mean what they say. It is axiomatic in contemporary liturgical theology to distinguish between *theologia prima* and *theologia secunda*. *Theologia*

²⁶ G. Winkler, *Die Basilius-Anaphora. Edition der beiden armenischen Redaktionen und der relevanten Fragmente, Übersetzung und Zusammenschau aller Versionen im Licht der orientalischen Überlieferung* (Anaphorae Orientales 2 = Anaphorae Armeniaca 2, Rome) in press.

²⁷ Winkler, *Das Sanctus* 130-33, 167-68, 171-72; and these articles in press: eadem, "Beobachtungen zu den im *ante Sanctus* angeführten Engeln," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 183 (2003) 213-138, here 214 note 6; eadem, "Über die Bedeutung des Sanctus-Benedictus und seine Wurzeln in der Quedlinburger Anaphora," *Studi sull'Oriente cristiano* 8/1 (2004) 91-100; and, most recently, eadem, "A New Witness to the Missing Institution Narrative."

²⁸ P.F. Bradshaw, "A Paschal Root to the Anaphora of the *Apostolic Tradition*? A Response to Enrico Mazza," *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001) 257-265; id., and M.E. Johnson, L.E. Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition. A Commentary* (Hermeneia, Minneapolis 2002) 45-48; J.F. Baldovin, "The Apostolic Tradition? Of Hippolytus? Of Rome?" The Sir Daniel & Countess Bernardine Murphy Donohue Chair in Eastern Catholic Theology at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, Annual Lecture, March 13, 2003 (in press).

²⁹ Cf. Jammo, "The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari," 11-18; M. Arranz, "L'esegesi dei testi liturgici: un'apertura metodologica per orizzonti nuovi," *Rassegna di teologia* 32 (1991) 86-92, here esp. 89-90; W.H. Bates, "Thanksgiving and Intercession in the Liturgy of St. Mark," *BELS* 19:112-9; G.J. Cuming, "The Anaphora of St. Mark. A Study in Development," *Le Muséon* 95 (1982) 115-129 122-3, 128; Kilmartin, "Sacrificium laudis," 268-287; G. Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 21, Tübingen 1956) 148; Ratcliff, "The Original Form of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari"; H. Wegman, "Une anaphore incomplète? Les fragments sur Papyrus Strasbourg Gr. 254," in: R. van den Broeck, M.J. Vermasern (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (London 1982) 432-450; id., "Généologie hypothétique de la prière eucharistique," *Questions liturgiques* 61 (1980) 263-278. For a summary of research on the origins of the anaphora up to the dates of the respective publications, see T.J. Talley, "The Eucharistic Prayer of the Ancient Church according to Recent Research: Results and Reflections," *SL* 11 (1976) 138-158; G.J. Cuming, "The Early Eucharistic Liturgies in Recent Research," *BELS* 19:65-9; to which must be added the recent works of C. Giraudo, *La struttura letteraria della preghiera eucaristica. Saggio sulla genesi letteraria di una forma. Toda veterotestamentaria, B'eraka giudaica, Anafora cristiana* (Analecta Biblica 92, Rome 1981); id., *Eucaristia per la Chiesa*; id., "Le récit de l'institution dans la prière eucharistique a-t-il des antécédents? Quelques aperçus sur la prière liturgique et la dynamique de son embolisme," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 106 (1984) 513-536; id., "Vers un traité de l'Eucharistie à la fois ancien et nouveau. La théologie de l'Eucharistie à travers l'école de la «lex orandi»,» *Nouvelle revue théologique* 112 (1990) 870-887.

³⁰ E.g., B.D. Spinks, *The Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer* (Cambridge 1991) 104, 108; id., "A Complete Anaphora? A Note on Strasbourg Gr. 254," *The Heythrop Journal* 25 (1984) 51-59; J. Magne, "L'anaphore nestorienne dite d'Addée et Mari et l'anaphore maronite dite de Pierre III. Étude comparative," *OCP* 53 (1987) 144-45. Most recently, Winkler concurred with Spinks' assessment in his study, *The Sanctus*. See her analysis of the Syriac and Ethiopic evidence in *Das Sanctus*; in her forthcoming study on the Basil Anaphora (note 26 above); and in eadem, "A New Witness to the Missing Institution Narrative."

³¹ Giraudo, *Eucaristia per la Chiesa* 329. See the whole discussion there, 329-60.

³² Gelston *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* 5.

prima, or first-level theology, is the faith expressed in the liturgical life of the Church antecedent to speculative questioning of its theoretical implications, prior to its systematization in the dogmatic propositions of *theologia secunda* or systematic reflection on the lived mystery of the Church. Liturgical language, the language of *theologia prima*, is typological, metaphorical, more redolent of Bible and prayer than of school and thesis, more patristic than scholastic, more impressionistic than systematic, more suggestive than probative. In a word, it is symbolic and evocative, not philosophical and ontological.

