LOGIA is a journal of Lutheran theology. As such it publishes articles on exegetical, historical, systematic, and liturgical theology that promote the orthodox theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. We cling to God’s divinely instituted marks of the church: the gospel, preached purely in all its articles, and the sacraments, administered according to Christ’s institution. This name expresses what this journal wants to be. In Greek, ΛΟΓΙΑ functions either as an adjective meaning “eloquent,” “learned,” or “cultured,” or as a plural noun meaning “divine revelations,” “words,” or “messages.” The word is found in 1 Peter 4:11, Acts 7:38 and Romans 3:32. Its compound forms include ιδεολογία (confession), ἀπολογία (defense), and ἀναλογία (right relationship). Each of these concepts and all of them together express the purpose and method of this journal. LOGIA is committed to providing an independent theological forum normed by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. At the heart of our journal we want our readers to find a love for the sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, not merely as rule and norm, but especially as Spirit, truth, and life which reveals Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we confess the church, without apology and without rancor, only with a sincere and fervent love for the precious Bride of Christ, the holy Christian church, “the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God,” as Martin Luther says in the Large Catechism (LC II, 42). We are animated by the conviction that the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession represents the true expression of the church which we confess as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

THE COVER ART features a pen and ink drawing of the incarnate Christ by Siegfried Reinhardt, a Lutheran artist from Saint Louis. Titled Incarnation, it is one of four original drawings he contributed in 1960 for The Seminarian. It calls to mind the Epiphany Gospel, which tells of the magi’s coming to worship the King of the Jews. Yet even as Reinhardt presents our Lord in his exaltation, he forgets not his humiliation: a crown of thorns under the crown of gold, the mark of a nail in the uplifted hand of peace. Indeed, the incarnate King would give His body and blood for us on the cross and to us in his Holy Supper for the forgiveness of our sins.

The original drawings are a part of the art collection at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis. Used by permission.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Ulrich Asendorf—Pastor, Hannover, Germany
Burnell F. Eckardt Jr.—Pastor, St. John Lutheran Church, Berlin, WI
Charles Evanson—Pastor, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, IN
Ronald Feuerhahn—Professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO
Lowell Green—Professor, State University of New York at Buffalo, NY
Paul Grime—Pastor, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, West Allis, WI
David A. Gustafson—Pastor, Peace Lutheran Church, Poplar, WI
Tom G. A. Hardt—Pastor, St. Martin’s Lutheran Church, Stockholm, Sweden
Matthew Harrison—Pastor, St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, Westgate, IA
Steven Hein—Professor, Concordia University, River Forest, IL
Horace Hummel—Professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO
Arthur Just—Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
John Kleining—Professor, Luther Seminary, North Adelaide, South Australia, Australia
Arnold J. Koelpin—Professor, Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN
Lars Koen—Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
Gerald Krispin—Professor, Concordia College, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Peter K. Lange—Pastor, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Concordia, MO
Alan Ludwig—Pastor, Concordia and Immanuel Lutheran Churches, Cresbard and Wecota, SD
Cameron MacKenzie—Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
Gottfried Martens—Pastor, St. Mary’s Lutheran Church, Berlin, Germany
Kurt Marquart—Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
Norman E. Nagel—Professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO
Martin Noland—Pastor, Christ Lutheran Church, Oak Park, IL
Wilhelm Petersen—President, Bethany Seminary, Mankato, MN
Hans-Lutz Poetsch—Pastor Emeritus, Lutheran Hour, Berlin, Germany
Robert D. Preus—The Luther Academy, Shorewood, MN
Clarence Priebebenow—Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Oakley, Queensland, Australia
Richard Rusch—Pastor, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, IN
David P. Scaer—Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
Robert Schaibley—Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, IN
Bruce Schuchard—Pastor, St. James Lutheran Church, Victor, IA
Harold Senkbeil—Pastor, Elm Grove Lutheran Church, Elm Grove, WI
Carl P. E. Springer—Professor, Illinois State University, Normal, IL
John Stephenson—Professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada
Walter Sundberg—Professor, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN
David Jay Webber—Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Brewster, MA
William Weinrich—Professor, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
George F. Wollenburg—President, Montana District LCMS, Billings, MT

LOGIA (ISSN 0194-0958) is published quarterly by the Luther Academy, 2430 Brackets Road, Shorewood, WI 53533. Third class postage paid at Aberdeen, SD and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to LOGIA, PO Box 5757, Naperville, IL 60567.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT: 1004 Plum St., Mankato, MN 56001. Unsolicited material is welcomed but cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage.

BOOK REVIEW DEPARTMENT: 1004 University Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414. All books received will be listed. LOGIA Forum and Correspondence Department: 707 N. Eighth St., Vinncennes, IN 47591-1609. Letters selected for publication are subject to editorial modification, must be typed or computer printed, and must contain the writer’s name and complete address.

SUBSCRIPTION & ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT: PO Box 5757, Naperville, IL 60567. Advertising rates and specifications are available upon request.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: U.S.: $20 for one year (four issues); $40 for two years (eight issues). Canada and Mexico: 1 year, $27; 2 years, $50. Overseas: 1 year, air: $67; surface: $50. 2 years, air: $117; surface: $90. All funds in U.S. currency only.

Copyright © 1995, The Luther Academy. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written permission.
CORRESPONDENCE

ARTICLES

New Directions
By Charles J. Evanson

Reflections on the Appropriate Vessels for Consecrating and Distributing the Precious Blood of Christ
By John R. Stephenson

The Angels Are Aware . . . and We are Too
By Paul R. Harris

The Epiclesis and Lutheran Theology
By William E. Thompson

Medicine of Immortality
By David G. Schoessow

A Call for Manuscripts

REVIEWS

Review Essay: No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology? by David F. Wells
The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus. By Arthur A. Just Jr.
Fortress Introduction to Lutheranism. By Eric W. Gritsch
The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of the Law. By Thomas R. Schreiner
On Being Christian. By Henry P. Hamann
Paul Schneider: The Witness of Buchenwald. By Rudolf Wentorf. Translated by Franklin Sanders
Many Gifts, One Lord. By Harley G. Schmidt
The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius. By Peter Widdicombe

BRIEFLY NOTED

LOGIA FORUM

Free Recourse to Joy • Nothing But Fig Leaves • A Little Yeast
A Spiritual Perversion • That Same Old Manna • Not Many, But Much
Turn Back, You Folks • Lex Orandi Revisited • Our Daily Calling • Dangerous Liaisons
God Damned It • Holy Communion Needs No Delta Force • The Quest for God • 4000 Hymnals to Go, Please
The Body of Christ Illustrated • Colloquium Viatorum • A Sauer Note
The New Measures • Ministry a la Mode • Reforming the Ceremonies • Confessional Lutherans in Latvia
Translation Watch • Fruit of the Vine • Discerning the Body • Tappert's Omission
Dear Editor,

A telephone call from Kenosha a while back alerted me to a Logia review of a Lutheran book (Eastertide/April 1994, p. 65), which criticized the book for its theology of glory. The review suggested that the theology of the cross had come up short, and argued that its author was teetering on the edge of Lutheran theology. Yikes, another Schwärmer, I thought. I read the review and discovered that it was directing its arrows at me! Oh, what pains of conscience I should have, were the reviewer’s aim true, but then I reread my book and was relieved to discover myself saying, “I am repeating myself, but it bears reaffirming—the glory of God is his grace” (Motivation for Ministry, Northwestern, 1993, p. 69). Ah.

A lesson suggests itself for the wary: be careful how you use red flag terms, and do not underestimate the potential for readers to judge superficially all that you say or write by the bias such terms convey, as you attempt to sanitize and use them. “Theology of glory” as theological shorthand sends out immediate distress signals, and who wouldn’t wonder if my deliberate treatment of such a term meant that the Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God was being telegraphed superficially or in stupid fashion for Lutheran use? We know what the Reformed mean when they speak of God’s glory, and accordingly we have a knee-jerk reaction to it (which is good).

My book, Motivation for Ministry: Soli Deo Gloria, attempted to set the record straight for both Lutheran and Reformed readers, in a non-polemical, devotional style, that the glory of God is his grace, centered in the cross (see Chapter 5, “God Is Glorified for His Grace,” especially pages 70–71), and because that grace has both made and then saved us, Christians have ample reason to glorify God in all they do, both clergy and laity. I was attempting in part to influence the Reformed that they need to put the grace of God in the center of their theology, which it appears St. Louis professor David S. Smith caught when he reviewed the same book, saying, “The Theology of Soli Deo Gloria is aptly Part One. A clear, Gospel-centered presentation follows. There is no confusion of Law and Gospel here. The Gospel predominates so that God receives the glory, and we have the honor of working to glorify Him for all His works on our behalf” (Concordia Journal, January 1994, 72–73).

I can understand why the Dakota reviewer took me to task. I am a Wisconsin Synod pastor and made no secret that I am a fourth-generation Wisconsin Synod one. That makes me a worthy suspect for those attuned to the art of exorcising the spooks of Pietism from American Lutheranism, since we all know where the roots of the Wisconsin Synod are to be found, which also means that I for one admit that I cannot say that I have been altogether free of Pietistic influence. As someone told me recently, Pietism is the equivalent in Lutheran theology of herpes, and having been infected with the virus, one never is completely free of it—in times of stress, it flares up (which I am coming to see is the pattern of my synod).

So when a Missouri man reads a book by a Wisconsin man about a theology of glory, I can well appreciate his suspicions, and I bear him no grudge, though his criticisms are off the mark; nor do I run the Eighth Commandment to the mizzenmast to escape accountability. I commend rather his rush to uphold Christ’s doctrine and name, namely to keep the Second Commandment, as I also say that if more people were less touchy about their own reputations and more interested in God’s, one might possibly see a return to the kind of refreshing debate of the issues that marked Luther’s and Walther’s day, and a renaissance of confessional Lutheranism.

Nathan R. Pope
Racine, Wisconsin

Logia Correspondence and Colloquium Fratrum

We encourage our readers to respond to the material they find in Logia—whether it be in the articles, book reviews, or letters of other readers. While we cannot print everything that comes across our desks, we hope that our Colloquium Fratrum section will allow for longer response/counter-response exchanges, whereas our Correspondence section is a place for shorter “Letters to the Editors.”

If you wish to respond to something in an issue of Logia, please do so soon after you receive an issue. Since Logia is a quarterly periodical, we are often meeting deadlines for the subsequent issue about the time you receive your current issue. Getting your responses in early will help keep them timely. Send your Correspondence contributions to Logia Correspondence, 1004 Plum St., Mankato, MN, 56001, or your Colloquium Fratrum contributions to Logia Editorial Department, 1004 Plum St., Mankato, MN, 56001.
New Directions

CHARLES J. EVANSON

New directions can be taken to be a term that describes our contemporary church scene, for new and sometimes startling directions are being taken in almost every area of church activity. There are new directions in biblical and doctrinal theology, in the understanding of the pastoral ministry and its activity, in stewardship, in evangelism, in church growth, in pastoral and parish administration, in lay involvement, as well as in liturgy and worship.

These new directions constitute movements that have this in common: they show us that there is a genuine and deep concern about the renewal of the church at large, the parish congregation, and the individual member of the church. Each movement in its own way seeks to foster fuller and more complete commitment, involvement, activity, and dedication. “Where there is no vision, the people perish,” says the writer of Proverbs (30:18)—and the advocates of these and other movements like them have shown that they are concerned to provide more insight, to increase understanding, and so to motivate the people that they too catch a vision of what Christians individually and the church corporately ought to be and do.

It would not be out of place for us to note a possible danger here, lest these movements and their projected goals come to constitute a denial of the vision we are meant to have and share with one another. After all, the vision of which the writer of Proverbs is speaking is nothing less than the vision of the Lord. It is not a vision of the church as a beehive in which one and all are busily involved in the earnest business of helping the church survive, nor is it the vision of busy Christians “authenticating” themselves by means of their perpetual motion. We must recognize the possibility that seemingly worthy activity may spring from unbelief, that is, the notion that the church’s survival somehow depends upon her taking the necessary steps and making the necessary accommodations to insure her survival, growth, and prosperity.

The church’s sight and hearing are to be fixed upon what the Lord has to say about himself as Lord over the church and about his calling of his people to fear, love, and trust in him above all things. To trust in him in this deep way means to hear and trust the word he speaks. The call is God’s invitation for us to hear and believe his word in the face of others’ words we hear and in the face of all the “incontrovertible evidence” to the contrary. The call is God’s invitation to his church to turn her attention away from her own apprehensions, and turn toward her Lord and the word he speaks. The call stands against the idolatry that shows itself in our predilection to direct our attention toward ourselves, our perception of our needs, our plans for survival and expansion. The Lord never ceases to warn against this idolatry.

The situation we face is not that God has stated the goal and left us to grope toward it as best we can, with the assistance of his grace. The situation with us is that we are accused by our own unbelief. We simply do not trust in God above all things. Christ says of his church that he will build it—and the apostles constantly insist that the church can have no other foundation than him, and that it is in the preaching of Jesus as the Christ and what the Father in heaven has been pleased to do in, by, and through him that we are saved. It is a matter of fides ex auditu: faith comes from hearing, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ. So the life of the church is always bound to the hearing of that word which is his word, which is alive and active in sermon and absolution, in baptism, and in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. The renewal of the church is centered in the renewal of her faith, and this depends upon her faithful use of the means by which the Lord intends to nurture and renew his church and her members. If the contemporary movements we have mentioned above need to be reminded of this, the movement toward the renewal of worship and liturgical life needs especially to hear it, for current thinking in this movement shows an almost hypnotized fascination with what we are doing when we gather around the pulpit and the altar.

That new directions are being taken in liturgy and worship is surely beyond dispute. There has been a virtual explosion of new music, new hymnals, new liturgies and liturgical materials worldwide. Extensively revised liturgies have made their appearance in Roman Catholicism, in the churches of the Anglican Communion, in Lutheranism both here and abroad, and in the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, to mention but the most prominent examples. A publication produced by the Church Agenda Committee of the Church of Sweden about a decade ago noted these liturgical revisions in some detail, noting both the official revisions and the unofficial attempts of various groups to meet the contemporary age on its own terms, including as well a descrip-

CHARLES J. EVANSON is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and a LOGIA contributing editor.
tion of the theological stance of each. Some common characteristics seem to emerge in all these productions, and we will take a look at them later. In addition to all this, the parish offset press and copier have brought into circulation myriad services of worship of various kinds, some of which patch together the church's traditional liturgical materials in highly novel and ingenious ways, and others that try to ignore that tradition altogether.

There are, of course, some who decry all this interest in worship as dilatory to the church's real life and work—which, for them, is found in some other movement, perhaps one of those mentioned above. Charismatics and fundamentalists characteristically have little interest in ordered worship of a traditional kind—and this is true also within the so-called liturgical denominations, where the church's tradition may be endured, but only with the understanding that the real "action" is somewhere else. There are in all branches of Lutheranism, pastors, professors, and laity who really do not care much for the church's traditional worship, and feel that it is probably detrimental in work among people of non-liturgical backgrounds who do not care much for rituals and sacraments. A recent correspondent told the readers of the Lutheran Witness, in effect, that the best liturgy is to have as little of it as possible. Understandably, if you are convinced that the real and essential work and life of the church is in the evangelism board, the stewardship or finance committee, or the school, then what happens when the congregation gathers on Sundays and other days around the altar may well seem to you either irrelevant, or at best an opportunity to mobilize the people for your program.

There are, of course, some who decry all this interest in worship as dilatory to the church's real life and work.

It must also be said that the liturgical movement has changed greatly since the old days of the short-lived St. James Society and the beginnings of the Valparaiso Institute. The movement paralleled developments in Europe that came to life through the interest in the church's confessional and sacramental heritage fanned by the publications of such men as Aemilius Ludwig Richter and Emil Sehling (both jurists!), Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loewe, Christian George Rietschel, Friedrich Lochner, and Paul Graff. The work of the Common Service Committee (1888) and the Lutheran Association at the turn of the century, the appearance of the Common Service in the Missouri Synod as a gift of the newly merged English District in 1911, and the appearance of the Common Service Book (1937) and subsequent use of that service by many of the smaller Scandinavian Lutheran groups in the Middle West represented a renewed appreciation for the church's heritage from the Kirchenordnungen of the sixteenth century. From there interest turned more particularly to the Sacrament of the Altar, its theology, and its place in the life of the congregation—and that brought a raft of works from Hermann Sasse, Wilhelm Stahlin, Peter Brunner, Bo Gertz, Gunnar Rosendahl, and later, Max Witte, Regin Prenter, Helmut Lieberg, Albrecht Peters, Carl Fr. Wielöff, Jurgen Diestelmann, Tom Hardt, and Bertil Gartner.

In addition to this there was the massive output of Roman Catholics who were advocating the renewal of worship in that communion: Dom Gueranger, the monks of Solesmes and Maria Laach, Abt Herwegen, Pius Parsch, Dom Odo Casel, Romano Guardini, Josef Jungmann, and later, Louis Bouyer.

But what we see in contemporary books of renewal and the liturgies most recently authorized and adopted stems from a different source and movement that is the child of two important movements of the earlier days of the twentieth century. First, there were the results of the comparative study of Christian churches, the history of religions, and the phenomenology of prayer and worship. Influential names here include Rudolf Otto, Frederick Heiler, Nathan Söderblum, Yngve Brilioth, and Mircea Eliade. In addition, there were the form-critical and redaction-critical labors of at least three generations of biblical theologians and commentators: Hans Lietzmann, Rudolf Bultmann, Oscar Cullman, Ernst Käsemann, Joachim Jeremias, and others. A generation ago Hans Asmussen could rejoice that their labors had so little affected the church's worship. Such is no longer the case. The movement that has derived from these twin sources stemmed from the appearance in 1937 of The Shape of the Liturgy by British monk Dom Gregory Dix. This book continues to be the single most influential articulation of the new movement and its basic position.

Dix writes to address what he believes to be an entirely new situation and to answer the question left unanswered by the theologians of the previous generation: Can the church's Eucharist be claimed to have been instituted by Christ? and is it any longer possible, on the basis of the New Testament, to regard any one view of the Eucharist as the norm and standard by which later developments are to be judged? His approach is phenomenological. He sees the Eucharist as related to the Last Supper as source, but not model. Christ did seven things at the Last Supper: (1) he took bread, (2) he gave thanks over it, (3) he broke it, (4) he distributed it, saying also a particular formula; then after the meal (5) he took a cup, (6) he gave thanks over it, and (7) he handed it to his disciples, saying also with it a particular formula. The unanimous tradition of the earliest extant liturgies, however, bears witness to a fourfold action: (1) the offering of the bread and the wine, (2) the prayer of thanksgiving by the president of the assembly, (3) the fraction of the bread, and (4) the Communion. This indicates that the liturgical tradition appears to have originated independently of the New Testament documents. The real significance of the Supper can best be determined by a careful examination of these two phenomena: the Last Supper and the Eucharist.

First, inquiry must be made concerning the Last Supper. Was it a Passover? Most probably not. But it was a Jewish religious meal, most likely a Chaburah, a gathering for devotees, for the purpose of special devotion and charity. Such suppers were the weekly gathering of a closely knit religious society for purposes of fellowship, the transacting of business, and the discussion of religious issues. At the beginning of the meal there was a formal giving of thanks, followed by a formal thanksgiving before each individual course, in each case with a fixed formula, and in every case given by the leader, with the single exception of the blessing of the wine, which each was to bless for himself.
The absence from the texts of such blessings is readily explained by the fact that every Jewish child knew them all by heart; their inclusion would be utterly unnecessary. What was unique at the Last Supper is that here Jesus adds an enigmatic remark about his body. Whether or not the command to repeat the action was explicit, it was at least implicit, since the disciples would regard the breaking of bread as a matter of religious obligation according to Jewish practice. Accordingly, the words “This do in remembrance of me” or “This do” must refer to the fact that now this common action will have a new and deeper significance: when and where the Chaburah meets again without Jesus these words will be recalled. At this point, however, the words themselves would have given the disciples little clue of the new meaning of this ancient ceremony.

After the Supper, when Judas has departed, Jesus departs from the usual order of things and takes up the task of washing the feet of his disciples. Then at last comes the time for the last blessing—in the case of the Chaburah, over a cup of wine into which water has been mixed. Again, the words of the thanksgiving are not reported. Here Jesus makes another startling incidental remark. And again, the injunction “Do this” bears witness to the new significance now given to this familiar action. Now the words of the blessing make the disciples aware of this new meaning, for the traditional prayer makes reference to God’s covenant sealed in the flesh of his people, and now Jesus speaks of the new covenant in his blood.

Dix’s conclusion is that Jesus did not establish a new rite. He attached to two corporate acts, which his disciples would surely continue, a new meaning that connects them with his approaching death. The significance of the presence of two actions is that had bread only been blessed, then the Eucharist would have been as private as bread-breaking so often was. But it is the “Cup of Blessing” reserved for the solemn gathering that makes the Eucharist necessarily a corporate action, an act of the church. In addition, the association of bread and cup provides the basis for the sacrificial understanding of Christ’s atoning death and of the Eucharist. The significance of all this would of course be lost to later Christian writers of Gentile background—their misconception would stem from ignorance of the Chaburahic background.

Dix regards his findings as a repudiation of the position taken by the liberal theologians of the preceding generations. The liberal thesis was that the Christian Eucharist had little or no relation to the Last Supper. It was said to have sprung from pagan converts to Christianity some score or more years after the Last Supper and the appearance of either rite as it was used at the time of Jesus. It must also be questioned whether it is really possible to gain an accurate understanding of the Eucharist on the basis such a hypothesis provides. Further, his understanding of the significance of the Last Supper presupposes rather than establishes the motive of sacramental offering. In addition, nothing definite may be said about the
Eucharistic Prayer of Hippolytus, much less on the basis of it. To say that it represents the Roman tradition is to say more than can be said with any degree of assurance. Finally, to determine the meaning of the Supper from what may have later been done in the churches is to make uncritical determinations.

But in spite of all these formidable criticisms, the work of Dix has played a decisive role in the formulation of almost every Eucharistic rite produced since 1950! When the Church of South India, which had been formed in 1947 by a merger of Anglican, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches in South India, produced its new liturgy in 1950, the problem of the differing confessions of these bodies had to be considered. The problem was solved by building from Dix’s analysis of the so-called invariable structure of the worship of the early church, allowing for a range of verbal expressions within that same general structure.

Even within Lutheranism the new view of structure as decisive quickly came to show itself.

The ideas that were given voice by Dix and that came to their first practical expression in the South Indian liturgy were to play an especially dominant role in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy produced by the Second Vatican Council in 1963. Here the former ideal of a “right liturgy” and the attempt to produce a traditional common form of words that could constitute the common ground expressive of the church’s catholicity was rejected in favor of a search for the “right actions” that could be said to constitute worship itself. It is not the words that really count, it is what the church is doing in the celebration that is of prime importance. When in 1969 the new post-Vatican Mass was finally approved, no less than four alternative Eucharistic Prayers were authorized for use in place of the earlier single fixed form.

Even within Lutheranism the new view of structure as decisive quickly came to show itself. In Germany there appeared from the Brotherhood of St. Michael (Michaelisbruderschaft) in 1971 a service entitled Abendmahl in der Tischgemeinschaft. In the introductory article it is established that the old liturgical movement’s power and brilliance have now dimmed; it has not remained the kind of worship renaissance for which one had hoped. Now a significant advance has been made by focusing sociologically on the gathering as a small group rather than as the folk-church. By so doing, it is possible to enter once again into the milieu of the early congregation—by starting with an analysis of the roots of the table fellowship going on in that room in which Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper.

First evidence of the influence of Dix in North American Lutheranism came in the Missouri Synod’s Worship Supplement in 1969. Here the chief Communion Service offers three alternative Eucharistic Prayers. An alternative order, from Protestant Episcopal sources, offers a four-action “Meal” consisting of Taking, Blessing, Breaking, and Sharing. The Service of Holy Communion published in 1970 by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship for provisional use shows the four-action shape, particularly defining it in the preliminary essay and the marginal notes. No particular reference is made to the shape in the notes that are preliminary to the Eucharist in Lutheran Book of Worship, but four alternatives at the consecration are offered: three Eucharistic Prayers and the verba without any prayer at all. Included among the alternatives is a reconstruction of the prayer of Hippolytus. The structure of each prayer is such that the verba are regarded as an integral part of the prayer itself and not as an act of consecration of the elements.

In every particular, from the offering of various alternatives to the concentration upon structure, the influence of Dix is evident. It is an influence that ought to be questioned by people who as a matter of confession regard the New Testament reports to be the sufficient theological basis for the doctrine and practice of the Lord’s Supper. It is not the use of a Eucharistic Prayer that constitutes the problem—after all, such prayers appeared already in Ottolinrich’s Pfälz Neuburg Agenda of 1544, the old English liturgy of the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Agenda produced for German Russian congregations by Theodosius Harnack, and in our own century in the Alterbok of the Church of Norway (with its singular prayer addressed directly to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity), in the liturgy of the Church of Sweden, and in Agenda I of the German Lutheran Churches. But the Eucharistic Prayers that have appeared (also in Lutheran agendas) since the ascendancy of the Dix hypothesis differ from these in structure and form and in intent. The older prayers give to the verba a predominance that modern critics believe to be hopelessly medieval. Those who stand under the influence of modern studies are not just advocating a Eucharistic Prayer, but they are looking toward a particular kind of prayer: one that conforms to what is now believed to have been the “classic” fourfold shape that articulates what the church understands herself to be doing in the Supper in union with her Lord.

This might help us understand the significance of the severe criticisms leveled at the cautious and rather tentative movement towards a fuller anamnesis, thanksgiving, and prayer of humble access found in the prayers—based on traditional sources—included before the Our Father and the words of Christ in the Eucharistic rites of Lutheran Worship.

The Lutheran Church is still confessionally committed to the position that the church’s doctrine of the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord is simply that which is articulated in the Words of Institution that Christ spoke over the bread and the wine. Any attempts to determine the specific nature will never be more than problematic, and so any conclusions reached on the basis of such attempts will never be capable of confessional strength. Whatever meal—whether Chaburah or Passover (which is far more likely), the Last Supper in the upper room marked the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New. Werner Elert has pointed out that since it is under the terms of the Old that Christ is condemned, it is no longer possible for the disciples and the church to consider and use it as such. What we do and what we receive in the Supper depends upon the creating word Jesus has spoken. What we are called to do is the action of the believing heart, which trusts what he has said. That doing is not
dependent upon the adequacy of our articulation of a theoretical understanding of what he was doing or how he went about doing it, or of how we are going about the business of doing what he wants done. To say that what he said there, in that solemn moment before his Passion, was “incidental” or “enigmatic” is to say far less than needs to be said about who he is and the nature and significance of the words he speaks and the food he gives.

“We are at odds concerning the words of Christ in the Supper,” says Luther against Karlstadt, Zwingli, and Oecolampadius in That These Words of Christ, “This Is My Body,” etc. Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics, 1527 (AE 37:3-150). The disagreement was over the meaning of these words and the sense in which they are to be taken. Luther complains that they are jumbled and belit-tled, as though Christ should be ashamed that he ever uttered them. But God’s word is still God’s word, and it is concerned with such important matters as the glory of God, the Spirit, and Christ, grace, everlasting life, death, and sin, and other deep top-ics. One really ought to humble himself and not treat those words so lightly.

It is the word Christ speaks that creates and makes the Sacra-ment a sheer gift for us to receive. It is on that word and saying that we are to take our stand. By it we know that the Sacrament is not a human fabrication or invention, Luther writes in the Admo-nition Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, 1530 (AE 38:91-137) that it has been instituted and established by Christ himself, according to the will and command of his Father, to be used by us out of affection and measureless love. Therefore every Christian should examine himself as to whether he believes that Christ has really instituted and given it to us, and also whether he believes that Christ actually loves us this much and is really so concerned about us. It is the nature of faith that whoever wants to be a Christian should know what and how he should believe, in order that he may not fool himself into thinking that he is a Chris-tian when he is one only in name or appearance. For what a person does not believe, he also does not honor and keep.

It is a great mistake to think that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist finds its center in the action of the congregation, as though we could do honor to Christ’s suffering and worship God by means that we ourselves appoint, institute, and observe. Wor-ship that originates in us can only obscure the lofty worship that he has himself appointed and with which he is so well pleased, and in which his remembrance and the glory of Christ’s Passion are most truly exalted. The true anamnesis is that which Christ has established by the word he speaks, rather than those words by which the congregation, under her president, seeks to articulate the significance of her action.

Now if you want to engage in a marvelous, great worship of God and honor Christ’s Passion rightly, then remember and participate in the sacrament; in it, as you hear, there is a remembrance of him, that is, he is praised and glorified. If you practice or assist in practic-ing this same remembrance with diligence, then you will assuredly forget about the self-chosen forms of wor-ship, for, as has been said, you cannot praise and thank God too often or too much for his grace revealed in Christ (AE 38:106).

Worship is the means by which man makes a god, according to Luther: “Thus, if you really want to do it right and make a right god, you must learn from him how to make him your God. Learn from the words of Christ to remember him by preaching, prais-ing, listening, giving thanks for the grace revealed in Christ, for God says of this thanksgiving that it truly honors him, even though it appears insignificant from a human point of view. Such worship fills the heart, and both adorns and decorates God.”

Little positive significance is accorded Luther’s liturgical writ-ings today. Modern liturgical writers appear to assume that he had little concern or knowledge in matters concerning Christian wor-ship, or regarded them at least indifferently, and that what he does offer—found chiefly in the Formula Missae and Deutsche Messe—reveals a disastrous conservatism that is clearly inferior to the liturgical work of his contemporaries Brenz, Bucer, and the later Cranmer in England. From the theological standpoint, Luther’s concentration on the sacraments, and particularly the centrality of the dominical word, are criticized for not appearing to revolve in the orbits of law-gospel and the doctrine of justification.

It is the word Christ speaks that creates and makes the Sacrament a sheer gift for us to receive.

What Luther’s liturgical writings demonstrate is that he does not see liturgical renewal as such to be a program for the renewal of the church and the individual Christian. The Reformation is not built upon, nor is it dependent upon, the formulation and use of radically new and different forms of the mass and other kinds of services. It is hardly fair to assume that this conservative attitude is an indication of Luther’s lack of imagination, knowl-edge, or skill in this area. His possession of all three is clearly seen in the popular vernacular hymns that he composed, in many cases on the basis of traditional Gregorian melodies and texts from the mass and the Divine Office. Even Luther’s statements about modifying the church calendar, the use of church bells, the traditional vesture of the clergy at mass, and the ceremonies of the mass were in many cases more a statement of possibility than a program to be initiated and carried through as a part of the reform. We know, for example, that the elevation of the consecrated species was retained at Wittenberg until 1542, when it was dropped during Luther’s absence, and with his subsequent objec-tion. Again and again in the Kirchenordnungen we run into the phrase wie in das Romisch’ Messbuch—with only the canon suppressed and minor changes in wording in certain places. Even the use of Latin as a liturgical language—not only in schools and chapels but even in city churches—continued, in some places for another two and a half centuries.

What Luther has to say about worship is perhaps most clearly articulated when he is writing about what it means to have a god. Commenting on the meaning of the First Commandment in the Large Catechism, he says:
A god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. To have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe him with our whole heart. As I have often said, the trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you have not the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your God (LC I, 2–3, Tappert, p. 365).

To cling to him with all our heart is nothing else than to entrust ourselves to him completely. He wishes to turn us away from everything else, and to draw us to himself, because he is the one, eternal good. It is as if he said: “What you formerly sought from the saints, or what you hoped to receive from mammon or anything else, turn to me for all this; look upon me as the one who wishes to help you and to lavish all good upon you richly” (LC I, 15, Tappert, p. 366).

Worship has to do with the heart, and the true worship that pleases God is that worship which comes forth from the heart that trusts in him:

Behold, here you have the true honor and the true worship which please God and which he commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart should know no other consolation or confidence than that in him, nor let itself be torn from him, but for him should risk and disregard everything else on earth. On the other hand, you can easily judge how the world practices nothing but false worship and idolatry (LC I, 16–17, Tappert, pp. 366–367).

This idolatry, too, knows all about worshiping a god both outwardly and inwardly:

The heathen actually fashion their fancies and dreams about God into an idol and entrust themselves to an empty nothing. So it is with all idolatry. Idolatry does not consist merely of erecting an image and praying to it. It is primarily in the heart, which pursues other things and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils. It neither cares for God nor expects good things from him sufficiently to trust that he wants to help, nor does it believe that whatever good it receives comes from God (LC I, 20–21, Tappert, p. 367).

What is objectionable in the mass and office is not related to its liturgical structure, but rather rests in the idolatry from which it is offered as a means of obtaining favor with God. To that extent, it is false worship, because the heart from which it is offered is false toward God and has cast him aside for idols that the false heart has created for itself. The structure and indeed most of the verbal contents of the church’s worship are unobjectionable; its purification involves only the removal of accretions of the idolatrous heart.

Luther makes this clear in his first liturgical writing, Concerning the Order of Public Worship (AE 53:7–14), written early in 1523 in response to the request of the congregation at Leisnig (Saxony) and in reaction against the radical German order prepared by Karlstadt. “One thing alone is needful,” says Luther, “that Mary sit at Christ’s feet and hear his word daily.” The churches that Karlstadt has closed on weekdays should be reopened for daily prayer. Luther suggests that the people, as many as can, gather early in the morning to hear the word and its interpretation (in fulfillment of St. Paul’s requirement that there be interpretation and prophesying (1 Cor 14). In the morning a chapter or two of the Old Testament and in the afternoon a chapter or two of the New Testament. Then the congregation should unite in giving thanks and praise and pray for the fruit of the word, using the psalms, responsories, and antiphons.

What is objectionable in the mass and office is not related to its liturgical structure.

On Sundays the whole congregation should gather for the mass and Vespers, with the morning sermon on the Gospel, and at Vespers, a sermon on the Epistle. There would be no daily mass unless someone wishes to receive Communion. The present-day service goes back to the beginnings of Christianity, to the apostles themselves, but faith has been overthrown by the silencing of God’s word, by the introduction of legends and fables, and by the notion that one acquires merit of grace and salvation by the performance of worship.

The Formula Missae, which followed later in the same year, went into the same matters in far greater detail. Luther assures his readers that it was never his intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but to purify the present mass from what has corrupted it, namely, the canon of the mass, and to restore what Christ himself instituted, the Communion. The early additions of the [church] fathers, who prayed one or two Psalms before the consecration, are commendable, as are the Kyrie and the other hymns of the mass. But the canon is a cesspool, and has turned the mass into a human work of sacrifice.

The structure of the mass is the traditional one, although Luther considered that the sermon is not really part of the mass itself and might well be preached before the service begins.

All that matters is that the Words of Institution should be kept intact and that everything should be done in faith. In all other matters, there is room for latitude. Those who commune should inform the bishop in advance of the service so that he may know their names and manner of life and see that they can give an account of their faith and answer concerning the Lord’s Supper.
and its benefits. They should know the Words of Institution by heart and be able to explain that they are coming because they are troubled by sin, fear of death, and other need. Such an examination is not necessary at each reception: for some once a year or even once in a lifetime is enough. Those guilty of manifest sins should not be permitted to commune until they have given evidence of their repentance.

In addition to the mass, on weekdays Matins with its three lessons, the minor hours, Vespers, and Compline for ordinary days contain nothing objectionable. The services may however be shortened to three Psalms at Matins and Vespers. The whole Psalter should remain in use, and the Scripture should be read through. For this purpose daily lessons must be appointed: one chapter in the morning and one in the evening—one from the Old Testament and the other from the New, with interpretation.

It is in the Deutsche Messe that Luther offers the thought that there are really three kinds of masses:

The Latin [as found in the Formula Missae, which should continue in use]—it would be a step forward were we able to hold mass in four languages on successive Sundays: German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But since the Holy Spirit did not wait around for everyone to learn Hebrew, neither will we. In addition, we now have the Deutsche Messe for the unlearned, for we are not a people ruled by the Gospel, but we still need to be moved by it and learn to believe it and become Christians. Finally, the third kind of service is the truly evangelical service which must be held in private for those who earnestly want to be Christians. But we neither have nor are people like that, so the first two kinds of service must be continued. They are able—in addition to preaching—to train the young and call and attract others to faith. In addition, a simple catechism is needed to instruct the people morning and evening in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Our Father. On this basis the people should be constantly questioned and encouraged. (Paraphrased from Kleine Texte für Lesungen und Übungen, Liturgische Texte 5, ed. Hans Lietzmann [Berlin, 1929], pp. 3–4; see AE 53:62–64)

Services are provided for every day, including Matins, mass, and Vespers on Sunday; and daily preaching on the chief parts of the faith named above, and in addition, Baptism and the Sacrament. In this way we are trained and tutored in the Bible day by day. To the same end, many of the traditional festivals should be retained, including Holy Week, with the understanding that among Christians the whole service should center in the word and sacrament.

It is particularly in the Deutsche Messe that we find practical guidance for new directions in worship, especially when we ponder and weigh Luther’s words in the context that is provided in Luther’s other liturgical and sacramental writings. The pastor, theologian, and church musician ought to be better acquainted with them—and this includes the volumes in the American Edition that deal with word and sacrament, the Small and Large Catechisms, the Saxon Visitation Articles, sermons, and the Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John. Through all these Luther demonstrates a remarkable consistency in his liturgical and sacramental thinking. And these are in no sense divorced from his other doctrinal emphases, for it is always the faith of who Christ is and what he does for us and on our behalf and the creative power of the word he speaks that is to determine for us how the faithful heart worships and how faithful people do their liturgy.

One of Luther’s concerns is the right use of Christian liberty in worship. He decries the fact that there is now such a great variety of masses—everyone creates his own new order, and the result is widespread dissatisfaction, confusion, and offense. Public worship is no playing-ground for tinkerers or those who would use it for their own purposes. Worship is not a form of religious amusement or public entertainment. Christian freedom demands that we be and remain the servants of love and of our fellowman. Certainly, that word needs to be spoken and heard again in our day.

It is particularly in the Deutsche Messe that we find practical guidance for new directions in worship.

Further—and this stands out boldly in everything Luther writes—the Lord’s Supper is the worship of the Christian congregation. It stands without parallel as the chief service of the congregation for Sundays and other times when the congregation gathers. It cannot be classed among the occasional services. This principle, articulated by Luther time and again, and as well in the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, is sadly neglected, overlooked, and in some cases even rejected in places—and even when there has been a great deal of ingenuity displayed in revising or modifying or embellishing public worship so that it may grasp and involve the people and elicit from them involvement and commitment.

