

Concordia Theological Monthly



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BRIEF STUDIES

THE MOMENT OF THE REAL PRESENCE IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

EDITORIAL NOTE: The St. Paul Convention resolved

"(a) That the joint theological faculties of Synod provide appropriate studies on the following topics mentioned in Unprinted Memorial 18, 'The Moment of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper' and 'Intercessory Prayers for the Benefit of the Souls of the Dead';

"(b) That we recommend that these studies be published in the *Concordia Theological Monthly*."

The joint theological faculties have devoted considerable time to the study of the first topic in several meetings. On May 2, 1959, the following statement was adopted and its publication authorized.

1. Scripture is silent with reference to the "moment" of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, for 1 Cor. 10:16 relates the sacramental union to the total sacramental action.

2. According to the Formula of Concord (VII 83) the Lord's Supper is a sacrament only when the elements are consecrated and the directives included in Christ's command *This do* are executed. The paragraph reads:

This blessing, or the recitation of the words of institution, of Christ alone does not make a sacrament if the entire action of the Supper, as it was instituted by Christ, is not observed (as when the consecrated bread is not distributed, received, and partaken of, but is enclosed, sacrificed, or carried about), but the command of Christ *This do* (which embraces the entire action or administration in this Sacrament, that in an assembly of Christians bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, received, eaten, drunk, and the Lord's death is shown forth at the same time) must be observed unseparated and inviolate, as also St. Paul places before our eyes the entire action of the breaking of bread or of distribution and reception, 1 Cor. 10:16. (English translation from *Triglot*, p. 1001.)

3. The Formula of Concord does not, however, fix the moment when the sacramental union takes place. It rather lashes out in severe language against speculative questions dealing with the "when" and "how" of the sacramental union. "When and how does the body come into the bread? How long does the sacramental union last? When does the body cease to be in the bread?" See *Bekennnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 2d ed. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), p. 1016, n. 4, for a list of such questions as had appeared in Kurtz *Bekennnis*, 1571, a forerunner of the Formula of Concord.

See also Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), pp. 164—176. The condemnatory statement in the Formula of Concord (VII 127) reads: "We reject and condemn also all presumptuous, frivolous, blasphemous questions and expressions which are presented in a gross, carnal, Capernaïtic way regarding the supernatural, heavenly mysteries of this Supper." (English translation from *Triglot*, p. 1015)

4. In view of the above considerations (silence of Scripture regarding the "moment" of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, and statements quoted from the Formula of Concord) Lutheran theologians, whether they be in the preaching or teaching ministry, will be careful not to ask or evoke "presumptuous, frivolous, blasphemous questions" regarding the mystery of the "moment" of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, lest Christian consciences be disturbed and Satan be given an opportunity to sow the seed of discord in the church. Lutheran theologians need constantly remember that the chief emphases in the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper are those succinctly expressed in the statement of the Small Catechism: "'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.' Which words, besides the bodily eating and drinking, are the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins."