
The Abiding Word

The
ABIDING
WORD

AN ANTHOLOGY OF DOCTRINAL
ESSAYS FOR THE YEARS
1954-1955

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Publisher's Preface

The essays in this volume were selected by the Literature Board of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from those presented at the District conventions of 1954 and 1955. They are made available as a continuation of Volume I (1946) and Volume II (1947), issued under the direction of the Centennial Literature Committee and edited by Dr. Theodore Laetsch. Since the original two volumes, published under the title **THE ABIDING WORD**, are still in demand, the publisher is encouraged to make these additional essays available as Volume III of the series.

THE PUBLISHER

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The Abiding Word

The Proper Use of the Sacrament of Holy Communion

INTRODUCTION

IN the night when He was betrayed our Lord said: "This do in remembrance of Me." The Holy Supper was to be used in accordance with His institution. Here the Master issued a directive. "This do," He said. "This do" is the word of a divine Master and gracious Savior. Who would have thought that this would not be done by many who in the following years and centuries called themselves His own? Seldom has a clear directive been so abused by such as claimed that they were doing as He directed. The history of the visible New Testament church is blackened with violations of the word: "This do in remembrance of Me."

This inclination not to do as He did is due neither to any vagueness nor to any inexactitude of Scripture. The divinely inspired words of Matthew and Mark and of Luke and Paul are clear and admit of only one explanation. The records of the four writers are not given in identical words. We would not expect the record of the institution to be thus given. The records are not contradictory; they agree, even in detail. True, negative Biblical criticism has not been content to let the accounts stand as they are. Critics have contended that the accounts of the Synoptists and of Paul record the practice in vogue in the church when these records were written; in other words, these accounts do not give the true words of Jesus as He spoke them some thirty or forty years previously. So critics have sought the historical words of Jesus. Some contended that Jesus' command to repeat the Holy Supper is not historical; Jesus never intended that this be done in the church. These contentions, based as they are on subjective thinking, may be dismissed without further comment. Others must be examined more carefully. A treatise entitled *Can We Still Hold to the Lutheran Doc-*

trine of the Lord's Supper?¹ cites some of these negative critics. The author of the treatise was a Lutheran. He accepts the words as written by Paul and therefore also the directive to repeat the Supper. But he also contends that certain words in Luke are an interpolation. Luke wrote: "And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is My body." Now, says the writer, the following was added later: "Which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after the supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you" (pp. 77ff.). He maintains that the directive to do and the giving of the cup were added by someone else. He speaks at length of the "so-called short form of Luke." He concludes: "The long form is the product of a very awkward and clumsy redactor." As answer to the question: "Why did Luke stop with the words: 'This is My body?'" he gives what was already advanced by Zahn: "Theophilus had not yet joined the Christian congregation when Luke wrote his Gospel for him, and for an outsider it sufficed to know that here a mysterious act took place; to tell him in detail in what it consisted was neither necessary nor advisable." This answer contradicts facts. Kurtz writes in his *Church History* that Justin, who lived ca. 100 to 166, "describes in his *Apology*, expressly intended for the heathen, in full detail and without hesitation, all the parts of the eucharistic service."² Kurtz goes on to show that the notion of mystery originated in Tertullian's time, who lived ca. 150 to 220-240. Westcott-Hort first branded these words in Luke an interpolation. Alexander Bruce, whose exposition of the Synoptic Gospels is contained in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, writes that the resemblance of this passage with St. Paul's account is one of the arguments of Westcott and Hort against the genuineness of the passage. The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament omits the words in the text proper, adding them in a footnote. These words are contained in nearly all Greek codices and versions.³ Even though the directive to do is written in First Corinthians, yet no cogent reason has been ad-

¹ [J.] M. Reu, *Two Treatises on the Means of Grace*, pp. 40ff.

² J. H. Kurtz, *Church History*, I, 204.

³ *The Expositor's Gr. Test.*, "The Synoptic Gospels," I, 625.

vanced for dropping the "This do," etc., in Luke. It is well that the Authorized Version has retained the complete passage.

The four records of the institution are in full agreement with one another. That Matthew and Mark have not written the words "This do," does not imply that they make no provision for the future celebration of this Supper. What the Spirit of God saw fit to omit in the first two accounts, He adds in the last two: "This do."

THE INSTITUTION

It was Thursday, the fourteenth day of the month called Nisan.⁴ Two disciples, Peter and John, were sent to make preparations for the eating of the Passover, which eating would take place that evening, the fifteenth of Nisan. The disciples, according to Mark 14:12, had inquired: "Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the Passover?" Jesus had then sent the two disciples. He told them that they would meet a man in the city — probably a servant — carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow him. In the house which he would enter they were to ask the man of the house where the guest chamber was in which the Master would eat the Passover with His disciples. He, so Jesus predicted, would show them an upper room prepared. The two did as Jesus told them. In the evening Jesus and the twelve came to this room. Here the Passover meal was eaten.

It was here that the Lord's Supper was instituted. Occasionally one hears voices that deny this. There are those who claim that the Supper was instituted in connection with another meal. Felix L. Cirlot, in his *The Early Eucharist* (London, 1939), p. 1, for example, has this to say: "To the present writer the reasons appear decisive against accepting the Synoptic chronology which would identify the Last Supper with the Passover Meal. . . . But specialists in Talmudic and Jewish studies tell us of certain corporate meals held both by families and also by special groups having some bond of union (Haburah meal)." According to the Synoptists — and there is no reason to doubt their accounts — the institution of the Lord's Supper was clearly in connection with the Passover.

The Passover meal was ended. Jesus "took bread." "And blessed it," the first two Synoptists write. Luke and the apostle write that

⁴ Adam Fahling, *The Life of Christ*, 2d ed., p. 592.

He gave thanks. Not one of the writers repeats the words which were spoken. Then He "brake" the bread. He gave it to them. Matthew and Mark repeat the invitation: "Take, eat." Each of the four inspired scribes thereupon writes the words of the Lord: "This is My body." Luke adds: "Which is given for you," and Paul writes: "Which is broken for you." And Luke and Paul write the Lord's direction: "This do in remembrance of Me." Then Jesus took the cup. Matthew and Mark state that Jesus gave it to them. Matthew has the directive: "Drink ye all of it." Mark alone comments: "They all drank of it." Matthew and Mark give the Lord's next words thus: "This is My blood of the new testament," while Luke and Paul write: "This is the new testament in My blood." Of this blood Jesus says, in the words of Matthew: "Which is shed for many for the remission of sins"; in the words of Mark: "Which is shed for many"; in the words of Luke: "Which is shed for you." Paul does not give these last words, but Paul adds what the others do not record: "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Human reason soon disregarded the words "This do." False notions regarding the use of the sacrament are found already in the writings of the apostolic fathers. Later the teaching of transubstantiation crept in and grew to such an extent that it became a determining factor in establishing doctrine and *cultus* in a large segment of the visible church. A figurative interpretation was later advocated with such vigor that today this is accepted as the truth in another large segment of the visible church. Add to these the many minor controversies begun by human reason, and you cannot but cry out: "Why?" Why, when the words are so clear and the directive is so simple? Why, when the Lord says: "This do"?