Perhaps we are still much too captivated by our own productions and proposals. Luther is not opposed to embellishment and decoration, and the Lutheran churches have generally followed him in this. But we do have to be attuned to the Lord’s great gift to his church. The Sacrament is not a sacrifice but a gift of God to be taken and received with thanksgiving, and we are to come to it out of praise and thanks to God, out of love for and in the confession of Christ, as a good example to our neighbor, and for the preservation of the Sacrament, sound teaching, the faith, and even Christendom herself. Here we practice a devotion that is not of our own choice or construction, for it is founded entirely upon the words of Christ: “This do in remembrance of me.”

Lesungen und Übungen, Liturgische Texte

Kleine Texte für

Deutsche Messe

Formula Missae

Deutsche Messe

Small Catechism

Large Catechism

Augsburg Confession

Apology
Reflections on the Appropriate Vessels for Consecrating and Distributing the Precious Blood of Christ

JOHN R. STEPHENSON

In Eucharistia sacramento venerabili et adorabili est exibetur et sumitur vere et reipsa corpus et sanguis Christi tam a dignis quam indignis. 1

Haereticos serio censemus et alienos ab Ecclesia dei esse Cinglianos et omnes sacramentarios, qui negant corpus et sanguinem Christi ore carnali sumi in venerabili Eucharistia. 2

As a long-serving teacher of New Testament and systematics at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Carroll Herman Little (1872–?) became the most eminent theologian to emerge thus far within Canadian Lutheranism. In an essay wherein he censured the substitution of grape juice for wine in the administration of the Holy Supper, Little voiced his pain at the introduction into Lutheran circles of the “individual cups” that first surfaced within Reformed church bodies in the U.S.A., that is, among those whom Luther at the end of his days solemnly branded as “heretics . . . estranged from the Church of God”:

The change of the container from the one cup to the many individual cups has been even more widely adopted in our Lutheran Churches. This innovation first found favor with the Reformed, and entered into our Lutheran Churches through Reformed influence. In the case of the Reformed, as they were dealing only with earthly elements of a symbolic nature, they had not much to lose. It came in their case also after they had long substituted grape juice for wine. Without the alcoholic content, which was antiseptic, they felt that there was real danger of infection. Consequently they made the change without any scruples in the matter. But why should Lutheran Churches take up with this Reformed innovation and depart so radically from the Lord’s institution, which in every instance speaks of the cup as one? How can we face the Reformed and charge them with changing the word “is” into “signifies,” when we just as perversely change the word “cup” into “individual cups”? Besides this, the innovation utterly destroys the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper as the Sacrament of union with one another and of brotherly love. It also goes against the whole history of the Church, displays a lack of faith in our gracious Lord, and diminishes the solemnity of the sacramental administration. May the time soon come when this modern innovation is done away with! Else we may yet arrive at the further innovation to which some Reformed Churches have already succumbed, and be found using paper cups, which after use are gathered up and destroyed. When a Church looses itself from the old and safe moorings and starts upon a course of innovation, there is no telling how far it may go or where it will stop. Our Church as an historical Church should beware of innovations. 3

The arguments advanced by Little against the substitution of “individual cups” for the chalice instituted by our Lord are five in number. First, Jesus used one cup, not many, at the Last Supper, which continues in each celebration of the Eucharist. 4 Second, the use of one container of consecrated wine per communicant destroys the symbolism of the “efficacious sign” that both produces and expresses the unity of the mystical body. Third, acceptance of the innovation of “individual cups” goes against the grain of that loyalty to historic Christian precedent, which Little considered appropriate to the essence of the “Conservative Reformation.” 5 Fourth, embrace of the Reformed mode of distribution through “individual cups” betrays a distressing lack of faith in the real presence and hence in our Lord himself. Fifth, with his awareness that ceremony inappropriate to the real presence “diminishes the solemnity of the sacramental administration,” Little echoed the Reformer’s perception of the Holy Supper as eucharistia venerabilis et adorabilis. Reformed style can only erode Lutheran substance.

Little’s first argument is reinforced by ELCA scholar Robert Jenson’s perceptive observations concerning the dominical mandate that establishes the Holy Supper:

First, it is the rite with bread and cup, just described, that is mandated. The texts are not at all about bread and wine as substances or foods merely; they are about

JOHN R. STEPHENSON teaches historical theology and is director of the library at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario. He is a LOGIA contributing editor.
these specific ritual uses of bread and wine. The command is not somehow to absorb grain agglutinate and grape extract. It is to share bread and drink together from one cup, as fellowship in the praise of God. Any practice, such as the use of small glasses for the wine, which depends on the notion that what is essential is that some minimum quantity of holy substance get into each worshiper, is unscriptural. Such practice simply does not obey the mandate which creates the Supper in the first place.5

Some may be minded to counter Little's second argument by pointing out that the Lord’s body is not now customarily distributed under the form of a single loaf: if the unleavened bread of eucharistic celebration is placed in the ciborium or on the paten in the shape of separate hosts, what objection stands in the way of dividing up the wine to be consecrated into “individual cups”? Such a line of thought breaks down when it is remembered that bread must be “broken” in order to be distributed; wine can without difficulty be shared through a single chalice. Moreover, as both R. C. H. Lenski and Timothy Teuscher7 have insisted, the purpose of the division of the sacramental wine into “individual cups” is not to ensure ease of distribution, but to accommodate the fastidiousness of certain communicants.

Do powerful dogmatic considerations in fact undergird Little’s loyalty to dominical and historic precedent? Is there any substance to the Waterloo scholar’s charge that adoption of the Reformed usage of “individual cups” “displays a lack of faith in our gracious Lord, and diminishes the solemnity of the sacramental administration”? Little’s sense that here too “Reformed style” must expel “Lutheran substance” can in fact be shown to correspond to the testimony of blessed Martin Luther and the Book of Concord to the consecration, to the real presence effected thereby, and to the reverent treatment that is appropriately to be given to the consecrated elements which are in very truth the body and blood in which the Lord was conceived, born, suffered, died, rose again, and now sits at the right hand of the Father for us.

THE EFFECTS OF THE CONSECRATION

The words make the bread into the Body of Christ delivered up for us. Hence it is no longer bread; rather, the bread “wears” the Body of Christ [ergo non est amplius panis, sed corpus Christi hat das Brot an].8

In rebuttal of Karlstadt’s sarcastic charge that he and his co-religionists engage in “breathing or whispering over the bread,” Luther retorted that we “do speak the divine, almighty, heavenly, and holy words which Christ himself spoke at the supper with his holy lips and commanded us to speak.”9 The efficacy of the consecration could not be articulated more clearly than in these words from the Reformer’s sermons on the Sacrament of the Altar of Eastertide 1526:

For as soon as Christ says: “This is my body,” his body is present through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. If the Word is not there, it is mere bread; but as soon as the words are added they bring with them that of which they speak.10

This testimony recurs in the Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper of 1528:

But when he said, “Do this,” by his own command and bidding he directed us to speak these words in his person and name: “This is my body.” . . . We say that his body, which long ago was made and came into existence, is present when we say, “This is my body.” For Christ commands us to say not, “Let this become my body,” or, “Make my body there,” but, “This is my body.”11

A further confession of the efficacy of the consecration in this writing was taken into FC SD VII, 78:

Here, too, if I were to say over all the bread there is, “This is the body of Christ,” nothing would happen, but when we follow his institution and command in the Supper and say, “This is my body,” then it is his body, not because of our speaking or our declarative word, but because of his command in which he has told us so to speak and to do and has attached his own command and deed to our speaking.12

---

**Bread must be “broken” in order to be distributed; wine can without difficulty be shared through a single chalice.**

Melanchthon, secretly during Luther’s lifetime and openly after his death, departed most radically from the Reformer’s conception of the real presence. In his regrettably yet unpublished ThD dissertation, Edward F. Peters tells how eight years after Lutheran’s demise Melanchthon coined the term artolatreia (bread worship) in disparagement of the eucharistic adoration practiced by the Reformer and his Gnesio-Lutheran followers.13 This sacrilegious term of ridicule was employed first of all in a letter to John Calvin, being repeated in a communication with Henry Bullinger, who had succeeded Zwingli in Zurich, and used no fewer than eleven times in Melanchthon’s correspondence with Albert Hardenberg, his close friend who was a Reformed pastor in Bremen. First privately and after 1546 publicly, Melanchthon denied the efficacy of the consecration, reducing the sacramental usus or actio to nothing more than the sumptio. Moreover, he tended to identify the sacramental presence of the Lord with the “repletive” presence of his sacred humanity at the right hand of the Father, losing sight of the special quality of the “definitive” real presence in the elements. A good case could be made for the thesis that the use of individual cups is consonant with Melanchthon’s anti-scriptural reductionism, while being incompatible with Martin Luther’s sacramental confession and practice.
In the course of his polemic against the theory of transsubstantiation, Martin Chemnitz followed up his approbation of a famous statement of St. Irenaeus with a confession concerning the consecration that exemplifies his close agreement with the Reformer:

This is certainly a great, miraculous, and truly divine change, since before it was simply only ordinary bread and common wine. What now, after the blessing, is truly and substantially present, offered, and received is truly and substantially the body and blood of Christ. Therefore we grant that a certain change takes place, so that it can truly be said of the bread that it is the body of Christ.\(^\text{15}\)

\textit{Haec certe magna, miraculosa, et vere divina est mutatio}—the bottom line of the case against “individual cups” is the sheer unfittingness of casting wine which has, according to the testimony of the second theologian of Lutheran Christendom, been the subject of a “great, miraculous, and truly divine change,” into washing-up water or even a garbage can.

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE LUTHERAN HOC**

For what we believe, they consider to be incongruous; they regard it as tremendous miracles, that the single body of Christ is in a hundred thousand places, wherever bread is broken, and that the massive limbs should there be so concealed that no one sees or feels them.\(^\text{16}\)

I myself have pondered much, what necessity there was in it, and how so great a body could be in so small a piece of bread, and how it could yet be undivided and whole in every particle.\(^\text{17}\)

According to the Reformer and the Book of Concord, the ministerial speaking of the words of institution in Christ’s person and name at a valid celebration of the Eucharist produces much more than a loose and fleeting association of the elements with the Lord’s body and blood. The consecration effects a mysterious yet real identification of the consecrated bread with the Lord’s body and of the consecrated wine with his blood. Much has been written about Luther’s championship of the integrity of the dominical \textit{est} of the words of institution: the elements are Christ’s body and blood. At the same time, scholars have often cast a blind eye to the truly distinctive, even novel quality of the Reformer’s testimony to the real presence, which is to be located in what struck his Roman and Reformed contemporaries as his astonishing exegesis of the demonstrative pronoun \textit{hoc}: precisely these elements of bread and wine on the altar are the body and blood of the incarnate God.

The Middle Ages had stood under the spell of the Aristotelian “Law of Identical Predication,” which insisted that the subject and predicate of a given sentence must communicate the selfsame content. Applied to the \textit{verba testamenti}, this Aristotelian principle must needs reduce the Lord’s words to a lame tautology in which the subject would determine the predicate, or vice versa. Since Thomas Aquinas as a loyal servant of the papal magisterium was committed to the real presence, he was obliged to deny that the demonstrative pronoun \textit{hoc} denoted the element of real bread that Jesus held in his hands. Some scholastics did admit that at the outset of the expression concerning the bread \textit{hoc} referred to the element of bread, while by its end attention is directed to the Lord’s body. Others conceded that, while \textit{hoc} denoted the body, it did in some way connote the bread. In the end of the day, however, scholasticism could not escape the reduction of the words of institution to a tautology according to which “my body is my body.” The English radical John Wycliffe (d. 1384) accepted the Aristotelian Law of Identical Predication while approaching the words of institution from the other end, namely allowing the subject to determine the predicate. Since \textit{hoc} manifestly denoted the element of bread, \textit{corpus meum} must be taken in a figurative sense that would rule the real presence linguistically out of order. Already in the Babylonian Captivity of 1520 and continuing through Against the Heavenly Prophets (Part Two) of 1525 and the Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper of 1528, Luther offended the scruples of Romans and Reformed alike by insisting on the integrity of both the subject and the predicate of the eucharistic words. Neither Romans nor Reformed could accept Luther’s paradoxical exegesis of the \textit{verba} to the effect that, through the consecration, real bread is the real body of Christ and real wine is the real blood of Christ.

Luther’s interpretation of the demonstrative pronouns of the eucharistic words powerfully determined his conception of the real presence. It would be hard to garner more than a handful of statements from his writings (if so many) where he employs the Philippist formula that the Lord’s body is present and given with the bread and that his blood is present and given with the wine. A richer crop would be harvested should we peruse his eucharistic writings in search of the confession that the sacred body and blood are present in and under the consecrated bread and wine, though we should recall the Reformer’s explicitly sounded caution against “in, with, and under” language concerning the real presence.\(^\text{18}\) Luther’s predilection is consistently for the identification language which SD VII, 35 followed him in deeming to have priority over explanations based on the prepositions “in, with and under.” The language employed in 1520 remained in use throughout the Reformer’s career:

For my part, if I cannot fathom how the bread is the body of Christ, yet I will take my reason captive to the obedience of Christ, and clinging simply to his words, firmly believe not only that the body of Christ is in the bread, but that the bread is the body of Christ. . . . Actually, the idiom of the language and common sense
both prove that the subject [“this”] obviously points to
the bread and not to the body, when he says: *Hoc est cor-
pus meum, das ist meyn leyf*, that is, “This very bread
here [iste panis] is my body.”

The Lutheran *hoc* was confessed in the Smalcald Articles of
1537, and in the Brief Confession Concerning The Holy Sacrament
of 1544, its basis having been thoroughly set forth in Against the
Heavenly Prophets of 1525, and the Confession Concerning
Christ’s Supper of 1528. The integrity of the Lutheran *hoc*
anchors Luther’s confession of the real presence in an irreducible
realism that can no longer be heard in the later Melanchthon:

> These sophists and keen smart alecks in this place could have applied the whole passage about bread and body, of which Jesus spoke when he said, “This is my body,” solely to the body, regardless of the bread. Not that the bread did not belong here, but in his words he placed as much importance on the body as if only the body were present and everything else, be it bread or color, was nothing more than the body.

I have often enough asserted that I do not argue whether the wine remains wine or not. It is enough for me that Christ’s blood is present; let it be with the wine as God wills. Sooner than have mere wine with the fanatics, I would agree with the pope that there is only blood.

Luther’s understanding of the real presence cannot be
deemed a *via media* between Roman excess and Reformed under-
statement. The medieval theory of transubstantiation is, in fact, poles removed from any crass overstatement of the real presence. Rather, transubstantiation, at any rate as expounded by Thomas Aquinas, represents a watering down and evaporating away of the real presence, which is conceived more as the presence of the *idea* of the body of Christ than as the actual presence of the sacred body itself. In keeping with the anti-Thomist position of his nominalist forbears, Luther, as the two quotations at the head of this section indicate, had a much stronger conception of the real presence than did Aquinas. “[T]he massive limbs [are] there so concealed that no one sees or feels them.” “[S]o great a body [is] in so small a piece of bread.” Such a massively realistic confession would have been impossible for Thomas Aquinas, whom the late Hermann Sasse, writing to the Swedish Gnesio-Lutheran Tom Hardt, dubbed a “Semi-Calvinist” in this connection. Luther’s consistent testimony that not the mere idea or substance of Christ’s body but rather the “true, natural Body” itself is present in the Eucharist prompts one to deem it appropriate to label the real presence a “physical” presence, while making the qualifica-
tion that the body naturally present is present in the definitive and not in the circumscripive mode. In the context of his defini-
tion of the Lutheran *hoc*, the Reformer expressed his preference for the first (1059) over the second (1079) draft of the confession *Ego Berengarius*. The theory of transubstantiation was in fact formulated by way of reaction against precisely the “crass” real-
isim which would later be espoused by Luther.

Confession of the Lutheran *hoc* found distinctive expression in
the liturgical practice of the Reformer and of his Gnesio-
Lutheran successors. The aged Luther’s apologia for the elevation of
the host stems from the conviction that the consecration earths
the real presence in the referent of the demonstrative pronoun of
the eucharistic words:

> This, too, would be a fine interpretation, if the priest would with the elevation of the sacrament do nothing other than illustrate the words, “This is my body,” as if he wished to express by means of his action: Look, dear Christians, this is the body which is given for you.

Andrew Musculus, one of the co-authors of the Formula of
Concord, was responsible for the development of a further cere-
mony, supplementary to the elevation, intended as an unmistake-
able confession of the Lutheran *hoc*. A controversy with the
Melanchthonian Abdias Praetorius over eucharistic adoration,
which broke out in Frankfurt on the Oder in 1562, prompted
Musculus to practise the “ostentation” of the Sacrament, in which
the elements were solemnly displayed to the congregation just

---

**Luther’s understanding of the real presence cannot be deemed a via media between Roman excess and Reformed understatement.**

prior to the distribution in conjunction with the verbal testi-
mony, “Look, dear Christians, this is the Body of the Lord, this is
the Blood of the Lord.” The “ostentation” might be practiced
today by solemnly displaying the host and chalice after the *Agnus
Dei* to the accompaniment of the confession of St. John the Bap-
tist: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the
sin of the world.” Equally appropriate would be the reverent
holding aloft of the consecrated elements while reciting the entire
formula of distribution prior to administering the Sacrament
with a brief formula directed to each communicant (“This is the
very body/blood of Christ, given/shed for you”).

**COMPLETING THE “USE”**

For Luther, the treatment of consecrated but unconsumed
elements was never an adiaphoron but a dogmatic matter con-
cerning which he expressed himself unequivocally in two letters to Simon Wolfirinus, which, since they are quoted in SD VII, 87 (a fact woefully suppressed by both the Goettingen and
the Tappert editions of the Confessions), arguably enjoy the
same authority among Lutherans as does the *Book of Concord*
itself. Wolfirinus, pastor in Eisleben, was in the habit of stor-
ing hosts consecrated but not consumed at one celebration
along with unconsecrated hosts to be used at future Eucharists.
Luther was unimpressed with Wolfirinus’ appeal to
Melanchthon’s rule that “Outside the Use there is no Sacrament.” The second letter to Wolferinus both offers the orthodox explanation of the Extra Usum rule and indicates how celebrant and congregation are to treat consecrated but unconsumed elements. The real presence begins with the Oratio Dominica (which, in this setting, can mean only the Lord’s words spoken at the consecration) and ends with the consumption of what has been consecrated. Failure to consume the consecrated elements sets a bad example by dividing the Sacrament and treating the sacramental action irreverently. Be it noted that the Reformer locates the temporal end of the real presence not at the point when the last communicant has communed but at the consumption of all those elements that have been consecrated:

Sic ergo definiemus tempus vel actionem sacramentalem, ut incipiat ab initio orationis dominicae, et duret, donec omnes communicaverint, calicem ebiberint, particulas comederint, populus dismissus et ab altari discessum sit. Ita tuti et liberi erimus a scrupulis et scandalis quaestionum interminabilium. D. Philippus actionem sacramentalem definit relative ad extra, id est contra inclusione et circumgestationem Sacramenti, non dividit eam intra se ipsam, nec definit contra se ipsam. Quare curabitis, si quid reliquum fuerit Sacramenti, ut id accipiant vel aliqui communicantes vel ipse sacerdos et minister, non ut solus diaconus vel alius tantummodo bibat reliquum in calice, sed alii det, qui et de corpore participati fuerint, ne videamini malo exemplo Sacramentum dividere au actionem sacramentalem irreverenter tractare. Sic sentio, sic sentit et Philippus, hoc scio.

Therefore we shall define the time or the sacramental action in this way: that it starts with the beginning of the Our Father and lasts until all have communicated, have emptied the chalice, have consumed the Hosts, until the people have been dismissed and [the priest] has left the altar. In this way we shall be safe and free from the scruples and scandals of such endless questions. Dr. Philip defines the sacramental action in relation to what is outside it, that is, against reservation of and processions with the Sacrament; he does not split it up within [the action] itself, nor does he define it in such a way that it contradicts itself. Therefore see to it that if anything is left over of the Sacrament, either some communicants or the priest himself and his assistant receive it, so that it is not only a curate or someone else who drinks what is left over in the chalice, but that he gives it to the others who were also participants in the Body [of Christ], so that you do not appear to divide the Sacrament by a bad example or to treat the sacramental action irreverently. This is my opinion, and I know that it is also Philip’s opinion.}\(^{32}\)

Luther’s strict adherence to the principle that consecrated but unconsumed elements must be eaten and drunk as Sacrament held good not only in cases such as that of Simon Wolferinus where Philippist malice was at work, but also in cases where accidents occurred with the consecrated species and where the officiating clergyman acted in ignorance when mixing consecrated with unconsecrated elements.

Our first testimony to Luther’s reverence before consecrated wine accidentally spilled during the distribution comes from North German folk memory as distilled in oral tradition and might be dismissed as legend were it not for the fact that our second piece of evidence comes from a writing of three of the main authors of the Formula of Concord.

The reformer’s awe before the miracle of the real presence can be exemplified by recalling some incidents from the end of his life. In late January of 1546 Luther was obliged to journey to his birthplace, Eisleben, where he managed to effect a reconciliation between the bickering counts of Mansfeld. The flooding of the river Saale forced the Reformer’s party to delay its arrival in Eisleben for three days by accepting the hospitality of Justus Jonas in Halle. The folk memory of Halle preserved the information that, during his stay, Luther not only preached but also celebrated and administered the Sacrament of the Altar. Fatigued by the effort of distributing the chalice to a large congregation, and troubled by a trembling hand, the Reformer dropped some consecrated wine onto the floor of the sanctuary. Karl Loewe reports that “Luther placed the chalice on the altar, fell on his knees and licked up the wine so as to avoid stepping on it. At this, the whole congregation erupted into loud sobs and tears.”\(^{33}\) The Halle incident is rendered thoroughly plausible by the following information offered by Chemnitz, Kirchner, and Selnecer in their exhaustive Histori des Sacramentstests, where these doctors of the church point out with pain that an attack Melanchthon launched ostensibly on the Gnesio-Lutherans Joachim Moerlin and Erasmus Sarcerius was in fact none too subtly directed at blessed Martin Luther himself. The three confessors stoutly maintain that reverent treatment of spilled consecrated wine occurs within the parameters of the Nihil Rule:


Uber diesen wolpert Philippis/sind viel gute fromme Leute auch bestuertzt worden/denn hiemit niemand anders denn D. Luth. gemeint ist/welcher an den Rhat zu Franckfurt (wie wir oben Anno 33. angehoeret) diese
word fehret: Es gilt hie nicht den Brey im Maul welzten/und Mumm Mumm sagen/sondern den Brey aussspeyen/und das mummen lassen/und frey duerr herrauss sagen/was Brot und Wein sey im Sacrament/sc

So wil Sarcerius nur dis/dass man dis Sacrament mit aller ehrerbietung handeln sol/und mit den eusserlichen zeichen/zu denen das Wort Christi kommen ist/nicht leichtfertig umbgehen/sondern unterscheid hal- tens ol/wie Lutherus und Pomeran zu Wittenberg/a da ein troepplein aus dem gesegneten Kelch uber dem Altar vergossen/hinzu gegangen sind/und mit aller Reuernesselbig/acht nicht unter den Fuessen haben liegen lassen.

Diese eusserliche ehrerbietung setzet das Sacrament nicht ausser der niessung/oder ausser dem brauch/darzu es Christus verordnet hat/sondern gibt seine innerliche andacht unnd Reuernetz gegen diesem heiligen geseg- neten Brot und Wein/ welches im rechten brauch Christi Leib und Blut ist/one alle superstitition in Gottfuerchtiger demut zuerkennd/unnd wil nicht/da man mit Fuessen mutwilliglich (so man es fuerkommen kann) das geseg- nete Brot und Wein vertreten und leichtfertig/wie sichere Gottlose Leute thun/damit handeln wollen.

Eighth, Philip takes Dr. Moerlin and Sarcerius to task with the words: “Moerlin at Braunschweig has said, ‘You mustn’t mumble incoherently but rather say precisely what the priest has in his hand.’ Sarcerius will have it that particles of hosts that have fallen to the ground should be carefully recovered, with the surrounding earth being shaved and burned, etc.”

Many good pious folk were also disturbed by these words of Philip, for they take aim at none other than Dr. Luther, who (as we heard above, in the year 1533) directed these words to the Frankfurt Council: “It is not in order here to slosh the broth around in one’s mouth and mumble incoherently, but to spit out the broth and be done with incoherent speech and say forthrightly what the bread and wine in the Sacrament are.

Thus Sarcerius merely wants to say that this Sacra- ment is to be treated with all reverence and that one should not act frivolously with the external signs to which the word of Christ has been added, but should distinguish [between them and ordinary elements] as Luther and Pomeranus did in Wittenberg. When a little drop [of wine] from the consecrated chalice spilled on the altar they went up with all reverence and saw to it that [the spilled wine] should not be trodden underfoot.

This outward reverence does not set the Sacrament outside its consumption or the use for which Christ ordained it, but without any superstition and in God-fearing humility affords demonstrable evidence of inward devotion and reverence towards this holy blessed bread and wine, which in the proper use are Christ’s Body and Blood. [Such reverent outward behaviour] intends (so far as such actions can be prevented) to preclude the blessed bread and wine’s being audaciously stepped on and frivolously treated, as is the habit of cer- tain godless folk.

Our third and final testimony to Luther’s reverence before the consecrated species takes us back to the close of the Reformer’s life:

During these last weeks of his life, the Reformer’s coun- sel was sought on a question of church discipline involving a careless young clergyman, Adam Besserer, the curate of Weida in the diocese of Naumburg. On the Third Sunday in Advent 1545, Besserer had celebrated the Holy Supper for seventeen communicants in a small village church. When, at the distribution, he came to the last communicant, the curate found that one of the hosts that he had counted onto the paten was missing. Besserer simply took an unconsecrated host from the pyx and administered it to the waiting communicant. After the service, the missing, conse- crated host was found, and Besserer thoughtlessly put it in the pyx among the unconsecrated wafers. Such behaviour inevitably came to the attention of the evan- gelical bishop of Naumburg, Nicholas von Amsdorf, who had Besserer placed under arrest pending advice from Wittenberg. Meanwhile, the bishop, unable to distinguish the one consecrated from the many unconsecrated hosts in Besserer’s pyx, had them all burned. At Amsdorf’s request, Luther gave a written opinion on the case. Besserer, thinks the ailing Reformer, is guilty not of mere “negligence, but of extraordinary wicked- ness. . . . As a despiser of God and man he has dared publicily to treat consecrated and unconsecrated hosts alike. Therefore he must simply be expelled from our churches. Let him go to his Zwinglians.”

The action does not cease until the elements are consumed.

The concrete consequences of the orthodox doctrine of the consecration render it unsurprising that, on July 18, 1619, the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg replied in the neg- ative to the question whether it is permissible for a clergyman to take consecrated but unconsumed wine home with him after ser- vice for common use at table. The faculty agreed with the clergy- man in question that “when the action ceases, the Sacrament ceases,” but pointed out that the action does not cease until the elements are consumed. The complete actio includes a total sumptio. The Gnesio-Lutheran understanding of the consecra- tion and its consequences still reverberated in C. F. W. Walther’s Amerikanisch-lutherische Pastoraltheologie, which insists on the reverent consumption of consecrated elements remaining after the distribution. Walther’s allegiance to the Wolfeninus corre- spondence, which is accorded dogmatic status in SD VII, 87, is unmistakably evident in his directives concerning the treatment of left-over consecrated wine:
Bleibt von den consecrierten Elementen etwas uebrig, so ist der Wein von den gewesenen Communicanten, von den Vorstehern, dem Kuester etc. etwa in der Sacristie auszutrinken, keinesweges aber mit unconscriertem wieder zu vermischen oder gar zu gewoehnlichem Gebrauche zu verwenden; allenfalls kann solcher Wein zu Krankencommunionen, jedoch ohne Vermischung mit anderem, gebruedt werden, doch ist er in diesem Falle wieder zu konsekrieren.

Should anything of the consecrated elements be left over, the wine is to be drunk up—maybe in the sacristy—by communicants at that particular celebration, by the lay officers, or by the sacristan. Under no circumstances, however, is consecrated to be mixed with unconsecrated wine or in any way to be put to common use. Such wine can be used if need be for sick Communions, even though in this case it is to be reconsecrated.37

**CONCLUSION**

A glance at the first volume of Paul Graff’s mammoth work *Geschichte der Auflösung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands* indicates that Reformed “individual cups” had precursors of a kind even in the days of Lutheran orthodoxy. First, despite multiple prohibitions in church orders and on the part of ecclesiastical authority, it proved impossible to root out the practice of “private Communion” in which the upper classes communed separately from the lower orders. Even when gentry communed at the same celebration as ordinary people, it was not unknown for noblewomen to be communed from a separate chalice.38 Second, there is evidence that provision was made for the sick (e.g., those suffering from hereditary diseases or leprosy) to be communed separately from the healthy.39 The first of these cases involved a massive outbreak of the sin of pride and a vicious attack on the catholicity of the church. The second presents a perennial pastoral problem that might perhaps best be resolved by permitting (but not encouraging) the practice of intinction as the least of several evils. Sacred Scripture leaves us in no doubt that some have fallen sick and even died through their partaking of Holy Communion, while making it clear that unworthy Communion rather than deficient hygiene is to be regarded as the culprit (1 Cor 11:30).

The profusion of “individual cups” in the Lutheran Christendom of our day is one among many melancholy indications that, in his titan’s struggle with the heresiarch Zwinglei, Luther won the battle but went on to lose the war. Humanly speaking, individual cups are here to stay and will never be dislodged from the altars where they rest. Yet in confessional perspective, it is difficult if not impossible to understand how the use of individual cups is reconcilable with the miracle of the consecration, the nature of the real presence, the implications of the Lutheran *hoc*, and the directives given in the letters to Simon Wolferinus concerning the treatment mostly to be afforded consecrated but unconsumed elements. Circumstances have rendered individual cups a practical adiaphor aton the life of North American Lutheranism, so that in many cases the retention of the chalice as an option alongside individual cups is the best that can be hoped for. Since style is substance’s most conspicuous mode of witness, though, confessional Lutherans of future generations will acknowledge the rightness of Little’s warning, for mimicking the practices of *Cinglianos . . . ab Ecclesia Dei alienos cannot remain forever tucked away among the so-called adiaphora.*

**NOTES**

1. WA 54:426, 13–15 (*Contra XXXII articulos Lovanensium theologistarum*, 1545). English translation: “In the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is deserving of honor and adoration, the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present, proffered and received both by the worthy and by the unworthy” (AE 34:355).

2. WA 54:427, 8–10. English translation: “We earnestly believe that the Zwinglians and all sacramentarians who deny that the body and blood of Christ are taken with the bodily mouth in the venerable eucharist are heretics and estranged from the church of God” (AE 34:356).

3. C. H. Little, *Disputed Doctrine: A Study in Biblical and Dogmatic Theology* (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1933), p. 92 f. Little’s aversion to the Reformed innovation of “individual cups” was amply shared by R. C. H. Lenski, who switched his congregational membership over this issue. In his treatment of the Epistle for Maundy Thursday, Lenski delivered the following judgment: “When now we use wafers as the bread, this casts no reflection whatever on the first institution of the Sacrament by Christ. I am unable to say the same when now in late years the wine is placed into many little individual cups. In my judgment this casts a reflection on Jesus who used a common cup. Say that you do not mean to cast a reflection, you actually do so, whether ignorantly or not. Jesus was not sanitary enough. Or, if you shrink from the word sanitary, he was not refined, fastidious enough. The use of these little cups even *obtrudes* this idea upon every communicant, right at the altar, and this in connection with the most holy blood of our Lord. To say that this division of the wine is the same as the division into wafers, is not true, for the point is not the division, but the *purpose* for which it is made, this is *not the same*” [on 1 Cor 11:25]. The *Epistle Selections of the Ancient Church: An Exegetical-Homiletical Treatment* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 368. See also his *Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* (reprint Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), pp. 623–624: “Any change in what Jesus did, which has back of it the idea that he would not do the same thing today for sanitary or similar reasons, casts a reflection upon Jesus which is too grave to be allowed when he is giving us his sacrificial blood to drink” [on Mk 14:23]. Cf. also *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (reprint Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), p. 1027: “The point is that Jesus instituted the sacrament with the use of one cup and that he bade all
the disciples to drink out of this one cup. Any change in what Jesus here did, which has back of it the idea that he would not for sanitary or similar reasons do the same today, casts a rather serious reflection upon Jesus” [on Mt 26:27].

4. Cf. Luther, AE 37:31: “In reference to this particular cup, then, Matthew and Mark may be understood as saying that each of the apostles had a cup before him on the table, or at least that there were more cups than one. But now, when Christ gives a new, special drink of his blood, he commands them all to drink out of this single cup. Thus, in proffering it and with a special gesture, Christ takes his own cup and lets them all drink of it, in distinction from all the other ordinary cups on the table, in order that they might better observe that it was a special drink in distinction from the other draughts which had been given them during the meal” (Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper, 1528).

Jewish devotional practice at the time of our Lord offers, in the Kiddush for the Sabbath and Feast Days, precedent of a kind for the use of “individual cups” for wine distributed from so to say a pouring chalice. See Lucien Deiss, Springtime of the Liturgy: Liturgical Texts of the First Four Centuries, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), p. 5 f. All accounts of the institution of the Eucharist insist, however, that a single cup was used as the vessel of the blood of Christ.

5. Little made unabashed appeal to Christian tradition in questions not unequivocally settled by Holy Scripture: “Where the words themselves are neutral, history should be decisive as to their significance and usage in the Church of the Conservative Reformation” (p. 94). In the matter of “individual cups” the evidence of tradition in favor of the chalice is rendered irreputable by scripturally attested dominical precedent.


8. Sermons on the Catechism, 1529 (my translation).

9. AE 40:212 (Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1525). Luther regards the speaking of the words of institution as the “most powerful and principal action in the Sacrament” (quod post probationem verborum, quae est potissima et principalis actio in Sacramento). See the Reformer’s letter of July 20, 1543, to Simon Wolfenius, WA BR 10:348.


14. As an instance of the current revival of Gesnus-Lutheran liturgical practice in certain quarters, see the draft Agenda produced in 1991 by the Selbstständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK) in Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenagende, Band I: Der Hauptsgeistliche mit Predigt und Heiligem Abendmahl und Andere Predigt- und Abendmahlgottesdienste (Entwurf 1991). The rubrics at the consecration of host and chalice read as follows: “Der Liturg erhbet eine konsekrierte Hostie; dann legt er sie auf den Hostienteller und macht eine Kniebeuge. . . . Der Liturg erhebt den Kelch; dann stellt er ihn auf das Korporale und macht eine Kniebeuge” (p. 198). “The liturgist elevates a consecrated host, then he lays it on the paten and genuflexes. . . . The liturgist elevates the chalice, then he lays it on the corporal and genuflexes” (my translation). The Anweisungen (Directives) placed at the outset of the Agenda set forth the appropriateness of genuflection before the really present Christ in the context of their explanation of the elevation of host and chalice (D, 26): “Die Kniebeuge oder das Verneigen des Oberkoerpers ist Zeichender Ehrfurcht gegenueber dem gegenwaertigen Herrn und Bekenntnis zur Lehre der Kirche von der Realpraesenz des Leibes und Blutes Christi in, mit und unter Brot und Wein” (10). “Genuflection or a profound bow is a sign of reverence before the present Lord and a confession of the church’s doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under bread and wine” (my translation).


17. AE 36:345.

18. AE 37:306 (Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper, 1528).

19. AE 36:34 f. (Babylonian Captivity, 1520).

20. SA III, VI, 1: “We hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ. . . .”

21. AE 38:304: “For they [Zwinglians et al.] do not want to believe that the Lord’s bread in the Supper is his true, natural body which the godless person or Judas receives orally just as well as St. Peter and all the saints.”


23. AE 37:294–303. The following words are significant for the light they shed both on Luther’s understanding of the demonstrative pronoun and on his conception of the consecration: “by virtue of the sacramental unity it is correct to say, ‘This is my body,’ designating the bread with the word ‘this.’ For now it is no longer ordinary bread in the oven, but a ‘flesh-bread’ or ‘body-bread,’ i.e., a bread which has become one sacramental substance, one with the body of Christ. Likewise with the wine in the cup, ‘This is my blood,’ designating the wine with the word ‘this.’ For it is no longer ordinary wine in the cellar but ‘blood-wine,’ i.e., a wine which has been united with the blood of Christ in one sacramental substance” (303).

