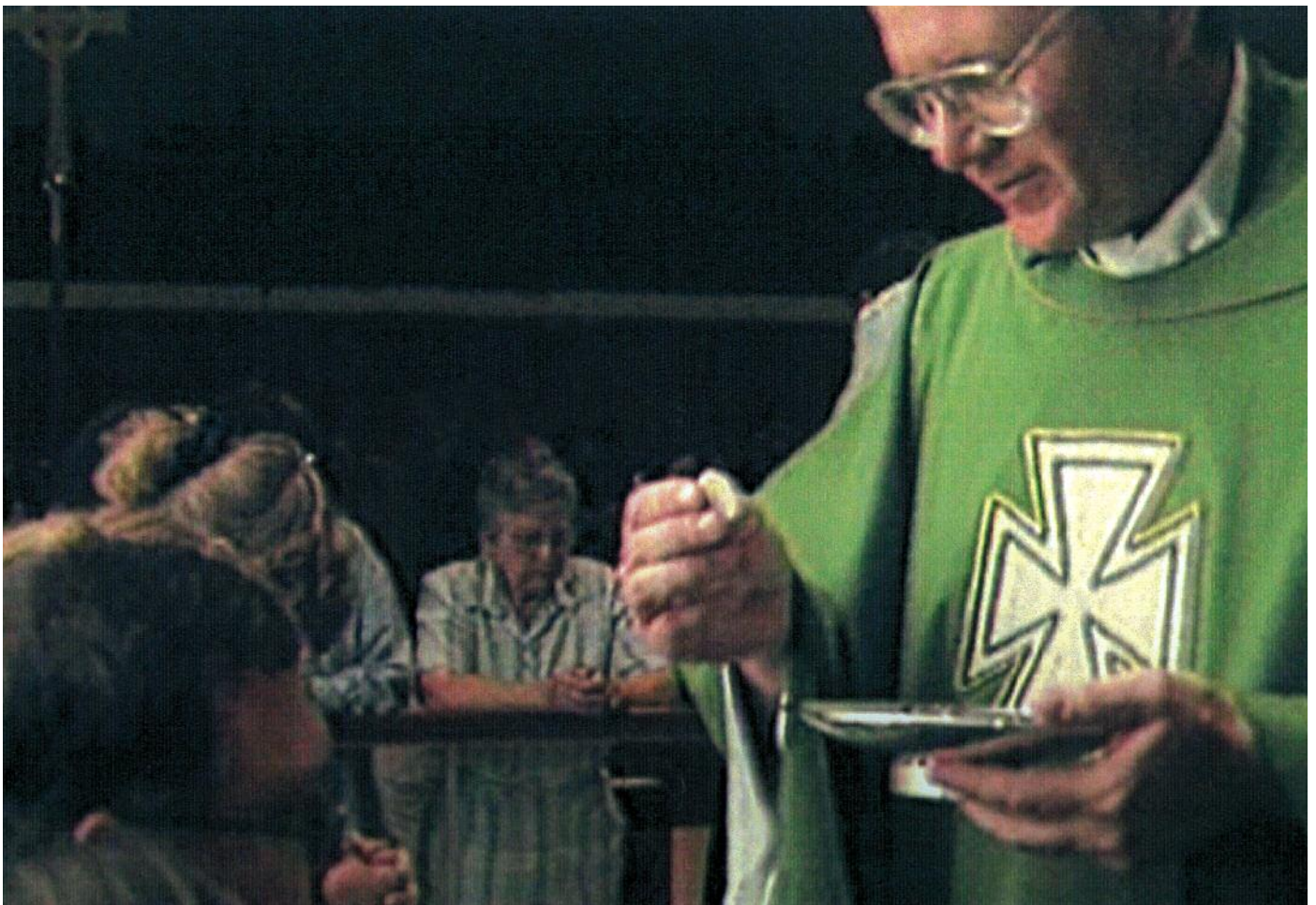


For the

LIFE of the WORLD

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For the LIFE of the WORLD

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FEATURES

4 The Lord's Supper in the Congregation

By the Rev. Kenneth W. Wieting, Pastor of Luther Memorial Chapel, Shorewood, Wis.

The Lord's Supper was central in the worship of Christ's Church right from the beginning. Our Lutheran Confessions trumpet the Scriptural and historical practice in the church when they affirm that the Lord's Supper "is celebrated every Lord's day and on other festivals, when the Sacrament is made available to those who wish to partake of it." In highlighting this weekly presence our Synod's explanation to Luther's Small Catechism rightly describes the gift of the Lord's Supper as "a regular and major feature of congregational worship, not an occasional extra" (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:20,33).

7 It Is Not Ours, But the Lord's Supper

By the Rev. Prof. Naomichi Masaki, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Is it the Lord's Supper or our own supper? Is it the Lord's Supper or the Christians' supper? Even if the world of Paul and Luther may seem different from our own, we are still challenged by the same old enemies: the devil, the world, and our flesh. All these enemies continue to attack in order to "diminish my Lord Jesus Christ" (Luther). The confession that it is *the Lord's* Supper has profound implications. Probably the most recognizable thing would be to acknowledge that it is not the pastor's supper nor the congregation's supper as if they may do whatever they please.

11 Where Is God?

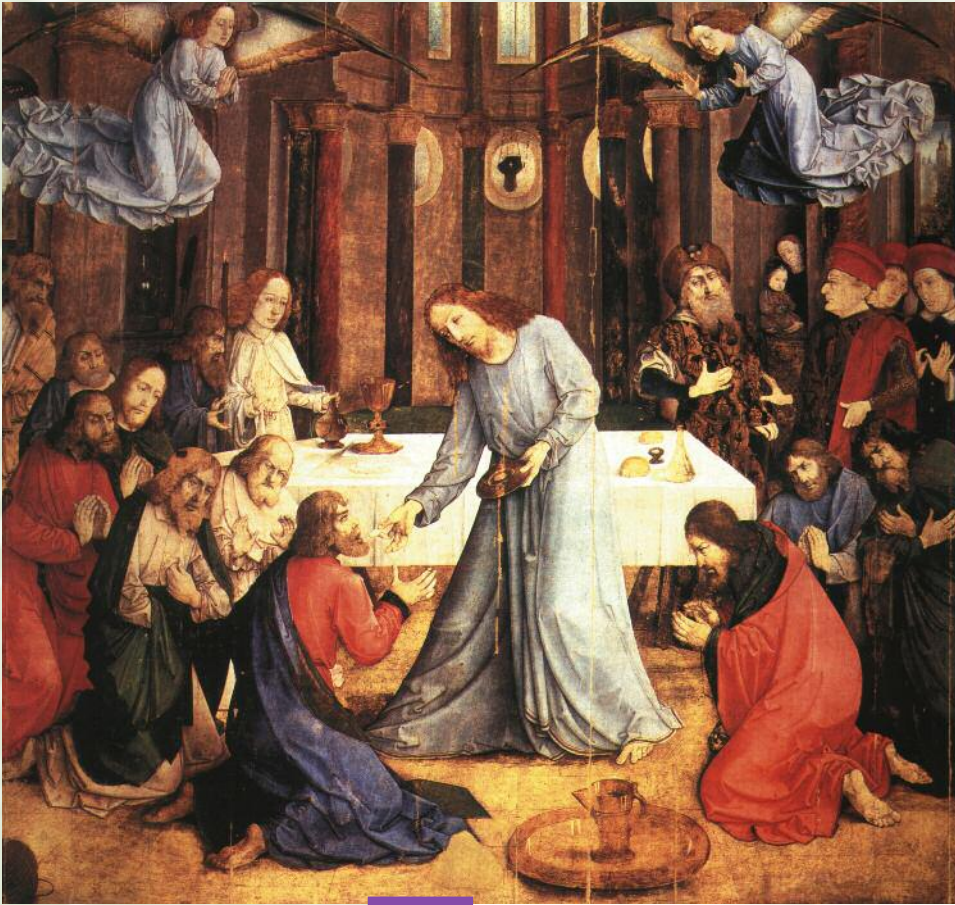
By the Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Gard, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Some say that everything changed on September 11 and, in some ways, they are right. Where is God? The answer is right there in our tears. Where is God? He was there as His own Child suffered the agonizing death of the Cross. Where is God? He is there in the rubble and in the pain, never distant from His suffering, sin-wrecked creation but always in the midst of it all. Where is God? He was there at the Pentagon, in New York City, in a field in Pennsylvania.

20 In the Field

By Monica Robins

Featuring the Rev. Scott L. Murray, Pastor of Memorial Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas



It's Not Ours But The Lord's Supper!

by the Rev. Naomichi Masaki

If your friend or child asks you, “why do you go to the Lord’s Supper?”, how would you reply? What is the big deal in the Lord’s Supper? What do you regard as most important when you are at the Lord’s table?

“It is to celebrate,” some of us may be inclined to say. Such celebration can include: the celebration of the Lord’s resurrection, our encountering with the risen Christ Himself, and our coming together in unity and love. Others may say that we go to the Sacrament of the Altar in order to strengthen our faith by remembering our Lord who suffered and died for us; in so doing we offer thanks and praise to God for what He has done for us. Some may give a rather apathetic response: “I don’t care. I don’t think that the Lord’s Supper is really necessary because I am baptized and I hear good sermons every Sunday. I go to the Holy Communion because all my friends and the families of my congregation go there.” What is most important about the Lord’s Supper to you?

St. Paul contrasted “*the Lord’s Supper*” with “*our own supper*” when he saw how the Holy Communion was abused by some Corinthians who were eating and drinking in the church as if they were eating and drinking in their own homes (1 Cor. 11:20-21). Similarly, Dr. Luther in his defense against various attacks on the sacrament said, “It is *the Lord’s Supper*, *not Christians’ supper*” (AE 37:142; 38:200).

Is the Lord’s Supper still being abused or attacked—or is it being received and confessed according to the way He instituted it? When our own ideas, notions, and presuppositions are placed ahead of the Lord’s words, we are subordinating what our Lord has said about His Supper to our own ideas and taking control of His Supper according to our concepts, values, and categories.

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world of Paul and Luther may seem different from our own, we are still challenged by the same old enemies: the devil, the world, and our flesh. All these enemies continue to attack in order to “diminish my Lord Jesus Christ” (Luther).

The confession that it is *the Lord’s Supper* has profound implications. Probably the most recognizable thing would be to acknowledge that it is not the pastor’s supper nor the congregation’s supper as if they may do whatever they please.

Other implications may be observed by looking at the life of the church both in the past and the present. One of the “discoveries” among the scholars of the so-called “liturgical movement” of the last century was the dimension of the meal and how it relates to Holy Communion. By studying ancient religions, these scholars observed that there was a cultic or memorial meal in each one of them. They also found meals in

both Old and New Testaments. Thus, some scholars attempted to understand the Lord’s Supper on the basis of these “discoveries” about the meal. In some cases the “Lord’s Supper” was changed into “Supper of the Lord” in order to give greater emphasis to the meal.

Other scholars of the same movement were attracted to the Hellenistic mystery religions which had flourished centuries earlier. According to these scholars, salvation was accomplished by the people’s participation in certain rituals. By “recapitulating” and “reenacting” the god’s story by way of a rite, a god is made contemporary and salvation is made available to the people. Informed by such research, some scholars promoted the notion that the liturgy is the work of the people. Just as some held the position that the more meal was emphasized the better the sacrament, others claimed that the more the laity participated, the better the sacrament. Emphasis was laid on ritual action in the liturgy and more lay involvement, rather than on the clear words of our Lord. Likewise, a similar “discovery” was made rather independently among the Protestant ecumenical movement of the last century. This Protestant “discovery” of the apostolate of the laity influenced churches at large to hold a false notion of the doctrine of the priesthood of the baptized.

Theologically speaking, what we observe above is compatible with the theology of the Lord’s Supper by non-Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Protestant alike. For example, “liturgy as the work of the people” is compatible with the Roman doctrine of work righteousness, thus adopted in Vatican II.

By focusing on the ritual or meal which is done by us, the fanatics (called *Schwämer* by Luther) have revisited us. Dr. Karlstadt, who had been a colleague of Luther in Wittenberg, emphasized “the burning remembrance of Christ” and “the passionate tasting of the sufferings of Christ” in the Lord’s Supper (AE 40:213 f.). Instead of looking outside of himself, he fixed his eyes inward, focusing on his own feelings and actions. As a result, he removed the statues, the crucifix, altars, vestments, and other remnants of the Papacy from the churches. Next he referred to himself as “Brother” instead of “Pastor.”

We may observe here that the means of grace and the Office of the Holy Ministry go together as confessed by the Augsburg Confession, Article V. While the Reformation gave the term *Predigtamt* (preaching office: AC V) to confess the Office of the Holy Ministry, the nineteenth century theologian and churchman Theodor Kliefoth used such words as *Gnadenmittelamt* (the means of grace office) and *Heilsmittelamt* (means of salvation office) in his *Acht Bücher von der Kirche* (1854; 217 f.). When the confession of the means of grace is weakened or damaged, the confession of the Office of the Holy Ministry goes with it, as does the doctrine of the priesthood of the baptized.