EARLY WRITINGS

Only the Holy Scriptures may determine how the Lord's Supper should be used properly. The early Christian Church is frequently appealed to as a witness in this matter. The reasoning underlying such appeal may be entirely correct: The church that had personal contact with the disciples of the Lord learned from eyewitnesses how this sacrament should be used properly. We might place credence in the testimony of the first Christian generation, say to about A. D. 100 and shortly thereafter. What this generation did should

have rested, to some extent, on apostolic authority. But what are the facts? The writings of the apostolic fathers prior to about A. D. 100 contain little that refers to the sacrament. Johann Christian Wilhelm Augusti, *Handbuch der chr. Archaeologie*, Leipzig, 1836, referring to the witness of the church fathers, writes: "The apostolic fathers give nothing, or only a little that is profitable. Neither Barnabas nor Hermas nor Polycarp mentions the Lord's Supper. . . . Only in the letters of Ignatius does one find a few passages which refer to the Eucharist." (II, 571)

Ignatius of Antioch lived A. D. 30 to 107. It is said that he was a disciple of John. This cannot be proved. Ignatius wrote a number of letters while he was being taken to Rome as a prisoner. Following are the only passages which in these letters could refer to the sacrament. The translation is by Goodspeed. To the Ephesians, 20: ". . . breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, to make us live forever in Christ Jesus."⁵ To the Philadelphians, 4: "Be zealous, therefore, to practice one giving of thanks, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in token of union in this blood." To the Smyrnaeans, 7: "They keep away from Thanksgiving and prayer, because they do not admit that the Thanksgiving is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ." 8: "Let that be considered a valid Thanksgiving which is held under the bishop or someone authorized by him. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church. It is not permissible to baptize or hold a religious meal without the bishop, but whatever he approves is also pleasing to God, so that everything you do may be secure and valid." In this same letter he refers to the church "bearing the sacred vessels." On the positive side, there is little in these quotations that shows how the sacrament was used in the early church; on the negative side, there is already in these quotations the indication of false notions.

Then there is a writing called *Didache*, or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. It was known to Clement of Alexandria (ca. A. D. 150–220). Lost for many centuries, it was rediscovered

⁵ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers: An American Translation*, pp. 207 ff.

and later published in 1883. Many questions have been raised concerning its authorship. Since reference is so often made to it, also with respect to the Sacrament of the Altar, it is only fair that mention of it be made at this time. Chapter 9 is translated by Goodspeed as follows: "Now about the Thanksgiving, give thanks thus: First about the cup, 'We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of your servant David, which you have made known to us through your servant Jesus. Glory to you forever.' And about the piece of bread, 'We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge you have made known to us through Jesus your servant. Glory be yours forever. Just as this piece of bread was scattered over the mountains, and then was gathered together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For the glory and the power are yours through Jesus Christ forever.' But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving but those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord. For it was of this that the Lord said, 'Do not give dogs what is sacred'" (pp. 15, 17). Chapter 10 begins with the words: "After you are satisfied, give thanks thus." In this last prayer no direct reference is made to the Eucharist. Chapter 14 is translated as follows: "On the Lord's own day, gather together and break bread and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions, so that your sacrifice may be pure. Let no one who has a quarrel with his comrade meet with you until they are reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is what was said by the Lord, 'At every place and time offer me a clean sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the heathen.'"

Note that thanksgiving is spoken first about the cup and then about the piece of bread; this is the reverse of the thanksgivings uttered by Jesus. Only baptized are to partake. If the words "break bread" refer to the sacrament, this was administered in the gathering on the Lord's day. Sins were confessed. The unreconciled were not to partake. No more concerning the use of the sacrament is written in the *Didache*. Schaff gives this opinion: "The *Didache* of the Apostles contains eucharistic prayers, but no theory of the Eucharist."⁶ Add to this the fact that there is even some question

⁶ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, II, 241.

concerning the explanation of some of these quotations, and you will see why not too much may be concluded from the *Didache*.⁷

In quoting these passages I have risked tiring you, but I want to prove that the extant writings of those who lived and wrote about A. D. 100 and shortly thereafter tell us little of how the Lord's Supper was used in the early church. We should therefore not be too hasty in drawing conclusions. The references are too few to give a complete picture of how the sacrament was used in the apostolic church. Furthermore, this lack of reference to the Supper is no argument favoring later practices. Kurtz indicates that official Roman Catholic theology regards the *Disciplina Arcani* as an institution existing from the times of the apostles, and from it accounts for the want of patristic support to certain specifically Roman Catholic dogmas and forms of worship, in order that the Roman Church may, in spite of the want of support, maintain that these forms of worship had a place in primitive Christianity (I, 204). Meant is that the first church desired to keep the use of the Lord's Supper a mystery and therefore did not even write about it. This is not true. "At all events the *Arcani Disciplina* of paganism had not entered the Church of the second century, whatever may have been its influence on the Church of the succeeding centuries" (Groton, p. 173). So the Roman Church may not base her misuses on the argument that the apostolic church kept her practices secret.

Conclusions as to the proper use of the Lord's Supper cannot be based with certainty on the writings of church fathers who wrote later than those referred to before. That certain usages were current later does not prove that they were current in the apostolic church. Furthermore, definitely wrong usages appear in these writings.

All in all, patristic literature may be interesting and in some respects enlightening when it refers to the Supper, but we do not appeal to it when we desire to establish the proper use of the Lord's Supper. The Bible is the only source to which appeal may be made in this matter. When the fathers agree with Scripture, we agree with the fathers; when the fathers do not agree with Scripture, we disagree with the fathers.

⁷ W. M. Groton, *The Christian Eucharist and Pagan Cults* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1914), p. 158.

And let it be said at this time that no connection existed between certain heathen mysteries and the Lord's Supper, as some critics have contended. The Bohlen Lectures of 1913 begin with the words: "The belief that much, if not all, of Christian sacramentalism had its origin in the cultic ideas and practices of paganism has become quite current" (p. 1). Certain cults among the heathen observed ceremonial meals. But these ceremonies did not in any way influence any usage of the Lord's Supper. Heathen mysteries teach us nothing as to the proper use of Holy Communion.

JOHN 6

Which passages of Scripture refer directly to the Lord's Supper? That question might appear entirely useless. Is it? John 6 is often quoted as proof in matters pertaining to the Supper. In an assembly such as this I need not make a long explanation why John 6 does not speak of the Lord's Supper as such. Luther reminds us that these words cannot be forced to refer to the Sacrament of the Altar.⁸

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV, does not contradict this. Quoting Ambrose, who in turn quotes John 6, the Apology states with regard to John 6: "This passage testifies that in the sacrament the remission of sins is offered; it also testifies that this ought to be received by faith." Here no more is said than that Ambrose quotes John 6 to show that forgiveness is offered in the sacrament and this is received by faith.⁹ Also the Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Art. VII, refers to John 6: "There is, therefore, a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ, one spiritual, of which Christ treats especially John 6:54, which occurs in no other way than with the Spirit and faith, in the preaching and meditation of the Gospel, as well as in the Lord's Supper, and by itself is useful and salutary, and necessary at all times for salvation to all Christians; without which spiritual participation also the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only not salutary, but even injurious and damning." John 6 speaks of faith, not of the sacrament as such.

⁸ Franz Pieper, *Christl. Dogmatik*, III (St. Louis, 1920), p. 387.

⁹ See Latin and German texts.