24. AE 40:398 (Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1525).

25. AE 37:317 (Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper, 1528).


27. AE 38:304 (Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament, 1544).
28. AE 37:300 f.
31. The 1991 draft *Agende* of the SELK echoes both the Reformer and the *Book of Concord* with its prescription (*Anweisung D, 25*) that “Alles, was verzehrt wird, musz konsekrirt sein. Konsekrirte Elemente sollen verzehrt werden” (10). “Everything that is consumed must be consecrated. Consecrated elements should be consumed.”
32. WA *BR* 10:348, 27–349. English translation Peters, p. 210 f. On the appropriate translation of *Oratio dominica* in this letter to Simon Wolferinus, which is referred to in SD VII, 87, see Tom G. A. Hardt, *Venerabilis et adorabilis Eucharistia*, pp. 255–263. Hardt points out that the sixteenth-century Gnesio-Lutheran Erhard Sperber translated *Oratio dominica* in the letter to Wolferinus as “the words of the Lord”; *Venerabilis et adorabilis Eucharistia*, p. 262, n. 125. On Luther’s position against Wolferinus, see Tom G. A. Hardt, *On the Sacrament of the Altar*, pp. 69 ff.: “The reality which springs forth from God’s creative words cannot lightly be made to cease merely because the communicants have completed their Communion. In two extensive letters to Simon Wolferinus, Luther attacks that man’s teaching and practice according to which the presence ceased with the Communion itself, for which reason the priest could without reproach mix consecrated and unconsecrated elements after mass. This error cast unhappy shadows over Luther’s old age, and Wolferinus is to be considered equivalent to a Zwinglian.”
35. Stephenson, pp. 448 f. Luther’s judgment on Besserer is given in WA *BR* 11:259, 5–9: “Primum non est negligentia, Sed nequitia, Eaque insignis istius Diaconi, Qui contemptor Dei et hominum in publico ausus est hostias consecratas ac non consecratas pro eodem habere. Ideo simpliciter est ejiciendus extra nostras Ecclesias. Vadat ad suos Zuinglianos.”
36. First, it is not a case of negligence but of intense wickedness on the part of this assistant pastor who as a despiser of God and man has publicly dared to esteem consecrated and non-consecrated hosts as the same thing. Hence he must simply be thrown out of our churches. Let him go to his Zwinglians,” (my translation).
37. See Bjarne W. Teigen, *The Lord’s Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz* (Brewster, Massachusetts: Trinity Lutheran Press, 1986), p. 215, n. 78: “On July 18, 1619, the theological faculty of Wittenberg rendered a decision with regard to the question as to whether it is right for a pastor to take the remaining consecrated wine home for common use, since with the cessation of the action the sacrament ceases. The faculty gave a negative answer, although granting that ‘quod cessante actione cesserat sacramentum’ (‘when the action ceases, the sacrament ceases’). But the faculty then insists that the sacramental action must be correctly defined. They insist that the three parts of the action must be done entirely together in ‘ipso usu sacramenti’; otherwise the sacramental action is not carried out. From this it follows that such action does not end until all that has been consecrated has been consumed. For this reason it is not proper to take consecrated wine home for common table use. Then excerpts from Luther’s two letters to Wolferinus are quoted to support this decision, and the reference is precisely given, ‘Tom 4, Jenensi Lat., fol. 585b’ (Redekin: *The sauri Conciliorum*, I, Hamburg, 1671, p. 139).”
Announcing

FOUR SYMPOSIA

Commemorating the Centenary of the Birth of

Dr. Hermann Sasse

October 26, 27, 1995
Bethany Lutheran College
and Seminary

October 30–November 1, 1995
Concordia Lutheran
Theological Seminary

ST. CATHARINES,
ONTARIO

Speakers: Ronald Feuerhahn,
Lowell Green, Tom Hardt,
Gottfried Martens, John Kleinig,
Kurt Marquart, Norman Nagel,
John Stephenson, John Wilch,
Tom Winger, Edwin Lehman

An International Theological Symposium
Marking the Centenary of the Birth of Dr. Hermann Sasse
Presented by
Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary
and Lutheran Life Insurance Company of Canada
in association with Lutheran Church-Canada
and The Luther Academy

Contact
Concordia Theological Seminary
470 Glenridge Avenue PO Box 1117
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 7A3 Canada
Ph. 416-688-2362

June 22, 23, 1995
Concordia Catechetical Academy
Country Inn Hotel

PEWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Speakers: Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn
Dr. Norman Nagel
Dr. John Stephenson

Contact
Deacon Matthew Gatchell
PO Box 123, W240 N6145 Maple Ave
Sussex, Wisconsin 53089
Ph. 414-246-3200

LOGIA
Reformation 1995
A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Herman Sasse
edited by
Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn and
Dr. Tom G. A. Hardt

Contact
Reformation Lectures
Bethany Lutheran College
734 Marsh St.
Mankato, Minnesota 56001
Ph. 507-386-5354
The Angels Are Aware . . . and We Are Too

PAUL R. HARRIS

The angels are aware of the miraculous, glorious thing that is happening on and around our altars when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. The Proper Preface closes each Sunday with the words: “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee and saying . . . .” Where are the angels and archangels worshiping if not at our altar? Are they as far removed from us as heaven is from earth? Do we ascend spiritually to worship where they are? No, they worship with us where Christ is, on our altars. Chrysostom said the very angels tremble before the Sacrament. Albrecht Durer fashioned a woodcut portraying angels hovering above the altar where the Sacrament is being celebrated. The angels are aware of Christ’s presence in the Sacrament, and they give him their adoration there accordingly.

But what does it mean for human beings to adore Christ in the Sacrament? Luther describes it as proving our “inward worship by outwardly bowing, bending, and kneeling with the body.” Chemnitz echoes these sentiments: “The simplest and safest rule with respect to these external marks of reverence is that they are testimonials to the inner faith concerning the Eucharist, according to the Word, and that they correspond to that faith.” A contemporary Lutheran theologian says that among Lutherans adoration or veneration of the Sacrament was evidenced by the communicants’ bending their knees after they have risen from kneeling and receiving the Sacrament. Chemnitz quotes two scriptural rules for evaluating acts of adoration: (1) Outward appearance without inward faith does not please God. (2) Ways of worship chosen by men are not pleasing to God.

Adoring Christ in the Sacrament expresses externally and bodily the faith that is in the heart. The term adoration does not refer to faith in the heart that does not so express itself. Our heart may bend low before Christ in the Sacrament, but unless our bodies do too we are not adoring Christ as the term is historically used.

Why are most Lutherans, whether pastors or laymen, reluctant to adore Christ in the Sacrament? Many are afraid of idolatry. The Formula of Concord rejects and condemns the notion “that the external visible elements of the bread and wine should be adored in the Holy Sacrament” (Ep VII, 40). This was included to assure the Sacramentarians that we did not believe that created elements should be worshiped. Chemnitz makes this same point in the Examination of the Council of Trent when he says, “the substance or form of the elements of bread and wine should not be worshiped lest, beside the Creator, we worship also the creature” (Rom 1:25).

In the corresponding article of the Solid Declaration, however, the Sacramentarian view is condemned and the adoration of Christ in the Sacrament is defended: “However, no one, unless he be an Arian heretic, can and will deny that Christ Himself, true God and man, who is truly and essentially present in the Supper, should be adored in spirit and in truth in the true use of the same, as also in all other places, especially where his congregation is assembled” (SD VII, 126). We can see Chemnitz’s hand behind this Declaration even as we could see it behind the Epitome. In the Examination, immediately preceding the above quote warning against idolatry, we read this: “Christ, God and man, present in His divine and human nature in the action of the Supper, should be worshiped.”

Certainly no Lutheran wants to be idolatrous. The point, however, is that there is more present on our altars than merely the created elements of bread and wine. The Reformed, on the other hand, do not know or believe that more than bread and wine are present. We can understand, therefore, their fear of adoration. The “Black Rubric” in the Book of Common Prayer, 1662, explains the case from their point of view:

That thereof [kneeling] no adoration is intended or ought to be done, either to the sacramental Bread and Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ’s natural Flesh and Blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine still remain in their very natural substance, and therefore may not be adored (for that were idolatry, to be abhorred by all faithful Christians); and the natural Body and Blood of our Savior Christ are in heaven, and not here.

Even Roman Catholics have a fear of being idolatrous. Thomas Aquinas insisted that the bread could not also be present because the veneration of the Sacrament would be impossible if bread, a created substance, were present. Perhaps we would do
well to stop thinking in terms of four things being present: body, bread, blood, wine. Luther in his Confession Concerning Christ's Supper (1528) says, “Now I have taught in the past and still teach that . . . it is of no great consequence whether the bread remains or not” (AE 37:296). Luther in fact never abandoned the view that bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.10 Even Francis Pieper, though a receptionist, believed that once the body and blood were united to the elements they became “one entirely new thing, they lose their distinction as far as that new unity is concerned and in so far as they become and are one thing . . . [I]t is no more common bread in the oven, but flesh bread or body bread.”11

The Roman Catholic error was that they adored Christ where he had not promised to be.

Adoration would not make us so uneasy if we focused more on the body and blood being present than on the bread and wine. But the opposite is the case in practice. We traditionally speak of the elements according to their natural nomenclature rather than their divine. We say in America that the pastor distributes bread and wine. Yet in Lutheran liturgies of the years 1533–1559 the consecrated host and chalice are always called body and blood.12

In addition to being afraid of idolatry, we have been afraid of the “Catholic” errors. In the mass the adoration of the Sacrament is focused on the elevation. The elevation is that point in the service where the consecrated elements are raised up to be adored by the faithful. In the medieval mass the elevation, not Holy Communion, became the climax. Adoration replaced communing. Liturgies spoke of communing with the eyes.13 Also, the elevation came to be associated in the popular mind and in some medieval theologies with the idea of the mass as a propitiatory sacrifice that the church was offering to God.14 The elevation was regarded as the actual offering up of the victim. Another Roman Catholic error Lutherans find repulsive is the Corpus Christi Festival, where the Communion host is paraded through the streets for people to adore.

The Formula of Concord rejects adoration in the ways just mentioned, stating that “apart from the use, when the bread is laid aside and preserved in the sacramental vessel [the pyx], or is carried about in the procession and exhibited, as is done in popery, they do not hold that the body of Christ is present” (SD VII, 15). Chemnitz states specifically where the problem is: “[O]ur dispute with the papalists is about their reserving, shutting in, carrying about, and displaying the consecrated bread for worship and adoration, apart from distribution and reception.”15 The Roman Catholic error was not that they adored Christ in the Sacrament but that they adored him where he had not promised to be, making the adoration an end in itself.

This making adoration an end in itself is what prejudices many Lutherans against adoration. Indeed, it is what Luther initially reacted against. In The Adoration of the Sacrament, 1523, Luther spoke his sharpest words against adoration.

But he is present in the sacrament and in the hearts of believers not really because he wants to be worshiped there, but because he wants there to work with us and help us; just as he also came to earth in the flesh not that men should worship him, but to serve us as he himself said (AE 36:294).

Luther wrote here that “the most secure and the best” communicants are

those whose entire interest is in the words of this sacrament, so that they feed their faith. … They probably seldom descend so low as to bother themselves about worshiping and adoring, for they pay attention to the work God does to them and forget about the works they do for the sacrament (AE 36:296).

Luther even gets to the point of saying that it is better not to adore than to adore:

Nevertheless, you can see that adoration of this sacrament is a dangerous procedure if the Word and faith are not inculcated; so much so that I really think that it would be better to follow the example of the apostles and not worship, than to follow our custom and worship. Not that adoration is wrong, but simply because there is less danger in not adoring than in adoring; because human nature tends so easily to emphasize its own works and to neglect God’s work, and the sacrament will not admit of that (AE 36:296–97).

Luther penned these words before Zwingli attacked his doctrine of the real presence in 1524. The Adoration of the Sacrament is Luther’s reaction to the Roman abuses. The position he takes here will be modified after his confrontations with the Zwinglians. It is noteworthy that when the Formula of Concord directs us to use Luther’s writings to shed light on the doctrine of the Sacrament it presents, it does not mention The Adoration of the Sacrament (1523). The Formula does, however, direct us specifically to Against the Heavenly Prophets (1525), This is My Body (1527), and both catechisms (1529). If the Formula had intended to reject adoration completely, all it would have had to do is quote from Luther’s work on that specific subject.

If we do not reject The Adoration as being only an early Luther view, are its arguments against adoration sound? Admittedly, Christ did not give us the Sacrament so he could be worshiped there, even as he did not become incarnate to be served but to serve. All who recognized Christ even in his humiliation, however, did not do wrong by worshiping, did they? Whenever they realized whom they really were meeting, they worshiped.

Obviously, Christ is not in the Sacrament so we might do something for him. But to say that we should not adore him there because that is being too concerned about what we do rather than what Christ does for us goes too far. Such reasoning would do away with ornate churches, lavish vestments, costly Communion ware, and high church liturgies. Luther, while not requiring these, kept them.
Finally, can we really make as much as Luther tried to out of the example of the apostles at the first Lord’s Supper? Can anyone deny that the apostles did worship and adore Christ in that first celebration? Does anyone really want to argue where the focus of their adoration was? All we can say is that it had to be Christ. But we cannot argue from the one Lord’s Supper where Christ was present both incarnationally and sacramentally to our Lord’s Supper. If we want to “follow the example of the apostles,” we must follow St. Paul. He is the one the Lord selected to deliver the Lord’s Supper to the church. Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians against treating the Holy Communion as if it were ordinary bread, failing to discern the body of Christ.

It is true that a fear of idolatry, the Roman Catholic errors, and the attitude of a “young” Luther toward adoration have made many Lutherans hesitant about adoring Christ in the Sacrament. But far more may be hesistant because they hold the receptionist error. Receptionists believe that the bread and wine are not the body and blood until they are received by the communicant. They believe the words of institution do not effect the real presence, but are a mere consecrating, a setting aside, of these elements to be used by Christ in the distribution and reception. Christ therefore is not present on our altar and may or may not be present in the hand of the pastor. Where can Christ be adored with such an understanding? As Dr. T eigen points out, “If the consecration did not effect the Real Presence of Christ, Chemnitz and all those who agreed with him would be guilty of gross idolatries.”

This receptionist error is very popular among us, bequeathed to us by such notable theologians as Pieper and Walther. But its roots go back to the seventeenth and even the sixteenth century. Melanchthon taught that Christ’s presence coincides with the action of distributing and receiving the Sacrament. Quenstedt, called “the bookkeeper of the Wittenberg Orthodoxy,” says, “this sacramental union itself does not take place except in the distribution.” According to one contemporary conservative Lutheran theologian, Bjarne T eigen, present-day conservative Lutheran books quote from the receptionist theologians, but not a one surveyed quoted from Chemnitz.

**Wherever Christ’s presence was recognized, he was worshiped.**

The receptionist view is not Lutheran. Writing in 1952, Hermann Sasse states, “The consecrated bread is the body of Christ also when it lies on the altar or when the pastor holds it in his hand. This is the Lutheran view.” At a Free Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1857, there were forty-eight participants, twenty-two of whom belonged to the Missouri Synod. All agreed that the body and blood were present in the hands of the one administering the Holy Communion. The Formula of Concord rejects the receptionist view, using the words of Luther: “This his command and institution have this power and effect that we administer and receive not mere bread and wine, but his body and blood” (SD VII, 77, emphasis added). Again, “Not the word or work of any man produces the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Supper, whether it be the merit or recitation of the minister, or the eating and drinking or faith of the communicants; but all this should be ascribed alone to the power of Almighty God and the Word, institution, and ordination of our Lord Jesus Christ” (SD VII, 74).

The receptionist error is only fueled by a misunderstanding of the Lutheran confession that there is no sacrament or real presence apart from its use. This was never intended to mean that the use of the Sacrament effects the real presence, but rather that Christ is not present when his institution is altered for a different use from the one he intended. Luther employed the terms action and use rarely when speaking of the Lord’s Supper. The Roman Catholics, the Sacramentarians, and the Gnesio-Lutherans liked to use these terms. Melanchthon, fearing the materialism of Luther’s doctrine of the Sacrament and wishing to retain the pure spirituality of the Sacrament, emphasized Christ’s presence in the celebration, in the action, in the use instead of in the elements. If Christ is not present on the altar but somewhere in the celebration, where is he to be adored?

### Why Adoration Should Be Restored

The practice of adoring Christ in the Sacrament should be restored. The practice is biblical, it is Lutheran, and it is catholic.

**Biblical**

There is no command in the Bible that Christ should be adored or worshiped in the Sacrament. But the preincarnate Christ was worshiped when he took the form of an angel, a human, a cloudy presence, or burning bush. Wherever Christ’s presence was recognized, he was worshiped.

The fathers of the Lutheran Church and of the early church correlate appearances of Christ, both preincarnate and incarnate, with his presence in the Supper. Chrysostom says, “On the altar that body is present which the wise men worshipped in the manger... Let us at least imitate those Barbarians, who are citizens of heaven.” In *On the Priesthood*, Chrysostom says the Eucharist is a greater miracle than what the people witnessed in Elijah’s day when fire came from heaven. The people fell on their faces in adoration at that mighty miracle.

Chemnitz admits that Jacob, Moses, and Elijah had no command to worship God at some of the places they did:

[They] doubtless did not have a special commandment that they should worship God in these places; but because they had a general commandment that they should worship God everywhere, and were sure that God is truly present under these external and visible signs and that He there reveals Himself by a peculiar mode of grace, they certainly worshiped that God whom they believed present there.

Probably the best example of all is how God’s people treated the ark of the covenant. Chemnitz writes, “So the Israelites worshiped, not the wood, not the gold, not the cherubim of the ark of the covenant, but God Himself only, who had promised His presence there.”
They were not being superstitious, they were not being idolatrous when they bowed before what looked like wood and gold. They were not “chancel prancing” when they moved the ark with such incredible care. Their God had promised to be with them, to come to them by means of this ark. The word, the promise of God, called forth their behavior even as the word and promise of Christ about his presence in the Sacrament calls forth ours.

The ark is an outstanding example, because apart from the use God had instituted for the ark, he did not appear present. The sons of Eli superstitiously carried the ark to war to have the presence of God help them, but this was to no avail, even though the ark was present at other victories of Israel. The Philistines could treat the ark like a war trophy, and God did not strike any of them dead as he did Uzzah, an Israelite, who merely took hold of the ark to steady it when the oxen nearly upset it. God did not reward superstition, nor did he judge those who knew no better, but he expected his people to honor his presence in the ark rightly.

Lutheran

That Christ should be adored wherever believers know him to be present is biblical. It is also Lutheran. Article XXIV of the Augsburg Confession says, “The Mass is retained among us, and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are preserved, save that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns” (AC XXIV, 1–2). The “usual ceremonies” were those found in the Roman mass, which would have included the elevation where the faithful express their adoration of Christ.

“Thus it is good that the Sacrament of the Altar is honored with bended knees; for the true body and blood of the Lord are there”

In Luther’s Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament he is inclined to drop the elevation in opposition to the papists, but to retain it to defy the Zwinglians (AE 38:315). Both of Luther’s liturgies, the Formula Missae (1523) and the Deutsche Messe (1526), however, keep the elevation. When a Lutheran pastor elevated the Sacrament in Luther’s day, the faithful would have bowed in adoration. That is what they had been taught their whole lives. In his work specifically about the adoration of the Sacrament, even though he gives all the reasons mentioned above against it, still Luther says he favored it (AE 36:271). Actually, Luther’s words are quite strongly in favor of the practice:

But where worship is offered from the heart, there follows quite properly also that outward bowing, bending, kneeling, and adoration with the body (AE 36:293).

But he who does believe, as sufficient demonstration has shown it ought to be believed, can surely not withhold his adoration of the body and blood of Christ without sinning. For I must always confess that Christ is present when his body and blood are present (AE 36:294).

While Luther specifically says he would not condemn or accuse a person of heresy because he does not adore the Sacrament, he says the opposite as well:

On the other hand, one should not condemn and accuse of heresy people who do adore the sacrament. For although Christ has not commanded it, neither has he forbidden it, but often accepted it (AE 36:295).

Even outside the work quoted above, Luther praises the practice. During the last calendar year of his life, 1545, in his Lectures on Genesis, he says, “Thus it is good that the Sacrament of the Altar is honored with bended knees; for the true body and blood of the Lord are there” (AE 8:145).

George Anhalt (d. 1553), Luther’s close friend, gives testimony to just how the practice of adoration was embraced among Lutherans. Chemnitz and co-authors Selneccer and Kirchner published Anhalt’s sermons on the Lord’s Supper “as an eternal witness of the teaching about the sacrament [held] in the churches of this land, which has been [held] after the death of Dr. Luther.” One of the sermons published in Historie des Sacramentstreits said:

Although our dear Lord Jesus Christ did not institute His holy Supper for the purpose of adoring it and worshipping it, nor yet is it forbidden nor to be accounted as an excess or as idolatry, but much rather just and right, that this holy Supper might be administered according to its institution by our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

Bjarne W. Teigen, a formidable Chemnitz scholar, shows that Anhalt’s attitude toward the adoration of Christ in the Sacrament continued to be represented in Lutheran circles by Chemnitz. “There could be no question for him [Chemnitz] that if one accepts these truths [the personal union, the special modes of Christ’s presence, the creative power of the words of institution when spoken at Christ’s command], an external adoration of the Sacrament could follow because these truths called for true faith in the heart.” Furthermore, Teigen shows that Chemnitz believed he was representing Luther’s attitude as well. Chemnitz believed that “Luther regarded the adoration of the Sacrament as a normal result of one’s belief that the consecration effects the presence of the body and the blood of Christ in the elements.”

Chemnitz’s own writings bear out Teigen’s conclusions. Chemnitz says if we believe that Christ “truly and substantially imparts His body and blood to those who eat . . . it neither can nor should happen that faith would fail to venerate and worship Christ, who is present in this action.” Again, “For it belongs to a genuine confession that we also bear witness publicly both with the voice and with outward signs to the faith, devotion, and praise of which we have just spoken.”

In Chemnitz’s Enchiridion, written for the examination of pastors, he asks and answers the question: “With what outward reverence is this Sacrament to be observed in [its] true use?” After rejecting the idea that bread and wine are to be worshiped,
The practice of adoring Christ in the Sacrament is biblical, Lutheran, and catholic. Chemnitz, of the Lutheran fathers probably the most well-read in the church fathers, says that “the ancients venerated and worshiped Christ the God-man, indeed the very flesh of Christ, not only in the Supper [Latin coelo, “in heaven”] but also on the altar where the mystery took place. . . .” He quotes Ambrose’s comment on Psalm 183, saying that today we worship the flesh of Christ in the mysteries (i.e., the Sacrament).14

The Coptic version of the Apostolic Constitutions compares the reverence the sons of Aaron and Eli ought to have had with the reverence we should have for the Lord present on the altar. Earlier the Constitutions advise that communicants should “approach with reverence and holy fear, as to the body of their King.”15

Chrysostom writes, “Reverence now, oh reverence, this Table whereof we all are partakers! (1 Cor 10:16–18). Christ, who was slain for us, the Victim that is placed thereon.”16

The Lutheran Hymnal preserves for us testimony of the early church’s adoration of Christ in the Sacrament. The 1938 work Studies in the Liturgy says, “There is no question that the Agnus Dei is specifically a prayer of adoration to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world . . . . The Agnus Dei is certainly not a joyous hymn of praise. It was rejected only by those who feared that it might lead to an adoration of the Host, rather than of the Saviour Himself.”17 It is noteworthy that, given this background, The Lutheran Hymnal, published in 1941, retained the Agnus Dei.

It can be asserted that the early church universally adored Christ in the Sacrament. Augustine, speaking to the issue of whether or not to celebrate the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday, and Chemnitz, speaking against the practice of withholding the cup from the laity, both use the catholicity of a practice to argue for its being accepted. Chemnitz, probably paraphrasing Augustine, writes, “If any one of these things, namely, rites which the authority of the divine Scriptures does not prescribe, is frequently done by the whole church throughout the world, then it is an act of the most insolent madness to argue that it should not be done.”18

WHY ADORATION IS NEEDED NOW

The adoration of Christ in the Sacrament has a long history. In the beginning of the Reformation, the practice was not emphasized because of Roman abuses. Over against the Zwinglians, however, and later the Sacramentarians, the practice is defended and even suggested. In our day, I believe the practice of adoration should be restored now for four reasons: (1) To confess against the Sacramentarians inside and outside of Lutheranism, (2) to help in resolving our ongoing debate about fellowship, (3) to emphasize the physical benefits of the Lord’s Supper, and (4) to honor the Lord Jesus Christ rightly.

To Confess Against the Sacramentarians Inside and Outside of Lutheranism

The error of the Sacramentarians, the real absence of Christ from the Holy Communion, is an ever-present error. The Formula of Concord says that what distinguished a Sacramentarian is that he uses the same words but believes the true and essential body and blood of Christ are absent from the consecrated bread and wine as far as heaven is above the earth (SD VII, 2).

It is very easy to spiritualize the Lord’s Supper, to believe that while we are receiving the Lord’s Supper our spirits should ascend to heaven and there bow before Christ. But when we bow in body here, we confess that Christ is present right before our eyes on the very altar. Chemnitz says that outward veneration is a confession of “what food we believe we receive there. With such external confession we separate ourselves from the Sacramentarians and from the Epicurean despisers of these mysteries.”19

Over against the Zwinglians, however, and later the Sacramentarians, the practice is defended and even suggested.

There is a real need today to confess boldly and clearly against “Sacramentarians and Epicurean despisers” of the Sacrament. Sasse observed in 1959 that the disease of crypto-Calvinism (i.e., hidden Calvinism; Calvinists are also Sacramentarians) is chronic in the Lutheran church.20 The Sacramentarian position is so palatable to human reason in its assertion that Christ is only spiritually present, only present according to his divine nature. It is the position towards which all people, in accordance with their fallen human reason, will naturally gravitate. Furthermore, the true doctrine is so unpalatable to natural man. Charles Porterfield Krauth observed in 1871: “The offense of the Master’s cross now rests upon his Table.”21 Luther said, “This is the very devil; he can never quit abusing the blood of Christ” (AE 35:197). The early church had to defend herself against the charge of cannibalism. The Reformers had to prove they were not talking about a Capernaitic eating of the body and blood of Christ. And I have heard Baptist army chaplains deride Catholic chaplains as “blood drinkers.”

The devil, the world, and our own flesh make us want to give up the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. By bowing or kneeling before the consecrated elements, by elevating them, we confess that we are not Sacramentarians, that we believe contrary to what our eyes tell us that the real Christ is present before us with those visible elements. We are confessing that we reject the common error of both the Reformed and Rome that the finite is not capable of the infinite. In Jesus’ words “This is my body,” Rome refused to take the word “this” literally, and the Reformed...
refused to take the word “body” literally. By adoring our Lord Jesus Christ, while admitting that bread and wine are still visibly present, we are confessing that most sacred scriptural truth, the finite is capable of the infinite!

Only a Sacramentarian would refuse to bow before the consecrated elements. That is what Martin Chemnitz said: “No one, therefore, denies that Christ, God and man, truly and substantially present in His divine and human nature in the action of the Lord’s Supper, should be worshiped in spirit and in truth, except someone who, with the Sacramentarians, either denies or harbors doubt concerning the presence of Christ in the Supper.”

---

**Crypto-Sacramentarians are not going to be smoked out into the open unless we adopt practices that expose their error.**

---

According to Luther in his *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*, a Sacramentarian would say, “Christ is not with us in a certain form, therefore he is not with us at all” (AE 37:196). How is this any different from saying that Christ is not present in a certain form, therefore I will not adore him? Such seems to be the modern Sacramentarian position.

Crypto-Sacramentarians are not going to be smoked out into the open unless we adopt practices that expose their error. Also, with a large segment of Lutheranism pursuing full communion with the Sacramentarians, we need to testify to the Reformed how we differ from them. The elevation and accompanying adoration will testify to one and all that the celebrant and the congregation believe in the real presence of Christ. Luther wrote his *Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament* in response to rumors that the elevation had been dropped at Wittenberg because of a new understanding of the Sacrament and because an agreement between Lutherans and Zwinglians had been reached (AE 38:288).

If dropping the elevation was taken as a sign of agreement, what would its restoration today be but a sign of our disagreement with the Zwinglians inside and outside of Lutheranism?

The Sacramentarian position is on the move from another front too. Those enamored with church growth theology have been downplaying the sacraments for years. Their way of worship particularly draws attention away from the real presence, away from Christ.

If Pope Celestine I (422–432) was right in saying that each dogma of the church actually occurs in the liturgy before it is defined, it is but a short time before church-growth Lutherans plainly deny the real presence. Some church-growth pastors are preaching mini-sermons as the faithful come forward to commune; mood music is played during the distribution; families are brought forward to hold hands at the Communion rail. Like the Sacramentarians of old, they are focusing everything on the action rather than on the simple, real presence of the body and blood of Christ. The Sacramentarians liked to talk of action rather than presence, processes rather than things, effects rather than being. Adoration, on the other hand, emphasizes the objective reality of the body and blood of Christ. It adores Christ, his body given for us, his blood shed for us. Adoration focuses on Christ as the reason we are gathered together.

Restoring the adoration would also establish a beachhead of sorts against the onslaught of Calvinism from the Church Growth Movement. In *The Controversy Concerning Predestination* C. F. W. Walther relates a story about a Lutheran duchess. She was attending a service conducted by the court chaplain. He was apologetic because he knew some could criticize it for being “popery.” The duchess responded that she remembered what Luther had told her father and for that reason did not want him to discontinue the ceremonies. It was her hope that “So long as such ceremonies continued, Calvinistic temerity would be held back from the public office of the church.”

---

**To Resolve The Ongoing Fellowship Dispute**

A second reason for restoring the ancient practice of adoration is that it would help in resolving the ongoing debate in our churches as to who is in fellowship with whom. Sasse observed about thirty-four years ago: “Every disease of the church becomes manifest at the Lord’s Table.” In the Missouri Synod, our fellowship disease has manifested itself at the Lord’s Table. On the surface, the disease appears to be who should come to the Lord’s Table. Should our altars be open or closed? But the question of who comes to the Lord’s Table can only be answered once the question of what is on the Lord’s Table is answered. Historically, those churches who believed in the real presence practiced closed Communion. Those who did not believe in the real presence or did not see it as all that important practiced open Communion. We have been debating for years who should come to the Lord’s Table. The real point at issue is what is on the Lord’s Table.

Luther saw from the very beginning of his controversy with the Zwinglians that since the words of institution are the gospel, a difference in the understanding of the Sacrament meant nothing less than a difference in the understanding of the gospel. What we have failed to comprehend in Missouri is that there is not a disagreement over who should come to the Lord’s Table without there also being a disagreement over what is on the Lord’s Table, which therefore signifies, according to Luther, that there is a difference in understanding the gospel itself. To put it more succinctly, differences about who goes to the Lord’s Table ultimately and essentially mean there is a difference about what is on the Table. Furthermore, differences about what is on the Table mean there is an existing difference over what the gospel is.

In my opinion, there is a variety of views as to what is on the Lord’s Table. One Communion announcement I read from a Missouri Synod church instructed those taking Communion to treat the bread and the wine “as if it were the body and blood of Christ.” I transferred a family to a Missouri Synod congregation in another city. The family contacted me, saying their new pastor on two occasions had forgotten to say the words of institution. If it happened again, they wanted to know, should they receive the Sacrament?

Even among “conservative” Lutherans I believe there is no unanimity as to what is on the Lord’s Table. Hermann Sasse, writing in *This Is My Body*, makes an insightful observation about the Hussites: “Not a common understanding of the Lord’s Supper, but the demand for the chalice, kept the various branches of Hus-
sitism together.” Is this the present situation among us? Is it that the demand for closed Communion and a rejection of unionism, not a common understanding of what the Lord’s Supper is, keeps various branches of Lutheranism together?

How do we confess publicly what is on the Table? Luther warned that if a person knows his preacher teaches Zwinglian doctrine he should “rather go without the sacrament as long as he lives than receive it of him.”

How might Zwinglian Lutherans be exposed today? The answer may be, through restoration of the practice of adoring outwardly the real presence of Christ on his altar. Adoration confesses in no uncertain terms what we believe to be on the Lord’s Table. In the same Anhalt sermon quoted above we read, “Where outward reverence is neglected knowingly and sacrilegiously out of contempt, then there is a certain sign, that it [the real presence] is not so in the heart.”

We can all agree, for example, that if a pastor should allow a clown in his full regalia to mime the words of institution, he either does not believe what Communion is or he has contempt for it. In either case, his altar should be avoided.

**To Emphasize the Physical Benefits of the Lord’s Supper**

A third reason the adoration of Christ in the Sacrament through physical actions should be restored is to emphasize the physical benefits of the Sacrament. The Lord’s Supper benefits us physically. The early church taught this. Ignatius in his Epistle to the Ephesians writes of the Lord’s Supper that it “is the medicine of immortality and the antidote that we should not die but live for ever in Jesus Christ.”

Some of the ancients viewed the Lord’s Supper as the means by which God prepared these physical bodies for everlasting life. Chemnitz quotes Bernard favorably: “The body of Christ is to the sick a medicine, to pilgrims a way; it strengthens the weak, delights the strong, heals weariness, preserves health.”

Luther in his Large Catechism says the Sacrament will “give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved” (LC VI, 68).

---

**If a person will not bow before Christ on the altar, he ought to examine what he is bowing before.**

Lutheranism, as we have seen, glories in the stupendous truth that the infinite God comes to us by means of what is finite. Luther was very incarnational. For him the Sacrament of the Altar was “an extension of the incarnation into our time and into our lives.”

“The real presence meant that the incarnation was more than a historical fact of the past.”

The real presence meant that the incarnation was a reality right now at this moment, at this place, right before our eyes.

But as Teigen remarks, “There is a constant tendency to spiritualize what Christ really offers in the Sacrament and to turn one’s thoughts from the Supper observed in our midst to a meditation of Christ in heaven.”

This is what happened in Lutheranism. Martin Bucer, who tried to find a middle way between Luther and Zwingli, but always came down on the Zwinglian side when it came to the real presence, believed that nothing material could help the soul.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century, with some notable exceptions, the idea of a connection between the Sacrament and our physical bodies was all but given up. “It becomes evident from the doctrine of late Orthodoxy that the Sacrament no longer had the profound meaning for the lives of the Christians that it had a hundred years earlier. This is one of the reasons why people could no longer see a real difference between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches.”

This is true of our day too. We have lost or at least downplay the physical benefits of the Lord’s Supper probably because we sense what Sasse observed in 1959: the most criticized element of Luther’s doctrine of the Sacrament was that the Sacrament has bodily effects. But this then is precisely what we should confess loudest, not only because it is a very comforting doctrine, but because it distinguishes us from the Reformed.

By bowing before his real presence, by elevating the consecrated elements for all to adore, we confess that the Sacrament is not only a physical (incarnational) reality, but that it has physical effects. Here is Christ in our midst to feed us not only spiritually but physically; to revive bodies, not just souls; to touch our earthly lives, not only our eternal ones. To confess that we cannot rise to where he is, but he has come down to where we dwell, we bow where we are because here is where we meet him.

**To Honor Christ Rightly**

The fourth reason the practice of adoration should be restored is to honor Christ rightly. I am aware that most Lutherans regard adoration as an adiaphoron. One can find passages in Luther that say it is not a sin if one does not adore or elevate the consecrated elements (AE 36:296; 38:316) and to bind consciences with a necessity not imposed by the Word of God is of the antichrist, as Chemnitz states.

“Things which do not have a commandment of God in Scripture must not be laid on conscience as necessary.”

Therefore, I do not want to be understood as saying that a person is not rightly honoring Christ unless he by outward actions adores Christ in the Sacrament. I do, however, believe it is a godly way to honor him. Moreover, I believe that if a person will not bow before Christ on the altar, he ought to examine what he is bowing before. Most communicants give a slight bow upon rising from receiving the body and blood. What are they bowing before? Certainly not the pastor! Are they merely reverencing the altar, a symbol of God’s presence on earth? Behold, God himself is before them! Again, we religiously teach our acolytes to bow before empty altars at the beginning of service. What is wrong with bowing before Christ? Likewise, the pastor who will not elevate the consecrated elements for adoration should examine what he is elevating in the service. In 1938 it was observed, “Where the old-time priest elevated the Host, the present-day parson elevates the coins.”

Bowing, reverencing, even elevating are not strange things in our service. But we feel strange when we think of making the consecrated elements the object of such actions. Perhaps we are being caught up mistakenly in the spiritual bliss of it all. Chemnitz cautions, “But in the Lord’s Supper the spiritual eating must not so turn our mind and faith away from this celebration of the
Supper which is taking place in the gathering of the congregation that in our meditations we are carried beyond the heaven of heavens, as our adversaries imagine.\textsuperscript{71}

The Communion liturgy in \textit{The Lutheran Hymnal}, which dates back to the early church, focuses attention on what is taking place on earth, not in heaven. After the Proper Preface, we sing in the Sanctus, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Our King is coming down to us. Once the words of institution are said, we sing the Agnus Dei, which, as was pointed out, is sung in adoration of the Lamb of God who is now present in our midst, on our altar.

\textbf{We rightly honor Christ in our midst when we adore his presence in the Sacrament.}

Only to the eyes of faith, however, is there any miracle, any Christ to bow before. As we sing in “An Awe-full Mystery Is Here,” “The Word, not sense, must be our guide, / And faith assure since sight’s denied” (\textit{TLH} 3045). The adoration of the presence of Christ flows from faith that he is there and the reason why he is there. This is why Luther said more honor had to be given to the word that to the Sacrament itself (AE 36:277). Without the word no one would know what the Sacrament was or why Christ gave it to us. From faith grounded in the word flows adoration focused on Christ in the earthly elements. As Luther said, “But if you first exercise faith rightly, at the most important point, namely, with respect to the words, then the adoration of the Sacrament will afterwards follow beautifully in its own place” (AE 36:296). Chemnitz echoes Luther’s sentiments: “Men must first of all be taught from the Word of God how they ought to worship Christ, God and man, in the true use of the Eucharist with a true, inner, and spiritual worship. Thereafter the true external indications of inward reverence finally and rightly follow.”\textsuperscript{72}

The word tells us that this bread before us is the body of Christ, this wine before us is the blood of Christ. Luther said that just as at the baptism of Christ someone could have pointed at the dove and said, “This is the Holy Spirit,” so we can point at the bread and say, “This is Christ’s body.” What one does to the bread is rightly and properly attributed to the body of Christ by virtue of the sacramental union” (AE 37:299, 300).

In 1534, Luther gave Melanchthon instructions concerning ongoing negotiations with the Zwinglians after the Marburg Colloquy:

Our opinion is that the body is in such a way with or in the bread that it is truly received with the bread. Whatever the bread suffers or does is also true of the body. Thus, it is rightly said of the body of Christ that it is carried, given, received, eaten, when the bread is carried, given, received, eaten. That is the meaning of “This is my body.”\textsuperscript{73}

If this is our faith, will we not bow down before the consecrated bread and wine? If whatever happens to the bread happens to the body of Christ, if whatever the bread receives the body receives, is it not proper then to honor Christ in the Sacrament by adoring him?

Other fathers of the church had the same realistic, down-to-earth understanding of the presence of Christ in the Sacrament. From this understanding, from this faith based on the words of institution, came their treatment of the Sacrament. Chemnitz compares God’s presence in the ark to his presence in Holy Communion.\textsuperscript{74} How did Israel treat the ark? Cyril of Jerusalem in his \textit{Catechetical Lectures} said that the Sacrament should be physically treated as more precious than gold or gems.\textsuperscript{75}

Chrysostom, in \textit{Homilies on Ephesians}, directs worshipers to the altar before their eyes: “Look, I entreat: a royal table is set before you, angels minister at that table, the King Himself is there . . . Everyday He cometh in to see the guest, and converseth with them all.”\textsuperscript{76} In another homily, he compares the reverence people have for kings with the reverence due the body of Christ. If people do not inconsiderately receive the robe of a king, though it is nothing but cloth and dye, how much more the body of the king, Christ Himself! He beseeches his congregation, “Let us not I pray you, let us not slay ourselves by our irreverence, but with all awfulness and purity draw nigh to it.”\textsuperscript{77}

The realization that Christ is truly, substantially, essentially present in our very midst has led men and women to express their adoration of that reality by their actions. But it has not only affected their view of worship, it has affected the place where they worship. As Sasse observes, “It would be as incorrect to understand medieval cathedrals primarily as a display of an amazing knowledge of mathematics and statistics.” He goes on to say, “The medieval church was built for the celebration of the mass and the adoration of Christ as present in the Sacrament.”\textsuperscript{78}

We rightly honor Christ in our midst when we adore his presence in the Sacrament, and how we treat Christ in the Sacrament reflects our attitude toward his person and work. C. P. Krauth observed over a hundred years ago: “All theology without exception, had views of the atonement which were lower or higher, as its views of the Lord’s Supper were lower or higher.”\textsuperscript{79} Centuries before Krauth, Luther observed: “All the ridicule that Karlstadt [a Sacramentarian] heaps on the sacrament, he has to direct also to the deity of Christ in the flesh, as he also surely will do in time” (AE 40:216). The Reformed, beginning with the spiritual brothers of Karlstadt and Zwingli, fulfilled Luther’s prophecies with their dictum that the finite is not capable of the infinite.