Now although it is perfectly obvious, indeed necessary, that doctrine will acquire theological refinements, especially in the heat of dogmatic controversy, it should be equally obvious that such refinements cannot be read back into texts composed long before the problems arose which led to those precisions. To pounce upon ancient anaphoral texts and exploit them tendentiously in today's theological controversies is an anachronistic procedure devoid of any legitimacy.

If we turn now to the pristine Latin *theologia prima* as expressed in the ancient Roman *Canon Missae*, we find a movement which, far from justifying a hylomorphic scholastic *theologia secunda*, fits better with the pre-scholastic theology of the Latin Fathers. Less smooth and unified in its redactional structure than the Antiochene anaphoral type, the Roman Canon does not first recite the Institution Narrative, then elucidate its meaning. Rather, it imbeds Jesus' words in a series of discrete prayers for the sanctification and acceptance of the oblation (which, theologically, are of course the same thing). Now some of these prayers even before the Words of Institution speak of the species in terms that can only refer to the Body and Blood of Christ, as if the gifts were already consecrated; and, conversely, after the Words of Institution speak in a way that could seem to imply the gifts are not yet consecrated.

Only the wooden-headed literalist totally innocent of the proleptic and reflexive nature of liturgical discourse could find anything surprising about this. Such seeming contradictions—and similar apparent contradictions can be found in the Fathers of the Church who comment on the eucharistic prayer—result from the fact that before the Middle Ages no one tried to identify a “moment of consecration” apart from the anaphoral prayer over the gifts in its entirety.

In his *De officiis ecclesiae* I, 15, St. Isidore (ca. 560-†636), bishop of Seville from 600-636, says that the consecration occurs in the canon, which he calls the “sixth prayer” of the “ordo of the mass and prayers by which the sacrifices offered to God are consecrated...”³³ From the context it is clear that he is referring to the entire section of the anaphora following the preface that extends from the Sanctus to the Our Father inclusive—the entire text in Appendix I below, p. 225):

Then [comes] *the sixth prayer* [of the eucharist], from which results the formation of the sacrament as an oblation that is offered to God, sanctified through the Holy Spirit, formed into the body and blood of Christ. The last of these is the prayer by which our Lord instructed his disciples to pray, saying: “*Our Father who art in heaven.*”³⁴

St. Isidore is usually considered the “last of the Latin Fathers,” so right through to the end of the patristic period the view was current in Latin theology [1] that the eucharistic consecration was the work of the Holy Spirit, and [2] that the prayer which effected it was the canon or anaphora without further specifying one of its component parts as the “form” of the sacrament or the “moment of consecration.” St. Fulgentius of Ruspe (ca. 468-†533)³⁵ and numerous other pre-scholastic Latin authors teach the same doctrine.³⁶

³³ I, 15.1, PL 83:752A (= CPL §11207): “Ordo autem missae, et orationum, quibus oblata Deo sacrificia consecrantur...”

³⁴ I, 15.3, PL 83:753AB: “Porro *sexta [oratio]* ex hinc succedit conformatio sacramenti, ut oblatio, quae Deo offertur, sanctificata per Spiritum sanctum, Christi corpori ac sanguini conformetur. Harum ultima est oratio, qua Dominus noster discipulos suos orare instituit, dicens: *Pater noster, qui es in coelis.*”

³⁵ *Ad Monimum* II, 6 & 9-10 (= CPL §814), PL 65:184-85, 187-90.

³⁶ J.R. Geiselman, *Die Abendmahlslehre an der Wende der christlichen Spätantike zum Frühmittelalter. Isidor von Sevilla und das Sakrament der Eucharistie* (Munich 1930) 198-224; Y. Congar, *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, 3 vols. (Paris 1979-1980) 3:320-330.

Nor is this view substantially different from that of the early medieval Latin commentators. Peter Lombard (ca. 1095-†1160), speaking of the *Supplices* (Roman Canon §6 in Appendix I below), says in his *Sentences* IV, 13: “It is called ‘Missa’ that the heavenly messenger might come to consecrate the life-giving body, according to the expression of the priest: ‘Almighty God, bid that this be borne by the hand of your holy angel to your altar on high’, etc.”³⁷

Even more explicitly, shortly after AD 1215, John Teutonicus’ comment on the same prayer says: “‘Bid,’ that is: *make*. ‘Be borne,’ that is: *be transubstantiated*. Or: ‘be borne,’ that is, be assumed, that is: *be changed*...”³⁸ The inclusion of this text in the *Glossa ordinaria ad Decretum Gratiani*, shows how common and acceptable such a view must have been. Note, please, that these authoritative medieval Latin commentators are speaking about a consecratory prayer said *after the Words of Institution* in the Roman Canon (Appendix I below, §6).