Which passages clearly refer to the Lord's Supper as such? There are five: Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17, 21; 1 Cor. 11:20-34. On the basis of these passages I have developed the theme which the President of the Northern Illinois District requested me to present at this convention: "The Proper Use of the Sacrament of Holy Communion." The theme is not restricted to an explanation of the *salutary* use of the Sacrament of the Altar. It is much broader: the *proper* use of the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

I. HOW ADMINISTERED

ABUSE IN THE CORINTHIAN CONGREGATION

Seeking an answer to the question: "How is the sacrament to be administered by the church?" we consider an abuse that had been permitted to develop in the Corinthian congregation. The apostle sought to correct the abuse in his First Letter to Corinth. The Corinthian Christians were assembling in one place. This one place was not a church building such as we would assemble in today. It may have been a house. When they assembled as a church, there were divisions among them. These divisions showed themselves in various ways. In chapter 12 Paul points to the fact that the Holy Spirit gives different gifts; but all members, just as in a human body, are one, and all members, even the less honorable, are necessary. "The members should have the same care one for another." In chapter 13 Paul points to the pre-eminence of love. In chapter 14 he calls upon the Corinthians to let all things be done decently and in order in their church gatherings. The reason for all this admonition from chapter 11 to chapter 14 is the division among the members of the congregation. Now to return to chapter 11. Beginning in verse 20 of chapter 11, the apostle points out how this division shows itself when they come together to eat the Lord's Supper. Those who had something to eat ate their own food; those who had nothing could eat nothing and were thus put to shame. Having brought up this matter of division when the Supper was to be received, Paul speaks at length about Holy Communion.

From the word "supper" which Paul uses we conclude that the Corinthians assembled in the evening to eat the Lord's Supper.

This does not preclude other gatherings. As a church they came together also at other times (1 Cor. 14:23-34). But when they came "together to eat," they assembled in the evening. "But," the apostle wrote, "when you assemble at that time, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper." From this First Letter to the Corinthians it is not clear whether or not another meal was eaten first, a meal that preceded the sacrament. It seems more likely that the Corinthians brought bread and wine for the celebration of the Holy Supper. The eleventh chapter supports this supposition. If the *agape* meals were then being observed in the Corinthian church, the apostle would not have said: "Eat at home." It seems more in keeping with the words that the Corinthians did not come together to hold an *agape* and the sacrament, but that they brought bread and wine for the sacrament only. But the Holy Supper was never really celebrated. He who brought gifts to be used at the Supper ate and drank these things without waiting for others. So it came about that some were filled and others who could not afford to bring gifts were "hungry." Angrily the apostle asks: "Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" The Lord's Supper should have been participated in by all who desired it. Instead, the eating had degenerated into a common eating and drinking by those who could afford it.

The apostle had not been remiss in teaching these Corinthians. He tells them that he taught them that which he had received of the Lord. How had Paul received the teaching of the Lord's Supper from the Lord? Paul could say of the Gospel which he preached: "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11, 12; 1 Cor. 11:23). He could certainly have received the teaching of the Supper in a similar manner, by revelation. Add to this the fact that Paul so definitely emphasizes that he was not taught by men. He was commissioned directly by the Lord. The word he taught was God's Word. It is far more in conformity with the character of Paul's apostleship to say that the teaching of the sacrament was revealed to him directly by God than to say that it came from the Lord through the instrumentality of others.

Paul had taught the Corinthians as follows: "On the night when the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took bread." This was probably

unleavened bread as used in the Passover meal; although the word "bread" which Paul uses does not specify unleavened bread. Giving thanks, Jesus broke the bread. The words of thanksgiving which Jesus spoke are nowhere recorded. The next words of Jesus as delivered to the Corinthians by Paul are: "Take eat; this is My body." In the words of the King James Version, as well as of the Revised Standard Version, both based on some manuscripts, this body is specifically designated as the one "which is broken for you." There was to be no doubt in the minds of the disciples: the body which they were receiving was the same one which died for them. That this body had not as yet died need not disturb us. Before the crucifixion the Lord could give His body in the sacrament just as He can give it now after the crucifixion. "This do in remembrance of Me." The disciples, as well as the Corinthians, were to remember not only the outward circumstances of Jesus' death, but also the benefits accruing therefrom for them.

The Corinthians had been taught these words. They were to take bread, and eating, they would receive the body of Christ given for them. In doing this they were to remember Him, His death, and its benefits. "This do" refers to the eating in the sacrament, not to eating bread at other meals.

After the Passover meal Jesus took also the cup. The apostle reminded the Corinthians that Jesus took also the cup when He had supped, or, after supper. This supper was the Passover meal. The Holy Supper was separate from that meal. This should have indicated already that the Lord's Supper was something separate and distinct, not a common meal, particularly not a meal to satisfy bodily hunger. Of the cup Jesus said: "This cup is the new testament in My blood." Did Paul teach the Corinthians the correct words? Luke has the same words. But Matthew and Mark write: "This is My blood of the new testament." In giving the cup, Jesus could have spoken both, the words in Matthew and Mark and the words in Luke and Corinthians. Franz Pieper (III, 409) explains the seeming difference in the two statements well when he explains that the words written in Matthew and Mark point to the *essence* of the Supper, that is, they name the blood of Christ as the gift received in the Supper, while the words written in Luke and Corinthians point to the *purpose* of the Supper as a means of grace. The

new testament is the forgiveness of sins. "In My blood" shows why the cup is the new testament or the forgiveness of sins. Because of His blood there is forgiveness of sins. He who partakes of the cup partakes of the blood of Christ and through faith receives the forgiveness of sin. That Paul taught what Matthew and Mark record, namely: "This is My blood," is clear from two passages in First Corinthians. Paul soon writes of being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And in this same letter to the Corinthians Paul asks: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The Corinthians were taught that they receive the blood. "Therefore there is no doubt that also concerning the other part of the sacrament, these words of Luke and Paul: 'This cup is the new testament in My blood,' can have no other meaning than that which St. Matthew and St. Mark give: 'This (namely, that which you orally drink out of the cup) is My blood of the new testament,' whereby I establish, seal, and confirm with you men this My testament and new covenant, namely, the forgiveness of sins." (FC VII)

And Paul told the Corinthians also that Christ had directed: "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." This again is no reference to the ordinary drinking of wine: that they were to remember Him whenever they partook of wine. When they did this in the sacrament, they did it in remembrance of Him, they remembered Him and His blessings. With those words Paul's record of the institution ends.

FURTHER INSTRUCTION

Paul thereupon adds a number of observations which are not a part of the record of institution but which are nevertheless given with divine authority. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Here were these Corinthians coming together to eat in one place, but there were divisions among them, and their eating and drinking were tantamount to a common eating and drinking, such as they should have done in their own houses. "Why," writes the apostle, "as many times as one eats this bread and drinks this wine in the sacrament, one eats and drinks His body and blood, one shows His death until that time when He returns. The Supper is a procla-

mation of Christ's death on the cross. But you — you eat and drink to satisfy your sensual desires, you give no thought to the body and blood, you do not show the Lord's death. As each comes in, he eats and drinks what he brought; no thought that others should receive bread and wine and body and blood in the sacrament, no waiting for others."

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." He who does not discern the Lord's body in the eating is unworthy. Here is a sacrament in which he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup, and in eating and drinking receives the body and blood of the Lord, the very body and blood which were given and shed for the remission of sins, but he does not recognize that he receives body and blood, he does not do this in remembrance of Christ. He does it for the sake of his belly. So he becomes guilty of misusing the body and blood of the Lord. An awful thought!