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

To a large part of Christendom it does not matter whether Christ physically became man, physically arose, or physically ascended into heaven. For many, Christianity need not have any physical reality at all; it is all in the heart, in the spirit, somewhere “up there.” But Christianity is incarnational. God is with us in time. Our Lord’s Supper is tied to a particular night in time, the night he was betrayed. Our Lord deals with us only through physical elements: the written Word, the waters of baptism, and the bread and wine of Holy Communion. Through these physical elements our Christ comes to us at points in time. But in the Holy Communion he places his body and blood at a point in time and space. We do well to pause and bow before him there. The angels are.
NOTES

10. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 139.
12. Teigen, p. 196, n. 32.
13. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 54.
18. C. F. W. Walther, Pastorale (St. Louis: Concordia-Verlag, 1897), p. 175.
22. Teigen, p. 184. But Pastoral Theology, ed. George Krause and Norbert Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), does say that the words of institution are the creative words of the Lord (p. 104).
24. Der Lutheraner 14, no. 4, p. 84.
25. Teigen, p. 11.
33. Teigen, p. 110.
34. Teigen, p. 107.
35. Teigen, p. 105.
39. Apparently, coelo was mistaken for coena. The error was discovered by Bjarne W. Teigen.
48. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 272.
50. Teigen, pp. 53–54.
52. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 10, n. 1.
53. Teigen, p. 178.
55. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 2.
56. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 227.
57. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 60.
62. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 123.
63. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 328.
64. Teigen, p. 178.
65. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 246.
66. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 314, n. 46.
67. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 149.
70. Webber, p. 199.
73. Quoted in This Is My Body, p. 250.
78. Sasse, This Is My Body, p. 48.
The Epiclesis and Lutheran Theology

WILLIAM E. THOMPSON

The inclusion of a eucharistic prayer in the Divine Service of the 1958 Service Book and Hymnal sparked great controversy in worldwide Lutheranism.¹ This controversy has been spawned by “deepened scholarship” in matters liturgical as well as the push for “broader fellowship” (world ecumenism) and external unity.² The modern Lutheran liturgical movement has accepted the phenomenological views of Odo Casel,³ the historical analysis of Gregory Dix,⁴ and the thirst for an ecumenical mass canon that would include, perhaps, even Eastern Christianity. The lines drawn concerning this issue in Lutheranism center on the theological implications of such a prayer. The party in favor of the eucharistic prayer appeals to early liturgical sources, finding no conflict with the gift character of the Supper. The party opposed to it appeals to Luther’s clear emphasis that the words must be set apart from a prayer in order to maintain the gospel, gift character of the Supper (beneficium versus sacrificium). This party objects to the reversal of actions in the Supper by use of the mass canon. The action of the prayer being from man to God (law, sacrifice) and the action of the verba alone being from God to man (gospel, sacrament).

One aspect of this controversy is the role of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments in general, but also in the Supper in particular. Included in the eucharistic prayer is the so-called epiclesis, the prayer that calls upon the Holy Spirit to transform the earthly elements or, in its milder form, to sanctify the hearts of the communicants. The latter form is not so problematic as the former, since its focus is the right reception of the Sacrament rather than the consecration of the elements.⁵ It is argued that modern historical inquiry has shown the essential nature of the epiclesis to the liturgy of the sacrament.⁶ This article will explore the work of the Holy Spirit in the Lord’s Supper and, in turn, draw conclusions concerning the epiclesis.⁷

THE SACRAMENTS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

In That These Words, ‘This is My Body,’ Shall Still Stand Against the Fanatics (1527), Martin Luther wrote, “The Spirit cannot be with us except in material and physical things such as the Word, water, and Christ’s body and in his saints on earth” (AE 37:95). He emphasizes the presence of the Spirit with the means created by Christ, by which the Spirit is present. Werner Elert aptly stated, “In the Lutheran Confessions ‘Word and Sacrament’ are always closely joined together. But precisely this side-by-side position lends the sacraments an independence of Gospel proclamation.”⁸ Thus the sacraments are not mere supplements to the word in the fashion of visual aids used by the speaker to illustrate a particular point. Rather, sacraments are creations of the word used by the Holy Spirit to deliver specific benefits of Jesus’ saving death. The word makes the sacrament (SD VII, 74–89). We may not play off the word against the sacraments or vice versa. Without the word of God there are no sacraments, and a word without the sacraments is something other than the living word of the Lord.

The and in “word and sacraments” reminds us that just as the word cannot be divorced from the sacraments, neither can the sacraments be collapsed into the word. In the generosity of his will to be our Savior, God in his mercy has given us both word and sacraments. Thus the Augustana clearly confessed the purpose of these gracious gifts: “For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel” (AC V).

The word and sacraments are the objective gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet Elert warns that the sacraments are not grounded in pneumatology, but in Christ’s institution.⁹ Neither the sacred Scriptures nor the Lutheran symbols start with a definition of sacrament and then proceed to count all the holy acts that would thereby qualify as such. The Lutheran Confessions begin with the bare scriptural facts of baptism, absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. Problems arise when we apply to the Lord’s Supper what is said in Scripture about baptism, as debates of recent memory regarding infant Communion demonstrate.¹⁰

It is through the word of the Lord that baptism, absolution, and the Lord’s Supper are each given their specific content. They are not interchangeable.

The Christian may not be without the word and sacraments, for it is through these means that the Spirit accomplishes his gracious work. In the Smalcald Articles, we confess this with Luther:

In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with

WILLIAM E. THOMPSON is pastor of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Liberty Center, Ohio.
the external Word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts—that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure. Münzer did this, and many still do it in our day who wish to distinguish sharply between the letter and the spirit without knowing what they say or teach. The papacy, too, is nothing but enthusiasm, for the pope boasts that “all laws are in the shrine of his heart,” and he claims that whatever he decides and commands in his churches is spirit and law, even when it is above and contrary to the Scriptures or spoken Word. All this is the old devil and the old serpent who made enthusiasts of Adam and Eve. He led them from the external Word of God to spiritualizing and to their own imaginations, and he did this through other external words. Even so, the enthusiasts of our day condemn the external Word, yet they do not remain silent but fill the world with their chattering and scribbling, as if the Spirit could not come through the Scriptures or the spoken Word of the apostles but must come through their own writings or words. . . . Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil (SA III, VIII, 3–6, 10).

It is clear that the Confessions and Luther move with Scripture in binding the work of the Spirit to God’s mandated means, the word and sacraments.

THE LORD’S SUPPER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Unlike Holy Baptism and Holy Absolution, there is no text in the New Testament that directly links the Holy Spirit and the Lord’s Supper. The only reference to spirits is to demonic spirits. St. Paul warns, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and the table of demons.” (1 Cor 10:21). It is noteworthy that although St. Paul has much to say of the Spirit and his gifts to the church in Corinthians, he does not do so in connection with the Lord’s Supper. Instead, the discussion of the Spirit in chapters 12–14 is quite distinct from that of the Supper in chapters 10–11.

The Spirit is present in the Supper through the words of institution. The emphasis in the Lord’s Supper texts is not on the Holy Spirit but on the incarnation of Christ: “This is my body,” The Supper is mainly the sacrament of the Son rather than the Holy Spirit. To the Calvinists Chemnitz retorted, “But the Son of God does not say regarding the bread of the Supper, ‘This is the Holy Spirit’ or ‘This bread is the communion of My divine nature,’ but rather, ‘This is my body, and ‘This bread is the communion of the body of Christ.’” 11 This point is stressed with utmost care to refute the doctrine of the Sacramentarians, who say “that through the Spirit of Christ, which is everywhere, our bodies, in which the Spirit of Christ dwells here upon earth, are united with the body of Christ, which is in heaven” (SD VII, 5). Jesus’ ascension highlights the fact that he is bodily present wherever his Supper is celebrated.

Yet it is certain that the words of the testament are the Spirit’s words. Chemnitz rejoiced that “the very repetitions of the institution of the Supper clearly demonstrate the reason why and the thinking with which these things are set forth in Scripture by the Holy Spirit in the way they are. For the words are used in the way they are so that they may show that either by repetition or by the nuances of meaning or by the addition of material the Holy Spirit has wished by these very repetitions to demonstrate, teach, and confirm the true, sure, and genuine interpretation and meaning.”12 In addition, the writer to the Hebrews, when speaking about the all-availing sacrifice of the New Testament, ties the Holy Spirit’s witness to the word of Jeremiah 31 (Heb 10:15–17).

The Confessions and Luther move with Scripture in binding the work of the Spirit to God’s mandated means, the word and sacraments.

One clear scriptural parallel to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Supper is his work in the incarnation. God became man by the agency of the Holy Spirit through the word of the angel to Mary (Lk 1:26–38). So also the ascended God-man dwells with his people bodily by the agency of the Holy Spirit through the words of institution.

Additionally, there is communio of the body of Christ by the power of the Spirit in the Supper (1 Cor 10:17, Acts 2:42). Here the sacraments are scripturally tied together. The Lord’s Supper is the Supper of the baptized, for there is “one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:4–5). The oneness created by God the Spirit through baptism is nurtured and strengthened as he comes to feed us with his very body and blood. The Spirit has granted faith, which receives the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in the body and blood of Christ. This scriptural relationship of the sacraments is quite different from the modern ecumenical movement’s emphasis on the Supper as the means of communio rather than the expression of a communio previously given by the Holy Spirit.

The scriptural and confessional witness affirms that the work of the Spirit in the Supper is centered in the words of institution.

THE TEXT AND HISTORY OF THE EPICLESIS

A representative sample of texts of the epiclesis is as follows. 13

**Anaphora of the Mass of St. John Chrysostom**

Furthermore we offer unto thee this spiritual and unbloody sacrifice, and we pray, and beseech and implore thee: Send down thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these Gifts here presented . . . make this bread the precious Body of thy Christ. . . . And make what is in this Chalice the precious Blood of thy Christ . . . by changing (μετοβάλων) them through thy Holy Spirit.
**Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus**
Gather into one, we pray you, all your holy people who partake hereof; fill them with your Holy Spirit for the confirmation of their faith in the truth; and grant that we may praise and glorify you through your servant, Jesus Christ . . .

**Contemporary Worship 2**
Send the power of your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this bread and wine, that we who receive the body and blood of Christ may be his body in the world . . .

**LBW “Great Thanksgiving”**
Send your Spirit upon these gifts of your Church; gather into one all who share this bread and wine; fill us with your Holy Spirit to establish our faith in truth . . .

The development of these prayers is significant. It reaches its peak in *Contemporary Worship 2*, which returns to the pure form of the medieval mass by praying “the power of your Holy Spirit” upon the bread and wine that they might be the body and blood of Christ. Due to great debate over this prayer, the ILCW backed off in *Lutheran Book of Worship* to the form that we see above.

In both the East and the West the epiclesis is traced back to the Didache. Arthur Voobus, in an exhaustive study of the Didache texts, concludes that the earliest forms of the epiclesis were of the form of the consecration of the believers, not the elements. Rather, “the idea of the consecration of the elements is nothing else but an accretion to an original form of the epiclesis. In other words, it is a fallacy to project the development of later centuries into primitive Christianity.”

Justin Martyr in chapters 65–67 of his *First Apology* discusses the practice of the Supper. He speaks about prayers in association with it, but emphasizes that it is the words of Jesus given in the “memoirs of the apostles,” the gospels, which make the bread and wine the “flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.” No mention is made of an epiclesis.

The earliest account of a clear epiclesis over the elements comes from the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (AD 217). Gregory Dix, however, admits that it is questionable that the anaphora as it came from the pen of Hippolytus contained an epiclesis. It is clear that it did become a part of the Tradition early on.

The epiclesis has its prominence in Eastern rather than Western Christianity. Still in use today in Eastern churches throughout the world is the Mass of St. John Chrysostom. Chrysostom maintained the importance of the words of institution as consecratory. It was Cyril of Jerusalem who tied the moment of consecration to the epiclesis, which followed the words of institution. Commenting on the significance of the epiclesis in the anaphora of St. John, Alexander Schmemann points out that for the Eastern church the celebration of the mass reaches its summit in the epiclesis. “Everything has been said, everything has been remembered before the altar of God, thanksgiving has been offered for everything, and now the prayer, through which the oblation, this sacrifice of praise, is accomplished, turns to the Father in supplication for the sending down of the Holy Spirit upon these gifts here offered.” The result of this emphasis on the centrality of the epiclesis is a spiritualized doctrine of the Supper that sounds much like the doctrine of Calvin:

But what is most important is that fact that what is accomplished in heaven is already accomplished, already is, already has been accomplished, already given.

In the liturgy, which we have been commanded to celebrate until he comes, we do not repeat and we do not represent—we ascend into the mystery of salvation and new life, which has been accomplished once, but is granted to us “always now and forever and unto ages of ages.” And in this heavenly, eternal and otherworldly eucharist Christ does not come down to us, rather we ascend to Him.

The emphasis here is not on the gift of forgiveness in the body and blood of Christ but on the spiritual ascension of the communicant.

The prayers associated with the Supper in the early traditions are a creation of man, which must be weighed against the clear word of Scripture.

In the West, modern phenomenological liturgiologists, in spite of the evidence of Voobus, like to trace the epiclesis back to The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus and even to the Didache. They assume that Western liturgies, including the Roman, originally had an epiclesis similar to Hippolytus’s. Others understand the history much differently, finding the early extant witnesses unconvincing and viewing the Western church’s tradition since Augustine and Ambrose as emphasizing primarily not the epiclesis, but the words of institution.

The major figure in the history of the epiclesis is Cyril of Jerusalem. His position is seen by phenomenologists as a continuation of early church practice. Once again, their method is to take later evidence and work back to earlier times. The effect on the church of the notion of the “possession of the name” in the epiclesis ceremony corresponds to a heightening clericalization. Cyril, according to Rudolph Stahlin, “made Christ into an object of priestly action.” Cyril’s influence has been described by Gregory Dix with the idea that the dead Christ was brought to the altar in the offertory procession, and then by the use of the epiclesis was resurrected. “From end to end of Cyril’s account of the liturgy and throughout his eucharistic teaching, Christ plays only a passive part in the Eucharist. He is simply the divine victim whose body and blood are ‘made’ by the action of the Holy Ghost, that the early church may offer him to the Father “in propitiation for our sins.” Beyond the highly questionable historical conclusion that the Western tradition shared in early Eastern sources, the obvious question then arises concerning this extreme doctrine whether a prayer whose connotation in the East has been a Spirit-centered sacrament is in contradiction to the incarnation and the work of the Spirit through words.
Luther was intimately aware of these issues in the production of his liturgical formulae. The historical question was taken up in most of his treatises on the Supper. For Luther, the historical evidence was inconclusive on such matters. Our Lord has not made clear the kind of prayer used on the night in which he was betrayed. As a result, the prayers associated with the Supper in the early traditions are a creation of man, which must be weighed against the clear word of Scripture. Luther’s method, distinct from the phenomenological school, is always to start with Scripture and evaluate the historical evidence in light of Scripture. For this he has been thoroughly criticized by modern liturgical scholars.

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EPICLESIS

The theological stumbling block of the mass canon in general is that the main direction of the action of the celebration is from man to God (prayer), thus stripping the Supper of its gift character. This is a return to the medieval Roman notion of the sacrificial character of the mass, with the modern shift to representation or divine drama as opposed to the sacrifice of the mass. This simply means that some action of man is said to precipitate a response in God.

Applied to the epiclesis particularly, the notion that the Spirit will accomplish his work solely through the words of institution is abandoned. Instead, God’s work must first be triggered through our prayer. There is no place in holy Scripture that speaks of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Lord’s Supper in such terms. What we are given in the Lord’s Supper, the body and blood of our Lord to eat and to drink, we are given by the power of Jesus’ word. The Spirit does not work apart from that word.

The inclusion of an epiclesis over the elements is neither historically verifiable nor theologically sound.

The World Council of Churches’ document Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry summarizes much of contemporary ecumenical theorizing on the Lord’s Supper when it asserts that “the Spirit makes the crucified and risen Lord present in the eucharistic meal.” Like the sources previously cited, Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, in its insistence that the Spirit is the agent of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper, actually obscures what the words give and bestow: his true body and true blood. No Christian will deny that Christ is really present in the Lord’s Supper. Many, however, do deny that every communicant receives the very body and blood of Christ with his mouth.

Werner Elert states, “The doctrine of Holy Communion is the test for the genuineness of our belief in the Incarnation.” What separated Luther and Zwingli was not only a different understanding of the Sacrament but also of the incarnation. This is seen perhaps most clearly in Luther’s treatise of 1527 That These Words of Christ, ‘This is My Body,’ etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics. In this work Luther is careful to articulate a biblical definition of “spiritual” that is essential for a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit’s work. Luther wrote, “Surely ‘spiritual’ must mean what the Spirit does and what comes from the Spirit, just as ‘fleshy’ is what flesh does and what comes from the flesh, as Paul says in Romans 8:5” (AE 379.4). Luther goes on to argue that in St. John 6:63, where Jesus states that “flesh is of no avail,” he is not speaking of his body, for that would deny the necessity and benefit of the incarnation. “Spiritual” is not set in opposition to “physical.” That which is “physical,” namely, our Lord’s body and blood, is the vehicle for spiritual blessing—the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

CONCLUSION

World ecumenism today seeks to reach unity via convergence of confessional traditions. It has long been realized that one vehicle for reaching such external union is through a uniform liturgy. Lutherans have felt this pressure at crucial times such as at the imposition of the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims and at the imposition of the Prussian Union. Notably, the focus of such imposed union is on the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper. So it is today. Lutherans seem especially susceptible to such forces because of the liturgical freedom affirmed in our confessions.

The liturgical movement has fueled these forces by its use of historical evidence to interpret the scriptural witness. As early as 1930, Bishop Brilioth’s work promoted a view of eucharistic faith and life between the confessions as merely being different expressions of the same thing.

The recent inclusion of the mass canon with epiclesis is an example of these two forces. The premise of both the ecumenical and liturgical movements is false and contrary to Scripture. The inclusion of an epiclesis over the elements is neither historically verifiable nor theologically sound. It strips the Supper of its gift character by making the consecratory power that of man’s word in prayer rather than the word of our Lord’s institution. It centers the action in the Supper on that of man rather than that of our Lord. It is a direct attack on the merits of Christ and the righteousness of faith.

Article VII of the Solid Declaration puts it most succinctly:

No man’s word or work, be it the merit or the speaking of the minister, be it the eating and drinking or the faith of the communicants, can effect the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Supper. This is to be ascribed only to the almighty power of God and the Word, institution, and ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the truthful and almighty words of Jesus Christ that he spoke in the first institution were not only efficacious in the first Supper, but they still retain their validity and efficacious power in all places where the Supper is observed according to Christ’s institution and where his words are used, and the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed, and received by the virtue and potency of the same words that Christ spoke in the first Supper (SD VII, 74–5).
1. “Eucharistic prayer” and “mass canon” will be used synonymously to refer to the words of institution embedded in a prayer.


3. This method has its roots in the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule (ca. 1880–1920). The basic idea is for study purposes to treat Christianity as if it were merely one religious phenomenon among many. The Protestant scholar Hans Lietzmann set the groundwork for liturgical research was to begin with the Scriptural accounts of the Supper. Lietzmann taught later researchers such as Casel and Dix to work backwards in history, thus interpreting the Scripture in light of what came later. Casel’s approach was to seek to find the basis for the Christian Lord’s Supper in hellenistic religions.


5. Unless explicitly stated, the balance of this essay will treat the epiclesis over the elements.


7. I am indebted particularly in this essay to Oliver Olson, “Contemporary Trends in Liturgy Viewed from the Perspective of Classical Lutheran Theology,” Lutheran Quarterly 26 (1974), and John Pless, “Sacraments: Instruments of the Spirit” (unpublished). Portions of this essay are paraphrased from these.


12. Chemnitz, p. 93.


16. Gregory Dix, The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus (New York: Macmillan, 1937), p. 75. We must note that there is no definitive evidence that the Apostolic Tradition was actually written by Hippolytus or that it is a part of the liturgical tradition of the West.


20. Schmemann, p. 221.


22. The classic formulation, which appears repeatedly in the Book of Concord, is St. Augustine’s dictum Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum, “the word comes to the element and it becomes a sacrament,” Tract. in Joh. LXXX, 3, Patrologia Latina 35, 1839, CSEL 36, 529. Lutheran scholars until Peter Brunner uniformly accepted this position.

23. See Olson, pp. 141–42.


25. Stahlin, p. 27.

26. Of particular note are his later works Against the Heavenly Prophets, 1525, That These Words, ‘This Is My Body,’ Shall Still Stand against the Fanatics, 1527, and The Great Confection Concerning Christ’s Body and Blood, 1530.


28. Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1982), p. 13. Also note the comments of Charles Evason: “A Lutheran should be concerned about how the assertion of the importance of such an invocation either clarifies or further obscures the whole matter of the relation of the element to the blessing and the priority of the Words of Institution. If such a prayer is advocated as a necessary asking of the Spirit to make something earthly the bearer of a spiritual content, or if the advocate argues that the Words of Institution are not in themselves life-giving, active, and powerful words which are able to do what they say, then the inclusion of such a prayer, much more any insistence upon it, is highly questionable, and perhaps even a blasphemy.” Charles Evason, “The Lord’s Supper According to the World Council of Churches,” CTQ (April-July 1985), p. 128.


30. Brilioth takes a characteristically negative view of Luther’s liturgical work. Recently, it has been Anglicans such as Bryan Spinks and others who have realized the theological genius of Luther in this regard.

NOTES
Luther Digest provides abridgements of selected significant articles and books related to the life, times, and teaching of Martin Luther. Luther Digest seeks to facilitate a more extensive exposure to recent trans-national Luther publications to a wider range of North American readers. Abridged non-English articles have been translated into readable English. Each abridgement has been approved by the author.

Luther Digest Volume 2 includes

- Asendorf, Ulrich. “Luther’s Theology According to His Catechism Sermons.”
- Bagchi, David V. N. Luther’s Earliest Opponents, Catholic Controversialists, 1518–1525.
- Beintker, Horst. “Luther and the Old Testament.”
- Craycraft, Kenneth R. Jr. “Sign and Word”: Martin Luther’s Theology of the Sacraments.
- Delius, Hans-Ulrich. The Sources of Martin Luther’s Lectures on Genesis.
- DeMarzgerie, Bertrandt, S.J. “The Heart of Christ: Revelation of the Heart of the Father According to Martin Luther.”
- Eckhardt, Burnell F. Jr. Anselm and Luther on the Atonement: Was It “Necessary”?
- Elliott, John H. “Paul, Galatians, and the Evil Eye.”
- Evanson, Charles J. “The Office and Order of the Holy Ministry: Luther and the Lutheran Confessions.”
- Fusselman, Douglas D. “Pray Like This: The Significance of the Lord’s Prayer in Luther’s Catechisms.”
- Gritsch, Eric W. “Luther’s Humor as a Tool for Interpreting Scripture.”
- Hoffmann, Bengt. “Lutheran Spirituality.”
- Hurty, Kathleen S. “Mary, Luther, and the Quest for Ecumenical Images.”
- Hütter, Reinhard. “Martin Luther and Johannes Dietenberger on ‘Good Works’.”
- Jensen, O. “Hidden and Revealed God in Luther’s Christology.”
- Kittelson, James M. “Luther the Man.”
- Koester, Craig R. “John Six and the Lord’s Supper.”
- Kolb, Robert. “Ministry in Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions.”
- Krodel, Gottfried G. “Beginnings of the Lutheran State Church: The First Years in the Reformation.”
- Lindberg, Carter. “Luther’s Critique of the Ecumenical Assumption that Doctrine Divides but Service Unites.”
- Lull, Timothy F. “Luther’s Voice within the Confession.”
- Nestingen, James A. “Challenges and Responses in the Reformation.”
- Posset, Franz. “The Elder Luther on Bernard.”
- Saarinen, Risto. “The Word of God in Luther’s Theology.”
- Schmugge, Ludwig. “Martin Luther—Born Illegitimate?”
- Schwartzwaller, Klaus. “Conscientious Authorities.”
- Simons, L. “Creation in Luther’s Theology of the Cross.”
- Sockness, Brent W. “Luther’s Two Kingdoms Revisited: A Response to Reinhold Niebuhr’s.”
- Tinkler, John F. “Erasmus’ Conversation with Luther.”
- Wriedt, Markus. “Grace and Predestination: A Study of Staupitz and Luther.”
- Zahl, Paul F. M. “E. P. Sander’s Paul Versus Luther’s Paul: Justification by Faith in the After of a Scholarly Crisis.”

Please enter my subscription immediately so that I can receive the latest issue of Luther Digest. I am enclosing U. S. check or internation money order for $15 (add $5 for international postage). Make checks payable to LUTHER DIGEST.

☐ I am enclosing an additional $10 for Volume 1.

Name ___________________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________________

City _____________________________________________State _______Zip _________

Send orders to Timothy Maschke, Managing Editor, Luther Digest, Concordia University Wisconsin, 12800 N. Lake Shore Drive, Mequon, WI 53097-2402 U.S.A.

Luther Digest is an essential source for anyone interested in remaining current in Luther studies. You will not want to miss an issue of this timely and beneficial resource for Luther scholarship.
What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? That is shown us by these words, “Given and shed for you for the remission of sins,” namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation (SC VI).

Among Lutherans there is no debate that the first and primary benefit of the Lord’s Supper is the reception of the Lord’s body and blood by the Christian for the forgiveness of sins. “This is plainly evident from the Lord’s words: ‘This is my body and blood, given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins’” (LC V, 21).

The forgiveness of sins for Luther was not merely the undoing or taking away of something negative. “Forgiveness” encapsulates the whole treasure of benefits that Christ won for us, “for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.” Thus the Sacrament of the Altar is nothing less than the gospel itself in all its richness, as Luther teaches: “Now, the whole Gospel and the article of the Creed, ‘I believe in the holy Christian church, the forgiveness of sins,’ are embodied in this sacrament and offered to us through the Word” (LC V, 32).

“Well, if this is true,” the devout Christian might ask Luther, “if the Sacrament offers me nothing more or less than what I can find in my baptism or by reading my Bible or hearing the absolution, then why is the Sacrament necessary? Is God merely offering me a visual aid to preaching?”

As he listens to this dialogue, the Lutheran pastor might wonder whether Augustine’s definition of the Sacrament as a visible word (verbum visible) has altogether obliterated the uniqueness of the Sacrament. Indeed, if the forgiveness of sins is received by the believer even outside the Sacrament, simply by trusting in the promise of the gospel, then what is the unique gift of the Sacrament? “What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?”

Were Luther to hear these questions, his thoughts could not help but return to his debate with Zwingli, who asked of what possible use could be the eating of the Lord’s body and blood. John 6:63 decided the question for Zwingli: “It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” For Zwingli the teaching that the eating of the Lord’s body and blood benefits the Christian was a violation of the spiritual character of the Christian faith and a return to pagan materialism. This challenge forced Luther to examine the nature of the Sacrament and its benefits.

Luther’s answer to the question, “What is the use of such eating?” was straightforward. It is enough that Christ our Lord has commanded me so to eat and drink. Like baptism, this sacrament finds its value in Christ’s institution, word, and command. For “what God institutes and commands cannot be useless. It is a most precious thing, even though to all appearances it may not be worth a straw” (LC IV, 8).

Yet the Sacrament’s unique benefits do not remain hidden behind the inscrutable will and command of God. Its fruits are evident now and always have been. In the Scriptures the confessors saw at least four unique gifts offered in the Sacrament. These include the Supper as a seal and comfort through the personal application of God’s promise to the individual, as a “daily food and sustenance” of our faith, as a “bond and union of Christians with Christ their head and with one another,” and as a “medicine for immortality, antidote against death.”

It is this last benefit of the Sacrament that is the focus of this study. It is no surprise that Zwingli, Calvin, and the Reformed churches reject the idea that bodily eating and drinking can bring God’s grace and blessing to soul and body. What is surprising is that so many modern Lutherans are unaware of it or reject it (notable exceptions include Sommerlath, Elert, Schlink, and Sasse), since by its inclusion in the Large Catechism and the Formula of Concord it is a doctrine of the Lutheran Church.

Understanding the Sacrament as a “medicine for immortality” offers us a number of deep insights into the gifts that Christ gives to his church, insights that will affect our teaching and preaching, our pastoral care of the sick and dying, our personal and ecclesiastical use of the Sacrament, and our faith in the person of the Word Incarnate.

Any discussion of the Sacrament as “medicine of immortality” necessarily touches on three areas of concern: Christology, anthropology, and the Sacrament of the Altar itself. Since the rule is that “the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel” (SA II, 15), the verba themselves are our cornerstone. We hold to the simple, proper and usual meaning of these
words, for as Chemnitz observed, “this meaning does not clash with a single article of faith.”

**CHRISTOLOGY**

Who is this who is speaking? It is the Lord. What does he say? He claims possession of a human body: “This is my body . . . This is my blood.” The story of Christmas is the story of the *Deus absconditus* who reveals himself as *Deus incarnatus*. The incarnation was not a symbol for a “higher spiritual reality.” Nor was it some Judaic reconstruction of the pagan mysteries or a temporary manifestation of God after which he returned to the ethereal realm of the divine. Mary’s baby was not a docetic baby, but *ὁ λόγος σάρξ γεγονός* (Jn 1:14), a flesh and blood baby, the fruit of her womb, a human being. “For a little while he was made a little lower than the angels,” for “since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise partook of the same.” Nor was he “ashamed to call us brethren,” for “he was born of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Heb 2:11). “He could not come closer.... He that is so far from me and great puts Himself inside this tiny body. This is far nearer than mother, brother, or any other. Therefore He is called our brother, and also our bone and flesh, even closer than man and wife. For all this faith declares His flesh is ours, for He counts it to be of one body, blood, and so on. Whoever perceives this truth has what he can call comfort.”

Why does Luther find comfort in a “bawling boy” Savior? Because as the fathers said, “He saved what he became,” and in Christ he is flesh and blood. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth God has entered his creation in order to redeem it, and that creation includes me.

So we watch in wonder as this “bawling boy” increases in stature before God and man, is baptized to fulfill all righteousness, does battle with the devil, is tempted, teaches the Torah, proclaims the gospel, casts out demons, heals the sick, raises the dead, sets his face toward Jerusalem, where he institutes this Sacrament, suffers and dies. For three days creation holds its breath, until the angel breathes his oracle, “Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here. He has risen just as he said.” That same evening, for there is no time to lose, he breathes on the disciples and ordains them for the ministry of forgiving and retaining sins, a word and sacrament ministry to announce to flesh and blood sinners that “he saved what he became.”

We might add that this “enfleshed Word” is the same Logos “through whom all things came into being” (Jn 1:3, Heb 1:2). Yes, he made the great angels, those thrones and principalities of the spiritual world, but he made them to minister and serve the flesh and blood saints who will inherit salvation (Heb 1:14). This physical world is God’s good work and is worthy of his redemption. So Luther teaches us to confess and to pray:

> I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind . . . that he provides me daily and abundantly with all the necessities of life (SC II).

> Give us this day our daily bread . . . [namely] everything required to satisfy our bodily needs (SC III, 14).

> While we might expect God to furnish such bodily blessings before the Fall, the magnitude of God’s concern for us is such that he grants these blessings to us who live after the Fall, unworthy and corrupted though we are (see SD I, 34–35).

> Hence that God should approach our body together with our soul in the Sacrament is consistent with the incarnation. Our Creator and Redeemer, who is Christ our Brother, is concerned with all our needs, both spiritual and physical, as demonstrated by our creation, preservation, and redemption.

> But do the *verba* say more about the Incarnate One? His body and blood He gives “for the *forgiveness of sins*” “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” *ὁ λόγος σάρξ γεγονός*. In one person we have an individual who is both “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary” (SC II; Rom 9:5). “Since the divinity and humanity are one person in Christ, the Scriptures ascribe to the deity, because of this personal union, all that happens to the humanity, and vice versa” (SD VIII, 41). Already from the virgin’s womb, this assumed human nature possessed not only those properties characteristic of humanity, but in addition, through the union with the deity (Col 2:9), was elevated to the right hand of majesty (SD VIII, 27). Thus it is false to say that even in its personal union with the deity the human nature has only its own natural characteristics.

> The Holy Scriptures, and the ancient Fathers on the basis of the Scriptures, testify mightily that, because the human nature in Christ is personally united with the divine nature in Christ, the former . . . received, in addition to its natural, essential, and abiding properties, special, high, great, supernatural, unsearchable, ineffable, heavenly prerogatives and privileges in majesty, glory, power, and might above every name that is
named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come [Eph 1:21] (SD VIII, 51).

It is in this context, and as “a strong and irrefutable” argument for the communication of attributes, that the Confessions declare that the power to make the dead alive has been given to Christ “because he is the Son of Man and inasmuch as he has flesh and blood” (SD VIII, 58). In reference to 1 John 1:7 they affirm:

John is saying in this passage that in the work or matter of our justification not only the divine nature in Christ but also his blood actually cleanses us from all sins. Likewise, John 6:48–58 says that Christ’s flesh is a life-giving food, and accordingly the Council of Ephesus decreed that the flesh of Christ has the power to give life. Many other noble testimonies of the ancient orthodox church concerning this article are recorded elsewhere (SD VIII, 59).

In that Catalog of Testimonies, the Fathers speak in this way:

Cyril: How, then, does the flesh of Christ quicken [vivificat?] . . . According to the union with the living Word, which is accustomed to communicate the endowments of His nature to His own body (Dialog. lib. 5).11

Athanasius: God was not changed into human flesh or substance, but in Himself glorified the nature which He assumed, so that the human, weak, and mortal flesh and nature advanced to divine glory, so as to have all power in heaven and in earth, which it did not have before it was assumed by the Word (On the Arian and the Catholic Confession).12

Cyril: When you have examined the mystery of the incarnation with commendable care, and have learned to know the life dwelling in the flesh, you will believe that, although the flesh is not able to do anything by itself, it has nevertheless become quickening. For since it has been united to the quickening Word, it has entirely been rendered quickening. . . . For the body not of Paul or of Peter or of others, but that of Life itself in which the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, can do this.13

The flesh and blood of Jesus has this sin-forgiving, death-defying power through the communication of divine attributes to the human nature. This is the flesh and blood that is given in the Sacrament.

Because of this personal union and the resultant communion that the divine and human natures have with each other in deed and truth in the person of Christ, things are attributed to Christ according to the flesh that the flesh, according to its nature and essence outside of this union, cannot intrinsically be or have—for example, that his flesh is truly a life-giving food and his blood truly a quickening beverage, as the two hundred fathers of the Council of Ephesus attested when they stated that Christ’s flesh is a life-giving flesh. . . . To make certainty and assurance doubly sure on this point, he instituted his Holy Supper that he might be present with us, dwell in us, work and be mighty in us according to that nature, too . . . (SD VIII, 76, 79).

The flesh and blood of Jesus has this sin-forgiving, death-defying power through the communication of divine attributes to the human nature.

Here Luther, in his consummate and robust style, adds color. In his 1527 treatise That These Words of Christ, “This Is My Body,” Still Stand Firm he wrote:

Since this poor maggot sack, our body, also has the hope of the resurrection of the dead and of the life everlasting, it must also become spiritual, and digest and consume everything that is fleshly in it. And that is what this spiritual food does. . . . It is as if a wolf devoured a sheep and the sheep were so powerful a food that it transformed the wolf and turned him into a sheep. So, when we eat Christ’s flesh physically and spiritually, the food is so powerful that it transforms us into itself and out of fleshly, sinful, mortal men makes spiritual, holy, living men. This we are already, though in a hidden manner in faith and hope; the fact is not yet manifest, but we shall experience it on the Last Day.14

ANTHROPOLOGY

“Drink of it, all of you.” To whom is the Lord speaking? Disciples, surely, but who were these disciples? Little gods and saints with perfectly fitted halos? Or men of like mind with us—weak men, fearful men, sinful and mortal men?

Where the classical Greek concept of the immortality of the soul had influenced the church’s teachers, the focal point of the Lord’s Supper fastened upon the soul, rather than upon the man as a whole.15 One of the great exegetical insights of Luther, according to Pelikan, was his rediscovery of the “significance that the Scriptures attached to the body, in contrast to the exegetical tradition that had treated the body as part of man’s lower nature.”16 This means that body and soul are not to be dichotomized. As we saw above, God claims man as a whole being, created by him and found to be “very good” (Gn 1:31). The only anthropological antithesis that Scripture knows is between σάρξ and πνεῦμα, the old and the new nature that are at war in the life, yes, the very “members” of the Christian (Rom 7 and 8).

Thus Christ has redeemed our nature as his creation, sanctifies it as his creation, quickens it from the dead as
This observation sharpens the sword. Paul found a fifth column at work within him. While in the inner man he “joyfully concurred with the law of God,” a different law was at work in the members of his body, waging war against the law of his mind, and making him a prisoner of the law of sin that was in his members (Rom 7:22–23). The result is that not only man’s soul but also his body is ravaged by the deadly ordinance of sin. Jesus’ earthly ministry of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom with accompanying miracles over sickness, demons, death, and nature shows the total bondage to which sin subjects us and on which fronts the war was/is to be fought until the enemy’s unconditional overthrow at Easter and the Parousia.

Hence Jesus too, when he bore our sins, felt the heat of the battle in his own soul and body—in the wilderness with hunger and the wild beasts, in Galilee with no place to lay his head, above Jerusalem with tears, at the Gethsemane Garden, under the scourge and the wild beasts, in Galilee with no place to lay his head, above

The battle was fought where it had to be won—in the body and soul of Christ, on behalf of the bodies and souls of mankind. Just as the whole man is God’s creation and corrupted by sin, so the promise of eternal life and new creation comes to the whole fallen creature. Through baptism we are incorporated into the death of Christ, having been buried with him,

in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection . . . Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body . . . (Rom 6:4–5, 12 NASB).

The same physical-spiritual benefits that the Savior bestows in Holy Baptism, he also gives in the Sacrament of the Altar. Is it not significant that our reception of the Sacrament is manducatio oralis? “Take, eat, this is my body; drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” The Lord is speaking to flesh and blood sinners, inviting them to use hands and mouths and giving them forgiveness of sins. As sin is not a “spiritual” matter alone, but one that brings the most radical consequences to the body—death—so forgiveness of sin does not come to naked souls, but to human beings who use hands and mouths to eat and drink.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

“Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the δεσπότης. By the means of his δεσπότης God brings people into the closest possible relationship with himself. The covenant with Israel is supremely characterized by the words “I shall be your God and you shall be my people” and by the stupendum miraculum of Exodus 24, where “they beheld God, and they ate and drank” with him. That communion with God was limited in time and scope, yet it gave promise of something greater to come.