In modern times no less an authority on the Roman eucharist than the great Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J., sums up the original tradition of the undivided Church as follows: “In general Christian antiquity, even until way into the Middle Ages, manifested no particular interest regarding the determination of the precise moment of the consecration. Often reference was made merely to the entire Eucharistic prayer.”³⁹

Already in the 17th century, the famous Bossuet (1627-1704) raised his voice in favor of a similar sanity. He says:

The intent of liturgies, and, in general, of consecratory prayers, is not to focus our attention on precise moments, but to have us attend to the action in its entirety and to its complete effect... It is to render more vivid what is being done that the Church speaks at each moment as though it were accomplishing the entire action then and there, without asking whether the action has already been accomplished or is perhaps still to be accomplished.⁴⁰

Dom Charles Chardon, O.S.B., in his *Histoire des sacrements* (Paris 1745), expressed a similarly balanced view:

Despite this diversity [over the form or moment of consecration] there was formerly no dispute over this subject. The Greeks and Latins were convinced that the species [of bread and wine] were changed into the body and blood of our Savior in virtue of the words of the Canon of the Mass, without examining the precise moment at which this change occurred, nor just which of the words [of the anaphora] effected it as over against other [words]. One side said the change was effected by the prayer and invocation of the priest; the others said that it was the result of the words of Our Lord when he instituted this august sacrament. And they in no way believed that these different ways of expressing themselves were opposed to each other (and indeed they are not, as would be easy to show). But we shall leave that to the theologians to treat...⁴¹

Later Scholasticism vs. the Earlier Tradition

The later western narrowing of the perspective, ultimately doctrinalized in the scholastic hylomorphic *materia/forma* theory of the eucharistic consecration, contrasts sharply with the *theologia prima* of the Roman Canon and its earlier Latin interpreters, which views, in turn, were fully consonant with traditional eastern doctrine. The new Latin theology was sanctioned doctrinally by Benedict XII’s (1334-1342) *Libellus “Cum dudum” ad Armenos* 66 in

³⁷ PL 192:868: “*Missa enim dicitur, eo quod coelestis nuntius ad consecrandum vivificum corpus adveniat, juxta dictum sacerdotis dicentis: Omnipotens Deus, jube haec perferri per manus sancti angeli tui in sublime altare tuum, etc.*”

³⁸ “Jube, id est: *fac*. Perferri, id est: *transsubstantiari*. Vel: perferri, id est sursum efferri, id est *converti*...” *Decretum de consecratione* 2, 72, in *Glossa ordinaria* (Rome, 1582) 2:1813, cited by Salaville, SC 4bis:322

³⁹ J.A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite. Missarum sollemnia*, 2 vols. (New York 1951, 1955) 2:203-204 note 9. He goes on to say, “It is Florus Diaconus [of Lyons,†860], *De actione missae*, c. 60 (PL 119:52f.), in the Carolingian period, who with particular stress brought out the significance of the words of consecration: *ille in suis sacerdotibus quotidie loquitur*.”

⁴⁰ J.-B. Bossuet, *Explication de quelques difficultés sur les prières de la messe à un nouveau catholique*, ed. F. Lachat, *Oeuvres* 17 (Paris 1864) 74-75, trans. in R. Cabié, *The Eucharist* = A.G. Martimort (ed.), *The Church at Prayer*, vol. II (new edition, Colledgeville 1986) 147.

⁴¹ I translate it from the re-edition of J.-P. Migne, *Theologiae cursus completus*, 28 vols. (Paris 1839-1843) 20:249.

AD 1341 (Dz §1017), and by the AD 1439 *Decretum pro Armeniis* (Dz §1321) and the AD 1442 *Decretum pro Iacobitis* (Dz §1352) in the aftermath of the Council of Florence.⁴²

Even more restrictive was the teaching formulated by Pius VII (1800-1823) in his Brief *Adorabile Eucharistiae* of 9 May 9 1822 (Dz §2718), addressed to the Melkite Catholic patriarch and hierarchy, condemning

...that new opinion proposed by schismatic men which teaches that the form by which this lifegiving...sacrament is accomplished consists not in the words of Jesus Christ alone, which both Latin and Greek priests use in the consecration, but that for the perfect and complete consecration, there should be added that formula of prayers which among us [Latins] precedes the above-mentioned words [of Jesus], but in your [Byzantine] liturgy follows them...⁴³

I will leave to the dogmaticians what “theological note” they wish to assign this exclusively Latin teaching, construed in its narrowest popular understanding that the *Verba Domini*, they alone, and nothing else, are the so-called “words of consecration” of the mass. Suffice it to say that what His Holiness is pleased to call a “new opinion” was taught explicitly from the 4th century on by saints and Fathers of the undivided Church like St. Cyril/John II of Jerusalem (*post* 380),⁴⁴ St. John Chrysostom (ca. 340/50-†407),⁴⁵ and St. John Damascene (ca. 650/75-†753/4)⁴⁶ in the East, along with St. Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-†636) in the West.⁴⁷ Since all these sainted gentlemen are venerated in the Liturgical Calendar of the Catholic Church, to be consistent we must apply here the old adage “let the rule of prayer determine the rule of faith (*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*).”