Paul does not condemn the entire Corinthian church as a group of lost unbelievers. He admonishes. A person should probe himself: "Do I discern the Lord's body?" Those who would receive the Supper should ask: "Do I recognize the Lord's given body and shed blood when I eat and drink?" And so: discerning the Lord's body, so let him eat and drink of bread and wine. He who eats and drinks as though it were a common meal, he who does not recognize the Lord's body and blood in the sacrament, eats and drinks judgment unto himself. Luther calls it *Gericht*. The King James Version calls it "damnation." The word which Paul uses is "judgment." Throughout these verses there is a play on the Greek word "judgment." Paul does not restrict the word to final damnation. True, a persistent unworthiness results in "damnation." But, here in Corinth at least, judgment first showed itself in another way. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Because there was an unworthy participation here in Corinth, therefore there was sickness and debility and an unusually high death rate. These words denote physical sickness and temporal death. This occurred in Corinth. There this general condition prevailed: sickness and death. The words do not permit us to think that the Lord brought judgment on the desecrators of

the sacrament in that they became sick and died. Because there was this unworthy reception, the whole congregation felt the results. Here a word of caution is in place. G. G. Findlay makes a statement in his exposition with which we must agree: "We must be careful not to generalize from this single instance (see John IX, 3). The mere coincidence of such afflictions with the desecration of the Eucharist could not have justified Paul in making this statement; he must have been conscious of some specific revelation to this effect."¹⁰ We cannot say that the same judgment will descend on other churches in which there is such unworthy participation; nor dare we draw an opposite conclusion, namely, that worthy participation results in physical effects. Such arguments are entirely unwarranted.

In writing to the Corinthians of the Lord's Supper, the apostle makes a general observation which applies also to the sacrament. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." If the Corinthians would probe themselves, as the apostle admonishes, then no judgment, here in time and hereafter, would come upon them. Here no thought of work-righteousness is permissible. If they were concerned about discerning the Lord's body, they would not receive the sacrament unworthily and so would not be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

When the Lord sends a judgment, such as that experienced in Corinth, the purpose is to correct Christians. They may have been thoughtless about certain matters, such as discerning the Lord's body. The Lord's chastening should serve to correct their thoughtlessness. The world is condemned because of unbelief. Not discerning the Lord's body could easily lead to denial of the truth and so eventually to condemnation. This should not happen to the Corinthians. So the Lord's chastening should serve a salutary purpose in Corinth.

The apostle began by chiding the Corinthians: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." He concludes: "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger,

¹⁰ *The Exp. Gr. Test.*, I, 883, sub. v. 30.

let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation." Wait, and celebrate the sacrament together. Are not the many one body? (1 Cor. 10). In Corinth the Supper should be used properly, in conformity with Christ's institution, as noted, not as common eating, but as the eating and drinking of Christ's given body and shed blood.

PROPER USE

Is it necessary to state that as Paul delivered unto the Corinthians that which he received of the Lord, so the church should teach what she has received in the inspired Word of God? The individual must know how the sacrament is to be used properly; if he does not know this, an unworthy reception will result. It is incumbent upon the church to teach this. The proper use presupposes an adequate instruction. The Augustana, Art. XXIV, asserts: "The people are also advised concerning the dignity and use of the sacrament, how great consolation it brings anxious consciences, that they may learn to believe God and to expect and ask of Him all that is good. This worship pleases God; such use of the sacrament nourishes true devotion toward God."

BREAD

The proper use requires that the church take bread. The Greek word used by the Synoptists and by Paul is "bread." The word itself does not specify unleavened bread; though Jesus probably used unleavened bread when the Supper was instituted. We are therefore not justified in insisting either on leavened or unleavened bread. Bread is essential if the sacrament is to be used properly; the kind of bread used, however, is an adiaphoron. Leavened or unleavened, baked of wheat flour or of rye flour — that is immaterial when speaking of the proper use of the sacrament. Fritz has done into English what Walther already wrote in German: "It is unessential whether the bread be leavened or unleavened, whether it be baked of flour made of rye, wheat, corn, barley, or oats, provided that it is real bread made of such flour and water and baked."¹¹ And proper use does not prescribe the form of the bread, a loaf to be broken or small wafers.

¹¹ John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*, 2d ed. (St. Louis, 1945), p. 122.

Varied opinions as to the bread which should be used have brought about much controversy in the visible church. The Eastern Church and the Western Church differed in opinion as to leavened and unleavened bread. A writer who has devoted an entire book to the bread used in the sacrament observes: "The Oriental Churches have used ordinary leavened, which use, they maintain, is the unchanged, immemorial custom of the Church from the beginning. The Western Church, on the other hand, has long used unleavened bread only, and has based her practice on the alleged use by our Lord Himself at the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament."¹² He states further that this was "one of the pretexts of the schism between East and West" (p. 2). Much opposition showed itself when wafers were used in the sacrament. The epithets once coined by those who opposed the use of wafers in the sacrament border on the sacrilegious.

The wafers, unleavened and baked of wheat flour, which are universally used in our circles, are proper, in accordance with Christ's institution; they are "bread."

Some insist on "breaking" the bread. This should symbolize the suffering of the Savior. Charles Spurgeon once wrote about the words "in remembrance." In that sermon he stated: ". . . the bread has to be broken, and the wine poured forth, to show the sufferings of the Saviour. The bread itself is a most impressive type of suffering. The corn is buried in the dark earth, pinched by many a frost when it peers above the ground, and exposed to many trials ere it comes to its full growth. When it is ripe, it is cut down with a sharp sickle, threshed with many a heavy blow, then ground in the mill, the flour kneaded into dough, pressed into the shape of loaves, thrust into a hot oven, and baked, and then in this last process broken. Our blessed Master seemed to be passing through all that experience in his lifetime on earth. . . . Especially was that last part of the process—the breaking of the bread as a type of his suffering—illustrated throughout his whole life."¹³ Such thoughts result from human speculation. The Scriptures do not

¹² R. M. Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1913), p. 1.

¹³ *Sermons and Outlines on the Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), p. 19.

with one syllable indicate that breaking the bread should symbolize suffering. In 1 Corinthians 11 the word "broken" — "which is broken for you" — is in some manuscripts used to designate the body. Some commentators consider the word spurious.¹⁴ But also here, even if the word is original, we may not infer that the breaking of bread refers to the broken body. The breaking of bread is a general designation in Scripture. It is used in connection with what were admittedly ordinary meals. Before the five thousand were fed, Jesus "brake" the loaves (Matt. 14:19). At Emmaus Jesus "took bread and blessed it and brake and gave to them" (Luke 24:30). Paul on board the ship in a storm broke bread (Acts 27:35). Before bread could be eaten, the loaves had to be broken. Today we would not gnaw at a whole loaf of bread; it is first sliced with a knife. So in the days of Jesus and the apostles the loaf was broken. The breaking at the last Supper was not an essential part of the sacrament. Jesus broke the bread so that it might be distributed. We cannot say that the sacrament is used improperly if bread is not broken. Just as the bread need not after the first Supper be distributed in an upper room in Jerusalem, so it need not be broken. F. Pieper quotes Luther as follows: "We must not explain or use 'break' according to our fancy, but according to Scriptural usage. Now in the Scriptures 'break' means as much as to make pieces or to distribute, particularly when used in connection with bread or eating." (III, 415)

CUP

In order properly to use the Lord's Supper the church must take also the cup. The "cup" is mentioned in all Scriptural accounts referring to the Holy Supper. The container, of course, stands for the contents. And the Lord Himself mentions the contents when He speaks of "this fruit of the vine" (Matt. 26:29). Without a doubt the cup on the table at the first Supper contained wine. For centuries thereafter the church used wine. In comparatively recent years the use of grape juice was advocated by some. This question had not disturbed visible Christendom before. "In all of church history one finds no record that controversy ever arose concerning the question: Should grape juice or wine be taken? It was always

¹⁴ A. L. Graebner, *Theological Quarterly*, V (April 1901), 65.

taken for granted that wine be used.”¹⁵ But in this 20th century we are confronted with the question: May grape juice be used?

The question need not call forth much discussion in our midst. Why should we change the age-old use of wine? Shall we bow to the demands of temperance groups? Or shall we bow to those who are always seeking something new? The problem of an individual alcoholic might present itself. But such a case need not alter the usage in an entire church. We must continue the use of wine; then no doubts will arise in the minds of the communicants.