The fulfillment of that promise is found in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ all Christians participate in the “mystical union,” wherein the Triune God dwells within each believer (Jn 14:23; 1 Cor 6:15; 17; Eph 5:30; 2 Pt 1:4; Gal 3:27; 2:19, 20). This union has physical effects—both sanctification, as manifested by deeds of the body, and the final resurrection of that body (Rom 8:11–13).

The intimacy of this union is heightened in Holy Communion because it is both a spiritual and physical union. “One can only understand the Lord’s Supper of the New Testament and its meaning for the church if one does not forget what the modern Christian unfortunately has forgotten again and again, that we belong to the church not only according to the spirit but also according to the body: ‘Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?’ (1 Cor 6:15).” Paul asks, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation [κοινωνία] in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:16–17). Sasse comments:

One may certainly not understand this as though the “participation in the body and blood of Christ” is something purely spiritual and not as close and as real as the connection of food and drink to the human body. In the Bible the word koinonia signifies the closest and deepest communion conceivable between God and man (1 John 1:3) and between the members of the body of Christ, a communion in which our body also takes part (1 Cor. 6:15).

If we confess a true and substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Supper, truly offered to and received by the communicants, then we too must agree with the Apology when it asks, “Since this [body of Christ] is in us, does it not also cause Christ to dwell in us bodily through the communication of the flesh of Christ? . . . Therefore we must consider that Christ is in us, not only according to the habit which we understand as love, but also by a natural participation” (Ap X, 3). Likewise the Solid Declaration states that “he instituted his Holy Supper that he might be present with us, dwell in us, work and be mighty in us according to that nature, too, according to which he has flesh and blood” (SD VIII, 79).
For Christ surely will make even our body eternal, alive, blessed, and glorious. . . . Therefore he wills to be “in us by nature,” says Hilary, in both our soul and body, according to the word in John 6, “He who eats me abides in me and I in him.” If we eat him spiritually through the Word, he abides in us spiritually in our soul; if one eats him physically, he abides in us physically and in him. . . . For he is not digested or transformed but ceaselessly he transforms us, our soul into righteousness, out body into immortality. So the ancient fathers spoke of the physical eating. 21

That such is Paul’s understanding is evident by his warnings regarding the manducatio indignorum in 1 Corinthians 11. Even the unworthy are brought into physical koinōnía with the Lord, but without the benefit of the forgiveness of sins because they lack faith in the words “given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” The consequences of an unworthy koinōnía bring judgment of a specific kind, namely, in their bodies. “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep” (11:30). “In place of this characteristic formulation one could scarcely put a statement like: ‘That is why many have not had success in their work, and some have become quite poor.’

Our confessions reflect a long history of appreciation for the benefits that the body receives from her Lord in the Sacrament, especially as a guarantee of the resurrection.

The Lord punishes physically those who by unworthy participation in the Lord’s Supper are guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.22 The reality of this koinōnía cannot be doubted. Its “how” is unknown. The cause of the bodily judgment is an inner impenitence.

That man’s spiritual condition manifests itself bodily in this reception serves to indicate the radical reality of that wholeness of man discussed above. The body receives these benefits only through its being part and parcel of that believing human being’s reception of the body and blood of Christ joined to that promise of forgiveness. So we learn:

I have taught and still teach that Christ’s flesh is not only of no avail but actually is poison and death if it is eaten without faith and the Word. I have said further that God and the Holy Spirit himself are pure poison and death, and of no avail, if they are received without faith. For Scripture says, “To the impure nothing is pure,” Titus 1 . . . But on the other hand, to eat Christ’s flesh is salutary, necessary, and useful if it is eaten physically in connection with the Word and with faith. 23

Is physical healing also to be attributed to reception of the Sacrament? Though some of the early liturgies pray for this result and some of the early fathers speak in this way, 24 there is no divine promise. Potentially the forgiveness of sins can always bring physical healing, as Jesus’ ministry to the paralytic and others indicates. But in the face of suffering and sickness we see only the hidden will of God. His revealed will is to be seen in the Sacrament’s connection to the bodily resurrection. Jesus disclosed it in the verba when he said, “I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Mt 26:29). That day will be after the resurrection, when we are seated in his presence at the Messianic banquet.

In the act of reception the manducatio oralis is the dawn of the last things. For this act leads us to the boundary line that separates our body, appointed to death, from the body of Christ, which overcame death. It is simultaneously the actual obliteration of that line of separation. The dawn is here related to the consummation as this present “life,” which according to John is promised by Christ, is related to the resurrection on the Last Day. 25

Three tests have been applied to the Sacrament of the Altar as φάρμακον ἀθανασίας: those of Christology, anthropology, and the Sacrament itself. In each case it is clear that to confess the Sacrament as efficacious for the body as well as the soul has not been contradicted by either Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions. Indeed, both loudly affirm that such a bodily benefit is a consequence of our Lord’s forgiveness of the sinner, for where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation. What the Lord would give, faith knows only to receive.

MEDICINE OF IMMORTALITY IN THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

Our confessions reflect a long history of appreciation in the church for the benefits that the body receives from her Lord in the Sacrament, especially as a guarantee of the resurrection. That the Supper is meant for the whole man, body and soul, is one of the fundamental elements of the church’s worship and teaching. An easy way to gauge that usage is to examine some of her historic liturgies.

These liturgies serve as a witness to what the church has believed, confessed, and taught, for the church has always used her liturgy for catechesis. The church’s ancient liturgies can be divided into four major regional families: (1) The Syrian liturgies, centered in Antioch, which was probably the origin of the earliest complete Communion rite that has come down to us, the Apostolic Constitutions. A further distinction is made between East Syrian liturgies from Mesopotamia-Persia and West Syrian liturgies from Syria-Palestine, of which the Liturgy of St. James is the prime example. (2) The liturgy of Alexandria,
used in Egypt and the neighboring countries, of which the Liturgy of St. Mark is best known. (3) The Western type of liturgy, of which the Roman rite is the prime example. (4) The Byzantine liturgy, centered in Constantinople and derived from the West Syrian tradition. Constantinople’s prestige as the New Rome enabled its rite finally to replace other local rites, just as in the West the rite of Rome eventually prevailed.26

“Come together on the Lord’s Day, break bread and give thanks. . . .” These words of the Didache, dated as early as AD 50–70, remind us that from the very beginning our Lord’s resurrection has been linked to the celebration of the Sacrament, a practice no doubt received from the apostles (Acts 20:7).

The Anaphora of Addai and Mari, one of the oldest known texts, was probably composed about AD 200 for the Syriac-speaking church at Edessa, one of the earliest centers of Christianity (East Syrian rite). Its epiclesis reads:

May your Holy Spirit, Lord, come and rest on this offering of your servants, and bless and sanctify it, that it may be to us, Lord, for remission of debts, forgiveness of sins, and the great hope of resurrection from the dead, and new life in the kingdom of heaven.27 Its post-Communion prayer reads:

Having received the precious body and blood of Christ . . . let [them] not be [to] our condemnation but our salvation, the well-being of soul and body . . . the forgiveness of sins, the life of the world to come.34

The Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles shares much common material with the Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom, and both seem to have been derived from an older common original text dating from the beginning of the fourth century (Antioch).35

That they [the body and the blood] may be to all who partake of them for life and resurrection, for forgiveness of sins, and health of soul and body, and enlightenment of mind, and defence before the dread judgment-seat of your Christ. 36

The Mass of the Roman Rite cannot be precisely dated. Quotations and parallels begin to appear towards the end of the fourth century. The oldest manuscripts go back to the eighth century.

[Post-Communion prayer] May the receiving of your body, Lord Jesus Christ, which in my unworthiness I dare to take, bring on me neither judgment nor condemnation; but in your mercy may it be to me protection of mind and body, and receiving of a remedy.37

Three of these early liturgies include specific language that links the reception of the Sacrament to the resurrection of the body (the anaphoras of Sts. Addai and Mari, St. Peter, and the Twelve Apostles). These are derived from the Jerusalem/Antioch family of liturgies. The Coptic translation of the liturgy of St. Mark (Alexandrian rite) speaks more generally of immortality as being a benefit. This language is also found in other liturgies.38

In addition, four of the above liturgies connected reception of Holy Communion to some kind of bodily health or protection (the liturgies of Sarapion, St. Mark [Coptic translation], the Twelve Apostles and the Roman Rite). These liturgies originated in the worship life of Alexandria and Rome. So of the four major centers of Christianity in the early church, only the Communion liturgy of the Byzantine rite of Constantinople is without a specific reference to the benefits to the whole man that our Lord offers in the Sacrament.

Later the priest prays:

For he [Christ] is the living and life-giving bread who comes down from heaven, and gives life to the whole world, of which they who eat him shall not die; and they who receive it are saved by it, and do not see corruption, and live through it forever; and you are the antidote of our mortality, and the resurrection of our entire frame.39

The Euchologion of Sarapion is attributed to Sarapion, the Bishop of Thmuis in the Nile Delta. He was the close friend and supporter of Athanasius. The Euchologion consists of a kind of ritual with thirty liturgical prayers. It is dated in the fourth century, though some of the prayers may date from well before that period (Alexandrian rite). The anaphora reads:

O God of truth . . . make all who partake to receive a medicine of life for the healing of every disease.40

The Liturgy of St. Mark, the traditional Greek eucharistic liturgy of the church of Alexandria, contains substantial additions from the liturgies of St. Basil and St. James in its final thirteenth-century form. An early edition of this rite appears in a Coptic translation (Anaphora of St. Cyril) made soon after AD 451 (Alexandrian [Coptic] rite). Its anaphora reads:

Send upon these loaves and these cups your Holy Spirit . . . that they may become to all of us who partake of them for faith, for sobriety, for healing, for renewal of soul, body, and spirit, for fellowship in eternal life and immortality.41

It also has the priest say in the homologia prior to the Communion:

This is in truth the body and blood of Emmanuel our God . . . I believe and confess unto the last breath that this is the vivifying flesh which thine only begotten Son our Lord and our God and our Savior Jesus Christ took of the lady of us all, the holy Theotokos. . . . It is given for us to be salvation and forgiveness of sins and life everlasting to them that shall receive it.32

The Apostolic Constitutions is a compilation from about AD 375. Book 8, in describing the ceremonies for the consecration of a bishop, inserts the prayers of a liturgy attributed to St. Clement of Rome. Its source is the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome, which was compiled in the year AD 315.33 Its post-Communion prayer reads:

That they [the body and the blood] may be to all who partake of them for life and resurrection, for forgiveness of sins, and health of soul and body, and enlightenment of mind, and defence before the dread judgment-seat of your Christ.36

The Mass of the Roman Rite cannot be precisely dated. Quotations and parallels begin to appear towards the end of the fourth century. The oldest manuscripts go back to the eighth century.

[Post-Communion prayer] May the receiving of your body, Lord Jesus Christ, which in my unworthiness I dare to take, bring on me neither judgment nor condemnation; but in your mercy may it be to me protection of mind and body, and receiving of a remedy.37

Three of these early liturgies include specific language that links the reception of the Sacrament to the resurrection of the body (the anaphoras of Sts. Addai and Mari, St. Peter, and the Twelve Apostles). These are derived from the Jerusalem/Antioch family of liturgies. The Coptic translation of the liturgy of St. Mark (Alexandrian rite) speaks more generally of immortality as being a benefit. This language is also found in other liturgies.38
Some of the early hymns of the church likewise proclaim a connection between the Sacrament and resurrection. The Communion hymn “Your Sacred Body,” written before the third century, leads the church to pray in the context of receiving the Lord’s body and blood:

In place of the shroud in which you were buried, 
may we too be clad in invincible power.
In place of the new tomb and your sepulcher, 
may we receive the renewal of soul and body.  

The close connection between the reception of the Lord’s body and blood and our physical selves has disappeared in the Reformed and Lutheran liturgies. This, however, is not the case in Lutheran hymnody.

Break forth, my soul, in joy and say: 
What wealth has come to me today, 
What health of body, mind, and soul! 
Christ dwells within me, makes me whole.  

My Lord, you here have led me 
Within your holiest place 
And here yourself have fed me 
With treasures of your grace; 
For you have freely given 
What earth could never buy, 
The bread of life from heaven, 
That now I shall not die.  

You gave me all I wanted; 
This food can death destroy.  

Through the gifts Thou here dost give me 
As Thy guest in heaven receive me.  

This feast is manna, wealth abounding 
Unto the poor, to weak ones power, 
To angels joy, to hell confounding, 
And life for me in death’s dark hour.  

Omitted German stanzas continue: 

Dein Fleisch wird mich einst auferwecken 
und bringen aus dem Grab herfür, 
drum kann kein finstter Grab mich schrecken, 
es wird durch dich mein Lustrevier. 

Mein todtes Fleisch wird wieder leben, 
ob es die Würmer schon verzehrt, 
ihm wird das Leben wieder geben 
dein Fleisch, das mich jetzt hat genährt.  
(Kirchengesangbuch, St. Louis, 202:18, 19)  

Other hymns include the phrases “this food is to be taken / By the sick who are distressed”  
“Through weary, sinful, sick, and weak, / Refuge in you alone I seek, / To share your 

Some of the early hymns of the church likewise proclaim a connection between the Sacrament and resurrection. 

Justin Martyr (ca. 100–ca. 165) is the only apologist to speak in detail about the Lord’s Supper. Like Ignatius, Justin, following John 6, regards the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament as “the food of immortality.”

We do not receive the Eucharist as ordinary bread or as an ordinary drink. But just as our Savior Jesus Christ was made flesh by the Word of God and took flesh and blood for our salvation, in the same way, we have learned, that by the words of prayer received from him, the eucharistic food is the flesh and blood of Jesus incarnate, food that is assimilated and nourishes our flesh and blood.

Irenaeus (ca. 130–ca. 200), bishop of Lyons and pupil of Polycarp, uses the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper to defend the faith against the Gnostics “who . . . deny the salvation of the flesh, and scorn its new birth, saying that it cannot receive incorruption.” For example, in the Gospel of Philip the writer links John 6:53–56 and 1 Corinthians 15:50, and concludes that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, but it will be Christ’s flesh, not that of the individual. Irenaeus argues the other way: because in the Sacrament our bodies are incorporated into the body of the Lord and are fed by his flesh as a nourishing food, the believer’s flesh and bones will also be raised. 

Therefore to us, as to babes, the perfect Bread of the Father communicates Himself as milk . . . in order that we, nourished by His Flesh as by the breast . . . might be
able to retain in ourselves the Bread of Immortality.  

So even as . . . the grain of wheat which falls into the earth, and decaying, is raised up manifold by the Spirit . . . so also our bodies, nourished [by the body and blood of Christ], and put into the ground, and dissolved therein, shall rise again in their own time, the Word of God giving them resurrection.

The Council of Nicaea (325) was summoned by Emperor Constantine primarily to deal with the Arian heresy. The leading champions of Orthodoxy were Athanasius and Alexander of Alexandria. While not addressing the Sacrament directly, Canon XIII is significant.

Concerning the departing, the ancient canonical law is still to be maintained, to wit, that, if any man be at the point of death, he must not be deprived of the last and most indispensable Viaticum.

So intimately was the Sacrament connected with death and resurrection that even the “stern and invariable canons of the public penance” were bent to allow its reception.

Cyril of Alexandria’s (d. 444) doctrine of the Eucharist is a result of his christology. He stressed the hypostatic union of the two natures in opposition to Nestorius. Because he is quoted so frequently by the confessors, we take a somewhat longer look at the writings of Cyril. In his Third Letter to Nestorius Cyril writes,

When we approach the sacramental gifts and are hallowed participants in the holy flesh and precious blood of Christ, Savior of us all, by receiving not mere flesh (God forbid!) or flesh of a man hallowed by connection with the Word in some unity of dignity or possessing some divine indwelling, but the personal, truly vitalizing flesh of God the Word himself. As God He is by nature Life and because He has become one with His own flesh He declared it vitalizing (ep. 70).

Cyril calls the flesh of Christ “vitalizing” because he, along with the Fathers before him, identified the essence and nature of God with his power (δύναμις) and activity (ένεργεία). Thus the union of the λόγος and his body is a union of divine power and energy with human flesh. Cyril transfers his understanding of the role of divine δύναμις and ένεργεία from his doctrine of the Incarnation into his understanding of the vivifying virtue of the Eucharist. Cyril maintains that what the life-giving Word Incarnate did among men during his earthly ministry, he now does in the Lord’s Supper. According to Gebremedhin,

In his commentary on John 6:53 Cyril makes reference to the raising from the dead by Jesus of the daughter of the chief of the synagogue (Luke 8:54) and of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:12). What Cyril says in this connection helps to illustrate our point. Cyril writes, “And if by the touch of His holy flesh, He gives life to that which has decayed, how shall we not profit yet more richly by the life-giving blessing when we also taste it.”

The flesh of Christ, impregnated with divine power and energy, has a “life-giving virtue.” Hence the terms “vivifying” and “of life” are used with almost all of Cyril’s references to the Sacrament. The two most common designations are “life-giving flesh (σώματος ζωοποιού) and the “flesh of life” (τὸ σώματος ζωῆς). Thus to participate in the Communion is to participate in the life of Christ.

What are the benefits of such a participation? The first benefit is that the faithful become “concorporeal” (συνεσώματος) with Christ (Jo. 11). Through the Holy Spirit they partake of the nature of God (γλαφθ. Gen. 1) and are “mixed (τυμωνακεμαμεττάσθης) with Christ on a level befitting man (fr. Mt. 26:27). The former union is effected through the Holy Spirit and the latter through the body and blood of Christ.” Christ is in the faithful in a real way by a natural participation (μεικτα εσώματι). “Just as melting two pieces of wax by fire results in one thing out of two, so are those who participate in the body and blood of Christ united to Him and He to them” (Jo. 10).

The second benefit is that through the Eucharist the believers become “concorporeal” with one another by virtue of the fact that they share in the same physical body of Christ. “Blessing, through the mystery of the Eucharist, those who believe on Him, He makes us of the same body with Himself and with each other by one body (His own)” (Jo. 11). “Cyril calls this union a “physical union” (ένεργον τοῦ φυσικοῦ) (Jo. 11). Thus the faithful are incorporated into a “physical union” with Christ and with each other.”

The third benefit is as a “journey provision” (ἔφοδος) for the Christian church on pilgrimage. The Table of the Lord is a place of restoration and renewal for the fight against the flesh and the devil: “. . . the mystical table, the flesh of Christ, makes us strong against passions and demons. For Satan fears those who receive the mysteries with reverence and piety.”

But the gift of the Eucharist that Cyril mentions most frequently is incorruptibility, for which he uses the words ἀθάνατος and ἀθανασία interchangeably. Death dared to attack Christ, the “body of Life,” but was instead destroyed by him. This victory is now given to the believer through the Eucharist. Cyril writes,

From early times, that is, from the first time of the present world, death ravaged those who lived on earth, until the hour of the meal, i.e., until the time of the table. But when the time of the holy table arose for us, that table which is in Christ and is mystical, from which we eat the bread which is from heaven and is live-giving,
then death, which of old was fearful and most powerful, was destroyed (ador. 3).

In light of Cyril’s close connection to it, we mention here the Third General Council, held at Ephesus in 431. Summoned by Theodosius II in the hope of settling the Nestorian controversy, it made this pronouncement against Nestorius, who was unwilling to ascribe quickening to the flesh of Christ, but explained the passages in John 6 as referring to the divinity alone: “If anyone does not confess that the flesh of the Lord is quickening, because it was made the Word’s own, who quickens all things, let him be anathema.”

Though “councils can err,” such a pronouncement, quoted by the Reformers, bears such weight that it cannot be easily cast aside.

If one thing is evident from the above survey, it is the connection that the fathers saw between receiving the body and blood of Christ and our resurrection. The Bible does not tell us the doctrine in how this connection, only that “he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). That our body is fed with the body of Christ, accompanied by a promise of forgiveness more sure than the rising of the sun, can only be with the effect that “our faith and hope . . . abide and that our body also may live eternally from the same eternal food of the body of Christ.”

CONCLUSION


2. “Christ bids me eat and drink in order that the sacrament may be mine and may be a source of blessing to me as a sure pledge and sign—indeed, as the very gift he has provided for me against my sins, death, and all evils” (LC V, 22). See also AC XIII.

3. “Therefore, it is appropriately called the food of the soul since it nourishes and strengthens the new man. While it is true that through Baptism we are first born anew . . . there are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint. . . . The Lord’s Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger” (LC V, 23f).

4. SD VII, 44. Luther emphasized this benefit in his first writings on the Supper. See especially A Treatise Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the True Body of Christ and Concerning the Brotherhoods (1539).

5. “We must regard the sacrament as “a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body has benefited also . . . those who feel their weakness, who are anxious to be rid of it and desire help, should regard and use the sacrament as a precious antidote against the poison in their systems. For here in the sacrament you receive from Christ’s lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and conveys God’s grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death and the devil and all evils” (LC V, 68, 70).


7. See SD VIII, 59 and 76, where twice the confessors appeal to John 6:48–58 and the Council of Ephesus for support in regarding the flesh of Christ as vivificus cibus. See also the quotations in the Catalogus Testimoniorum, especially can. 11 (Trig. p. 1128) and the “Visitatio Articles,” authored by Melanchthon, “The body and blood of Christ are received . . . for a pledge and assurance of the resurrection of our bodies from the dead” (Trig. p. 1151).


10. Gregory Nazianzen, “What was not assumed was not redeemed”; Cyril of Jerusalem, “If the incarnation was a fantasy, also the redemption was a fantasy” (Catech. 4); also Tertullian (Adv. Marc. III, 8).


12. Triglotta, p. 1123.
13. Triglotta, p. 1133. Similar declarations by Cyril, other fathers, and councils are cited on pp. 1115, 1128, 1134, 1140, 1147, and less specific statements by the fathers throughout the Catalog of Testimonies.

14. AE 37:100 f.


18. Sasse, We Confess the Sacraments, p. 96.

19. Sasse, We Confess the Sacraments, p. 75.

20. When the Lord gives us his true body and blood in the Sacrament he thereby incorporates us into his body, the church. This incorporation takes place not only through the “truly and substantially present” (vere et substantialiter adesse) Christ, but also through the truly and substantially present body and blood of Christ (Ap X, 1). We are one body in Christ not only because of the spiritual blessings of the Sacrament, but also through the “communication of the flesh of Christ” (Ap X, 3).

Does this have any ramification for the various inter-Communion dialogues taking place? Does it not force us to confront the question: “Dare we receive the gift of the Lord’s body and blood with those who deny that gift is present? Is it really sufficient to confess the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament in such a general, “spiritualized” manner that the vere et substantialiter adesse body and blood of Christ, with all of its benefits, is omitted? By acknowledging only a “partial presence” of Christ, do we not thereby deny him and make our own participation unworthy?

Such inter-Communion also jeopardizes our confession of other articles of doctrine, for are they not equally pure gifts to the church given us joyfully to confess at the altar? The real and substantial presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Sacrament hinges upon and confesses our Lord’s incarnation, sacrificial death, victorious resurrection, ascension and session at God’s right hand, and his coming again in glory. It confesses the Bible’s revelation of Jesus Christ as true God and true man and the communication of the attributes of those two natures. To acknowledge the presence of his vivifying body is to confess our own status as sinners, our impotence before the grave, and the solid hope of our own resurrection.


22. Sasse, We Confess the Sacraments, p. 76.

23. AE 37:238. See also p. 191. Pieper’s concern [Christian Dogmatics, vol. 3, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 113] that ascribing the benefit of φάρμακον ἀθανάσιας to the Lord’s Supper might lead us to fall into the Romanist error of an operation of the sacraments ex opere operato sine bono motu utentis is acknowledged but is here answered by Luther. The body and blood of the Lord are present and received according to his Word, but their benefits are grasped only by faith. The same would be true of the promises in Holy Baptism or Holy Absolution.

24. Augustine reports how several miraculous cures were effected through the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (De civ. dei, 22, 8ff.).


35. Wegman, p. 127.


38. The Didache, Anaphora of Basil, Liturgy of St. James, Apostolic Constitutions, and the Anaphora of Epiphanius of Salamis. This language is preserved in the contemporary Lutheran liturgy, where communicants are dismissed with the words, “The body and blood of our Lord strengthen and preserve you steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting” (LW, p. 152). More specific is the distribution formula of The Book of Common Prayer of 1549, and The Scottish Prayer Book of 1637(!): “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.”


40. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215); Paed. I.6.42.2–3; I.6.49.3; Ped. 43.1 and 47.1. Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260–ca. 340). Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315–367), the ‘Athanasius of the West,’ was a defender of orthodoxy against Arianism and the leading and most respected Latin theologian of his age: De Trin. 8.13–17; Ps. 127.10. St. Athanasius (ca. 296–373), Bishop of Alexandria and defender of

41. ὁς ἐστὶν φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, ἀντίδοτος τοῦ μὴ ἁπαθείν. Eph. 20. 2. Lietzmann, p. 210, observes that Ignatius most probably borrowed the expression from the liturgy of Antioch.


43. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.2.2.


45. Against Heresies 4.38.1.

46. Against Heresies 5.2.3.


49. Gebremedhin, pp. 48 f.

50. Gebremedhin, p. 50.

51. Gebremedhin, p. 67.

52. Gebremedhin, p. 54.

53. For an insightful summary of Cyril’s Christology and Eucharistic doctrine, especially as it pertained to the Nestorian controversy, see Henry Chadwick, History and Thought of the Early Church (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), pp. 145 ff.

54. Gebremedhin, p. 90.

55. Gebremedhin, p. 92.

56. Luke, as quoted in Gebremedhin, p. 91.


58. “Si quis non confitetur carnem domini esse vivificant, propertea quod propria facta est Verbi, quod omnia vivificant, anathema sit.” Triglotta, Catalog of Testimonies, p. 1129. The Seven Ecumenical Councils, p. 213.

59. For a discussion of the applicability of John 6 to the Lord’s Supper, see Sasse, We Confess the Sacraments, pp. 74 ff.

60. Æ 37:132.
Review Essay

No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?

The title of this book is provocative, and the content fulfills its promise. David Wells, a professor at Gordon-Conwell Divinity School, has written what I believe is one of the best books on the state of Christianity in America today. He identifies himself as an Evangelical and specifically assesses the so-called Evangelical churches; but his conclusions speak to every religious group in America that wants to be a church and not just a reflection of American culture. Wells’s thesis is simply this: the Evangelical churches have plunged into theological illiteracy.

The genesis of this book was Wells’s surprising encounter with a student who was grateful for the theology course Wells had taught. The student related that taking the course in theology was a mighty struggle and admitted that he had initially wondered if it was right to spend so much money on a course that he thought was irrelevant to his desire to minister to people. Wells views this incident as a sign of the times.

Wells believes that Evangelicals are in trouble because they have succumbed to the thinking and standards of the modern world. Modernity is a complex phenomenon. On a secular level, Wells defines modernity as a coalition of Enlightenment ideals with market economies, technology, urbanization, bureaucracies, and mass communication. On the religious level, interest in the natural has supplanted interest in the supernatural. People speak in terms of facts, not truth: “Give me the facts, and I’ll make up my own mind on what constitutes the truth.” People are not concerned with unchangeable universal truths, but about changing cultural and personal circumstances. In this culture, God is marginalized. This in turn leads to a loss of faith. Wells comments, “When we believe in nothing, we open the doors to believe anything.” Wells believes that these developments have led to a “self-piety,” one which has been unhitched from the knowledge of sin. The individual is accountable only to himself/herself. The resulting ethic: what is right is what feels good.

Evangelicals have claimed to oppose modernity, but Wells, who claims to write from a position that is antimodern across the entire front, observes that Evangelicals are antimodern across a narrow front. Only when assumptions in the culture dramatically contradict articles of faith do Evangelicals engage in a struggle against “secular humanism.” Aside from that, they view culture as neutral and harmless. Wells regards this latter position as naive; for him, culture is dangerous and undermines the substance of faith.

This crisis of belief was not always present. There was a time when faith and life were more unified. To illustrate his point, Wells documents the history and life of a small town outside of Boston, Wenham, Massachusetts. He observes that the Puritan soul lived on “homiletically” in the ministers who served in Wenham. Their sermons “were addresses distilled from Christian understanding in which texts and life were interwoven with one other—and in this they reflected both how the people thought and how life was.” Those sermons did not have to forcefully “contextualize” biblical revelation. Wenham was characterized by permanence—a quality that modern culture lacks. Commenting on people who grew up in Wenham, Wells says, “Their world was permanent because they knew God to be unchanging; ours is impermanent and God seems to have largely disappeared.” Modernity has exacted a high price from us.

What is most remarkable about modern people is that they are not in scale with the world they inhabit informationally and psychologically. They are dwarfed. And they have been emptied of their metaphysical substance; more precisely, it has been sucked out of them. There is nothing to give height or depth or perspective to anything they experience. They know more, but they are not necessarily wiser. They believe less, but they are not more substantial. They are attuned to experience and to appearances, not to thought and character. And that is what it has meant to move from the kind of life represented by early Wenham to what we today encounter in the modern world.

Wells is aware of the complexities of modernity and how we reached modernity. He is not so naïve as to think that the example of Wenham tells the whole tale. His assessment of the historical developments that led to modernity is both detailed and realistic. Modernity places a high view on progress, but in Judeo-Christian values, a belief that progress is the highest ideal of humans is symptomatic of decay, not a movement upward.
Wells believes that the modern workplace undercuts religious belief and morality and promotes a pluralism that attempts to minimize conflict between competing views, even if it means compromising important values. The result is secularization, which internalizes and individualizes values. Even if many people hold to basic Christian beliefs, these are, says Wells, "stranded on the banks of private consciousness." He goes on to state, "Tradition and authority have been severed; only power remains." Power has been severed from moral order, so there is nothing to correct or contain power.

Wells contends that the Evangelical churches have responded to modernity by abandoning theology. Wells believes that theology is as significant for the congregation as it is for the seminary. He asserts that theology must have a confessional element; there must be reflection on that confessional element; finally, that confessional element must be acted out in the church's life. Wells judges that all three are absent in the Evangelical churches.

This disappearance of theology has affected Evangelicals in many ways. In pastoral dealings with people psychology has replaced confession. Even if confession occurs, it has been reduced down to thought about one's self. When theological considerations are abandoned, an identity crisis ensues; something must be done to fill the void. In the face of this, the church searches for techniques to expand the church and master the self. That in turn has led to a redefinition of the pastor—from being a preacher and teacher of the Word to being a manager and psychologist. These have replaced "sound doctrine" and "sound instruction." Basic Christian beliefs are removed from the center and relegated to the periphery.

These developments have had an adverse effect on the Evangelical seminaries. Wells maintains that seminaries increasingly train for "professional activities" and that theological substance has been replaced with "know-how in the soul-caring business"—which is untheological, even anti-theological. A successful career in a big church, not theological integrity, becomes the goal of a seminary education.

Evangelicalism has also lost its historical consciousness. Wells contends that evangelicism has forgotten its classical Christian heritage and has surrendered to modernity. A culture that once learned its habits from the Christian faith now learns its habits from psychologists. Unfortunately, many Evangelicals assume that this is what the faith is about. But this is not faith. It is not an alternative system of belief, but no system of belief at all. Symptoms of this are a subjective view of faith, a religion of good feelings that is characterized by euphoria and self-indulgence, and a conviction that there are no objective, absolute truths. Doctrinal controls have slipped, and those who argue for their preservation are diminishing in numbers.

Evangelicals have followed America in accepting a "middle ground." Anything that reflects excellence or intellect is regarded as pretentious. Everything is equal, including religious beliefs. The populist religious movements that result from these attitudes produce leaders who are able to appeal to the masses, gather followers, and produce a common ideal. Wells believes these movements promote an anti-clericalism that attempts to undermine the standard of a trained clergy. Communication replaces content; experience substitutes for doctrine. All distinctions between clergy and laity are erased; personal opinion rather than authority based on learning rules the day. Everyone possesses truth; everyone's intuitions stand on equal level and are regarded as equally true. This has created a crisis of leadership.

Contemporary servant leaders are typically individuals without any ideas of their own, people whose convictions shift with the popular opinion to which they assiduously attune themselves, people who bow to the wishes of "the body" from whom their direction and standing derive. They lead by holding aloft moist fingers to sense the changes in the wind. In all this they show themselves to be different indeed from the One who embodied what servanthood was intended to be and who never tailored his teaching to what he judged the popular reception of it would be—unless he was an exceedingly poor judge of what the crowds and religious leaders had in mind as they heard him. And to suppose that he derived the legitimacy to teach from the implied permission of those who heard him is to misunderstand both the Gospels and Christ himself. It is a supposition that also leads to the misunderstanding of the Christian faith and why God provides the teachers that it and the Church needs.

This crisis of leadership has produced what Wells calls "the new disablers." These constitute a new clerical order in which technical and managerial competence have come to define the ministry. The pastor as proclaimer of the truth has been replaced by the pastor as manager. Wells believes that this has led to a "professionalization" of the ministry—which he claims has elevated techniques and undermined theology. The result of this is a "new order of sacred fools." Once theology has been disengaged from the ministry and the life of the church, ministers must seek a niche in order to find meaning in what they do.

Since theology is no longer central, sermons become less and less biblically oriented; in many instances, the content of preaching is only vaguely Christian or not obviously Christian at all. And yet, ironically, wonderment is expressed at the numbers of lay people who are biblically and theologically ignorant and possess no specific set of beliefs. Why are we surprised? If ministers do not teach and preach, then the church is disabled and is vulnerable to the seductions of modernity. If there is no biblical and theological content in the church’s life, then the church is empty of meaning.

Wells is critical of several groups among Evangelicals that he believes have helped to promote the decline of theological substance—pietists, advocates of relational theology, the celebrators of self (e.g., Robert Schuller), the charismatics, and the Church Growth Movement. These groups are diverse, but they all have the assumption in common that theology is irrelevant and causes harm. They will not let their "theological slip" show, if they have any slip at all.

Wells believes that much of what passes for religion in America is pagan. The pagans rely on nature for revelation and experience for understanding; they have no moral categories. They rely on the experience of the moment and regard history as having no value. In the face of this, Wells calls for a return to the biblical mind. That means seeing God’s actions in history, seeing meaning
as supplied by God, and accepting that God’s actions cannot be finally known until they are completed—eschatology is essential. The Christian faith deals in objective truths, and these truths stand in opposition to any and all religious assumptions that are based on subjective feelings and experience. For Evangelicals, any reform means a rejection of modernity and the concept that culture is neutral in its values and therefore poses no threat. Any belief in the forward movement of humanity must be regarded as an illusion.

This is a powerfully written and engaging book; it is a damning indictment of evangelicalism. We have been led to believe that evangelicalism is the one Christian group in America that has its house in order. Wells exposes its flaws—fatal flaws—and demonstrates that the Evangelicals are no better off than the other churches in this country. They too struggle with modernity, and the verdict is that they have fallen prey to modernity’s seductions. The result is something that, at its roots, is more pagan than Christian.

No Place for Truth is also a damning indictment of American Christianity (or what passes for Christianity in America). Since we Lutherans are a part of it, Wells is also damning us. His description, which is richly detailed and thought-provoking, is not a pretty one. We have been found faithless, and we need to bring order to our house. Wells says that what is needed is not revival, which often proves to be only temporary, but reform. This is an important book, for both pastors and laity. All can profit from this book and its message—that consciences might be pricked and that we might be prodded by the Spirit to reform the church, with all the risks that entails. Wells obviously believes this is a matter of life and death. He is right, it is.

David A. Gustafson
Peace Lutheran Church
Poplar, Wisconsin


At Table with Jesus: An Invitation to the Ongoing Feast

The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus, Arthur Just suggests just such an approach. (Arthur A. Just Jr. is associate professor of pastoral theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he teaches homiletics, liturgy, and New Testament.) Just suggests that we begin with Luke 24, and with Emmaus. For, according to St. Luke, the first time that Jesus was recognized by his disciples as the crucified and risen Messiah was on the way to Emmaus. And it was by means of two conspicuous actions that Jesus caused his disciples to finally “see” their risen Lord. First he taught them. And then he broke bread with them.

In other words, suggests Just, he gave them to understand the place and the purpose of word and sacrament. For St. Luke’s account of the Emmaus meal represents the end point of an eschatological scheme in which Jesus’ table fellowship with his disciples has been prominently featured, a table fellowship of teaching and eating. Emmaus, therefore, represents the climax of the entire Gospel. And as such, it serves both as a principal vehicle for its interpretation and as a paradigmatic event for the life of the church, which is born of the same risen Christ.

This final chapter of St. Luke’s Gospel, then, “is pivotal to the two volume work of Luke-Acts. It makes possible an understanding of the purpose of the Gospel and the purpose of Acts, for the evangelist’s final word in the Gospel looks back upon the ministry of Jesus to give meaning to what had happened, while at the same time it looks forward to the Acts of the Apostles and sets the stage for what is about to unfold” (p. 1). At the end of the Gospel, therefore, the reader is given to understand “that the table fellowship of Jesus with his people was from the first a manifestation of the eschatological kingdom” and that the first Christian meals were to be “an anamnesis, not just of Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples, but of the entire table fellowship that Jesus engaged in from his baptism to his ascension” (p. 2).

Now if this is so, argues Just, then there is much that Emmaus has to say concerning word and sacrament. First of all, consider what Emmaus has to say concerning the proper focus of word and sacrament. For the table fellowship of Christ, which on the way to Emmaus included both his words on the road and the breaking of the bread, has as its primary point of reference the “hour” of Jesus (22:14; cf. 24:33). The word that Jesus shares with his disciples on the way is, therefore, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, that word of God from all the Scriptures which speaks of the necessity of his suffering and death (vv. 26–27). And it is only in the light of the “things” concerning Christ’s passion that his disciples are caused to “see” him in the breaking of the bread (cf. v. 35). Luke consciously frames the entire passion and resurrection of Jesus with two meals, both of unleavened bread: “the Last Supper, the last Passover of the old age (22:14–38), and the Emmaus Supper, the first meal of the new age (24:13–35)” (pp. 36–38). For Luke is most concerned to establish that the fellowship Jesus enjoyed with his disciples throughout his ministry was a table fellowship of teaching and of eating that reached its climax with Jesus’ hour. Indeed, it is precisely because Jesus suffered and died that his table fellowship with his own lives on (cf. Acts 2:42).