As for the *Decretum pro Armeniis*, it certainly does not recommend itself by the fact that it also proclaims the *traditio instrumentorum* to be the sacramental matter of holy orders (Dz §1326), a teaching not only no longer held today (Dz §§3858-3860), but one that *even in its own day* was flatly false, contradicting the clear facts of liturgical history. More important, it also departed from and contradicted age-old Catholic teaching, which had never impugned the validity of ordination rites of the Eastern Churches with no *traditio instrumentorum* like that of the Latins. So one must either reject that decree, or, if your theory of magisterium obliges you to squirm to salvage it by arguing that it envisaged only the medieval Latin ordination rite in which the *traditio* had assumed a significant place, then intellectual honesty would require saying the same for its teaching on the Words of Institution. For the decree assigns them an exclusive importance they had assumed only in the Latin West. More significant for me is the fact that the decree sanctions a culturally and temporally conditioned medieval scholastic theology of the sacraments that can in no wise claim to be traditional to the teaching of the undivided Church. Here we are talking not about magisterial teaching but the undeniable facts of history available to anyone able to read Latin and Greek.

The Entire Eucharistic Prayer as Formula of Consecration

⁴² Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 1:546-7, 581. On the council and its aftermath, see J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge 1959) 116, 265-67, 272-78, 280-81, 284-86, 292.

⁴³“...novam illam opinionem a schismaticis hominibus propugnatam qua docetur formam, qua vivificum hoc...sacramentum perficitur, non in solis Iesu Christi verbis consistere, quibus sacerdotes tam Latini quam Graeci in consecratione utuntur, sed ad perfectam consummatamque consecrationem addi oportere eam precum formulam, quae memorata verba apud Nos praecurrit, in vestra autem liturgia subsequitur” (emphasis added).

⁴⁴ *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5, 7, cf. 1, 7; 3, 3, SC 126bis:94, 124, 154; regarding date and authorship, 177-87. See also Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Homily 16*, 12: R. Tonneau, R. Devreesse, *Les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste* (Studi e testi 145, Vatican 1949) 553.

⁴⁵See below at notes 65-69.

⁴⁶ *Expositio fidei* 86:163-166, B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols. (Patristische Texte und Studien 7, 12, 17, 22, 29, Berlin/New York 1969-1988) 2:197 = *De fide orthodoxa* IV, 13, PG 94:1152C-53B; English translation from Saint John of Damascus, *Writings*, trans. by F. H. Chase, Jr. (The Fathers of the Church 37, Washington, DC 1981) 360-61. See also the texts cited below at notes 55-56, and the excellent study of N. Armitage, “The Eucharistic Theology of the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (*De Fide Orthodoxa*) of St. John Damascene,” OKS 44 (1995) 292-308; Taft, “Ecumenical Scholarship and the Catholic-Orthodox Epiclesis Dispute,” 210; id., “Understanding the Byzantine Anaphoral Oblation,” 47-55; id., “The Epiclesis Question in the Light of the Orthodox and Catholic Lex orandi Traditions,” 225-37.

⁴⁷ See above at notes 33-34.

So these doctrinal statements of the past must be understood not only in their historical context, but also in the light of contemporary Catholic teaching, which of late has come to take a considerably broader view of what comprises the eucharistic consecration. A steady stream of Catholic theologians has moved toward the view that the formula of eucharistic consecration comprises the prayer over the gifts in its entirety.⁴⁸ I do not have space to list these theologians here—those interested can find their teaching in Vincentian Father John H. McKenna’s thorough review of the question.⁴⁹

The most recent study by the late (†2003) Dom Burkhard Neunheuser, O.S.B., monk of Maria Laach and professor of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute Sant’Anselmo in Rome, furnishes not only the most explicit and emphatic justification of this return to the original tradition of the undivided Church, but does so with full respect for traditional Catholic teaching on the centrality of the Words of Institution within the anaphoral context.⁵⁰ As Neunheuser is careful to point out, this renewal is already found reflected in official Catholic texts in the aftermath of Vatican II. The 18 November 1969 *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* §54, concerning the reformed Roman Missal, says of the eucharistic prayer: “Now begins the summit and center of the whole celebration, namely the Eucharistic Prayer itself, *that is, the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification.*”⁵¹ “Sanctification” of course means in this context “eucharistic consecration.” And although Paul VI continues to use the outdated scholastic terminology of matter and form of the sacrament in his 18 June 1968 Apostolic Constitution *Pontificalis Romani recognitio*, he does so in a broad, non-scholastic context: the “matter” of the sacrament is the imposition of hands;⁵² “the form...consists in the words of the very prayer of consecration,”⁵³ and not some isolated formula within it. This broader vision is also reflected in how the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to the anaphora: “with the eucharistic prayer, the prayer, namely, *of thanksgiving and consecration*, we come to the heart and culmination of the celebration.”⁵⁴

This renewal found ecumenical agreement in Part I, no. 6, of the July 1982 Munich Statement of the Orthodox-Catholic Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue: “...the eucharistic mystery is accomplished in the prayer which joins together the words by which the word made flesh instituted the sacrament and the epiclesis in which the church, moved by faith, entreats the Father, through the Son, to send the Spirit...”⁵⁵ It is also reflected in what the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has to say about the eucharistic consecration: “In the Institution Narrative, by the words and action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, His Body and Blood are made sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine...”⁵⁶

This view that the prayer of consecration is the entire core of the anaphora, not just some segment of it set apart as an isolated “formula,” is, I think, more faithful to the earlier common tradition of the undivided Church. Several patristic texts lend themselves to this interpretation, using the term “epiclesis” for the whole prayer over the gifts. Among the earliest 2nd century witnesses to the eucharist in the period following the New Testament, Justin, *Apology* I, 65-67, written ca. AD 150, testifies to a prayer over the gifts. After that prayer, the gifts were no longer

⁴⁸ See esp. Congar, *Je crois en l’Esprit Saint*, 3 vols. (Paris 1979-1980) 3:309ff.

⁴⁹ J.H. McKenna, *Eucharist and Holy Spirit. The Eucharistic Epiclesis in 20th Century Theology* (Alcuin Club Collections 57, Great Wakering 1975); also id., “Eucharistic Prayer: Epiclesis,” in A. Heinz, H. Rennings (eds.), *Gratias agamus. Studien zum eucharistischen Hochgebet*. Für Balthasar Fischer (Pastoralliturgische Reihe in Verbindung mit der Zeitschrift “Gottesdienst,” Freiburg/Basel/Vienna 1992) 283-291.

⁵⁰ B. Neunheuser, “Das Eucharistische Hochgebet als Konsekrationsgebet,” in Heinz, Rennings, *Gratias agamus* 315-326.

⁵¹ “Nunc centrum et culmen totius celebrationis initium habet, ipsa nempe Prex eucharistica, *prex scilicet gratiarum actionis et sanctificationis.*” EDIL §1449 (emphasis added), cf. §1450; DOL §1444, cf. §1445; Neunheuser 321.

⁵² EDIL §1084-5 = DOL §2608-9.

⁵³ EDIL §§1085-7 = DOL §§2609-11: “forma...constat verbis eiusdem precationis consecratoriae.”

⁵⁴ *Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesiæ, Typica Latina editio* (Vatican 1997) §1352, emphasis added.

⁵⁵ *The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity Information Service* no. 49 (1982/II-III) 108; *Origins* 12 (12 April 1982) 158; French text in *La documentation catholique* 79 (1982 = No. 1838, 17 oct.) 942; *Episepsis* no. 277 (juillet-août 1982) 13.

⁵⁶ *Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesiæ* §1353, cf. §1375.

“ordinary food or ordinary drink but...flesh and blood of that same Jesus who was made flesh” (I, 66).⁵⁷ From the same period (ca. 185), Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* IV, 18.5, calls this consecration prayer “the invocation (*ten epiklesin*) of God.”⁵⁸ And although Cyril/John II of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* (post 380) 3, 3 and 5, 7, also uses the term epiclesis in its present, restricted sense,⁵⁹ in another passage, *Mystagogic Catechesis* I, 7, the word is usually interpreted as referring to the entire anaphora: “Before the holy epiclesis of the adorable Trinity the bread and wine of the eucharist were ordinary bread and wine, whereas after the epiclesis the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ.”⁶⁰ That, in my view, should suffice for a common profession of our faith in the eucharistic consecration. The rest can be left to theology.

The Words of Institution as Consecratory

As we have seen, both before and after the scholastic interval and the dispute between East and West over the epiclesis,⁶¹ reputable Catholic theologians rejected theologies that would isolate the Institution Narrative from its essential setting within the anaphora. Does that mean that the Words of Institution are not consecratory? Not at all. For the Fathers of the Church they are indeed consecratory, for they are words eternally efficacious in the mouth of Jesus. The classic Latin doctrine on the Words of Institution as “words of consecration” can be traced back to St. Ambrose (339-397), who states the teaching unambiguously (though not restrictively—i.e., *sensu aiente*, not *sensu negante*) in his *De sacramentis* IV, 4.14-17,⁶² 5.21-23, and *De mysteriis* IX, 52-54.⁶³ But Ambrose is not speaking of the words as a “formula.” Not until the 12th century do the scholastics formulate the thesis that the Words of Institution are the essential “form of the sacrament” which *alone* effect the consecration of the bread and wine.⁶⁴

That more narrow view is not the authentic tradition of the Fathers of the Church. St. John Chrysostom (ca. 340/50-†407), for instance, attributes consecratory efficacy both to the Words of Institution and to the epiclesis. Chrysostom states in at least seven different homilies that what happens in the eucharist happens by the power of the Holy Spirit,⁶⁵ a teaching common to both the Greek and Latin Churches. In at least one instance it is clear Chrysostom

⁵⁷ PE 68-72.