In a very positive manner we state that no other liquid may be substituted for the “fruit of the vine.” Water, milk, or honey cannot replace that which our Lord designated.

Aside from the question of fermented or unfermented “fruit of the vine,” the practice of mixing water with wine has caused some controversy. This practice was considered essential for centuries and is still considered essential in the mutilated Roman Sacrament. Peculiar explanations were advanced to explain this practice. It was, for example, “regarded as significant of the two natures in Christ.”¹⁶ Or it was “fancied a symbol of the union of Christ and the church.”¹⁷ The Lord may have used mixed wine. Edersheim states that according to express Rabbinic testimony water was mixed with wine for the Passover meal.¹⁸ But again we return to the expression “fruit of the vine.” This neither requires nor prohibits the mixing. The wine is “fruit of the vine,” be it unmixed or mixed with water.¹⁹

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

These visible elements the church sets apart to be used according to Christ’s institution. The words of institution are spoken. Theologians have referred to this as the consecration. The position of the Lutheran Church in this matter is set forth in The Formula of Concord, Art. VII: “Now, in the administration of the Holy Sup-

¹⁵ *Lehre und Wehre*, XXXI (December 1885), p. 374.

¹⁶ Kurtz, I, 369.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 204.

¹⁸ *Life and Times of Jesus*, New American Edition (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1936), II, 497.

¹⁹ C. F. W. Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Postoraltheologie*, 4th ed. (St. Louis, 1890), p. 168.

per the words of institution are to be publicly spoken or sung before the congregation distinctly and clearly, and should in no way be omitted in order that obedience may be rendered to the command of Christ: *This do*, that the faith of the hearers concerning the nature and fruit of this sacrament (concerning the presence of the body and blood of Christ, concerning the forgiveness of sins, and all benefits which have been purchased by the death and shedding of the blood of Christ, and are bestowed upon us in Christ's testament) may be excited, strengthened, and confirmed by Christ's word, and that the elements of bread and wine may be consecrated or blessed for this holy use, in order that the body and blood of Christ may therewith be administered to us to be eaten and to be drunk." Concerning the order to be followed in blessing the elements, Luther wrote in *Weise, christliche Messe zu halten und zum Tisch Gottes zu gehen*, 1523: "He (bishop or pastor) may bless both together, bread and wine, before he eat the bread; or between the blessing of bread and wine he may give himself and others, as many as desire it, to eat of the bread, thereafter bless also the wine and then give all to drink; which mode, I note, Christ used, as the words of the Gospel say, when He bade the disciples eat the bread before He blessed the cup. Afterwards the evangelist says more clearly: 'After the same manner also He took the cup, after He had supped,' etc., so that one may well perceive that the cup was first blessed after the eating of the bread."²⁰ In 1525 this order was observed in the Town Church in Wittenberg.

These words of institution must be understood as Christ used them. A church that publicly interprets the words of Christ as having symbolical meaning is not using the Supper properly, in fact, is not celebrating the Lord's Supper. Any recitation of the words of institution is invalidated by the church's wrong public profession. It is not within the scope of this essay to delineate the teachings of Zwingli, Calvin, *et alii*. Many well-known preachers and expositors have advocated this symbolical meaning. Spurgeon: "Then, the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine symbolize our reception of Christ into our innermost selves." Alexander Maclaren: "The sacredness lies in the proclamation which it makes,

²⁰ St. L. X:2245.

and that is sacredness enough.”²¹ And Barnes, explaining the words “This is My body,” states categorically: “That is, this represents My body.”²² A host of others might be quoted. Every class of catechumens in our circles is shown the difference between the Scriptural truth and the Reformed interpretation. All churches that subscribe to this Reformed interpretation do not celebrate the Lord’s Supper, even though they may recite Christ’s words.

Add to this a second consideration. The recitation of the words of institution does not effect a change in the visible elements. The Roman Church clings tenaciously to the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Council of Trent defines this doctrine thus: “By the consecration of the bread and of the wine a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ, our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood.”²³ Only “the outward appearance” of bread and wine is said to remain. According to this teaching the consecration spoken by a priest changes the bread and wine into body and blood. After the consecration, only body and blood of Christ are on the altar. Volumes have been written on the subject. Paul’s words to the Corinthians, both in the tenth and in the eleventh chapter, brand this teaching a falsehood. The public teaching that consecration changes bread and wine results in a wrong use of the sacrament, particularly also when we note that other false teachings are tied in with the teaching of transubstantiation.

But entirely apart from the teaching of transubstantiation, a word with regard to the so-called consecration is in place. It must be remembered that this recitation of the words of institution does not make the Supper a reality; in other words, the sacramental union is not a result of our recitation of the words of institution. In fact, there is no sacramental union at all unless everything is observed that Christ indicated when He said, “This do.” 1 Cor. 10:16 does not teach that the blood is present when the blessing is spoken. The words are: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” The

²¹ *Sermons and Outlines on the Lord’s Supper*, pp. 21, 29.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²³ Sess. XIII, ch. 4.

apostle's emphasis here is on "the communion." He is not setting forth in an orderly way the manner in which the Supper is to be used. The very fact that the cup is mentioned first should show this. He is not speaking of blessing, distributing, eating bread. He is not speaking of blessing, distributing, drinking the cup. Here he is thinking only of "the communion." And so he designates the cup as "the cup of blessing which we bless." This is a designation. He cannot mean: "The cup of blessing is the communion of the blood of Christ when we bless it." He designates the bread as "the bread which we break." If we were to say that the cup becomes the communion of the blood of Christ when we bless, then the parallel would have to be explained as follows: the bread becomes the communion of the body of Christ when we break it. Furthermore, Christ does not say of the bread *when He gives thanks*: "This is My body." He does not say of the cup *when He gives thanks*: "This is My blood." Rather, when He says: "Take, eat," He adds: "This is My body." When He says: "Take, drink," He adds: "This is My blood." Christ gives His body to be eaten and His blood to be drunk, not to lie on the table or the altar. There need be no quibbling about the exact moment when body and blood are in, with, and under bread and wine. It is certain that there is a sacramental union when bread and wine are eaten and drunk.

F. Pieper therefore concludes correctly when he writes: "Also when bread falls to the ground or wine is spilled in the celebration of the Supper, then not the body of Christ falls to the ground and the blood of Christ is not spilled, because *extra usum a Christo institutum no unio sacramentalis* occurs" (p. 414). Pieper cites also the example of a John Saliger, pastor in Luebeck and Rostock, who stubbornly contended that the *unio sacramentalis* occurs *ante usum*, that is, before the distribution and reception (p. 434). Over against this view Pieper quotes the Formula of Concord. (VII 83, German)

If the Supper is to be used properly in a church, that church must confess that she believes in the real presence, that is, "that the body and blood of Christ are truly present and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord" (AC X). Such is the public confession of the Lutheran Church. In the Formula of Concord she confesses that "the true, essential body and blood of Christ are also orally received and partaken of in the Holy Supper, by

all who eat and drink the consecrated bread and wine in the Supper — by the believing as a certain pledge and assurance that their sins are surely forgiven them, and Christ dwells and is efficacious in them.” Hence the Lutheran Church teaches those whom she prepares for the reception of Communion: “The Sacrament of the Altar . . . is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink.” (VII 63)

MEANS OF GRACE

When reciting the words of institution, the church must look upon this sacrament as a means of grace. That it is a means of grace is clearly stated in the words spoken by the Lord: “This is My body, which is given for you . . . This is My blood of the new testament.” And that it is a means of grace is shown unmistakably also in the words written by Paul: “This cup is the new testament in My blood.” The “new testament” is the forgiveness of sins. Paul, quoting from the Old Testament, writes: “This is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom. 11:27). This forgiveness was established when the blood of Christ was shed. The sacrament is a means whereby this forgiveness is offered to the individual. Referring to the cup, the Lord says: “This cup is the forgiveness of sins.” In the cup is forgiveness, and this forgiveness was brought about when the blood of Christ was shed, and that blood is here offered. Here in the Supper something is added which is not to be found in connection with the forgiveness offered in the Gospel: here Christ gives to the individual communicant His crucified body and His shed blood as an assurance and pledge that sin is forgiven. Apology: “It is certain that the Lord’s Supper was instituted on account of the remission of guilt” (XXIV 90). This forgiveness is appropriated by faith. Need it be said that this sacrament is not, like Baptism, an initiatory rite? Every time the Christian partakes of the Supper he receives the forgiveness of sins. This is always a full and complete forgiveness, and is not as though in each Communion he received forgiveness for the sins committed since the last Communion. And let me add immediately that the church confesses with Luther: “Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.” If the church does not consider the Lord’s Supper a means of grace, it is not the Lord’s Supper; it is being used improperly.