The root of Karlstadt’s approach was Greek think-

ing that there are two opposing realms: an earthly/external one and an inward/spiritual one. According to this Greek notion of man's condition, human beings are then trapped in earthly and material things; his salvation is found in his rising above this material realm into the inward spiritual realm. The Lord's Supper for Karlstadt was not seen as the point at which Christ deals with us by bestowing His body and blood with the bread and wine, but rather as a springboard from which a man is to fly upward with his soul and have a heavenly communion with Christ somewhere up there. Such spiritual exercises were heavily emotional.

Still another example of reducing the Lord's Supper into our own supper was evidenced by Zwingli, another contemporary of Dr. Luther. Zwingli was not willing to accept the plain words of the Lord. He misused John 6:63: "the flesh profits nothing" to advocate that the reception of the body of Christ, even if it were truly there, was of no avail. In reply to him, Luther taught that our sinful flesh, of course, profits nothing; but Christ's flesh avails everything (AE 37:78 ff.).

Zwingli also taught that with his soul a man so remembers Christ that he rises to a heavenly communion with Him, feeds on Christ with his heart, but not with his mouth. The true body of Christ is not down here but up there. He observed that Christ's divine nature may be down here but not His human nature, simply because it was impossible. In fact, he accused both Papists and Lutherans alike for "dragging Christ down from heaven and from the Father's throne" (Zwingli, *An Exposition of the Faith*, "The Presence of the Body of Christ in the Supper").

Here we see something very characteristic about Luther's approach. He does not begin with the limitations of our body and then impose these limitations upon Christ's body. He begins and ends with Christ's words which say: "This is My body . . . This is My blood." There is no doubt that He does with His body what He says He does. His body indeed can be anywhere but this is not the basis for our confession that Christ's body and blood are upon our tongues in Holy Communion. We may not impose our measurement and prescriptions on the Lord and what He does with His body and His blood. However, as we will discuss later, we are not helped by His being anywhere or everywhere.

Zwingli, on the other hand, tried to impose what is fitting for God. He held that it was not fitting for the almighty majesty of God so to lower Himself to bread and wine and there suffer Himself to be mishandled and abused. Man's soul must rise to the higher, more spiritual level if he is to have communion with God. Besides, he thought that the Lord's Supper was not really necessary since nothing may be said to be given by it that is not given by the words of the Gospel. To this particular opinion, Luther replied: "what an arrogant, ungrateful devil . . . will you prescribe and choose

means and measures for God? You ought to leap for joy that he does it in whatever manner he chooses, if only you obtain it" (AE 37:140).

As in the case of Rome, for both Karlstadt and Zwingli the Lord's Supper was not the Gospel. They distanced themselves from the Lord's gifts by way of emotion (Karlstadt) and of reason (Zwingli), just as Rome did so by way of our works. The words of institution were not understood as consecratory by Zwingli. They were an "Institution Narrative" at best, a story telling of what had happened in the upper room at the Last Supper.

What we find with Rome, Karlstadt, and Zwingli are revisiting us even now under various guises, so that Hermann Sasse observed that the problems we face concerning the Lord's Supper are basically the same as that of the sixteenth century ("A Lutheran Contribution to the Present Discussions on the Lord's Supper," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 30-1 [January 1959]: 24; *This Is My Body*, 299).

In his *Large Catechism*, Luther teaches that those who misuse the Lord's Supper in this way of unbelief of various forms should stay away from the sacrament (LC, V, 58). To them the sacrament is "something they do" while they rely on themselves, thinking that they are strong without it (LC, V, 7, 40, 63, 71). Unbelief does not undo the sacrament but rejects its benefits, which is the worst and fateful misuse of the Lord's Supper (LC, V, 16, 35).

It is not from our reflections on the "elements" or on our actions that we come to know about the Lord's Supper. Nor do we arrive at it out of deduction of some sacramental doctrine or definition. The words of Christ not only make the sacrament, but bring and give us the forgiveness of sin (Mt. 26:28).