⁵⁸ SC 264:611; cf. also *Adv. haer.* I, 13.2, SC 264:190-91. Indeed, “epiclesis” is commonly used for the entire prayer over the gifts even in sources as late as the 4th century: Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium (Philosophoumena)* VI, 39:2, PG 16.3:3258 (= CPG §1899; on its disputed authenticity cf. CPG §1870); Firmilian of Caesarea, cited in Cyprian, *Ep.* 75, 10, CSEL 3.2:818—translation and discussion of this text with relevant literature in A. Bouley, *From Freedom to Formula. The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer from Oral Improvisation to Written Texts* (Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity 21, Washington, DC 1981) 143-45; G. A. Michell, “Firmilian and Eucharistic Consecration,” *JTS* 5 (1954) 215-220; *Didaskalia* VI, 22:2: *Didascalia apostolorum*. The Syriac Version translated and accompanied by the Verona fragments, with an introduction and notes, by R.H. Connolly (Oxford 1929) 252-53. Cf. J.W. Tyrer, “The Meaning of *epiklesis*,” *JTS* 25 (1923-1924) 139-50; esp. 142-45, 148; O. Casel, “Neuere Beiträge zur Epiklesenfrage,” *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 4 (1924) 169-178, esp. 170-71. Some authors would also include in this list Basil, *De Spiritu sancto* 27, SC 17bis:480 = PG 32:188 (= CPG §2839). But I agree with Gelston (*The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* 15-17) that Basil is probably referring to the epiclesis in the narrow sense of the term.

⁵⁹ SC 126bis:124, 154.

⁶⁰ SC 126bis:94.

⁶¹ On East-West issues in eucharistic theology from two of the major recent Catholic theologians writing on the issue, in addition to my studies above in note 4 and others cited in this present essay, see E.J. Kilmartin, “The Active Role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Sanctification of the Eucharistic Elements,” *Theological Studies* 45 (1984) 225-253, esp. 235ff; C. Giraudo, “L’epiclesi eucaristica. Proposta per una soluzione «ortodossa» della controversia fra Oriente e Occidente,” *Rassegna di teologia* 41 (2000) 5-24. On Kilmartin’s liturgical theology, see most recently the excellent study of J.M. Hall, *We Have the Mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit and Liturgical Memory in the Thought of Edward J. Kilmartin* (A Pueblo Book, Collegeville 2001).

⁶² Cited below at note 71.

⁶³ SC 25bis, 110, 114, 186-88 = CSEL 73:51-53, 55-56, 112-13 (= CPL §§154-155).

⁶⁴ Geiselmann, *Abendmahllehre* 192-94, 144-47; J.J. Hughes, “Eucharistic Sacrifice. Transcending the Reformation Deadlock,” *Worship* 13 (1969) 540; J.A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, cited above at note 39.

⁶⁵ *De sacerdotio* III, 4:40-50; VI, 4:34-44, SC 272:142-46, 316 = PG 48:642-45, 681 (= CPG §4316); *Oratio de beato Philogonio* 3, PG 48:753 (= CPG §4319); *De resurr. mortuorum* 8, PG 50:432 (= CPG §4340); *In pentec. hom.* 1, 4, PG 50:458-59 (= CPG §4343); *In Ioh. hom.* 45, 2, PG 59:253 (= CPG §4425); *In 1 Cor hom.* 24, 5, PG 61:204 (= CPG §4428). But in *In De coemet. et de cruce* 3, Chrysostom is clearly speaking of the epiclesis: PG 49:397-98 (= CPG §4337).

is talking about the epiclesis. But in his *Homily on the Betrayal of Judas* (*De prodicione Judae hom. 1/2, 6*), he attributes the consecration to Christ in the Words of Institution:

It is not man who causes what is present to become the body and blood of Christ, but Christ himself, who was crucified for us. The priest is the representative when he pronounces those words, but the power and the grace are those of the Lord. “This is my body,” he says. This word changes the things that lie before us; and just as that sentence, “increase and multiply,” once spoken, extends through all time and gives to our nature the power to reproduce itself; likewise that saying, “This is my body,” once uttered, from that time to the present day, and even until Christ’s coming, makes the sacrifice complete at every table in the churches.⁶⁶

Note that Chrysostom assigns consecratory power *not to the priest’s liturgical repetition* of Jesus’ words now, but *to the historical institution itself*, i.e., to the original utterance of Jesus whose force extends to all subsequent eucharistic celebrations.⁶⁷

In the 8th century St. John Damascene, “last of the Greek Fathers” (ca. 675-753/4), teaches the exact same doctrine in his *De fide orthodoxa* 86 (IV, 13): “God said ‘This is my body’ and ‘This is my blood,’ and ‘do this in memory of me.’ *And by his all-powerful command it is done until he comes.* For that is what he said, until he should come, and the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit becomes, through the invocation [i.e., epiclesis], the rain to this new tillage.”⁶⁸ This is the classic Eastern Orthodox teaching: the power of consecration comes from the words of Christ, the divine mandate that guarantees the eucharistic conversion for all time.⁶⁹