NO SACRIFICE

Just at this point the sacrament has suffered much at the hands of a large part of the church. The emphasis was shifted and finally misplaced entirely. Instead of recognizing that God gives something in the Supper, men began to enumerate what they did. In the sacrament God gives blessings: Christ's body and blood as a pledge that sin is forgiven. Soon men turned the sacrament into a sacrifice. "First of all the prayer, which formed so important a part of this celebration that the whole service came to be called from it the Eucharist, might be regarded as a spiritual sacrifice. Then again, the gifts brought by the congregation for the dispensation of the sacrifice were called" oblations. "And just as the congregation offered their contributions to the Supper, so also the priests offered them anew in the sacramental action" (Kurtz, I, 205). Gradually "the theory prevailed of a sacramental memorial celebration of the sacrifice of Christ in that of an unbloody but actual repetition of the same" (p. 368). So the idea of sacrifice prevailed; God's blessings were subordinated, man's action predominated. This satanic invention was designed to vitiate the work of Christ. In the sacrament God gives, *God gives*, GOD GIVES. The church dare not tone down that truth. The church merely dispenses what God gives. The communicants receive what God gives. There can be no thought of giving on the part of the church, no thought of giving on the part of the people. Let the church guard against every diabolical thought of meritorious sacrifice, be it sacrifice of prayer, be it sacrifice of thanksgiving, be it repeated sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. Certainly, the church is thankful for God's blessing, but this gratitude is not a meritorious offering. Apology: ". . . piety regards both what has been given and what has been forgiven, i. e., it compares the greatness of God's blessings and the greatness of our evils, sin and death, with each other, and gives thanks, etc. And hence the term 'Eucharist' arose in the church." (XXIV, 76)

DISTRIBUTION

Both visible elements should be distributed to all communicants. Withholding the wine is contrary to the directive of Christ: "This do." He gave bread and wine to the disciples. They were the com-

municants. To them the cup was given. This is immediately clear also from Paul's words to the Corinthians. The entire account points to the fact that the Corinthians not only ate the bread but that they also drank the cup. This point was discussed at length by Luther and in the Confessions because it was a point of controversy between the Evangelicals and the Romanists. At first Luther did not insist on the distribution of both kinds to the laity. Once he taught that although both kinds were the will of God, yet there should be no compulsion.²⁴ But later, when people had learned how to use the Supper, he insisted on both kinds, stressing that this was Christ's institution. When a certain government prohibited the distribution of both kinds, Luther, in 1532, suggested to Martin Lodinger to move elsewhere.²⁵

According to Christ's "This do," the bread is to be distributed first; thereafter the wine. The administrant may give the elements into the hand or into the mouth of the communicants.²⁶ But both must be given separately, first the bread and then the cup. "It is the general custom, throughout the Eastern churches, to administer both the species of the Holy Sacrament together, by dipping the species of bread into the species of wine, and then placing the Sacrament in the mouth of the communicant. Sometimes a spoon is used for the purpose."²⁷ This is called intinction. Dipping the bread into the wine is now practiced even by some Protestant ministers. We cannot but look upon this practice as an improper use of the sacrament. If Christ took bread and gave it, no one has the right to change the procedure. If the church or the celebrant should decide how the sacrament be used, Christ's "This do" may just as well be abolished entirely.

When the pastor distributes the elements to the communicants, he speaks words (*Spendeformel*) in which the church's belief in the real presence is confessed. Thus the communicants are again reminded that they receive the true body and blood. These words are not an essential part of the sacrament. They are not always spoken in the same form, not even in our own midst.

²⁴ St. L. XX:38.

²⁵ St. L. X:2221. See also X:2250.

²⁶ Pieper, III, 414; St. L. X:2226.

²⁷ Woolley, *The Bread of the Eucharist*, p. 44.

VESSELS

The size and shape of the vessels used in distributing the Supper is of no importance. When we refer to the original Supper, we note that Christ used a cup. Nothing else is mentioned. What shape cup and of what material is not mentioned. The contention has been voiced that wooden vessels were used by Christ. This cannot be substantiated. Later ornate and expensive Communion ware was used in some churches. Mention is made of cups so heavy that two handles were required to hold them in the hands. The kind of Communion ware to be used is a matter of good Christian judgment. Churches should be guided by the means at their disposal. Communion ware inlaid with precious stones and worth the proverbial king's ransom — is that in good Christian taste? In some instances individual cups have replaced the one cup. The matter has caused some bitterness in our own circles. The use of individual cups cannot be condemned as wrong; but that it is an innovation cannot be denied.

CUSTOM

The manner of approaching the altar varies with local conditions. The disciples in the upper room reclined. Apparently little order was observed in the Corinthian congregation. Those who are older among us will remember that not too many years ago the order of men first and women second was strictly observed. Such order had already been stipulated in provincial church regulations in Germany. The observance of such order has by and large vanished in most Lutheran congregations; and even though the memory of a long line of men and then a long line of women approaching the altar has not been obliterated from the minds of many who are not as yet too old, yet the very thought of such a procedure is quite foreign today. So customs may change without militating against the proper use of the sacrament. So also the matter of fasting was not included in Christ's "This do." Once people in certain localities would not think of eating before the Supper; now few observe the custom of fasting. Christ's directive must always be observed; church customs may vary, may change, may vanish. It is to be regretted that at times more emphasis is placed on custom than on Christ's "This do."

CELEBRANT

The visible means must in some way be distributed to the communicants. By whom? At the institution Christ "gave" them the bread and the cup. I rather doubt that He went from disciple to disciple. It seems more likely from the accounts that bread and the cup were passed from one to another. It almost seems that in Corinth each communicant took the elements himself. In these New Testament times we have Christian congregations. Placed in these churches by the Holy Ghost as overseers are the pastors or bishops, who are to feed the flock purchased with the blood of Christ. They are the stewards of the mysteries of God. God and the congregation entrust to them the administration of the means of grace. As the preaching of the Word and as the administration of Baptism are entrusted to them, so also the administration of the Lord's Supper. They should distribute the elements in the church, publicly and privately. With the explicit or implied consent of the *Ortsgemeinde* they may be assisted by other ordained ministers, or even by laymen. Rome specifically limits the distribution to ordained priests. As far as the Lord's Supper is concerned, we cannot speak of an emergency Supper as we speak of an emergency Baptism. So there need be no question about a layman officiating by himself in an emergency. But looking upon the matter of the call as we do, we must admit that if it is proper for another ordained minister to assist the called pastor in a congregation, then it is just as proper for a layman to assist the called pastor under certain conditions. But always the called pastor is the steward. Here, of course, wisdom must again dictate. It would be unwise for a church to plot a course which would ultimately lead to the indiscriminate use of laymen in assisting at Communion.