What is said of the words is not, however, at the expense of the Lord's body and blood. Again in the *Large Catechism*, Luther calls the body and blood "a treasure and gift" . . . "through which forgiveness is



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obtained” on the cross and which is “brought to us” as the words say “given and shed for you” (LC, V, 22, 28-31). Notice he did not say that the treasure was personalized to Christ Himself. He said it was His body and blood. Of course, the Lord’s body and blood may never be disjoined from Himself. Luther, however, stayed as close as possible to what the words of the



Dr. Luther confessed that Christians go to the Lord’s Supper to receive the forgiveness which was won on the cross, because simply running to the cross and remembering the suffering of Christ does not grant the forgiveness of sins (AE 40:214). The forgiveness of sins needs to be not only remembered but delivered. Our Lord accomplished our salvation on Calvary by Himself without our assistance, and the same Lord who died for us now distributes the fruits of the cross, the forgiveness of sin, again without our aid, using His instrument, the *Predigtamt* (the preaching office).

Lord say and rejoiced in the *proprium* of the Lord’s Supper, not allowing any Christological considerations or “spiritualization.”

In another place Luther left us a very important word: “the Lord is indeed everywhere, but is he there for you?” (AE 37:68). This echoes in his catechisms where he stresses not only that the body and blood of the Lord are there at the Lord’s Table, but that they are given out “for you.” The Gospel which comforts us comes from this little phrase “for you” because the mere presence of the Lord can also be for our judgment.

In Greek, this “for you” in the words of institution involves not only “for the benefit of you” but also “in the place of you.” This language of vicarious satisfaction is seen also in another little phrase, “for many” (Mt. 26:28; Mark 14:23; cf., Heb. 9:28), which echoes *Ebed Yahweh*, the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:11), the Lamb of God.

At the Lord’s table, we are there with the Lamb “who once was slain, who sits upon the throne, and who gathers us to give them his body and his blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins” (Norman Nagel, “Holy Communion,” Precht ed., *Lutheran Worship History and Practice*, 295). It is *the Lord’s* Supper. Not only that the words of the Lord determine what it is and what it is for, but also that the same Lord Jesus is there as the one who *serves* (Luke 22:27). What goes on in such a liturgy was too precious for Luther that when Zwingli’s fellow Oecolampadius urged Luther to think of Christ in heaven, Luther replied, “I know no Savior apart from the one born by the virgin, died on the cross, and given out at the altar” (cf., AE 38:46).

Do we receive forgiveness through our ears or our mouth? Through words or through His body and blood? By faith or by eating and drinking? These are

all false alternatives. His words, His body and blood, bread and wine, ears and mouth, heart, faith, eating and drinking: Christ bestows forgiveness to us through them all. What the Lord has joined together, let no one separate, as Luther preached in the second catechism sermon series in 1528, “Let the sacrament remain whole” (WA 30 I, 55, 19).

So, why do you wish to go to the Lord’s Supper? What is the most important thing for you there? Is it for the celebration of our coming together as brothers and sisters, for a “family reunion,” for the meeting and the receiving of Christ Himself, for our giving thanks to the Father, for our remembering of Christ’s suffering and death, or for our sharing the meal together? Dr. Luther confessed that Christians go to the Lord’s Supper to receive the forgiveness which was won on the cross, because simply running to the cross and remembering the suffering of Christ does not grant the forgiveness of sins (AE 40:214). The forgiveness of sins needs to be not only remembered but delivered. Our Lord accomplished our salvation on Calvary by Himself without our assistance, and the same Lord who died for us now distributes the fruits of the cross, the forgiveness of sin, again without our aid, using His instrument, the *Predigtamt* (the preaching office).

The words of the Lord say not only that there are body and blood of the Lord present, but they are given “for you” to eat and to drink “for the forgiveness of your sins.” By such words of the Lord we know what is our deepest need. It is sin; not a distance from God. He and what He gives are sure. When the Lord’s Supper is reduced to our own supper or Christians’ supper, we may celebrate it as we want, but our deepest comfort is lost.

The Lord’s Supper remains His Supper when He gives His body and blood for us to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sin. Faith receives this gift which does not come from inside our hearts. Rather it comes from outside us through external means, both into the ears and upon the tongue.

He bids you come to eat and drink. He invites you in the most friendly way imaginable. All Law, works, worthiness, reason, inward movement, upward movement, “spiritualization,” compulsion are excluded. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28). He now serves you at the Lord’s Table by giving you His body and blood to eat and drink. Blessed are those who are at home in *His* liturgy, for there they receive forgiveness, life, and salvation, not through their own supper, but *the Lord’s* Supper!

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