Consider also what Emmaus has to say concerning the intended recipients of word and sacrament. “If the Emmaus meal is proleptic of the meal fellowship of the early Christian communities, then the location of the Emmaus meal is also proleptic of the primary geographical location where meal fellowship will be celebrated in the Church, i.e., outside Jerusalem” (p. 51). Meal fellowship, then, is not just for the Jews; neither is it just for the Eleven (pp. 53–54). “Luke’s classic statement—‘this man receives sinners and eats with them’—sums up Jesus’ table fellowship ministry” (p. 61). It is to be for all. Whether one is Jew or Gentile, then, is not the essential matter. That which is essential to proper table fellowship is, again, “an exposition of the Scriptures that entails a proper interpretation of the passion facts” (p. 80). The
colloquium of Jesus with his disciples on the way to Emmaus, therefore, precedes the breaking of the bread. For the goal of the colloquium is faith on the part of Jew and Gentile alike, “faith to believe all that the prophets had spoken about the suffering of the Christ . . . setting the pattern for all Christian dialogue within the worshiping assembly. The colloquium is Christological and functions within the table fellowship matrix as preparation for the meal” (p. 85). In the meal, then, “Neither the teaching itself nor the eating itself is of greater importance than the other; both must be considered together as one-and-the-same activity.” For, “When one sits down at a table with friends, one talks and one eats” (p. 129).

Thus, Emmaus has something to say finally concerning the intended character of word and sacrament as well. For the principal focus of the Emmaus narrative is this table fellowship of Jesus which bears not one, but two distinct and conspicuous climaxes, each in relation to the other.

The first climax is the teaching of Jesus that takes place in Luke 24:25–27 where the risen Christ opens up the Scriptures to the disciples. But this “climax” simply prepares for the greater climax where Jesus is recognized in the breaking of the bread in Luke 24:30–31. The significance of this distinction is that the teaching together with the breaking of the bread form the climax of Luke’s Gospel. This is the first time a disciple of Jesus recognizes by faith that Jesus is the risen, suffering Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. The teaching of Jesus in 24:25–27 creates burning hearts, preparing the disciples for revelation, but it is in the breaking of the bread in 24:30 that we have the moment of revelation (p. 219).

Each of these details, then, even the conspicuous order of “teaching, then eating” serves to set the pattern not only for the early Christian meals in Acts (p. 220) but also for all of Christian liturgy (p. 240). For this is what Christian liturgy is. It is the celebration of Jesus’ exegesis of “the things he taught on the road” and of his appearance “in the breaking of the bread,” of teaching and eating, of word and sacrament (p. 259).

Thus, “The common bond between the Emmaus meal, the meals of Jesus during his ministry, the Last Supper, and the early Christian meals is that these meals are first and foremost acts of table fellowship where Christ is present in one form or another to teach and eat with his people” (p. 240). Beginning with Luke 22, however, the presence of Christ, while still “real,” takes on a new character, causing Jesus at the climactic moment of Luke 24 to disappear from view.

With the crucifixion and resurrection, the table fellowship of Jesus has been transformed. . . . He no longer reclines at table as he did during his ministry, for he is now present with the Church in a new way. The presence of Jesus at the Emmaus meal prepares the Church for his presence at the Eucharist. Emmaus is the transitional meal between the historical meals, including the Last Supper, where he physically and visibly ate with his disciples, and the multiple, endless Eucharistic meals where he is present but not seen (pp. 260–61).

In the end, therefore,

The stranger who walked with them on the road, who became a guest at their home and then host at their meal, is a stranger no more. He is now the host who gives himself for food every time the Church gathers in fellowship around the table to celebrate the presence of the eschatological kingdom through the teaching of his words and the breaking of his bread (p. 261; emphasis mine).

A Few Observations

Now, readers will not find every aspect of this published dissertation equally compelling. As an example, I myself remain unconvincing that Emmaus represents the “climax” of St. Luke’s Gospel. True, Luke is alone among the synoptic writers in making reference to Jesus’ hour (p. 36). And he appears to frame his account of the passion and resurrection of Christ with references to “the hour” in Luke 22:14 and 24:43. It is these final chapters of the Gospel, therefore, that convey to the reader its intended climax. But is the climax of the Gospel to be found in the moment that the disciples see Jesus for who he is, or in the moment that Jesus completes the work that he has come to do?

It is Christ himself who declares that he will not eat of the last Passover (22:16) or drink of its cup (22:18) until “it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (22:16), that is, “when the kingdom of God comes” (22:18; cf. W.30, 51). But when does Christ eat and drink? When does the kingdom come? Is it not until the resurrection, until Emmaus? (p. 232; cf. Lk 24:41–43). Or does Christ speak of an eating, of a drinking, that he will do as he approaches the cross, and as he drinks of the cup of the passion? (22:42; cf. v. 44 and the sour wine of 23:36!). If so, then Christ is powerful to proffer the cup of the Supper because he is the one who drinks of the cup of the final Passover (of which he also gives his disciples to drink in 22:17! cf. Mt 20:22–23/Mk 10:38–39). Jesus does not drink with his disciples. He drinks for them, that they then might drink of him (22:20). With the drinking that Jesus does, then, the Passover is fulfilled and the kingdom of God comes (23:42–43! cf. 22:69; see also 23:2–3, 11, 36–38). But none of his disciples understand. None of them are able to “see.”

Jesus appears to his disciples on the way to Emmaus, then, in order to interpret rightly for them the significance of his hour, to show that the last Passover was not the “last” Supper, and that he would continue to gather at table with his own, but according to a new “real presence.” Emmaus, therefore, provides a needful transition from the ministry of Jesus to that of his disciples. That it represents both the climax of the Gospel and of Luke’s table fellowship matrix, however, seems unlikely.

Still, this in no way detracts from the principal contribution that Just has made. His remains a fresh and, I would suggest, most important approach to a seemingly ages-old discussion. For it is not often acknowledged that the essential form and character of Christian worship bears decidedly biblical roots, is not arbitrarily chosen, and is therefore no mere tradition of men. Neither is the gospel that is to be seen, heard, and tasted in the second half of the word and sacrament equation always appreciated in all its intended fullness.

...
Consider, for example, the gospel that is expressed in the action of “the breaking of the bread.” In early Christian usage, such an act “referred to the entire table fellowship between Jesus and the believing community in remembrance of all the meals that Jesus ate with the community” (p. 235). For “at every common meal the constitution of the table fellowship is accomplished by the rite of the breaking of bread” (p. 235; citing Jeremias). The table fellowship of the Last Supper in particular, then, was memorable for many reasons,

all of which would be recalled by the term “the breaking of the bread.” First, it recalled the breaking of the bread by Jesus at the feeding of the five thousand, which, in turn, recalled the manna in the wilderness. Second, the reader would recall the Lukan petition for daily bread in the Lord’s Prayer in 11:3, a petition for the earthly bread of today and the eschatological bread of tomorrow. Third, the nature of Jesus’ table fellowship throughout his ministry is to break bread with all kinds of people, whether sinners or Pharisees. Fourth, the unique Lukan beatitude of 14:15, “Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,” suggests that the ultimate blessedness of God is to eat bread in the kingdom of God. The reference to the eschatological kingdom in Luke 22:15–18 and the giving of his bread as body in 22:39 both indicate that the source of this blessedness will be in the table fellowship with Jesus. Bread thus takes on an eschatological significance (p. 236).

And the breaking of it speaks volumes. For in Judaism the eating of a piece of broken bread by everyone who shares in a meal brings out the fact that they all have a share in the blessing which the master of the house had spoken over the unbroken bread. Thus Jesus’ meals with the publicans and sinners, too, are not only events on a social level, not only an expression of his unusual humanity and social generosity and his sympathy with those who were despised, but had an even deeper significance. They are an expression of the mission and message of Jesus (Mk 2:17), eschatological meals, anticipatory celebrations of the feast in the end-time (Lk 13:28f; Mt 8:1–12), in which the community of the saints is already being represented (Mk 2:19). The inclusion of sinners in the community of salvation, achieved in table-fellowship, is the most meaningful expression of the message of the redeeming love of God” (pp. 253–54, n. 92; again citing Jeremias).

A Final Invitation

Many stimulating questions, therefore, remain, and hopefully are yet to be explored and discussed. As a prelude to such a discussion, it is a pleasure to recommend The Ongoing Feast. For Just has ably shown how the table fellowship of Jesus serves as a principal means by which the evangelist proclaims the arrival of the eschatological kingdom, the dawn of a new era. Table fellowship in Luke demonstrates that Christianity is a religion embracing both sinners and righteous, both Jews and Gentiles. Table fellowship reveals the most intimate nature of the kingdom of God, namely, that God and humans have fellowship with each other through teaching and eating together. This is the basic, elemental stuff of human existence that all people of all times understand. Jesus’ lifestyle at the table is one of service, and he renders the ultimate service to humanity as God’s innocent, suffering Messiah by giving up his life for the world and offering up that life at the table, for a table is the ultimate place of fellowship for those who will live together without end. This table fellowship “reveals a God who wants to sit down at table with all men and women and will remove all obstacles, even that of death, which stand in the way of the accomplishment of that communion.” Table fellowship, then, is an act of communion and revelation, making known to the world a God who comes to teach about forgiveness through death and resurrection and to offer that forgiveness in the breaking of the bread (pp. 253–54; citing Karris).

Bruce Schuchard
St. James Lutheran Church
Victor, Iowa


In 1992, conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh was vaulted into national notoriety with the publishing of his first book, The Way Things Ought To Be. Many would agree the “socio-political” philosophy championed by Mr. Limbaugh was not, for the most part, something that could be termed “extraordinarily new or creative” or “on the cutting edge of political thought.” But what his book did was give voice to the collective conservative consciousness of individuals all across our nation.

Again, it was not so much what he said, but the way that he said it—exposing the irrational thought and the inconsistent language of those advancing the liberal agenda. As many read his book, they found themselves saying, “Yes! This is exactly what I’ve been feeling, but I’ve never been able to put my thoughts into words.”

That is what this reviewer was saying to himself as he read Postmodern Times. Dr. Veith has made a valuable contribution to those of us who find ourselves—as a church—struggling with the tension of being in the world, but not of the world, and how that statement relates to our worship, our outreach, our being the light of the world. The readers of LOGIA are well aware of the disturbing signs of our time—both inside and outside the Christian church. In many ways it seems as if the foundation of our society is crumbling. Dr. Veith cites Psalm 11:3, both at the beginning and at the conclusion of his book: “When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?” In fact, Psalm 11 is at the
heart of one of the major premises of this book. Veith would have us (the church) make a confession of confident trust in the Lord’s righteous rule, at a time when wicked adversaries seem to have the upper hand. (Let the reader beware: one might be tempted to start singing “A Mighty Fortress” or “Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You” as this book is being read.)

Another major premise of this book is also taken from Scripture. In his preface Veith writes,

To embrace the opportunities and to avoid the traps, Christians should be in a continual process of “understanding the present time” (Romans 13:11). The church has always had to confront its culture and to exist in tension with the world. To ignore the culture is to risk irrelevance; to accept the culture uncritically is to risk syncretism and unfaithfulness.

The book is divided into four sections. Part 1 deals with postmodern thought. According to Veith, one of the major tenets of postmodernism is the conviction that there is no objective truth (no absolutes). With God out of the way, man is able to define “truth” on his own terms—with devastating results. This leads to Veith’s discussion of “constructing and deconstructing the truth” and the role of language. Veith writes of the postmodernist view,

Since language is bound up with our culture, it is largely beyond our control, and we cannot truly even think for ourselves. To a large degree, our language thinks for us. There is no “transcendental logos,” no objective meaning, no realm of absolute truth that exists beyond the bounds of our human language. To use another postmodernist slogan, we are incarcerated in a “prison house of language.”

He then moves on to a discussion of the deconstructionist’s “hermeneutics of suspicion,” observing that “they approach a text not to find out what it objectively means, but to unmask what it is hiding . . . . For the deconstructionists, all truth claims are suspect and are treated as a coverup for power plays.” The last chapter under the heading of postmodern thought is “The Critique of the Human.” Here Veith quotes David Levin in order to show how one of the ultimate goals of postmodernism is “the death of the self.” Veith then adds,

If there are no absolutes in the objective realm, neither can there be absolutes in the subjective realm. There can be no fixed identity, no sense of self, no unified human soul. Modernism was activist, optimistic, and self-confident. Postmodernism is passive, cynical, and insecure.

A final noteworthy point made in this section is Veith’s comment that “postmodernists stress style over substance.” To that, many of us would likely respond, “Oh really . . . you don’t say?”

Part 2 is an in-depth look at postmodern art. Veith covers everything from architecture to television, including Hollywood and contemporary literature. This section of the book is not as thought-provoking as the rest, but that having been said, it is still a very good read. Of special note here is Veith’s rejection of a “consumer mentality” when it comes to Christian worship (i.e., felt needs versus real needs).

Part 3, postmodern society, begins with Veith’s assessment that there is a “new tribalism” at work in our culture. He quotes a journalist who observed that “society is splintering into hundreds of subcultures and designer cults.” Dr. Veith then makes this point: “Segmentation, however, is more than diversity and more than a marketing device. People are finding their identities, not so much in themselves, nor in their families, nor in their communities or nation, but in the groups that they belong to.” What follows is a discussion of multiculturalism and tolerance (which Veith points out is “perhaps the only absolute moral value insisted upon by postmodernists”).

In “The Politics of Power” (chapter 9) Veith makes some startling assertions, beginning with the statement that “the only alternative to transcendent, absolute values is a power struggle in which might makes right” (emphasis added). And even more eye-opening is the claim that the tenets of postmodernism have been tried before in a political system. Social constructivism, cultural determinism, the rejection of individual identity, the rejection of humanism, the denial of the transcendent, power reductionism, the rejection of reason, and the revolutionary critique of the existing order are tenets not only of postmodernism but of fascism.

Part 3 concludes with Veith’s estimation of “everyday postmodernism” (what all of this means on a daily basis to the average person living the average life). He reasons that the cliché-of-the-day, “That may be true for you, but it isn’t true for me,” is inevitable. According to Veith, “With no absolute canons of objective truth, the rational is replaced by the aesthetic. We believe in what we like.”

Part 4, “Postmodern Religion,” is where the egg hits the fan, so to speak. Having discussed its thought process, its artistic expression, and its politics, Veith analyzes the effect of postmodernism on the contemporary church. Chapter 11 has the title “Spirituality without Truth.” On the basis of what this reviewer comes in contact with at his institution of higher(?) learning, Veith has hit the nail on the head! He goes on to demonstrate how religion is no longer a matter of what is true; it is a matter of preference (of choice). And the connection between religion and morality is inescapable. Veith writes,

For postmodernists, morality, like religion, is a matter of desire. What I want and what I choose is not only true (for me) but right (for me). That different people want and choose different things means that truth and morality are relative, but “I have a right” to my desires. Conversely, “no one has the right” to criticize my desires and my choices.

And with the Ten Commandments being as outdated as they are, Veith makes sure that we are all aware of the “new and improved” list of postmodern sins. These “sins” include “being
judgmental,” “being narrow-minded,” “thinking that you have the only truth,” and “trying to enforce your values on anyone else.” In summarizing he states that “the only wrong idea is to believe in truth; the only sin is to believe in sin.”

In the last twenty-five pages of the book, Veith gives the reader a plethora of insight and direction. To no one’s surprise (except, perhaps, some Church Growth gurus), Veith argues that “to be relevant to the postmodern era, the church must simply proclaim the truth of God’s Word, the validity of God’s law, and the sufficiency of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” And after a brief overview of how postmodernists have embraced evangelicalism for the worst (resulting in therapy instead of theology, and theology of glory instead of theology of the cross), Veith condemns this “megashift theology” in no uncertain terms:

Although this theology turns God into a warm, fuzzy therapist, it is essentially a teaching of moralism and despair, focusing on human works. Its facile optimism gives no comfort to tormented souls and includes no efficacious provision for the forgiveness of sin.

Instead of selling out to the culture, Veith encourages the church to be biblical and confessional. “Biblical churches with doctrinal integrity will have a stronger witness than muddled, eager-to-please-everyone congregations that do not stand for anything in particular.”

The book ends where it began, asking the question of Psalm 11. In formulating his “counter-culture” answer, Dr. Veith offers one last bit of advice:

While they [churches] need to reach out to postmoderns, they dare not leave them where they found them. A newly organized church may have to market itself to the unchurched “consumers”; but once they are brought in, the church should challenge that consumer mind-set. The church may have to appeal to people’s emotions, but it then must teach them how to think Biblically.

The author, like King David in Psalm 11, remains positive to the end. And this reviewer is “positive” that Postmodern Times will be a valuable addition to anyone’s library. **Kevin A. Karner**

*University Lutheran Church (University of Arkansas)*  
*Fayetteville, Arkansas*


Here is a work that has been waiting to be written—an affordable, 150-page paperback (8 ½ x 5 ½”), handy for introducing the general reader to the Lutheran Church’s past and present. Crafting a concise, accessible guide to the history and theology of the Lutheran Church requires mature insight, a wide knowledge of the sources, and a facile pen.

In this respect the author, Eric Gritsch, professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, had a running start on this production. In addition to many years of teaching church history, he edited several volumes in the American Edition of Luther’s Works, and more recently co-authored a volume titled *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings.*

The paperback should receive high marks for its popular format and the author’s style. Pictures (chiefly of people) and short paragraphs break up the printed page. But particularly impressive is the writer’s ability to synthesize eras and events concisely without resorting to vague generalizations and pious platitudes or overloading the reader with detail—pitfalls that historians must avoid in presenting short surveys.

The result is a flowing narrative encompassing Luther’s life and times, the “aborted reformation” during Rome’s counter-reform, the subsequent orthodox Lutheran response and the Pietist reaction during the Enlightenment, the nineteenth-century Lutheran struggle in European contexts, Lutheran immigration and assimilation in the new world, and directions of Lutheranism in our twentieth-century global age.

But this historical legacy is only part 1 (pp. 3–94) of the book. Part 2 (pp. 97–137) presents the challenge to understand and apply Lutheranism’s central tenets and to let them be its contribution to the ecumenical scene. Here Gritsch highlights Lutheran insights into Christian communication and mission by presenting specific topics from Luther and the Lutheran Book of Concord: the Christocentricity of the Scriptures, justification by faith apart from works, life in the two realms of church and the world, Christian service, worship, education and ethics, and finally the unifying gifts of word and sacraments.

The author announces the aim of his efforts in the Preface by addressing the critical question of Lutheran identity: “What does it mean to be Lutheran?” In the text he intends to pinpoint issues and answers to that question, first by giving an historical review of the Lutheran Church from its Reformation background and then by identifying Lutheran confessional affirmations.

To accomplish this end Gritsch identifies three Lutheran stereotypes: (1) Some still follow the “movement led by Luther to reform the Roman Catholic Church; they also work for the reform of the church catholic, hoping for an ever greater measure of Christian unity. (2) Other Lutherans have accepted the institutionalization of the movement and have joined the various Lutheran churches around the world, totaling nearly sixty million members. (3) Most Lutherans, however, are confused about their historical roots, doctrinal affirmations, and ethical directives” (p. ix).

The book hopes to clear the air. And Gritsch leaves no doubt which type he represents when halfway through the book he bares his soul. “It may be more important for Lutherans in America to discover their ecumenical role in the midst of a growing Christian and religious pluralism than to worry about Americanization.” Only then it would “fulfill the destiny dreamed of in early Lutheranism, namely, to be a reform movement within the church catholic both in the United States and abroad” (p. 68).

The call for continuous church reform (*ecclesia semper reformanda*) is not new to Lutheranism, and work for Christian unity is correctly identified as the Lutheran confessional way. But Gritsch gives the effort his modern twist. In the tensions between Lutheran orthodoxy and Pietism he comes down hard on Lutheran orthodoxy as an “ineffective” Lutheran aberration that
was “terminated” by the coming of pietism. This judgment seems historically too simple for a turbulent age where Christian answers needed to be given to major questions of faith.

It is the temptation of a reviewer to second-guess an historical writer. One of the most difficult matters in historical writing is selecting what to include in the narrative and what to cull. But selectivity can also reveal an author’s bias and sympathies. The attention given to Midwest Lutheranism in America may reveal either a lack of interest in or a lack of research into its history. This reviewer was impressed by most research and data given throughout the text but was amazed to read how the Missouri Synod originated in Wisconsin when Saxons and Prussians joined and “Pastor Martin Stephan was elected their bishop and then led about seven hundred from Wisconsin to St. Louis, where he helped found the Missouri Synod in 1847” (p. 59). Homework is needed!

Final editing and composition may have been hurried. For example, the clever topic “Manifest Destiny and Lutheran Identity” on page 65 is cited in the Table of Contents as “Manifold Destiny . . . ”, page 64! And just where Zinzendorf’s well-named estate is explained, the typist came off with “Herrnhurt” instead of “Herrnhut.”

The ecumenical Challenge Gritsch offers in the name of Lutheranism is the same hymn, ‘Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word,’ and ‘Send peace and unity on earth’ (Here We Stand [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946], p. 180).

A publication of this size and compass is unique and a starting point for reading more extensive specific treatments of Lutheranism, such as the history, edited by E. Clifford Nelson, of The Lutherans in North America, which can supplement, clarify, or correct impressions left by this brave attempt at a distillation of Lutheranism.

Arnold J. Koelpin
Martin Luther College
New Ulm, Minnesota


The Law and Its Fulfillment deals primarily with the Pauline corpus in an effort to defend the “Reformation understanding of the law” against several contemporary views that challenge it. At the heart of the matter is the question of how the Apostle Paul understood the relationship between the Old Testament precepts and the Christian life. The author, Thomas R. Schreiner, is an associate professor of New Testament at Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. He holds his PhD in New Testament from Fuller Theological Seminary. Schreiner brings with him a thorough knowledge of the current scholarship in Pauline studies.

For those who are uninitiated in contemporary Pauline scholarship, Schreiner does a laudable job of providing the reader with an accurate portrait of the current theological landscape. In doing so he spends a generous amount of time outlining the positions of E. P. Sanders, Heikki Räsänen, Stephen Westerholm, Timo Laato, Daniel Fuller and several others who have figured prominently in contemporary debate over the Pauline view of the law. Each of these writers has his own peculiar approach to the question of why St. Paul rejected the law as a means of salvation. Some, for instance, see Paul as rejecting the law only in opposition to a form of nationalism that would limit salvation to those who submitted to the Jewish culture. Some say that Paul rejects the law because the very effort to keep the law is sinful in itself. Others see Paul’s view of the law as the logical outcome of his “solution to plight” argument—that is, Christ is the only way to salvation; ergo, the law cannot in any way be a part of salvation.

After outlining this debate, Schreiner defends his own position as “the Reformation understanding of the law,” namely, that “no one can be justified by the works of the law because no one can obey the law perfectly” (p. 44). If this book has a literary weakness it is in these chapters. Here the reader often gets the impression that he is reading an editorial page where discussion centers not only on current trends but also on other articles and even on articles about articles (cf. pp. 44–59). Such exchanges are tedious and lean toward the parochial. Once the dust is settled, however, Schreiner has presented a solid apologetic for the “Reformation understanding” of the Pauline theology of the law.
Here he is to be commended for his treatment of some of the key Pauline texts that deal with Christian freedom from the law.

In the course of this argumentation, Schreiner often speaks in language that sounds refreshingly Lutheran. For instance, in a section dealing with Galatians 3, he says, “the law itself provides no power for obedience. . . . Paul objects to the theology of the agitators because they think that the law provides life and power. Paul insists, on the other hand, that the law cannot impart life” (p. 124). He even holds that “if Christians were morally perfect and completely righteous there would be no need for the law” (p. 174). This statement compares most favorably with the language of SD VI, 24.

While Schreiner does not operate under any delusions that the law empowers the Christian, neither does he jettison the law on that account. “To say that the law has no function at all for a Christian would be to read more than is warranted by these verses [1 Tim. 1:3–7] . . . Since Christians still battle against sin and are caught in the tension between the already and the not-yet, the law and moral norms still have a role to play in the life of a believer” (p. 174). In this way he resists the temptation to place the written law in opposition to Christian love. “Even though love resides at the center of Paul’s ethic, this does not mean that love and law are polar opposites. . . . The law guards us from sentimentality and vagueness in a society that knows all too well how to justify almost any course of action by an appeal to love” (p. 245). This last point cannot be emphasized enough today. For Schreiner’s observation is not only valid for society in general but also has much to say to our often vague and sentimental churchly practice.

Exegetically, Schreiner lays a solid foundation for a correct understanding of the law. In this foundation, he includes both necessary elements: (1) that the law does nothing to empower the Christian, and (2) that the love that is demanded of a Christian is never at variance with the law. Were he to allow these two elements to stand in condemnation of the Christian, he would find himself at a Lutheran understanding of law. Unfortunately, he pulls up short and settles for a “Reformation understanding of the law” that in the end is Calvinistic (p. 246). That he begins down the road of moralism is apparent when he redefines the demands of the law for the Christian into something that is attainable and measurable: “good works manifest the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. We should also stress that Paul is not demanding perfect obedience, but obedience that is significant, substantial, and observable” (pp. 203–4).

If Schreiner had stressed the same demands of the law upon a Christian as upon an unbeliever, he would have come to the impossible conclusion that a person is at the same time sinner and saint—believer and unbeliever—Christian and pagan. Herein lies the true meaning of Schreiner’s oft-repeated phrase “already and not-yet.” At such a juncture, the certainty of salvation can in no wise be found in “significant, substantial and observable” obedience. It can only be found outside of the self in Christ and his holy word.


The Importance of Being Lutheran: There are surely a multitude of reasons why people come to a Lutheran congregation instead of some other church. Much can and has been said about this fact, but one thing everyone seems to agree on: more and more, the reasons why people come to a Lutheran church have less and less to do with our pure preaching of the word and right administration of the sacraments.

Henry Hamann has left us a little book that serves as a brilliant reminder of the importance of being a Lutheran Christian. On Being a Christian deserves the widest possible audience both inside and outside the Lutheran Church today, because it reminds us that nothing is more relevant, more necessary, more a matter of life or death than faith in Jesus Christ, which faith is ours only by the Holy Spirit’s work through the purely preached word and rightly administered sacraments of Christ. Hamann’s book not only helps those seeking the right church, it also fills the reader with a genuine hunger for the pure word and sacraments, a hunger Hamann clearly shows can be satisfied only at the banquet table of a confessional Lutheran church.

Henry Hamann was President of Luther Seminary in North Adelaide, Australia, and a noted scholar of confessional Lutheranism. On Being a Christian is a last will and testament of sorts to the church, as Hamann died of cancer shortly after the manuscript was completed. Hamann writes from the point of view “of one who holds that to be a Lutheran and to be Christian are not in any way matters in tension . . . of one who is a Lutheran because he is a Christian.” Hamann explains: “the sentence: ‘I am a Lutheran because I am a Christian’ asserts (1) that the Christian faith is clearly revealed, (2) that it can be grasped and understood, (3) that it can be accurately stated, taught, and confessed, and (4) that this has been done in traditional Lutheranism.” The rest of the book demonstrates the soundness of these convictions in a “continuous, concise, non-technical form” that makes it an ideal text for adult Bible study, or a helpful tract for the visitor who might want to know just what we Lutherans are about.

The book is divided into seven chapters. Hamann leads us into an explication of the central article of justification by beginning with the universal and pervasive nature of human sinfulness. The chapter on justification is an especially bright jewel. Hamann disposes of some of the popular liberal attacks on the vicarious satisfaction of Christ, giving us a wonderful example of how law and gospel are properly distinguished, and leaving us with no doubt that the author was a man who, according to Luther’s criteria, surely deserved to wear the hat of a doctor of theology.

On Being a Christian surveys the important articles of the faith. From justification and the work of Christ, Hamann moves on to remind us of Luther’s teaching on Christian vocation. This section owes an obvious debt to Luther’s Freedom of a Christian. Hamann brings a clarity to this subject that is sadly lacking in our church today. With all the clamour for all to be ministers or find some noble, spiritual occupation in order to establish their Chris-
tian credentials, words like these from Hamann are a refreshing tonic: “Christians view their occupation as the chief way in which they serve, help, and benefit their fellows . . . This understanding leads Christians to work at that for which they are most suited; they realise that they can serve their neighbour far better as a good carpenter or mechanic or plumber, or as a good wife and mother, than as a poor teacher, an indifferent medico, an incompetent minister.” While there may not be many Lutherans left today who still realize this, Hamann certainly makes it clear why all Christians should have this clear understanding of Christian vocation. One can't help but wonder if some of the confused notions about the office of the ministry floating around the church today might partly be rooted in a failure to hold the strong, clear, Lutheran view of Christian vocation evidenced in On Being a Christian.

After sound, confessional explications on the articles of eschatology, the means of grace, and the marks of the church, Hamann drives towards his conclusion that there is no tension between being a Lutheran and being a Christian. He writes: “the Lutheran remains Lutheran, because each one has found in the Lutheran Church true to its Confessions the true witness to the marks of the church.”

Here is the real reason for affiliating with one church rather than another: the pure preaching of the word and the right administration of the sacraments. If these are not present, then make no mistake, something crucial is missing. Such a passion for the pure gospel and sacraments of Christ is sadly lacking among Lutherans today. On Being a Christian is an apologetic of sorts, and unfortunately many people sitting in the pews of Lutheran churches today need exactly that—an apologetic for the faith they claim to hold! In our zeal for expansive parking lots, spotless nurseries, and family nurturing seminars, we are in real danger of forgetting what the true treasure of the Lutheran Church is, and that it can be found nowhere else.

This powerful demonstration of the nature and value of the pure gospel is the real heart of On Being a Christian. It is written for lay Christians as well as pastors. It is a bracing reminder that nothing less than eternal life or death hangs on the pure preaching of the word and the right administration of the sacraments. It just might help modern Lutherans forget their planned giving workshops for a moment, their tinkering with the liturgy, their infatuation with Methodist revival techniques, and cause them to turn again to the Catechism, to begin to ask once more, “What do we need preached, what is received at the Lord’s table, what happens at the baptismal font?” One suspects that if, upon finishing this book, a lay member would ask, “Pastor, perhaps we could talk more about what we believe? Perhaps you could teach us the catechism again?” that such a response would bring a smile to Hamann’s face, that maybe this is what he was aiming at all along with this little book.

It is difficult in a brief review to do justice to Hamann’s winsome yet muscular writing style. The book is a pleasure to read, for everyone from the young layperson to the veteran pastor. Lutheran churches all over the world are starving for a genuine identity. In these times of spiritual famine, On Being a Christian is rich fare indeed, deserving a wide readership. God grant that the book may fulfill the hope Hamann had for it, a hope he put this way:

As a result of lectures given here and there on [the book’s] basic content, the hope has arisen that something of the old Lutheran conviction and faith may reappear. So I not only hope to give a clear account of my faith as a Lutheran; I pray that the Spirit of God may use what has been written to attract those who read it to a fuller faith—if not to faith itself—in the God who loved the world and gave his Son for its redemption and salvation.

Kevin W. Martin
St. John’s Lutheran Church
Pembroke, Ontario, Canada


The behavior of the German church under Hitler demonstrates what can happen when theology sells out to fashionable contemporary ideologies and when individual Christians make a too-easy peace with an ungodly culture. While many German Christians were guilty of doctrinal compromise, unfaithfulness, and cowardice, others—a small but heroic company—chose the path of confessionalism, witness, and martyrdom.

There is a myth that the confessional resistance to Nazism came out of the theologically liberal wing of the German church. Actually, the liberals—as they always do—were mostly content to follow the climate of the times. While neo-orthodox theologians such as Barth and Bonhoeffer were leaders in the Confessional Movement, conservative believers were also aligned against the neo-paganism and immorality of the Nazi regime. Most people know about Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s attempt to assassinate Hitler and his consequent execution, but know nothing about Paul Schneider, whose martyrdom for his faith may be even more instructive for contemporary Christians.

This biography of Schneider, translated from the German, is a saint’s life for our day. Schneider was not a theologian like Bonhoeffer; rather, he was an ordinary pastor. He did not attempt to kill Hitler; rather, he was simply going about the ordinary business of his parish. He was arrested, consigned to a concentration camp, and killed simply because he was faithful to the authority of God’s Word and to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The issues that put him into conflict with the Nazi regime are startlingly parallel to situations that today’s pastors are having to face.

The biography begins with Schneider’s early life, including his flirtation with liberal theology and socialism in his seminary days. Eventually, Schneider was converted to a vigorous Evangelical faith, to a total reliance on Christ alone as the way to salvation and to a firm trust in the Holy Scriptures. The excerpts from his diary and letters create a vivid but not untyp-
ical portrait of a young pastor beginning his career in the Evangelical-Reformed state church. He was assigned to his father’s old parish in 1926 and ministered faithfully to his congregation.

Soon, the growing National Socialist movement began to affect his congregation. Pastor Schneider refused to ring the church bells for party rallies. Requests started pouring in for church records to prove Aryan descent. He would fill in the forms, but then add a note: “You—Aryan—do not forget your first parents—Adam and Eve!” These mild acts of dissent were enough to get him in trouble. The church bureaucracy, not wishing to offend the authorities, failed to support him and actually attempted to remove him from the ministry. His local congregation, however, rallied to his support, whereupon the church Konsistorium backed down.

Pastor Schneider then gave a stirring sermon on the “naked paganism which cannot agree with the Christian faith.” He unmasked the claims of the so-called “German Christian” movement which sought to nazify the church:

Whenever they place blood and race and the history of the people as a source of revelation next to God’s Word, next to his Will revealed to us in the words of Scripture alone, next to Jesus as the unique Mediator between God and man, then in truth they fall away from the living God and His Christ.

Schneider recognized that the problem in National Socialism was not simply its political program, but its world-view, which was diametrically opposed to the world-view of the Bible. “It is not only mandatory that we give our votes to the Fuehrer and approve his foreign policy, but also that we approve the world-view and policy of National Socialism . . . a world-view and policy which ever more openly opposes Biblical Christianity.”

Interestingly, the precipitating issue was closed Communion. His congregation had traditionally practiced an easy-going policy of open Communion, letting anyone who attended the service receive the Sacrament. Based on his growing confessionalism, Pastor Schneider recognized that it was wrong to commune people whose faith was only nominal or who openly embraced a non-Christian creed such as Nazism. He instituted a policy of giving the Sacrament only to those who had first confessed their sins. Such intolerance was too much. He was removed from office and transferred to a double parish in two remote villages.

The confrontation between the Nazi world-view and that of Scripture continued, of course, even here. At a funeral for a member of the Hitler Youth, a Nazi official interjected some party rhetoric during the ceremony. Pastor Schneider rebuked him for violating the Christian liturgy. Then a teacher in the church school began teaching Nazi environmentalism and nature-worship. Another began teaching the Nazi world-view in religion class. A party member withdrew his son from confirmation class. Pastor Schneider, with the support of his elders, began procedures for church discipline against the two teachers and the two members of the Nazi party. When their excommunication was announced, the pastor was arrested by the Gestapo. He was imprisoned for two months. Upon his release, he was banished from the province. Reasoning that he had a divine call to serve his congregation, Pastor Schneider returned. After delivering a sermon, he was arrested again.

This time he was sent to the concentration camp at Buchenwald. Although not a death camp as such, sentries at Buchenwald were given three days of vacation and a bonus every time they found an excuse to kill a prisoner. Because he refused to take off his cap to the Nazi flag, Pastor Schneider was taken from the work detail and put under “dark-arrest,” which combined solitary confinement with regular torture. Pastor Schneider endured a little more than a year of this treatment before it killed him.

Throughout the book are testimonies about how Pastor Schneider ministered to his fellow inmates and witnessed to his persecutors, how he would share his food with those even weaker than he, how he kept up his devotional life in the camp with memorized Scripture passages, improvised worship services, and painstakingly drawn up prayer lists. His letters to his wife—when he was still allowed to write—are achingly eloquent in their concern for her and in his insights about how suffering can draw a person closer to Christ.

What the Nazi regime could not abide and what sent Pastor Schneider to martyrdom was not some grandiose political demonstration or an attempt to overthrow the regime, but simply his ministry of word and sacrament. That, of course, is subversive enough.

As one reads this book, ordinary details of everyday parish life are suddenly thrown into high relief in the context of Nazi opposition. Women’s circles and youth groups, controversies about closed Communion and church discipline, questions about liturgical innovations and whether staff members are teaching false doctrine, emerge not as routine trivialities that waste a pastor’s time, but as vital dimensions of the church’s witness, worth defending against the pressures of the world, worth dying for.

The reader is also startled at how some of the same issues Pastor Schneider faced are issues that pastors are facing today—intrusions of the state, neo-pagan world-views, demands for churches to compromise to the spirit of the age. Pastors—perhaps those who are burning out with the routines of parish life—should read this book to see how important their work really is. This book should also help them gear themselves for the more intense struggles that might lie ahead.

Christians who call themselves confessional—holding the faith of the Scriptures as set forth in the Reformation Confessions against the pressures from both the right and the left—should be aware that they share the legacy of the confessional church that defied Hitler and that produced blessed martyrs such as Paul Schneider. He is a saint not only for his time but for ours.

Dr. Gene Edward Veith
Concordia University-Wisconsin
Mequon, Wisconsin

The author’s concern in this book is announced in the introduction. How can the church be more effective in its ministry and outreach? The author suggests that a “visible demonstration that what these Christians are proclaiming is true, is needed.” He suggests that more effective outreach can be accomplished if the church “utilizes all the gifts of the Spirit—including the Charismatic gifts” (p. 11).

The book is divided into two parts: “Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit” and “Specific Categories of Charismata.” Each chapter of the book includes a number of discussion questions at the end. The author obviously intends the book to be used as a discussion guide for groups in the church.

In part 1 of the book the author directs attention to the grace of God. In proper Lutheran fashion he maintains that all of God’s gifts are gifts of God’s grace. This reviewer finds the author’s focus on grace as producing an inner effect in the recipient somewhat problematical: “grace is a free gift from God intended to bring joy and blessing to the recipient.” This is a different focus from the classical Lutheran understanding of grace as a disposition in the heart of God. Another problem is the author’s interpretation of the law as revealing the grace of God: “the law reveals the grace of God as it discourages ungodliness, encourages order, convicts of sin, and also provides for fulfilled living” (cf. “For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” Jn 1:17).

St. Paul’s description of the effects of the law, which always accuses, likewise does not admit of identifying the law as revealing the grace of God: “the law reveals the grace of God as it discourages ungodliness, encourages order, convicts of sin, and also provides for fulfilled living” (cf. “For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” Jn 1:17).

St. Paul’s description of the effects of the law, which always accuses, likewise does not admit of identifying the law as revealing the grace of God: “the law reveals the grace of God as it discourages ungodliness, encourages order, convicts of sin, and also provides for fulfilled living” (cf. “For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” Jn 1:17).

In part 2 of the book the author explores the various classifications of gifts. He distinguishes between (1) office gifts (Eph 4:11, 12) (2) personality gifts (Rom 12:1–8), and (3) manifestational gifts (1 Cor 12:4–11). The final chapter is devoted to the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23).

In this part of the book I discovered nothing new. Most of the material has been treated in other books by leaders in the Church Growth Movement and various leaders in the Charismatic Movement. Conclusions drawn are not always supported by adequate evidence. At times the hermeneutic seems to be an “advocacy hermeneutic” (finding support for a predetermined position). Many of the conclusions are, in the opinion of this reviewer, open to serious challenge. (Perhaps one should say about all conclusions that two possibilities, three maybes, and one what if do not permit anyone to postulate a “therefore.”)

One of the increasing difficulties this reviewer is having with much of the literature on spiritual gifts is that a single paradigm of the church dominates all of the discussion. That paradigm is the church as the body of Christ. This paradigm is predominant in the Epistle to the Ephesians. When this becomes the only paradigm, all of the Scriptures are interpreted in the light of Ephesians. Other paradigms of the church, such as the people of God, the chosen race, the holy nation, the kingdom of heaven (God), the royal priesthood, found in the Old Testament, the synoptic Gospels, and the non-Pauline epistles, are studiously ignored.

This book may be an introduction to the entire discussion on charismatic gifts for someone who has read little of the existing literature, but adds little new information to the discussion.

Dr. George F. Wollenburg
President, Montana District, LCMS
Billings, MT


At a time when the issue of God’s fatherhood is hotly debated, Peter Widdicombe provides a valuable contribution by examining this issue in the writings of Origen and Athanasius. His book is written so that student and scholar alike can glean important insights from these two Alexandrian church fathers as they defend God’s fatherhood against Gnostic and Arian opponents.

Although there are some major theological differences between Origen and Athanasius, they both believe that God’s fatherhood lies at the heart of the Christian faith. For them, the being of God is understood as the Father-Son relationship. God is the Father who has eternally begotten the Son. “It is as Father of the Son that God is who he is and it is as Father of the Son that God expresses himself in relation to all things.”

For Athanasius, God’s fatherhood is not the first attribute among others, but that which makes God what he is. God can only be known in what he is, namely, the Father of the Son. It is only through the incarnation of the Father’s Son that Arius’s apophaticism is answered. In the divine Son, God the Father is revealing himself to his creatures. It is only in and through the Son that believers can be united with the Father. While the Son is Son in being, believers are sons by adoption and grace. “It is as Father of the Son that God created us and makes himself known to us in the crucifixion of the Son. God’s eternal purposes arise from and are given effect by the eternal nature of God as Father and Son.”

Widdicombe states that Athanasius sees the word Father as identifying God’s being as fruitful, inherently generative, relational, and dynamic. It is this word (Father) that indicates that the divine being exists first as the relation of Father and Son. The description of God as Father is an irreducible premise of the Christian faith. To deny God’s fatherhood is to deny the essence of God and the foundation of the catholic faith.

The contemporary challenges to Origen’s and Athanasius’s views are discussed in the last chapter of Widdicombe’s book. It is not surprising that the greatest opponent is modern feminism. For those who believe that the fatherhood of God is a product of a patriarchal society, Widdicombe points out that these church fathers did not support their picture of God as Father by drawing on the biological or on the psychological
and sociological dimensions of human fatherhood. Contemporary ideas about the family and about adoption played no role in their discussions of the divine Being and his relationship to humans.

Widdicombe asserts that the substitution of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, because it is gender neutral, is unacceptable to Athanasius. This substitution would be viewed in the same way as Arius’s description of God as Unoriginate, a description Athanasius regarded as sub-Christian. It is the difference between substituting the acts of God for the being of God himself. God has not always been Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; however, God has always been Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

If there is a criticism I have of Widdicombe’s book, it is in his repeated use of the term metaphor when talking about God as Father. In what sense is Father a metaphor in describing the first Person of the Trinity? Unfortunately, Widdicombe does not discuss the matter. By describing God’s fatherhood as a metaphor, he appears to contradict the Alexandrian position that the first Person of the Trinity is Father in his very being and not merely a figure of speech.

If there is a metaphorical usage of the term Father, it is in relation to human fatherhood. Human fathers are like God the Father who is in his very being Father. He is the definition of fatherhood itself. This can be readily seen in Athanasius’s exposition of Eph. 3:15:

For God does not make man his pattern. Rather we men, because God properly and alone truly is Father of his Son, have also been called fathers of our own children; for “of him is every father (patria) in heaven and on earth named.”

Dr. Michael C. Boykin
Trinity Lutheran Church
Hinton, Iowa

Briefly Noted


Aageson describes interpretation in terms of a conversation and then refers to Paul as an illustration of this activity. Four case studies of Paul conversing with Scripture are provided: Paul’s use of Abraham texts, his understanding of Israel, his use of the figure of Adam, and his seeing Christ as a figure by which all traditions are understood in new ways. The case studies show Paul’s willingness to engage in the inventive hermeneutical transformations of texts and argues that interpretation today must be willing to do the same. Truth claims and their formulations, it is argued, are inevitably shaped by the social environments of the communities from which they come. In order to avoid inappropriate conceptions and outmoded theologies, then, each generation must “do theology afresh and not merely repeat the well-worn theological maxims of the past.”


A revised and expanded edition of a work first published in 1960 and previously revised both in 1966 and in 1970. Danker’s thorough discussion of the requisite tools for detailed biblical study is a must for the serious Bible student. Included in the present volume are valuable references to concordances, the Greek New Testament, the Hebrew Old Testament, the Greek Old Testament, the use of the Septuagint, Hebrew Old Testament grammars and lexicons, Greek New Testament grammars and lexicons, the use of grammars and lexicons, Bible dictionaries, Bible versions, the use of English Bible versions, Judaica, contextuality (archaeology, papyri, epigraphy, social scientific criticism, social world), the Dead Sea Scrolls, and commentaries and their uses.


The revised and enlarged edition of a work first published in 1976. The present volume offers a general introduction to St. John’s Gospel and then calls special attention to the following: the Father’s Son (Johannine Christology), two different worlds (Johannine dualism), seeing is believing (Johannine concepts of faith), and eternity is now (Johannine eschatology). With this revised edition, then, Kysar effectively relates his previous work to the current state of Johannine scholarship, adding new sections on the literary features of the plot line of the Gospel and the Johannine passion story. Included also are two appendixes, one on the Johannine epistles and the other on the women in the Gospel.
FREE RECOURSE TO JOY

As an introduction to the following three excerpts from Luther on the Lord's Supper, we include here the initial portion of a lecture given by the Reverend Dr. Norman Nagel on February 22, 1963. This presentation was made during a visit to Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, during his tenure as Preceptor of Westfield House, Cambridge, England.

In former times, when men wanted to discover the amount and quality of gold in a piece of metal, they had a special stone called a touchstone which they would rub on the metal to be tested. By the color of the mark it made they could tell how much gold there was there and how pure it was.

Our Lutheran Confessions say that for testing a piece of theology an excellent touchstone is the distinction between law and gospel. This morning we are to consider another such touchstone, for a man’s doctrine of the Lord’s Supper will show what is the strength of gold in his whole theology.

The doctrine of the Lord’s Supper discloses most clearly the basic situation between God and man: what is man before God, and what sort of a God deals with us there. From a man’s confession of the Lord’s Supper you can see most clearly what is his confession of Christ. This explains why the Lord’s Supper has been such a point of division in the history of the church. Theologies that appear similar in many respects have their final test of agreement in the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. One might almost say that if there is agreement in the Lord’s Supper you can be sure there is agreement in the rest of theology.

Throughout the history of the church it has been recognized that where Christians go together to the same altar there is nothing in their doctrine or life that stands in the way of the unity thereby confessed and confirmed. The Reformation is charged by some with destroying the unity of Christendom. While it is true that the visible unity of Christendom has always been rent, there remains the sad fact that in the West after the Reformation there were numerous church bodies, and, as we might expect, their sharpest discord was in the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, for that is a final test or touchstone of unity or the lack of it.

We might ask, incidentally, whether visible unity may rightly be a goal that dominates all else. Is it not perhaps like happiness which comes as an attendant realization where love is flowing back and forth? It may be that unity also is never won by being sought after for its own sake, but rather comes as an attendant realization where the word of God “has free recourse to the joy and edifying of Christ’s holy people.”

Today we would see what help there is from Luther for our confession of the Lord’s Supper. Of this confession Luther was convinced that he could not do otherwise. For the sake of what some understand as Christian unity we are sometimes asked to do otherwise, or at least to acknowledge another doctrine as having a rightful place. This puts a fearful responsibility upon us to try our doctrine by the Word of God. Is it the only right one that then requires the rejection of every departure from it? Luther may help us here although we cannot merely repeat him as though we were speaking to the same people he was.

Dr. Martin Luther we esteem as a great teacher of the church. His greatness rests in the fact that he did not strive to teach something new, but, as St. Paul says, “that which he also had received.” The doctrine is not Luther’s or ours, but Christ’s.

NOTHING BUT FIG LEAVES

Martin Luther’s Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament, 1544, translated by Martin E. Lehmann, in AE 38:311–313.

Consequently, it will not do them any good if, in connection with the sacrament, they do a great deal of babbling about the spiritual eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ and about the love and unity of Christians. For these words are nothing but fig leaves with which Adam and Eve wanted to cover and
adorn themselves so that God should not notice their shame and sin. Much less will their great labor of teaching and writing and their earnest chaste conduct help them. All this is still a heathenish practice.

It is also useless for them to believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and in Christ the Savior. Everything, I say, is lost along with all articles of faith, no matter how correctly and blamelessly they speak of and represent the same with their false, blaspheming mouth, because they deny and call false this single article of faith when Christ says in the sacrament: “Take (the bread) and eat; this is my body which is given for you, “ etc. For what they chatter about spiritual eating and about love has solely this aim: They want to cover up and hide such harm and poison so that one should not take notice of or see the same but should regard them as remarkable and very good Christians.

This is what we call placing an illusion before one’s eyes and adorning the gloomy devil (as St. Paul teaches regard them as remarkable and very good Christians. so that one should not take notice of or see the same but should regard them as remarkable and very good Christians. This is what we call placing an illusion before one’s eyes and adorning the gloomy devil (as St. Paul teaches).

Perhaps you would like to say: “My dear Luther, it is to be hoped that this is not so, or at least there is no use being anxious about the fact that God should be so very vehement and relentlessly strict that he would want to condemn people on account of one article of faith if they faithfully adhere to and believe all other articles.” This is the way not only the heretic comforts himself but also other sinners comfort themselves. Sirach [7:9] writes that they want God to take into consideration the rest of their good works and to be gracious to them, as King Saul, too, wanted to cover up his disobedience with his religious devotion and sacrifice, 1 Samuel 15:35.

So, they proceed securely and with self-assurance, as if they lacked nothing; the many great works and the labor which they do will outweigh a single failure.

Over against this [attitude] it must be said that God could scarcely hope or expect that his poor, miserable, blind creation should be so senseless and proud in opposition to its Creator and Lord that it would deny, regard as false, and blaspheme his divine word; rather, he should be able to hope that his humble, submissive, obedient creation would not deny and blaspheme a single word but sincerely receive all words [in general] and every word in particular, and give thanks with great joy that the creation is worthy to hear one single word from its dear God. Yes, it is fitting for God to look at it in this way.

Now, however, the heretics treat God’s word as though it were man’s word, or a fool’s word, which they can despise, mock, and blaspheme. They think they can do everything better according to their own good judgment. Nor do they want to let themselves be corrected. So there is no help for them. In this situation their many great and good deeds and labors will not outweigh the one bad point.

There are neither many nor few, neither small nor great, good works before God, but only vain, evil, condemned works, for unbelief or blasphemy destroys and condemns even the good (as they call them) works; yes, such good works are worse than plain sins are, because they are performed and take place in the midst of blasphemy and stubborn denial of God’s name and word.

**A Little Yeast**

Do Lutherans shatter love and harmony by being too particular about a single doctrine? Luther addresses that question in his Lectures on Galatians, 1535, translated by Jaroslav Pelikan, in AE 2736–39, 46.

The sectarians who deny the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper accuse us today of being quarrelsome, harsh, and intractable, because, as they say, we shatter love and harmony among the churches on account of the single doctrine about the Sacrament. They say that we should not make so much of this little doctrine, which is not a sure thing anyway and was not specified in sufficient detail by the apostles, that solely on its account we refuse to pay attention to the sum total of Christian doctrine and to general harmony among all the churches.

This is especially so because they agree with us on other articles of Christian doctrine. With this very plausible argument they not only make us unpopular among their own followers; but they even subvert many good men, who suppose that we disagree with them because of sheer stubbornness or some other personal feeling. But these are tricks of the devil, by which he is trying to overthrow not only this article of faith but all Christian doctrine.

To this argument of theirs we reply with Paul: “A little yeast leavens the whole lump.” . . . Hence this passage must also be considered carefully in opposition to the argument by which they accuse us of offending against love and thus doing great harm to the churches. We are surely prepared to observe peace and love with all men, provided that they leave the doctrine of faith perfect and sound for us. If we cannot obtain this, it is useless for them to demand love from us. A curse on a love that is observed at the expense of the doctrine of faith, to which everything must yield . . .

Therefore when they minimize this issue in such a dishonest way, they give ample evidence of how highly they regard the majesty of the Word. If they believe that it is the Word of God, they would not play around with it this way. No, they would treat it with the utmost respect; they would put their faith in it without any disputing or doubting; and they would know that one Word of God is all and that all are one, that one doctrine is all doctrines and all are one, so that when one is lost all are eventually lost, because they belong together and are held together by a common bond.

Therefore let us leave the praise of harmony and of Christian love to them. We, on the other hand, praise faith and the majesty of the Word. Love can sometimes be neglected without danger, but the Word and faith cannot. It belongs to love to bear everything and to yield to everyone. On the other hand, it belongs to faith to bear nothing whatever and to yield to no one. Love yields freely, believes, condones, and tolerates everything. Therefore it is often deceived. Yet when it is deceived, it does not suffer any hardship that can really be called a hardship; that is, it does not lose Christ, and therefore it is not offended but keeps its constancy in doing good even toward those who are unthankful and unworthy.

In the issue of salvation, on the other hand, when fanatics teach lies and errors under the guise of truth and make an impression on many, there love is certainly not to be exercised,
and error is not to be approved. For what is lost here is not merely a good deed done for someone who is unthankful, but the Word, faith, Christ, and eternal life. Therefore if you deny God in one article of faith, you have denied Him in all; for God is not divided into many articles of faith, but He is everything in each article and He is one in all the articles of faith. Therefore when [they] accuse us of neglecting love, we continually reply to them with this proverb of Paul’s: "A little yeast, etc." And another proverb says: "A man’s reputation, his faith, and his eye do not stand being played with."

I have said this at some length to encourage our own people and to instruct others, who are perhaps offended by our firmness and who do not think that we have definite and serious reasons for this firmness. Therefore, let us not be moved when they make such a boast of their zeal for love and harmony; for he who does not love God and His Word does not count for anything, regardless of what or how much else he may love. Accordingly, Paul warns both preachers and hearers with this statement not to think that the doctrine of faith is little or nothing and that we can play around with it as we please. It is a sunbeam coming down from heaven to illumine, brighten, and direct us. . . .

Therefore let us learn to praise and magnify the majesty and authority of the Word. For it is no trifle, as the fanatics of our day suppose; but one dot (Matt. 5:18) is greater than heaven and earth. Therefore we have no reason here to exercise love or Christian concord, but we simply employ the tribunal; that is, we condemn and curse all those who insult or injure the majesty of the Divine Word in the slightest, because (59) "a little yeast leavens the whole lump." But if they let us have the Word sound and unimpaired, we are prepared not only to exercise charity and concord toward them but to offer ourselves as their slaves and to do anything for them.

A SPIRITUAL PERVERSION

Some see reception of Christ’s body and blood as a spiritual participation in the corpus mysticum or “invisible church” sense of Christ’s body. Their idea is that faith of the heart serves as the active ingredient in the reception of the Lord’s Supper by which one participates in the spiritual body of Christ. Thus if they determine that a person has faith in the heart, he is a spiritual part of the “body of Christ,” and they see no reason why he should not or could not be welcome to eat and to drink our Lord’s body and blood.

Particular doxologies of faith (fides qua) are then seen as being important but not essential as long as a person has faith in the heart (fides qua). Even the particular teaching about Christ’s bodily presence in the Lord’s Supper can be seen as secondary in this light as long as one professes some sort of belief about participation in the body of Christ. Luther denies this as clever sophistry, attractive to reason but self-intrusive.

Luther sees his opponents’ pressing “participation” [Gemeinschaft] into service as an abstraction that bypasses the body and blood our Lord says is giving to his disciples to eat and to drink. The result is then a spiritual body of Christ that corresponds with a spiritual participation [Gemeinschaft]. This abstract understanding is not clearly indicated by the translator’s rendering of Gemeinschaft with the word “participation.”

“Participation” can serve quite well as a rendering of koinonia in the sense of an actual (could we say incarnational?) communication of the body of our Lord rather than some sort of signification that something invisibly spiritual is going on. There may be no corpus mysticum talk or “invisible church” talk that declines to confess first the corpus verum, of which our Lord speaks when he says, “My body” and “my blood.” Thus, what the Small Catechism first confesses is not that we have in the Lord’s Supper a Gemeinschaft, but that it is the true body and blood.

This excerpt from Luther’s treatise The Adoration of the Sacrament (1523) treats such an idea as the second of four errors in the interpretation of the sacrament. Luther weaves the perversions of his adversaries into his own dialogue—a fact that might escape the casual reader. Translated by Abdel Ross Wentz, in AE 36:282–283.

The second error involves the perversion also of the two phrases, “my body” and “my blood.” Indeed, it gives the whole passage a different meaning. It does this by claiming that when Christ says: “This is my body,” he means: If you take this bread and wine you will have a share in my body. Thus the sacrament is nothing else than a participation [Gemeinschaft] in the body of Christ, or, better, an incorporation into his spiritual body. To implement this process of incorporation he presumably instituted this bread and wine, as a sure sign that the spiritual incorporation is taking place and that the spiritual body is being realized. This is a clever sophistry. It is based on the fact that the Scriptures ascribe to Christ two kinds of body: one a natural body, which was born physically of Mary, just as all other men have bodies; the other a spiritual body, which is the whole Christian church, of which Christ is the head.

So they try then to refer Christ’s words to the participation [Gemeinschaft] in his body. When he says: “This is my body,” that is taken to mean: “This is the participation [Gemeinschaft] in my body.” And they cite for support the statement of Paul in 1 Cor 10:17, “We who are many are one loaf and one body, for we all partake of the same loaf” [teyllhaftig eyns brotts].

Likewise at the same place he says, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ [die Gemeinschaft des bluts Christi]? The bread which we break, is it not a participation [Gemeinschaft] in the body of Christ?” They think St. Paul has here elucidated Christ’s words. When Christ says: “This is my body,” that is supposed to be the same as saying: “This is the participation [Gemeinschaft] in my body.” That is, he who eats the bread eats not “my body” but “the participation [Gemeinschaft] in my body”; along with the others he appropriates the benefits of my body (which is not in the sacrament, but was given for you elsewhere and is now in heaven). By the eating of this bread he has a share in everything that my body has and does and suffers—not by virtue of the bread or the eating, but by virtue of God’s promise. It works like the water of baptism, which cleanses the soul not by virtue of the water but by virtue of God’s promise, that he who receives baptism with water shall be saved, and so forth.

Such ideas do seem quite attractive to the reason—if you want to let them interpret the words of Paul and of Christ as they please! But this is not Christian teaching, when I intrude my own ideas into the Scripture and compel Scripture to accord with
them. On the contrary, the Christian way is to make clear first what the Scriptures teach and then compel [ziehe read ziehe] my own ideas to accord with them. And who can tolerate it with good conscience when Christ’s statement: “This is my body, which is given for you” is interpreted to mean: “This is the participation-in-my-body, which is given for you”? For this interpretation has no basis in Scripture. “My body” is a very different expression, a very different thing, from “the participation in my body.”

**THAT SAME OLD MANNA**

Numbers 11 relates how the Israelites complained about having to eat the same old manna day after day. We are told that the mixed multitude yielded to intense craving that led the Israelites to weep and say, “Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onion, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up. There is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”

Even though the fire of the Lord had burned among them, consuming them, they still had not learned that complaints to the Cook could be hazardous to their health.

The Lord did give them meat to eat in the form of quail, but then “while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague. So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to their craving” (Nm 11:33–34).

Perhaps the LCMS may come to be called a Kibroth Hattaavah, because it has come to be a place where so many are yielding to their cravings. “We’re tired of the same old liturgy! We remember when we were back in Reformed congregations. We had real gospel praise songs, enthusiastic worship, ebullient preachers; but now our whole emotions are dried up and there is nothing at all except this old hymnal before our eyes!”

Same old. Same old. Many LCMS pastors are in a frenzy to rewrite creeds, compose new services, and the like to yield to that which the masses crave. Temptation gibbers in the loins of the Aarons who succumb to the people’s cravings and fashion golden calves for them. They are the Nadabs and Abihus creating their own unholy fires. “Give the people what they want. That way, they may stop complaining and keep coming to church in larger numbers.” Same old. Same old.

Luther, however, saw the value of God’s gifts handled without variation. In the preface to the Small Catechism, he drives the point home:

In the first place, the preacher should take the utmost care to avoid changes or variations in the text and wording of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the sacraments, etc. On the contrary, he should adopt one form, adhere to it, and use it repeatedly year after year.

Young and inexperienced people must be instructed on the basis of a uniform, fixed text and form. They are easily confused if a teacher employs one form now and another form—perhaps with the intention of making improvements—later on. In this way all the time and labor will be lost.

This was well understood by our good fathers, who were accustomed to use the same form in teaching the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. We, too, should teach these things to the young and unlearned in such a way that we do not alter a single syllable or recite the catechism differently from year to year. Choose the form that pleases you, therefore, and adhere to it henceforth.

Precisely in the context of evangelism and education, Luther sees great value in repetition, not constantly changing forms. Repetition becomes boring only when the heart is crying out for a yielding to its cravings. Repetition becomes vain when we think we will be heard for our many words. Whereas our decrepit flesh never seems to tire of repeating the same old sins, we do rejoice in the Lord’s gracious manna coming repeatedly through word and sacrament in the same old liturgy.

**NOT MANY, BUT MUCH**


The Lutheran Church knows that the Lord gives his Holy Spirit only through his word and sacraments, and therefore she recognizes no other effective means than word and sacrament. Her experience teaches her that a man can do nothing for his salvation except lend his ear to the divine truth as he might lend it to any other message. That is why she attempts to encourage and convince men to listen and observe the word above all else. She knows that the spiritual man is not always able to hear and heed God’s word, and much less does she believe that the children of the world will be able to endure frequent, lengthy opportunities of hearing the word.

From her knowledge of human nature she knows that men will sooner open their hearts to the truth when it is gladly but sparingly imparted than when they hear her voice speaking constantly. Therefore she understands how to give people enough of her means but not too much. She does not consider it an insult, nor is she eager to interpret it as an insult, when someone says, “This pastor thinks it is enough if he preaches, catechizes, administers the sacraments, hears confessions, and comforts the sick!” She knows that even the most faithful pastors do not do enough of this. She has little use for multiplying pastoral duties but treasures those which are commanded in the Scriptures and have been recognized since ancient times. To many people it is something novel that a man should not be a jack of many trades but a master of the few precious means, yet this is what the church has always thought. In a word, she accomplishes much through a few means.

Whichever examines the pastoral manuals of a Baxter [an outstanding English Puritan known for his manual of pastoral
Theology, 1615–1691] or, better yet, of a Gottfried Arnold [a German Pietist who wrote guides for pastors, 1666–1714] and compares them with the books on pastoral theology by our fathers will think at first that the latter do not deal enough with the duties and responsibilities of a pastor, as if Baxter and Arnold had a higher opinion of a pastor than, for example, men like Balduin [a conservative Lutheran theologian in Wittenberg, 1575–1627]. But an experienced man will see it differently.

It is enough, and more than enough, if a man just carries out the ancient duties of a pastor. Superfluous and even a hindrance is the officiousness of modern pastors. Here the slogan should be, “Not many, but much.” The poverty of our fathers is richer than the wealth of their opponents. It is through alternating periods of withdrawal and public appearance, stillness and publicity, through persistent use of word and sacrament, through giving of a quiet but full measure, through modesty and steadfastness that the Lutheran Church attains its goals.

She is not concerned with new means of encouraging good works, although they have been highly praised. She does not desire to do her good works the way societies or factories do. She knows that works carried out in the fashion of modern societies easily displace other works, disturb the harmony of manifold good works, and make men one-sided and intemperate. She is afraid that societies which separate from the church and act as if everything depended on them may become organizations of extravagance and intemperance, even though they carry the name “temperance” in their titles. She does not seize upon the shibboleths of human extravagance and useless activity; through her holy office she encourages men to do every God-pleasing good work according to their gifts and their circumstances.

She strives to unify and unite all good works in her midst. Even today she regards the care of the poor as a responsibility of the church; as it was at the time of the apostles; even today she considers the school, the children’s preparation for church, as her domain, as it was earlier; even today the sick, the pilgrims, the orphans are her responsibility, as they always have been; even today she provides bread and refreshment and support for her servants; even today she makes sure that the holy places serve that end. Her bishops or pastors unite the congregations in all good works and cultivate everything good in them according to the authority of their divine office; they give the scriptural measure of every good work according to time and place; they lead and direct the congregations into all good.

The church as a whole—as does every individual congregation—embraces all good works, and what takes place occurs in the unity of the flock with its shepherds. In obedience to the word, without the prattle of the societies and the arrogance of those who are members of them, in holy silence and with might power the church does everything the Lord gives her the ability and grace to do.

The church has various activities, therefore, even though the means through which she performs them and encourages all good things are always the same—word, sacrament, the holy office of the ministry. Few means many good works! That is the way it is with the church.

**Turn Back, You Folks**

This terse verse was found by one of our readers in the April 1981 issue of an English periodical called The Hymn. A parenthetical remark suggests that this piece is “not for American eyes,” though it is not clear whether the composer of this piece (F. Prater Gent) or an editor made that comment. A suggested tune is “Hominum Amator,” selection number 276 in the English Hymnal.

How can we sing the praise of Him
Who is no longer He?
With bated breath we wait to know
The sex of Deity.

Our Father is our Mother now,
And Cousin too, no doubt:
Must worship wait for hymnodists
To get things sorted out?

O rise not up, you men of God!
The Church must learn to wait
Till Brotherhood is sisterised,
And Mankind out-of-date.

O may the You-know-who forgive
Our stunned ambivalence,
And in our sexist anguish
Preserve our common-sense!

**Lex Orandi Revisited**

In presenting the Augsburg Confession the reformers were keen on demonstrating that they had not abandoned the catholic faith, but were in fact maintaining it more faithfully than their Roman opponents—whose errors, according to the reformers, made them sectarian! Likewise, the framers of the Book of Concord included the earlier confessions, as well as the three Creeds and the Catalogue of Testimonies, to show that we believe, teach, and confess what the church has always held. Sola scriptura is not nominative (“Scripture alone”), but ablative (“by Scripture alone”)—for in confessing the faith Scripture is never alone. It is this confessional principle which, I believe, Logia serves so well.

As interest in the apostolic and catholic context of the Lutheran confession grows, two ancient and popular patristic adages are repeatedly adduced: the Vincentian Canon, and the rule lex orandi—lex credendi (usually understood: “the rule of worship is the rule of faith”). As a result of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century liturgical movements, research has made clear the sources of these proverbs, research that demonstrates how inaccurately these clichés are thrown about.

First, one must realize that the aforementioned adages were originally coined in opposition to one another, that is, expressing the positions of opposing parties in a theological dispute! Let me explain. Vincent of Lérins (d. 435/450?), a monk on an island off the south coast of France, wrote his Commonitorium (not extant)
as a guide in determining what the true catholic faith is. In it he asserted that the truth is *quod ubique, quod semper, quod omnis creditum est,* “what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.” What is not always understood is that Vincent was a Semi-Pelagian, and that in this writing he was asserting that the majority of Christians have taught and believed Semi-Pelagianism! This was a bold attempt to use Augustine’s own “catholicity” arguments (the appeal to the teaching of the whole church) in favor of heresy. Just as at the opening of the Council of Constantinople AD 381 the majority of the church was to a degree Arian, so also Semi-Pelagianism repeatedly had the ascendency.

As the Semi-Pelagian controversy began to set all of Gaul in turmoil, Prosper of Aquitaine, a monk living in Marseilles, appealed to Augustine of Hippo for help. Augustine wrote back to Prosper, and the two became fast friends and allies. After Augustine’s death, with the fight still raging, Prosper traveled to Rome to seek an official papal denunciation of Vincent’s teachings. Prosper endeared himself to Pope Celestine and remained in Rome for a number of years, using the time to write at length against Vincent. Finally Celestine was persuaded to issue an official letter to the bishops of Gaul, to which was appended a “catalogue of testimonies,” containing statements of previous popes and other arguments that reject Semi-Pelagianism. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that Prosper himself authored this work.

This last document is the source of the expression *lex orandi—lex credendi,* as it is popularly known. In fact, the original statement is rather fuller: *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplianti,* literally, “that the law of praying may establish the law of believing.” In context, Prosper is attacking Semi-Pelagianism by drawing proof from the liturgical prayers of the whole church. He quotes a litany from the Roman rite in which the church prays for the conversion of unbelievers, idolaters, persecutors, Jews, heretics and schismatics. If we pray for their conversion, idolaters, persecutors, Jews, heretics and schismatics, if we pray for their conversion of unbelievers, idolaters, persecutors, Jews, heretics and schismatics. If we pray for their conversion, their conversion must be entirely God’s work, Prosper reasons. In a groundbreaking work, however, Karl Federer demonstrated that Prosper’s dictum has been commonly misunderstood, as if he were saying that whatever the church does in worship (*lex orandi* “the way of praying”) does (and should) establish her confession. Neither does it mean simply that the liturgy gives evidence to her confession, nor is it even a plain appeal to tradition and universality of belief, for this would play right into Vincent’s hands.

Rather, Federer shows that *lex orandi* was a commonly understood technical term referring to 1 Timothy 2:1–4—St. Paul’s mandate that the church should pray for all men. Prosper reasoned that God’s command through the apostle teaches us the true nature of conversion. If we are given the *divine* mandate to pray for the conversion of all nations, then conversion is God’s work and not man’s. To paraphrase Prosper: “God’s mandate given through Paul that the church should pray for all men, a mandate the church has indeed always carried out, resolves the question of what we should believe in this matter.” Thus, the *lex orandi—lex credendi* rule was actually a *Scriptural* argument, to which was added the witness of the church’s continual faithfulness to the apostolic mandate.

In light of this explanation, it is intriguing to see how Martin Chemnitz responded to Vincent’s canon, for among Lutherans Chemnitz was certainly the champion of patristic citation! Though he may not have understood the history behind it, he certainly grasped the theological problem when he modified the Vincentian canon in the direction of Prosper’s argument: *quod semper, quod ubique et ab omnibus fidelibus ex Scriptura constanter receptum fuit,* “what has been received consistently from Scripture, always, everywhere, and by all believers” [Ec. Conc. Trid. III, 331, 51; Kramer trans. vol. 3, p. 466; see Elet, *Structure of Lutheranism*, p. 288]. We too should be careful not to throw out these two mottoes indiscriminately.


The Reverend Tom Winger
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

---

**Our Daily Calling**

*From Bo Gietz’s Messages for the Church in Times of Crisis (Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, 1950), pp. 20–21.*

But side by side with the Word of God is our daily calling. There is no Christianity without faithful work—at least not for a healthy and sound person. All that I receive of God in the means of grace—forgiveness, peace with God, being God’s child—that I must immediately give out again through the service of my fellow man where I am placed in my daily life.

It is a wrong conception to think that I really serve God’s cause in the religious activities of my church, or in the societies, and through my prayers. I serve God just as much when for the good of my fellow man I plow a field, or keep the accounts, or wash the breakfast dishes.

Christians who are friendly and eager and sacrificial when it concerns the religious work of their church, but who are sullen and sour, unwilling and careless in their daily work, are no true Christians. They are just as bad as those who despise the grace of God. It is no better with those who are so careful about their bank loans and neglect their children, or their aged parents, in order to be out evening after evening at religious meetings. Their Christianity seems to consist in self-chosen deeds, which they heap up in order to make merit for themselves. They have fallen from grace according to the Scriptures. Their worship is just as full of sin as their common deeds. They withhold the deed which God wants, the simple acts of charity to their neighbor in their daily calling. Instead they give Him deeds which He does not want; the self-assumed religious duties, which should be a means of salvation but now instead have become a false basis for salvation or probably purely pleasure.
God wants to deal with poor sinners who have been forgiven much and therefore love much. He is eager that we should use the Word and go to the Lord’s table in order that we may become humble and as poor sinners serve a simple and humble calling. Instead, He finds a company of pious Pharisees who are so taken with their holiness and their pious exercises that they do not have time and energy to serve their fellow man in the daily vocation.

Externally, a true evangelical Christian is often very much like an honorable, law-abiding and helpful man of the world of the best kind. The deeds which follow from faith do not differ very much from those which every man does when he respects that law which God has put in the midst of the community and in the conscience.

An evangelical Christian is not in the least a conspicuous figure. He does not seek to be that, nor does he need to be that. He knows, that all that God expects of him, is that he shall be faithful in the least. That which separates him from the world is the faith of the heart. He lives day by day in the forgiveness of sin.

Of course, because of this he will certainly do some things that are different from the world and that will seem puzzling in the eyes of the world. He forgives where others seek revenge. He stops to give help where others shut their eyes and pass by on the other side. He sees emptiness and unhappiness in much which the world seems to love and enjoy. He has a life of prayer, a life of worship, and a life of holy communion, that the world does not understand. But in his external civil and community existence he is not conspicuous, and makes very little noise about his faithfulness.

He is in short, a serene, diligent, honest, conscientious, dutiful, and helpful citizen of his community in everyday life. But, someone will say, if a true Christian does not do any more marked and wonderful deeds than a good worldly man, why then should one be saved and the other rejected? Let Luther answer that question: “My dear man, do you continue to believe in your works? If a Christian is going to be saved it will in no wise be because of works.”

Both the Christian and the worldly man are sinners worthy to be cast away by God, since neither of them have for even one day kept the first and foremost commandment of the law, namely to love God above all things. But now God has given them an undeserved salvation by faith in that Savior who has fulfilled the law and suffered the penalty in their place. If either of them shall be saved, then it will depend on accepting that gift. If either of them is condemned, it means that he has not wanted to accept the gift.

And so an evangelical Christian life is a matter of simple faithfulness in our calling. Such a faithfulness has the greatest blessing to offer, first to our environment, but also to the Christian himself. It is namely in the daily work that he finds his cross which is necessary for his growth and discipline. A Christian shall carry his cross, but he is not to create it himself. Work-righteousness is always trying to choose its own cross. The monastics fast, have their own self-tortures, and live in celibacy. Sometimes among evangelicals people make other crosses for themselves and try to be extra pious and saintly. Some try an unnatural way of speaking which others find amusing. Others demonstrate their piety by dressing in outmoded garments which once were modern and were considered sinful thirty years ago. All of this is then named as a cross a Christian must bear, while it is instead nothing other than what the Bible calls a “self-chosen form of worship.”

The true cross we do not choose for ourselves. It comes in the daily round of duty in our calling, in the home, in marriage, and in the place of our work. It may be weariness, and headaches, carelessness in workmanship, pouting children, or disturbed sleep. It may consist of economic worries or a poor stomach, of sacrifices for the children, or injustice and unfairness on the job. When a man can bear such things with patience, in faith in the forgiveness of sins, then he is a true bearer of the cross, and the cross does its proper work—it destroys the old Adam and binds our hearts close to God. Such a cross is never impressive in the sight of the world. It is shunned by false Christians. But in evangelical Lutheran Christianity we should not be blind to the quiet radiance which shines in the midst of the most unimpressive, ordinary life because it comes from God.

Perhaps there is little of real evangelical Lutheranism among us today. Too little, I am sure. Much of that which today is called Christianity and conversion would not be considered such by Martin Luther. He would call it work-righteousness, egoism, and self-importance. He would say to us that we might just as well have remained under the pope as to land in a faith in our own commitments, our own feelings, our sacrifices, and our Christian zeal. The one is as bad as the other.

That is why it is important for us to try seriously to make clear what evangelical faith really is. We can do it no better than by reading Martin Luther and studying him for ourselves anew. Luther has been retranslated in modern language, and we do well to read his rugged and strong faith which can show us our salvation. To know the faith is not only a matter of honor for an evangelical Lutheran Christian. It is also a matter of salvation for our souls. That is the only question that a hundred years from now shall be of any importance for each and every one of us.

**Dangerous Liaisons**

_The plot thickens. What has been cast in the role of the femme fatale to the Bride of Christ? What tales are told by those who have had the harrowing experience of a near fatal attraction? The following article has a happy ending._

When I was in Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota, I began dating the Evangelical Lutheran Confession. My love for this movement increased to the point that I found myself proposing to her at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. Then, on the day of my ordination in 1963, I said my vows and was committed to the Evangelical Lutheran Confession for the rest of my life.

My marriage to the Evangelical Lutheran Confession went well for a number of years. She faithfully prepared all my sacramental meals and spoke the theology of the cross to me in an endearing way as I focused on the study of Genesis and Exodus in the Old Testament and on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament. It was a great marriage. But then, in 1983, I found myself under extreme stress. We were responding to the urgent needs of new refugees from Southeast Asia on an ongoing basis. We were providing all the basic necessities of life for them:
she turned sour. I attempted to remain true to my bride by reading every good new book that came out on Genesis and Exodus as well as on the Gospels. But at the same time I continued to flirt with my mistress by reading recommended books on how to grow successfully. Of course, there was a terrible incongruity in all of this. My two lovers talked a different language, lived a different lifestyle, followed different principles, possessed a different wisdom, and worshiped a different God.

Finally, the inevitable happened. My affair turned sour. I began to realize how seductive the Church Growth Movement is. I began to sense the deception in her claims. I began to hear her demands that I be willing to change, that is, to forsake my bride and throw in my lot with her completely. At the same time I rediscovered what a pure bride I had in the Evangelical Lutheran Confession. She was profoundly wise, utterly faithful in her promises, and a sound fortress and refuge when things were at their worst, for she always pointed me to the cross in the darkest moments of my life. I still remember vividly the moment I made my choice. I went to my library shelf, pulled off the huge stack of Church Growth Movement books, carried them outside, and threw them all into the dumpster—and I did that dynamically.