But this is no different from the position of Ambrose (339-397), who obviously attributes the efficacy of Jesus’ words not to the prayer of the priest,⁷⁰ but to the indefectible effectiveness of the Word of God, as is perfectly clear in his *De sacramentis* IV, 4.14-17:

14. ...to produce the venerable sacrament, the priest does not use his own words but the words of Christ. So it is the word of Christ which produces this sacrament. 15. Which word of Christ? The one by which all things were made. The Lord commanded and the heavens were made, the Lord commanded and the earth was made, the Lord commanded and the seas were made, the Lord commanded and all creatures were brought into being. You see, then, how effective the word of Christ is. If then there is such power in the word of the Lord Jesus that things which were not began to be, how much more effective must they be in changing what already exists into something else!... 17. Hear, then, how the word of Christ is accustomed to change all creatures and to change, when it will, the laws of nature.⁷¹

This is exactly what Chrysostom says on other occasions: in the liturgy the same Jesus accomplishes the same eucharist, the same marvels, as at the Last Supper.⁷² For instance, his *Homily 2 on II Timothy*, affirms:

The gifts which God bestows are not such as to be the effects of the virtue of the priest. All is from grace. His [the priest’s] part is but to open his mouth, while God works all. He [the priest] only completes the sign (*symbolon*) ... The offering is

⁶⁶ PG 49:380, 389-90 (= CPG §4336).

⁶⁷ See Nicholas Cabasilas, *Commentary* chap. 29, SC 4bis:178-90; cf. the commentary of Salaville, *ibid.* 314-15, and McKenna, *Eucharist and Holy Spirit* 59.

⁶⁸ Ed. Kottler 2:194.71-76; cf. Armitage, “The Eucharistic Theology of the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*” (English trans. from *ibid.* 293).

⁶⁹ But the epiclesis of the Holy Spirit is the decisive liturgical moment, for the Damascene continues: “...the bread of the prothesis, the wine, and the water, are converted supernaturally into the body of Christ and the blood, through the invocation (epiclesis) and intervention of the Holy Spirit.” Ed. Kottler 2:195; trans. Armitage 294.

⁷⁰ As Nicholas Cabasilas accuses them in his commentary on the liturgy, chap. 29.10, SC 4bis:184-86.

⁷¹ “14. ...ut conficiatur uenerabile sacramentum, iam non suis sermonibus utitur sacerdos, sed utitur sermonibus Christi. Ergo sermo Christi hoc conficit sacramentum. 15. Quis est sermo Christi? Nempe is quo facta sunt omnia. Iussit dominus factum est caelum, iussit dominus facta est terra, iussit dominus facta sunt maria, iussit dominus omnis creatura generatus est. Vides ergo quam operatorius sermo sit Christi. Si ergo tanta uis est in sermone domini Iesu ut inciperent esse quae non erant, quanto magis operatorius est ut sint quae erant et in aliud commutentur... 17. Accipe ergo quemadmodum sermo Christi creaturam omnem mutare consueuerit et mutet quando uult instituta naturae.”: SC 25bis:110 = CSEL 73:52-53 (= CPL §154); English trans. adapted in part from E. Mazza, *Mystagogy* (New York 1989) 183; Cf. Ambrose, *De mysteriis* IX, 52: “The sacrament you receive is produced by the word of Christ,” SC 25bis, 186 = CSEL 73:112 (= CPL §155).

⁷² *In Mt hom. 50* (51), 3 and *hom. 82* (83), 5, PG 58:507, 744 (= CPG §4424).

the same whoever offers it, Paul or Peter. It is the same one Christ gave to his disciples, and which priests now accomplish. The latter is in no way inferior to the former, because the same one who sanctified the one, sanctifies the other too. For just as the words that God spoke are the same as the ones the priest pronounces now, so is the offering the same, just like the baptism that he gave.⁷³

In this same sense, therefore, *the Words of Institution are always consecratory even when they are not recited, as in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari*. For they are consecratory not because they are a formula the priest repeats in the eucharistic prayer, but because Jesus' pronouncing of them at the Last Supper remains efficaciously consecratory for every eucharist until the end of time.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, then, I believe one can say there *are* irreducible local differences in the *liturgical expression* of what I would take to be the fully reconcilable *teaching* of both East and West on the eucharist: that the gifts of bread and wine are sanctified via a prayer, the anaphora, which applies to the present gifts of bread and wine what Jesus handed on. *How* the individual anaphoras express this application has varied widely depending on local tradition, particular history, and the doctrinal concerns of time and place. In my view these differences *cannot* with any historical legitimacy be seen in dogmatic conflict with parallel but divergent expressions of the same basic realities in a different historico-ecclesial milieu.

That is the approach I have taken here with regard to Church, magisterium, and dogma, reasoning as follows:

1. The whole undivided Church of East and West held that the eucharistic gifts were consecrated in the eucharistic prayer.
2. The *theologia prima* in the eucharistic prayers of East and West expressed this differently.
3. The *theologia secunda* or theological reflection on these prayers in East and West also was different. The West stressed the *Verba Domini*. The East stressed the Spirit epiclesis, while not denying the efficacy of the Words of Institution.
4. Problems arose only in the Late Middle Ages, when the Latin West *unilaterally* shifted the perspective by dogmatizing its hylomorphic theology.