CONFESSION

The practice once prevailed of conducting confessional services before those services in which the Supper was distributed. This practice is still followed in some localities. Other churches retain only the confession and absolution at the beginning of the service in which the Supper is celebrated. The confession of sins is not an essential part of the Lord's Supper. There was no confession of sins in the upper room, nor is there a sign of it in Paul's words

to the Corinthians, nor is it even inferred in the "This do." A Communion without public or private confession is right and proper. However, as a separate institution confession is entirely in place. It is well that the church retain confessions of sins, also before Communion, "especially on account of the absolution" (Ap VI, 2). In the absolution the Gospel is applied. It must be understood also that this confession of sins should not take the place of the self-examination spoken of by Paul. This will be given consideration in the last part of this essay.

II. TO WHOM ADMINISTERED?

UPPER ROOM

At the last Passover the twelve disciples were present. Matt. 26:20 relates: "When the even was come, He sat down with the Twelve." There the Supper was instituted. Jesus gave bread and wine to His disciples. Although they were not the only believers in Jerusalem, yet they were the first communicants. The others may have been more deficient in Christian knowledge at this time than were the Twelve. Whether or not Judas partook also of the Supper is a moot question. Luther and the Formula of Concord seem to assume that Judas received the Supper.²⁸ Stoeckhardt favors the explanation that Matthew and Mark, both of whom place the conversation with and about Judas before the institution of the Supper, give the chronological sequence.²⁹ If that explanation is correct, Judas did not receive the sacrament. Luke writes the Judas incident after the words of institution. It seems that Luke does not write all that was said in chronological order. But be that as it may, whether Judas received the Supper or not need in no way influence the use of Holy Communion. The answer to the question: "To whom is the sacrament to be administered?" is in no way based on the Judas incident.

CORINTH

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10 give us some insight into the question: "To whom is the Lord's Supper to be administered?" The Corinthians had asked concerning things offered to idols. They

²⁸ FC VII 33, 60.

²⁹ *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments* (St. Louis, 1906), p. 265.

desired to know whether it was right to eat meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols. The apostle had taken up the question. Now, in chapter ten, Paul becomes very specific. In this chapter Paul admonishes the Corinthians: "Flee from idolatry." They were to avoid idolatry, and this includes the entire heathen idol cultus. The Corinthians, who considered themselves wise, should immediately recognize this from a comparison which Paul makes. He reminds them of the Lord's Supper. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The cup gives the blessing of God placed there by Christ Himself. And this cup of blessing is then blessed in the Christian celebration of the sacrament. This cup is the communion of the blood of Christ, that is, in the Supper the blood is in a wonderful way connected with the cup. In these words the emphasis is on the relationship between cup and blood of Christ. And this is equally true of the bread. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In these words, too, the emphasis is on the relationship between bread and body of Christ. And still having the thought of bread and body in mind, the apostle speaks of the relationship existing between those who partake of the bread: "Because one bread, we, the many, are one body, for all share the one bread" (Greek). All partake of one bread and one body; hence they are one body, one communion of saints. There are many believers, but because they partake of the one bread, there is a oneness. The individual believers belong to the one holy Christian Church. They are a distinct entity. So here we have a unified group eating and drinking Christ's body and blood at the Lord's Table. Wise men should immediately see that individual parts of this unit cannot sit at another table. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils." The communion of saints drinks of the Lord's cup and eats at the Lord's Table. Idolaters drink of the devils' cup and eat at their table. There must be a distinct line of demarcation between the two. Paul places the one body of Christ, the church, over against those who have fellowship with devils, the idolaters. Regarding the use of the sacrament this passage teaches that those partaking of Christ's body and blood must be one, and cannot be partakers at the devils' table.

And it is clear from the Pauline account in 1 Corinthians 11 that only those who discern the Lord's body should partake of the sacrament. Or, to state Paul's "unworthily" in a positive way, only those who eat and drink worthily should be guests at the Lord's Table. To discern the Lord's body means to recognize the Lord's body. Those eat and drink worthily who recognize in the sacrament the Lord's body. And only such as believe that Christ's body and blood were given and shed for them are able to discern the Lord's body. Here, then, believers are meant, who believe that Christ died for them and who discern in the sacrament the Lord's body and blood as a pledge of the forgiveness of sins. Such as do not believe that Christ died for all cannot discern the Lord's body in the sacrament. These are unbelievers. Such should not eat and drink.

Looking at the two passages, we at once make several observations. We see, stated negatively, that those who eat and drink at the devils' table cannot eat at the Lord's Table. We see also, stated negatively, that those who do not discern the Lord's body should not partake of the Supper. We see, stated positively, that those who discern the Lord's body may partake of the sacrament. And those who partake properly of the Lord's Table are one body.

DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY

Let us look at the positive side first. Those who recognize the Lord's body are such as believe; they are the one body. This is a sacrament intended only for true Christians. They were regenerated. They believe that Christ died for all and that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. They believe: "Christ has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." But those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Table must also recognize the Lord's body in the sacrament. One can be a Christian and still not discern the Lord's body. The Lord Himself says of small children that they believe in Him (Matt. 18:6).

Yet they are not able to discern Christ's body. And we know that there are Christians in Reformed denominations. But by their adherence to the Reformed communion they testify that they do not discern the Lord's body in the Supper. According to Paul, they must be able to discern the Lord's body before they can partake of Communion worthily. Hence the church is to administer the sacrament to such believers only as discern the Lord's body, which was given for them for the remission of sins.

Shall we, then, assume that the communion of saints is not a unified body, that it is composed of two classes of Christians, a privileged class that may partake of the Supper and a lower class that may not partake? The church, which is the body of Christ, is not divided. All believers are members of the body of Christ. But not all have reached the same state of maturity, and some will never become mature. Some possess more Christian knowledge than others. Some have reached the point where they discern the Lord's body in the Supper, whereas others have not as yet, and may never reach that point. The sacrament should be administered only to the former.

With regard to the recipients, the church does not use each means of grace in exactly the same manner. Baptism is for all nations, young and old alike. The Gospel should be preached everywhere, to believers and unbelievers, to weak Christians and to strong Christians, to mature Christians and to those who do not possess the same degree of knowledge. But the body and blood of Christ are not to be received by all. Only such are to be admitted to the Lord's Table as Christ wants admitted. Luther writes: "When I preach the Gospel, I know not whom it strikes; but here I must take for granted that it has struck him who comes to the sacrament; I must have no doubt, but must be certain that he to whom I give the sacrament has taken hold of the Gospel and believes aright." (St. L. XI:616)

NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY

The church does not use the sacrament properly if she admits to the Supper those whom Christ does not want admitted. Those who cannot discern the body of Christ should not be admitted to the Table. For a time it was general practice in the church that Communion was administered also to the children. Augusti points

out that Augustine not only took this practice for granted but that he strongly advocated it (II, 639). The Supper was given to children in accordance with a principle — wrong in our opinion — that age, ability, etc., are not to be taken into consideration when administering the sacraments, but that everyone should have free access to divine grace. Since children are baptized, they should receive also the Supper. The Roman Church admits children to her mutilated sacrament at about the age of seven, the only criterion of fitness being that they distinguish the bread in the sacrament from ordinary bread.