I have now been reconciled to my bride, the Evangelical Lutheran Confession, and am enjoying my marriage as never before. Yes, the Church Growth Movement still makes passes at me at times, but I try not to notice. For she has proven herself to possess the wisdom of this age rather than the foundational wisdom of God. She claims to be able to see why churches grow—by focusing on what the people are doing—and does not understand that the invisible Spirit blows where he wills on the basis of what God is doing through word and sacrament. She proclaims the theology of visible glory rather than the theology of the cross and its victory that lies hidden in the darkness of Good Friday. She avoids the cross, its scandal and resulting persecution, as a way of avoiding decline in numbers. She does not believe in reconciliation and unity between diverse races and nationalities but encourages the fellowship of those who look, think, and act alike. She labels churches as winners and losers based on numerical growth or lack of it and does not appreciate the identity the apostle Paul gives to the smallest of churches: “You are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus.”

She speaks an alien language by calling bishops “chief executive officers,” by calling pastors “entrepreneurs,” and by calling the people of God “consumers.” She attaches more significance to human vision than to divine revelation. She has no heavenly marriage banquet and serves no sacramental meal. She calls the Sunday morning, “Little Easter,” heavenly marriage feast between Christ the Lamb and his Bride the Church “boring” and “culturally irrelevant” and “user-unfriendly.” She eats the seductive fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil rather than the Truth of the Tree of Life. She is devoted to the American cultural god whose name is “Success,” rather than to the God who identifies himself with the least of the peoples of the earth, a slave-people, and who identifies himself in Christ with the lowest of humans as he hangs on the cursed tree of the cross, a condemned criminal.

I am now once again committed only to my bride, the Evangelical Lutheran Confession. And I look forward to many more years in her loving embrace. I hope I have learned my lesson and will not so easily be seduced when the next attractive movement comes along.

The Reverend Theodore N. Strelow
Redeemer Lutheran Church
Burlington, North Carolina

GOD DAMNED IT

One can often hear choruses of the sinful nature in concert with the judgment of the almighty God: God damn it! Indeed. Cursed ground. Sweaty brows. Labor pains. Thorns and thistles. The sinful nature that echoes the cursing, however, would curse the judgment itself even as it seeks its own way out from under it.

Messiah Technology. Thorns, thistles, and the sweat of the face seem to be surmounted by large red or bright green and yellow farm machinery with air-conditioned cabs from which one can apply the latest in herbicides and fertilizers. Despite these, the farmer’s curse lingers: the implements break down and break the budget, and the chemicals are costly both to one’s wealth and health. It seems that technology is infected with the curse too.

Relief from the pains of childbirth and all other discomforts is sought in organic chemistry and biomedical engineering. Social mores are adjusted to liberate proponents from under the curse: “Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.” And what of the promise that looms on the horizon to genetically alter or eradicate the more ornery and undesirable aspects of the human character? A modern, corporate Sisyphus pushes its rock up the hill once more, grunting and cursing all the way.

At the bottom of the hill, a heel-bruised head-smasher stands on deck: “No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.”

JAB
HOLY COMMUNION NEEDS NO DELTA FORCE

What is to be said to delinquent members who have not been receiving the Lord’s gifts in Holy Communion? In his introduction to the Small Catechism, Luther offers a suggestion of what not to do. The following is taken from the Triglotta translation of the Book of Concord, pp. 537 and 539. Compare it if you like with Tappert’s translation on page 340–341, ¶ 21–27.

We are to force no one to believe, or to receive the Sacrament, nor fix any law, nor time, nor place for it, but are to preach in such a manner that of their own accord, without our law, they will urge themselves and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer the Sacrament.

This is done by telling them: Whoever does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least some four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is no Christian, just as he is no Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel; for Christ did not say, “This omit,” or “This despise,” but “This do ye as oft as ye drink it,” etc. Verily, He wants it done, and not entirely neglected and despised. This do ye, He says.

Now, whoever does not highly value the Sacrament thereby shows that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell; that is, he does not believe any such things, although he is in them over head and ears and is doubly the devil’s own. On the other hand, he needs no grace, life, Paradise, heaven, Christ, God, nor anything good. For if he believed that he had so much that is evil, and needed so much that is good, he would not thus neglect the Sacrament, by which such evil is remedied and so much good is bestowed. Neither will it be necessary to force him to the Sacrament by any law, but he will come running and racing of his own accord, will force himself and urge you that you must give him the Sacrament.

Hence, you must not make any law in this matter. . . . Only set forth clearly the benefit and harm, the need and use, the danger and the blessing, connected with this Sacrament, and the people will come of themselves without your compulsion.

But if they do not come, let them go and tell them that such belong to the devil as do not regard nor feel their great need and the gracious help of God. But if you do not urge this, or make a law or a bane of it, it is your fault if they despise the Sacrament. How could they be otherwise than slothful if you sleep and are silent? Therefore look to it, ye pastors and preachers.

Our office is now become a different thing from what it was under the Pope; it is now become serious and salutary. Accordingly, it now involves much more trouble and labor, danger and trials, and, in addition thereto, little reward and gratitude in the world. But Christ Himself will be our reward if we labor faithfully. To this end may the Father of all grace help us, to whom be praise and thanks forever through Christ, our Lord! Amen.

THE QUEST FOR GOD

“You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here.” The Easter morning quest for Jesus left them gaping at an empty tomb. Jesus was not to be found there. But then where? And where are we to find him today?

Our quests for the Lord are in vain unless he comes to a place where he may be found. That place for us today is in the means of grace. Looking for him elsewhere will only result in the message, “He is not here for you.” Consider then these words from This is My Body, by Hermann Sasse, p. 312. It is published by the Lutheran Publishing House, 205 Halifax Street, Adelaide, S. A. (Australia), but can be obtained through CPH Publishing (800–325–3040) for $16.95.

We are told that the quest of the sixteenth century was the quest for a gracious God, while today the question is whether there is a God at all. But to ask for God, if it is a serious asking and seeking, always means to ask for a gracious God. Otherwise, the quest for God is a purely philosophical, metaphysical quest.

We are told that the interest in religious problems (and even church membership) is growing. But such a change may not mean much more than a sort of intellectual conversion, a change from old-fashioned materialism and atheism of the nineteenth century to another metaphysical system, such as a renewed Thomism. Religion may become fashionable again in an age of uncertainty and fear. A real conversion would be a conversion of the heart, a conversion of the whole man, as he repents of his sins and asks for pardon.

In such a situation, the Sacrament of the Altar is of inestimable importance. For the church it is the best means of overcoming the intellectualism that threatens her very life. A Good Friday sermon may be heard as something that appeals to our heart, or merely to our intellect. Even the Passion music of Bach, which carries the message of the Gospel so impressively to many of our contemporaries throughout the world, may be understood from a merely aesthetic point of view.

The Lord’s Supper, however, cannot be understood intellectually or aesthetically; it can be understood ‘by faith alone’. It requires complete self-humiliation and submission to the words of Christ: ‘This is My body . . . This is My blood’.

Whenever we hear these words at the celebration of the Sacrament in humble faith, taking them as they sound, we know that he is present who is at the same time the eternal High Priest and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. We know that we receive what he has sacrificed to atone for all sins of all men—from the fall of the first man and the first fratricide to the terrific mass-murders of our time, and to all sins and inconceivable crimes which may be committed until the day of the Last Judgment.

Can we receive this precious body and blood without realizing the greatness of human sin, the greatness of our own sin? And who can hear the words: ‘Given for you . . . shed for you . . . for the remission of sins’ without realizing the greatness of Christ’s love for sinners and God’s mercy toward us? Here forgiveness is received as a reality by the believer. It is the same forgiveness that we received in absolution, though in a different form.
4000 HYMNALS TO GO, PLEASE

The July 1994 issue of Concordia Gospel Outreach reported that 4,000 copies of The Lutheran Hymnal were available for overseas missions last February. Working with CPH’s Procurement and Music Departments and with Synod’s Mission Department, the hymnals were shipped from a warehouse in Ohio to the Lutheran Churches in Nigeria and Ghana. How were they received? The following letter from the Lutheran Church in Nigeria (LCN) indicates:

May the name of the Lord be praised! The LCN’s mission and evangelism efforts now go to the cities in Nigeria. A number of newly founded congregations are now in borrowed or rental halls in cities like Akure, Otla, Iko, Rumoukasi, Langtang, and Akwangka. In all of them we have only sent one or two copies of English Lutheran hymnals. One can guess when a newly found church all struggling to learn our liturgy and hymns but only have one hymn book surrounded by eight to ten singers. Even in well-established city churches . . . our members as well as choristers still scramble for TLH in English. (Signed) Rev. S. J. Udofia, President, LCN

What a delight to be able to share a unity of confession, hymnody, and faith with these brothers and sisters in Christ! If they were to visit one of our congregations here or if we were to visit them there, we could still join our voices in the common service—God’s service to us. But will the twenty-first century visit them there, we could still join our voices in the common possession of the gospel, these are brought together such as have received the gospel. It is held that through the coming together of such as have arrived at faith in Christ, the church can be regarded as an organization or an institution. Indeed this is the proper sense in which the church and the body of Christ coincide.

There is another and quite contrary sense in which they are sometimes said to coincide, when both are used only as names for the coming together of individuals. But when by “the body of Christ” nothing more is meant than such a coming together, something essential is lost from view. In the true church, the body of Christ, there is indeed a coming together of those who become members of the church, but this is not the most vital truth about the church. The most vital truth is this essential reality to which we have referred.

One finds oneself wishing that one might make this clear by the use of adequate illustrations. The illustrations which present themselves are rather stumbling. But one might say that their very awkwardness may serve to make clear how strange and incongruous our view of such matters would appear to the early Christians’ viewpoint.

If one wished to use an illustration of the view which regards the church merely as an assemblage of individuals who have come to a common faith, and to do so in terms of the figure of the tree, the vine, or the olive tree, the illustrations would go something like this: One gathers branches from the East and the West, from the North and the South, and, bringing them together, one either places them in a pile or binds them together. Then the pile which one heaps up or the bundle which one ties together would represent the church.

Now by what illustration shall one represent that other view of the church which regards it as an institution or an organization? One might possibly liken the church to a greenhouse and a collection of dry branches in the greenhouse. Then the figure would lead one to expect that because there is glass in the greenhouse and because the sun’s rays shine through the glass, these dry branches will come to life.

THE BODY OF CHRIST ILLUSTRATED

“Individualism and the Concept of the Church,” by Hugo Odeberg, as found on pp. 62–66 in This Is the Church, ed. Anders Nygren (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952). Paragraph breaks were altered for the sake of our format.

On the one hand, it is said that the church can be viewed as a coming together of such as have arrived at faith in Christ, such as have received the gospel. It is held that through the common possession of the gospel, these are brought together into a group which is called congregation or church.

The other alternative is that according to which the church can be regarded as an organization or an institution which makes it possible for the gospel to broaden its outreach, and in which they who are won by the gospel are received as members.

But it must be said that neither of these alternatives, by itself, does justice to the early Christian view as to the church, because in both of them there is lacking something which is essential for the early Christian concept and for the early Christian experience. That which is lacking has frequently been so completely lost sight of that one may not even be aware that anything is missing. We refer to that reality which in the New Testament is represented by various illustrations, among which the most familiar and effective is seen when the church is called the body of Christ.

If one views the church as the coming together of individuals who have arrived at faith in Christ, or as an institution, it is evident that one does not realize that there is such a reality as the body of Christ.

The words “the body of Christ” are simply understood by such people as another expression for the coming together of those who consider themselves Christians or have arrived at faith. But we know that the term “the body of Christ” is intended to convey the same meaning as that presented in other expressions which we encounter, as in illustrations whose purpose it is to make clear that we are confronting something organic. There is, for instance, that which is said about the vine and the branches, which we recognize as an organism. The same reality is also indicated under the figure of a temple or a building which is built up as a unit. It is certainly beyond doubt that this is the reality to which the name “body of Christ” points.

We here confront the church’s origin and essence, and it is because of this reality that it is possible for us to talk about the church. Indeed this is the proper sense in which the church and the body of Christ coincide.
As we said, the awkwardness of these illustrations may serve to make clear how incongruous all this would appear to the early Christian. And what is it that is incongruous? It is that one can fail to see the fact that there is a living stream which is the fountain from which the church issues. In so far as man has lost his conviction that such a living reality is present, by so much is all his talk about the church meaningless. It is the existence of that living reality which is recognized when the church is spoken of as the body of Christ. For it is exactly the truth that the body of Christ is not something consisting of a gathering of different members who have come to a certain conviction . . .

Here one finds it necessary to take up the issue of the individualistic outlook, which is so familiar to us and which has so fully entered into our blood that it is extremely difficult for us to think in any other way. It is just as easy to find that view in our thinking as it is impossible to find the corresponding reality in actual fact. In our thinking we entertain the view of human beings as individuals distinct from each other, each one within the limits of his own self, in such a way that each one is distinguished from all others and constitutes in himself the unity and the whole over against every other thing.

One thinks of the individual as a kind of free sphere floating in the universe, free from any fundamental dependency upon surrounding existence. It is surely enough to say that this in no way corresponds to reality. Humanity did not come here out of empty space, merely plucked out of a vacuum and placed here. We are bound up in a relationship of the most intimate kind both with each other and with the earth upon which we live.

It is only by birth that we come to be, and he who has been born has belonged to another body as an integral part. Thus it is seen that the whole human race is bound together through the fact of birth. So the individual does not at all exist independent of his environment. We inhale it with every breath, so necessary for our life, and we give it back again.

To the New Testament mind individualism was quite unthinkable. The church, for instance, is viewed in the figure of a body where each individual stands in appropriate relationship. The fact that must not be overlooked is precisely this, that it is Christ, the living actual Christ, in whom the church has its origin. Accordingly the expression is meant in the most real sense when Paul says, “Ye are the body of Christ and severally members thereof” (1 Cor 12:27). The same fact is to be observed in the concept of the sacrament.

**COLLOQUIUM VIATORUM**

What do you do if you study or teach in educational settings where philosophy and methodology stand in stark contrast to the confession in Christ? The answer to that question could be *colloquium viatorum*. This group, formed in 1990, was originally dedicated and designed for the *mutua consolatio* of LCMS graduate students enrolled in a course of theological studies *extra Concordiam*, that is, outside of the graduate programs provided by the colleges, universities, or seminaries of the LCMS. Readers interested in finding out more should contact the Reverend Lawrence R. Rast, 610 W. Old Hickory Blvd., Madison, TN, 37115-3514.

**A SAUER NOTE**

At one time, certain segments of American Lutheranism exerted a great deal of effort attempting to remove the entrenched reformed influences from their midst. The laudable activities of many in the Wisconsin Synod during the mid-late 1800s give evidence of this. The sad fact today, however, is that a number of us influenced by growth-oriented Lutheranism have failed to digest the implicit lessons so painfully learned by our fathers.

Yes, as the specialists can tell us, the sights, sounds, and even smells of orthodox Lutheran liturgy can be offensive to so many. As told below, they even caused a man to withdraw himself and his child from the Divine Service! Yet such Church-ungrowth methodology did not deter this pastor and people from embracing “healthy Lutheran practice” and theology from their mongrel past. In the same way today, such things ought not deter us from fleeing in like manner from a similarly mongrel future as found in some of the family papers I recently found:

In the spring of the year 1869, Pastor J. J. C. Sauer was ordained by Reverend C. F. Waldt. He was to experience hard work and difficult times. It was to be a time when drastic measures were necessary. Evangelical discipline was to be introduced, and the disturbing element had to give way. Un-Lutheran practices were abolished and healthy Lutheran practice was carried out. Old disputes were ended and solved, and order was restored on all sides. In short, unionistic practices were ending. Inside, the church experienced reform and beautifying. All this did not happen without battle and strife, however. There was a split in the congregation. The “Reformed element” left and built their own church.

On July first, 1869, the following was resolved:

1. All members who have not entered their names in the church records according to par. 4 and 5 are to do this, or they will be reminded by the church council.

2. Accordingly, those who live in the area and wish to take Communion must first become members of the church.

3. That in our church, as in other Lutheran Churches, there should be liturgy.

On the last point, the reformed group objected, and when Rev. Sauer used the regular Lutheran host instead of leavened bread, their furious anger knew no bounds. When Mr. C. Rosenhauer presented a crucifix to the church and placed it on the altar, a member noticed this and took his child out of church, although his child was yet to be confirmed and was sitting with the other children. There was yet no split, but the crisis was near.

The Reverend J. M. Braun
Christ Lutheran Church
Klamath Falls, Oregon
THE NEW MEASURES

To many Lutheran leaders of the early nineteenth century, the dramatic new measures and methods of revivalism seemed to offer an effective way to combat rationalism, indifference, and apathy. Lutheran leaders in our late twentieth century seem to concur. They invite the spiritual heirs of Charles G. Finney to concur in this period of interest in revivals and sudden conversions. Catechisms did not sell as well as hymns, prayer, and preaching. Most English-speaking congregations used the New York Hymnal which had originally appeared in 1814. It really had no full liturgical form for the Sunday service; it simply provided a selection of prayers, confessions of sins, and benedictions. Each pastor could adapt these resources to his own form of worship. German congregations followed a similar procedure. As late as 1842 a new liturgy suggested the following outline:

The minister rises and pronounces a benediction, or some other devotional passage of Scripture, and then gives out the hymn that is to be sung. After the singing he goes to the altar, and calls upon the congregation to confess their sins, or reads one of the general prayers for Sunday. The prayer is followed by the reading of a portion of Scripture, such as the Gospels, the Epistles, or some other suitable passage. After this the minister announces a hymn adapted to his sermon, and whilst it is sung, ascends the pulpit. After the close of the hymn he prays, preaches, and prays again; whereupon the congregation, having sung another hymn, is dismissed with the benediction.

Before these simple rules were laid down, pastors either copied forms of worship out of books belonging to others or composed liturgies of their own. Some efforts in the period sought to provide new hymnals and liturgies but they did not really change the basic hymn-prayer-hymn-preach pattern. The most successful new publication was the hymn book of the General Synod. It had sold out more than thirty editions by 1843 and it came to replace the New York Hymnal as the standard among English-speaking congregations. Catechisms did not sell as well in this period of interest in revivals and sudden conversions, although editions were produced by the General Synod. German catechisms were published also, chiefly in Pennsylvania. The struggle, however, was uphill all the way. As a pastor near the “Burned-over District” put it:

I state with regret that I have found it extremely difficult to collect together a class of young persons for catechetical instruction. This I attribute to the practice so widely pursued at present, . . . of admitting persons into the church . . . whilst ignorant of the very first principles of Christianity. The influence of this practice is severely felt among us, and in the minds of many catechetical instruction and formality in religion are inseparably linked together.

MINISTRY A LA MODE

In the bottom left-hand corner of page 5, readers of the August 1994 Reporter found an ad placed by Concordia College, Portland. This ad encourages inquiries for a program that offers to help people prepare for an “apostolic” ministry in their pre-seminary program. What most readers cannot discern from the ad, however, is what Dr. Robert Schmidt of the School for Theological Studies means by “apostolic” ministry.

The quotes around “apostolic” serve as red flags. They suggest that something is out of the ordinary. Indeed it is. In an October 30, 1993, draft of his description of the “apostolic” ministry, Schmidt outlines what our synod apparently needs.

First of all, the need for a new paradigm for ministry appears to be economic: “The pain and hopelessness of the world is calling for another model of ministry. The pastoral model of ministry is simply too expensive to export to hungry nations and those where Christians are a small minority. In the rich nations, many Christians are looking for ministry within a small group of people where participants can discuss their problems and receive the warmth and love of fellow Christians” (p. 1).

Then, after defining the word “apostle” as one who is “sent,” he identifies Jesus as the chief “Apostle” in the New Testament and suggests that “as one looks closely at the way in which Jesus, the twelve, and Paul carried out their ministries, certain patterns emerge which provide the model for apostolic ministry” (p. 1).

Features of this apostolic ministry include: a concern for the lost (“those in a contemporary apostolic ministry would spend a majority of their time with people outside the church”), the attempt to bridge the gap between people’s pain and the gospel of the kingdom (“practical experiences in the church and the world should sensitize them to the real life dimensions of these problems”), and the concentrating on the teaching of one’s replacements (Jesus “involved them in their learning by sending them out. In this endeavor they learned through the process of copying what they had seen Jesus do”).

The fourth and perhaps most important feature of Schmidt’s apostolic ministry appears to be “leaving.” When the apostolic minister leaves he enables new leaders “to learn directly from God through the practice of ministry” (p. 3). This seems to be a very important part in the model, for Schmidt asserts: “Without leaving, the three other features of the apostolic ministry become subverted. Congregations monopolize the minister’s time so there is little time for out-
siders. Repetition of ancient truths for group cohesion becomes more important than bridging the gap of diverse cultures with the Gospel” (p. 3).

How are such “apostolic” ministers prepared? “Even though growing numbers of seminary-trained workers are doing apostolic type ministries, few have been trained for it. . . . Ministers in the apostolic mode should have the benefit of such a bridging education in the pre-seminary and professional education. In pre-seminary studies, students might be educated, wherever possible, in the context of international students, non-Christians, and people in need. They should be expected to concentrate in making connections between their studies in literature, philosophy, sociology, political science, and international studies with their work in theology. For their primary modern language they should be encouraged to take Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Polish, French, Swahili, Slovak, or do work in linguistics.”

“Since the need for such apostolic ministers is likely to increase in the future, recruitment efforts might be modified to call those into the ministry having the interests and talents for this type of work. In addition, seminaries might organize a whole track to give such seminarians the best possible preparation for such a ministry. In denominations with more than one seminary, one [seminary] might be set aside for this purpose” (p. 6).

Schmidt then asks, “What if a seminary graduate was educated for a pastoral ministry and now wishes to move in the direction of a more apostolic mode of ministry?” He suggests a retooling of seminary continuing education “for motivation, curriculum and measurement.”

Has the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted a definition of ministry that is marked by modes and models? Have we come to see the office of pastor as doing something to be differentiated from that which was handed down by the apostles to pastors like Timothy and Titus? At the 1995 synodical convention, will we be called on to adopt a resolution to add “apostolic” ministers to the list of categories found in The Lutheran Annual following ordained ministers, commissioned ministers—teachers, commissioned ministers—directors of Christian education, deaconesses, directors of Christian outreach, lay ministers, lay teachers, parish workers, parish assistants, and parish music?

Schmidt’s creation of a special program offered at Concordia, Portland, deserves some serious scrutiny. Those wishing to gain clarification may write Dr. Robert Schmidt at the School for Theological Studies, Concordia College, 2811 NE Holman, Portland, OR, 97211. Those wishing to express their concern might write the chairman of the synod’s Board for Higher Education, Rev. John Meyer, 2300 Hickory, Caspar, WY, 82604–3413.

Reforming the Ceremonies

“Outright impious, blasphemous Sodomites, who want to reform the church in outward ceremony and usage! Until the teachings are reformed, the reform of practice is vain, for superstition and false piety are revealed only by the word and faith.”

Luther, WA TR 4, 232–233.

Confessional Lutherans in Latvia

As early as 1521, the Reformation gospel was being preached in Riga, the beautiful and powerful Hanseatic city on the Baltic. By the middle of the sixteenth century, Lutheranism was the national religion of the two northernmost Baltic states, Estonia and Latvia, though their names and boundaries were different then.

The history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia (ELCL) reflects the general history of Lutheranism. Whatever view of the day held sway in German and Scandinavian Lutheranism, that view held the day also in the Baltic Lutheran Churches. A late eighteenth-century church at Aluksne, for example, has busts of Plato and Aristotle decorating the outside face of the church as one enters. At least they are outside and not inside.

While the Baltic nations rode a roller coaster of domination by Germans, Swedes, and Russians until 1921, there was a fairly constant domination by German culture until the twentieth century. The sacristy of St. Anne’s Church in Liepaja, the great port of Lübe on the western coast, tells the story of the church in Latvia. There one can gaze on pictures of all the pastors of the church since the seventeenth century. All the names until late in the nineteenth century are German, and only as the twentieth century dawns do ethnic Latvian names regularly appear.

Riga is a city of churches. As one approaches the old city from the airport to the southwest and comes to the banks of the River Daugava, a beautiful panorama of the medieval city is opened, punctuated by the steeples of the Riga churches announcing the spiritual history of the city. The view is dominated by the Dome Church dating to the thirteenth century, and seconded by St. Peter’s Church, in which one can see a plaque commemorating the day Gustavus Adolphus worshiped there.

It was St. Peter’s Church, along with St. Jakobi’s Church where the Reformation was proclaimed early on. Today, however, St. Jakobi’s is the Roman Catholic cathedral, representing the 20 percent of the Latvian population that is Roman Catholic.

There have been low spots in the history of the Latvian Lutheran Church, but without a doubt, the darkest period was from 1940 to 1991, when Latvia was a captive nation. Latvian churches were suppressed and many were closed. For a time under the communist occupation, no theological education was permitted. During that period, many pastors were exiled to Siberia, and the theological faculty at the university was shut down. In the early 1960s, some theological training was again permitted in a seminary separate from the university, but not much more than a bare minimum of training could be provided.

With the perestroika and glasnost of the Gorbachev era, many, especially young people, turned to the church again, and many of them wanted to devote themselves to the ministry, so the student body of the seminary began to swell. Many church leaders were also instrumental in the awakening nationalistic and freedom movements, especially through a group called Rebirth and Renewal.

One of those pastors was Roberts Feldmanis, a tireless eighty-year-old who taught church history in the seminary, served as pastor of seven congregations in the Riga area and...
beyond, and had a Friday night Bible study for theology students. Feldmanis was committed to orthodox Lutheranism, and the students who gathered around him learned to believe in an inspired, inerrant Bible and to despise the destructive biblical criticism taught at the seminary. They also were troubled with the ordination of women, which had been instituted by the archbishop without discussion in the church. Of the 150 pastors in the Latvian Lutheran church, eight are women.

In 1990, Thoughts of Faith, a mission society in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, sent the undersigned to Latvia to evaluate the church situation there. Thoughts of Faith had been working in Ukraine for several years, both through radio broadcasts and Bible distribution, and had recently begun work in Czechoslovakia. With the help of a confessional Lutheran pastor from Finland, Halvar Sandell, we met Prof. Feldmanis and some of the young pastors and students in his circle. We learned that the way we could help them was to provide theological literature in German and in English, and to provide instruction in Reformation theology. Beginning in 1991, the undersigned has been invited back each year to lecture and distribute theological books. During these years, between fifty and sixty copies of the Book of Concord, mostly in the Concordia Triglotta edition, have been distributed.

Through the initial contacts by Thoughts of Faith, others have made contact with this confessional group as well, and have come to their aid. Humanitarian aid has come through the Lutheran Laymen’s League. The Lutheran Hour has radio and TV programs. One young theologian, Guntis Kalme, has studied a year at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and earned an MA. Gundars Bakulis, formerly a physician, will complete his MDiv at Bethany Seminary in Mankato in 1995. Another, Ilars Plume, is now working on his advanced degree in St. Louis.

The Luther Academy’s Lutheran Heritage Foundation, founded to promote the translation of theological literature into Russian, has also assisted the Latvians in forming their own independent translating foundation, Luteriska Mantojuma Fonds, Lutheran Heritage Foundation. The most significant and ambitious project of the LMF has been the translation of the Book of Concord. While the Augsburg Confession and the Catechisms were translated into Latvian many years ago, the other confessional writings were not. Soon ready for publication, the Book of Concord will be a key to reawakening and reasserting commitment to Lutheran confessional theology and church life. Thoughts of Faith is also preparing to assist this circle of confessional Lutherans to build up a study center and library.

In addition to the undersigned, the LMF has sponsored lectures by Dr. Robert Preus of the Luther Academy and Prof. Mark Harstad of Bethany Lutheran College. Other lecture series are in the planning stages. Before Christmas 1994, the undersigned will deliver a series of lectures introducing the Lutheran Confessions.

Confessional Lutheran church life in Latvia faces an uphill struggle. A boost was given when in 1993 a young pastor and professor, Janis Vanags, was elected archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia. (There are no bishops in Latvia—only an archbishop. Recently, the Latvian Lutheran churches in exile elected one bishop to lead them.) Before his election, Vanags made known his acceptance of biblical inerrancy and rejection of higher criticism, his dissatisfaction with the Lutheran World Federation, and his opposition to the ordination of women. In spite of that, he was narrowly elected. Vanags was a founding member of the LMF before his election.

There are serious tensions in the ELCL, and few would be so naive or millenarian as to believe that the ELCL will become a thoroughgoing confessional church. But under Archbishop Vanags, there is a climate for proclaiming confessional Lutheran theology.

There are myriad spiritual influences being exerted in Latvia. One can hardly walk the streets of Riga without seeing the influence of the American cults and sects, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hare Krishna, and others. The Roman Catholic Church in Latvia has an aggressiveness not often seen in the West. Pentecostalism is a lively influence, and the American Lutheran charismatics are promoting their schwaermerisch healings and revelations. Even Church Growthism is being promoted, to say nothing of the continuing leaven of syncretism and destructive criticism that is increasingly dominant in Lutheran World Federation Lutheranism.

All that is reason enough for an increasing commitment to reassert the Reformation gospel—not only in the former captive nations, but also at home. The words of Heiko Oberman serve as a good reminder during a time when many think that the antidote to the moral and spiritual malaise is law preaching and service of “felt needs” at the human altar of “relevance”: “Moral rearmament is not the primary goal of his [Luther’s] reformation. . . . The heart of the Reformation is the recovery of sound doctrine—only true faith will lead to renewal of life” (Heiko Oberman, Luther: Man Between God and the Devil, p. 57).

**Translation Watch**

Rev. R. E. Wehrwein of Austin, Minnesota, alerts us to the unintentional duplication of translation efforts among Lutherans. Those with the gift of tongues might better organize if there were some “translation watch” of works in progress so that unnecessary reduplication could be avoided. Two of the examples he cites:

1. Francis Pieper’s “Theses on Unionism” of 1924 were translated first by J. A. Rimbach and E. H. Brandt in the June 1952 issue of the Orthodox Lutheran, but then later by L. L. White in the Orthodox Resource Catalog and again by Ken Miller in The Faithful Word Spring 1993 issue.

2. John Schaller’s “The Kingdom of God” Quartalschrift article (Bibl. #44) was translated by both Egbert Schaller for the CLC’s Journal of Theology and Ernst H. Wendland for The Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly.

If you are working on a translation (or know of someone else who is), you may wish to contact Pastor Wehrwein at PO Box 2151, Sanborn, MN, 56073, who can catalog such efforts to avoid unintentional duplication of work.
FRUIT OF THE VINE

Readers of Forum Letter may have been following the recent tête-à-tête on the use of grape juice as an alternative to wine in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (see the April 29 [FL 23:4] and August 15 [FL 25:8], 1994, issues). Some oblique references to Rev. Andrew Dimit were initially made, though no specific citations from Dimit’s writings were printed. What follows is a portion of his reaction to a 1993 column in The Lutheran Witness, which may have set off the discussion. For Luther’s views on the distinction between “wine” and “fruit of the vine” see AE 37:317.

The Lutheran Witness of today makes no claim to being a theological journal. The masthead states simply “A magazine for the laypeople of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.” Still, in a nod of deference to its predecessor, Der Lutheraner, each issue includes something called “Q & A,” in which questions regularly fielded by parish pastors get published with a cursory answer.

The June “Q” was a familiar one: “What does our church say about using grape juice [when a recovering alcoholic doesn’t wish to take wine], since it’s also a ‘fruit of the vine’?” What was unfamiliar was the “A,” which might be summed up as follows: (1) We know that the Lord Jesus used wine at the Last Supper because grape juice as we know and use it was unavailable then. Therefore, the use of wine today assures faithfulness to the clear words of Christ. But (2) since the Scriptures know nothing of grape juice, we have no clear word that grape juice is not an acceptable substitute for wine in these days of technological arrestment of the fermentation process. So (3) “there is no wholly satisfactory solution. The matter ultimately lies in the realm of pastoral judgment.”

So there you have it. The parish pastor using his own best, albeit isolated, judgment may (or perhaps must) be the arbiter of what is and what is not a sacramental element. And why can he or must he do this? Because the Scriptures know nothing of what are to be, in perpetuity, the sure substances to which the Lord will attach his body and blood and the forgiveness of our sins. The parish pastor has the grand option to search for whatever, in his own opinion and judgment, will serve as an acceptable substitute for the offending bread and wine.

This is not the first time that this “know-nothing” hermeneutic has been employed in such matters. Resort has been made previously, especially by the synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to Scripture’s silence on a range of topics (voters’ meetings and women’s suffrage quickly come to mind) as a reason for making no decision and relegating matters to the realm of adiaphora. The June “Q & A” column appeals almost exclusively to the CTCR’s 1983 document on the Lord’s Supper for its exegesis and takes “know-nothingism” to its logical conclusion: Scripture knows nothing of the elements that would be acceptable in the Supper in the twentieth century.

If the Scriptures know nothing of what things might be usable beyond bread and wine, then the parish pastor also can know nothing of them. He could never impose any particular elements upon the parish to the exclusion of any others. In the age of “silent Scriptures,” pity the poor pastor who, fearful of substituting elements to which the Lord will not come, does not offer grape juice! The parishioners could simply leave and go across town to the “know-nothing-and-proud-of-it” LCMS parish where the altar is arrayed with red wine, white wine, purple grape juice, white grape juice, maybe a wine-juice mixture for the adventurous—or if the parish is really avant garde—a flagon of grape soda (with 10 percent real fruit juice). A new rubric suggests itself: “Christ will come in whatever beverage you desire. Signal your choice at the altar rail. The peace of the Lord be with you always.”

The Reverend Andrew Dimit
Christ the King Lutheran Church
Duluth, Minnesota

DISCERNING THE BODY

The following article consists of two excerpts from a fraternal response to a paper presented to the Council of Presidents regarding 1 Corinthians 11:27–34. Those interested in the full text may write us at the Logia Forum address.

I.

The study paper presented to the joint meeting of the Council of Presidents and the faculties of the two seminaries was delivered to justify a more open Communion practice in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In view of the conclusions which the author reached, namely, that the “body” in 1 Corinthians 11:29 is not the true and substantial body of the crucified and risen Lord (the body “born of Mary; that our sins and sorrows did carry,” TLH 313; LW 238), but the mystical body of Christ, i.e., the church.

On the basis of this conclusion, the author suggests that perhaps the very sin which the Apostle condemns—“profaning the body and blood of the Lord”—is committed by those who refuse the Eucharist to anyone who does not believe that the true and substantial body of Christ is present and received by those who commune, with the mouth, together with the bread and wine. He suggests that when we do not discern the church (i.e., the body of Christ), we eat and drink judgment on ourselves and profane the body and blood of Christ. This is an extremely serious challenge, for it suggests that by the Communion practice and policy which it has adopted, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod actually causes people to sin against Christ’s body and blood.

Unanswered is the question, however, of how one discerns the church. Do we discern the church on the basis of the faith in the heart of another person? If that is the answer, then it must be stated emphatically that no one can discern the church, since whether or not there is true faith in the heart can be, and is known only to God; “The Lord knows those who are his” (2 Timothy 2:19).

The church as the mystical body of Christ, properly speaking, is only the elect, those whom God has chosen and who have by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit been brought to true faith in Christ. The church is the pure and holy bride of Christ, “having cleansed her with the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle . . . holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:26–27). It is obvious that hypocrites and godless persons may be mixed
with the church according to its external marks, namely, the right teaching of the gospel and the right administering of the sacraments (CA VII; VIII).

With reference to the meaning of αὐτῆς, the author refers to Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (ed. G. Kittel). However, he omits the explicit translation of 1 Corinthians 11:29 found therein: “because he does not distinguish the body of the Lord (from ordinary bread)” (vol. 3, p. 946).

To assert that each individual person who comes to eat and drink at the Eucharist must discern the body of Christ, the holy and pure bride of Christ, in the other individuals who come to eat and drink is like asserting that each individual is personally the bride of Christ spoken of in Ephesians 5:26–27. This not only violates the accepted use of language, but also defies reason.

II.

“There is one bread, and we who are many are one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor 10:17).

In his comments on this passage, Martin Chemnitz writes, “Yet this bread of the Eucharist is not materially one in number in all the churches which are the one body, but with the bread the one and the same body and the one and the same blood of Christ are distributed to all in the Lord’s Supper and received orally by the communicants. . . .

“The members of the church are joined together in the one body of Christ, therefore they are also joined with one another and become one body, whose head is Christ . . . For through the bread we are united with the body of Christ, and through the body with Christ Himself, and through Christ with the Father. Thus we are made partakers [κοινωνοῦν] with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Martin Chemnitz, The Lord’s Supper, trans, J. A. O. Preus [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979], p. 143).

Martin Luther comments on this passage, “We know that St. Paul does not say here, ‘We who are many are one body of Christ,’ but simply, ‘we who are many are one body,’ i.e., a group, a community, just as every city is a particular body or society in distinction from another city. From this it does not follow that all members of this body are holy . . . but it is a physical group or body in which are both holy and unholy people who together partake of the one bread” (AE 37:355).

For the Corinthian spiritualizers, the transformation of the spirit or inwardness of man was the chief concern. This led to the conclusion that if the inner spirit had been transformed and liberated, whatever was done bodily did not matter and was inconsequential. This led to the bodily immorality against which St. Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 6: “He who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her.” The bodily union with a prostitute was regarded as of no spiritual consequence by these Corinthians. St. Paul responds by saying that it is the physical act of sexual intercourse with the prostitute, not some sort of inward communion, which makes the person one body with the prostitute.

The Reverend Dr. George F. Wollenburg
President, The Montana District of The LCMS
Billings, Montana

TAPPERT’S OMISSION

The Tappert translation of the Book of Concord does not include two key sections found in the Concordia Triglotta, namely, the Catalogue of Testimonies and the Visitations Articles. These have been reprinted in a special edition by Ballast Press, PO Box 1193, Evansville IN, 47706–1193, softbound, 60 pp. They are available for just $7 a copy, which includes postage and handling. Only ninety copies are left at the time of this writing. The following is a portion of the introduction:

Since especially in the article of the Person of Christ, some have without reason asserted that in the Book of Concord there is a deviation from phrasibus and modus loquendi, that is, the phrases and modes of speech of [received and approved by] the ancient pure Church and fathers, and that, on the contrary, new, strange, self-devised, unusual and unheard-of expressions are introduced; and since the testimonies of the ancient Church and fathers to which this book appeals proved somewhat too extended to be incorporated in it, and, having been carefully excerpted, were afterwards delivered to several electors and princes,—

[Therefore] they are printed in goodly number as an appendix at the end of this book, in regard to particular points, for the purpose of furnishing a correct and thorough account to the Christian reader, whereby he may perceive and readily discover that in the aforesaid book nothing new has been introduced either in rebus (matter) or in phrasibus (expressions), that is, neither as regards the doctrine nor the manner of teaching it, but that we have taught and spoken concerning this mystery just as, first of all, the Holy Scriptures and afterwards the ancient pure Church have done.