The above four points are not theory but demonstrable historical facts. From them, I would argue further:

1. Since this western innovation narrows the earlier teaching of the undivided Church, the East rejected it—and in my opinion should have rejected it.
2. Since the post-Florentine Latin *Decreta* canonizing this view are highly questionable, I offered some elements for their reinterpretation.
3. Finally, I showed how Catholic teaching has for over a century been moving towards recovery of the view that what an earlier theology was pleased to call the “form” of a sacrament is the central prayer of the ritual, and not some single isolated formula within that prayer. This prayer can be understood and interpreted only within its liturgical context. The Words of Institution are not some isolated formula, but part of a prayer of the Church operative only within its worship context. In East and West this context was and is and will remain diverse within the parameters of our common faith that Jesus, through the ministers of his Church, nourishes us with the mystery of his Body and Blood.
4. None of this denies the teaching that the Words of Jesus are consecratory. For the Fathers, they are *always* consecratory because he once said them, not just because someone else repeats them. And so they are also

⁷³ PG 62:612 (= CPG §4437). On this point see Congar, *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint* 3:303-4.

consecratory in Addai and Mari, even though that ancient prayer does not have the priest repeat these words *verbatim* in direct discourse, but adverts to them more obliquely.

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APPENDIX

I. *The Roman Canon Missae (mid-4th c.)*

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| <p>1. Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostrae, sed et cunctae familiae tuae, quaesumus, Domine, ut placates accipias...</p> <p>2. Quam oblationem tu, Deus, in omnibus, quaesumus, benedictam, adscriptam, ratam, acceptabilemque facere digneris, ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiat dilectissimi Filii tui Domini nostri Jesu Christi.</p> <p>3. Qui pridie quam pateretur...</p> <p>(= INSTITUTION NARRATIVE)</p> <p>4. Unde et memores...ejusdem Christi Filii tui Domini nostri tam beatae passionis, nec non et ab inferis resurrectionis, sed et in caelos gloriosae ascensionis, offerimus praeclarae majestati tuae, de tuis donis ac datis, hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam, Panem sanctum vitae aeternae, et Calicem salutis perpetuae.</p> <p>5. Supra quae propitio ac sereno vultu repicere digneris, et accepta habere, sicut accepta habere dignatus es munera pueri tui Abel...</p> <p>6. Supplices te rogamus, omnipotens Deus, iube haec perferri per manus sancti angeli tui in sublime altare tuum in conspectu divinae majestatis tuae, ut quotquot ex hac altaris participatione sacrosanctum Filii tui corpus et sanguinem sumpserimus, omni benedictioni caelesti et gratia repleamur.</p> | <p>1. Therefore, Lord, we ask that you be pleased to accept this oblation of our ministry and also of your whole family...</p> <p>2. Which oblation we ask you, God, deign to make in all things blessed, and acceptable, that it might become for us the Body and Blood of your beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p>3. Who on the day before he suffered... (= INSTITUTION NARRATIVE)</p> <p>4. Remembering, therefore...the blessed passion of this same Christ your Son our Lord, as well as his resurrection from the dead and glorious ascension into heaven, we offer to your glorious majesty, from your own given gifts, a pure offering, a holy offering, an immaculate offering, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of eternal salvation.</p> <p>5. Deign to look on them with a propitious and kindly regard, and accept them as you accepted the gifts of your child Abel...</p> <p>6. Humbly we implore you, almighty God, bid these offerings be carried by the hands of your holy angel to your altar on high in the presence of your divine majesty, so that those of us who, sharing in the sacrifice at this altar, shall have received the sacred body and blood of your Son, may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.</p> |
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II. *From the Postsanctus of Addai and Mari (3rd c.)*⁷⁴

1. Do you, O my Lord, in your manifold mercies make a good remembrance for all the upright and just fathers, the prophets and apostles and martyrs and confessors, 2. **in the commemoration of the Body and Blood of your Christ, which we offer to you on the pure and holy altar, as you have taught us in his life-giving Gospel...**

3. And we also, O my Lord, your servants who are gathered and stand before you, 4. **and have received by tradition the example which is from you, rejoicing and glorifying and exalting** 5. **and commemorating this mystery of the passion and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

6. **And let your Holy Spirit come, O my Lord, and rest upon** 7. **this offering of your servants,** 8. **that it may be to us for the pardon of sins and for the forgiveness of shortcomings, and for the resurrection from the dead, and for new life in the kingdom of heaven.**

9. **And for your dispensation which is towards us we give you thanks and glorify you** 10. **in your Church redeemed by the precious Blood of your Christ,** 11. with open mouths and unveiled faces offering glory and honor and thanksgiving and adoration to your holy name, now and at all times, and for ever and ever. Amen!

⁷⁴ Gelston *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* 121-3.