The sacrament should not be administered to children until they are able to discern the Lord's body. To this end they must be instructed in the chief articles of Christian belief. The so-called pre-confirmation instruction in our Lutheran Church has as its aim that children — and adults — be led to partake of the sacrament worthily, that is, that they discern the Lord's given body and shed blood in the sacrament as a pledge of forgiveness. Hence they are taught the Ten Commandments; this Law should serve them as a mirror. They are taught the Creed so that they may see God's plan of salvation in its entirety. They are taught the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer so that they learn what works are pleasing to God. The Office of the Keys shows what authority the church has with regard to the means of grace. Confession shows how to acknowledge sin. The part treating of Baptism shows how Christ is put on. And the part treating of the Supper points to the body and blood and the great blessing of forgiveness. All of this was uppermost in the mind of the Reformer when he wrote the catechisms. F. Bente states: "In particular, the two Catechisms were to serve the purpose of properly preparing the children and the unlearned for the Holy Eucharist. . . . The Sacrament of the Altar, in Luther's estimation, is the goal of all catechetical instruction. For this reason he added to the ancient chief parts those of Baptism, Confession, and the Lord's Supper."⁸⁰ Incidentally, parents should be concerned about this preparation. Too frequently the outward rite of confirmation looms larger in the minds of parents. When the church prepares children, she teaches them to see

⁸⁰ "Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church," *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis, 1921), p. 80.

their Savior and to recognize, when they partake of Communion, His body and blood given and shed for the remission of sins. Until they have reached that degree of understanding, the church must not administer to them this sacrament.

SITTING AT TABLE OF DEVILS

This sacrament must be denied those who sit at the devils' table. It is obvious that the Supper cannot be given to those who are unbelievers. Such may not today worship idols and partake of meats sacrificed to idols as did the Corinthian heathen, and yet they have fellowship with the devils, sit at their table, and partake of their cup. They do the devils' bidding. They would fail to recognize Christ's body and blood, which were given and shed for them.

Furthermore, those who persist in a manifest sin sit at the devils' table. They do just what the devils want. The church cannot administer the sacrament to such. If, despite all admonition, they persist in their sin, they are to be put out and classed as heathen. 1 Cor. 5:11: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no, not to eat." As long as anyone willfully continues in any sin, he does not want forgiveness. How, then, can the sacrament be given to him, the sacrament in which he receives Christ's body and blood as a pledge of forgiveness?

But in this matter of admitting to the Lord's Table and denying access to the Table the church must be most careful. She must very definitely steer a course which avoids the Scylla of an open Communion. And she must avoid also the Charybdis of excluding any that would partake worthily. The church should be ready to administer the sacrament to all eligible members, and this includes the weak in faith.

It happens not infrequently that people who know nothing of the essence, benefit, and use of the sacrament desire to partake of Communion. In most sectarian churches the memorial meal is open to any and all. People hear about the Communion services. The desire to participate is in the hearts of some who are completely ignorant as to the proper use of the sacrament. Then there are

others who feel a certain compulsion to commune once a year. The trend of this thinking can be traced to certain sections of Europe: Communion once or twice a year was considered sufficient. So today we are confronted, particularly in Holy Week, by those who feel that they ought to commune. They ignore the church throughout the year, feel no obligation toward God and the church, and do not even agree with the teachings and practice of the church. They make no effort to learn what the Supper really implies. But on Maundy Thursday or Easter they desire Communion. Now the mere desire on the part of such cannot move the church to administer to them the Lord's Supper. They must first be prepared by the teaching of Law and Gospel. And no effort in this direction should be spared. But those who sit at the table of devils for 364 days of the year and evidently will continue to do so, or those who cannot discern the Lord's body in the sacrament must be denied the use of the sacrament. This is not a heartless judging on the part of the church; this is a divine regulation.

EXAMINATION

Has the church through the pastor as steward of the mysteries of God the right to examine communicants in order to determine who should be admitted and to whom the Supper should be denied? That question is asked in every treatise dealing with pastoral procedure. That question disturbs many a pastor. Should he assume the role of a judge? The church is concerned about the spiritual welfare of those to whom she ministers. Therefore she must be concerned also about those to whom she administers the sacrament. If any would partake of the sacrament to his spiritual detriment, he must not be admitted to the sacrament. "For none are admitted except they be first examined." (AC XXIV)

Such an examination may be made in a very judicious manner when the communicants announce their intention to partake of the sacrament. In many cases an examination is not indicated, for the pastor is acquainted with the spiritual status of most members of the church. Luther writes in *Weise, chrl. Messe zu halten*: "I judge that it is sufficient that he who desires to receive the sacrament be thus examined once a year; in fact, such a one may be so well instructed that he needs to be thus examined but once in a lifetime

or not at all; for our only purpose is to avoid that both worthy and unworthy persons come to the Lord's Table." ³¹ Fritz comments: "The registration for Communion should not be made an inquisitorial proceeding; it ought to be a friendly interview and ought not to be turned into a rigorous examination and a torture. A pastor can, by a skillful method of approach, find out all that he wishes to know without even letting a person know that he is being subjected to an examination." ³²

III. WHEN ADMINISTERED?

The question: "When should the church administer the Holy Communion?" concerns itself not only with the frequency of the administration but also with the occasion. Despite all that has been written and is still being written, often with a voice of absolute authority, no direct answer to the question, as far as the church is concerned, can be found in the Scriptures.

UPPER ROOM

The Supper was instituted in the evening when Christ was betrayed. The two directives given that evening were: "This do in remembrance of Me," and: "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." In these words there is no direct reference, nor can anyone infer from them, that the Savior who would be betrayed wanted the sacrament to be administered so and so many times and on such and such occasion. "This do" states clearly that the sacrament was to be repeated. And the word "oft" takes for granted that it would be done often. But in neither of these directives is there even an indication that it be done every day, or every Sunday, or once every month, or once every other month.

CORINTH

Turning to the church in Corinth about A. D. 57, we note that the Corinthians came together probably in the evening to eat and — although it is not expressly stated, yet it seems to be taken for granted — with certain regularity. Paul, after having given the words of institution, adds: "For as often as ye eat this bread and

³¹ St. L. X:2248.

³² *Past. Theol.*, p. 112.

drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Here again is the word "often." Paul does not write: "When ye eat," etc., but: "As often as ye eat," etc. And when Paul concludes: "Tarry one for another," he certainly has in mind an administration which occurs "oft."

BAPTISM — PREACHING — SUPPER

Not one of the other Pauline epistles contains even so much as a reference to the Sacrament of the Altar. And Acts, the most extensive treatise on the apostolic church, has, with the possible exception of the passages in chapters two and twenty, nothing to say concerning the sacrament. I am aware that this silence in the Acts and in the other epistles of Paul does not prove or even hint that the Lord's Supper is relatively unimportant. Yet it is strange that a rite which later was given such a prominent place in the cultus of the church should be mentioned only twice by Paul. What Paul delivered to the Corinthians he undoubtedly delivered also to the other churches. Without a doubt the sacrament was administered also in these churches. As in Ephesus, so also in the other churches Paul shunned not to declare "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Paul took for granted that the Supper was celebrated in all the churches. Of this, I believe, we may be certain.

But at the same time the administration of the Supper did not occupy the climactic position in the worship of the apostolic church which some endeavor to assign to it. The New Testament references to Baptism and the New Testament examples of Baptism as well as the New Testament emphasis on teaching cannot be ignored while considering the question: "When should the Supper be administered?" The argument cannot be advanced that since the apostolic church was a mission church, more emphasis was placed on Baptism in the New Testament writings. Some of the churches were removed by a number of years from the mission-station class. In Corinth the Supper was being celebrated, evidently regularly. This congregation had been organized some five or six years before the First Epistle was written. The congregation in Ephesus had been in existence more than ten years when the epistle was sent to that city. Yet nothing is said about the Supper in this congregation or in any of the other congregations. This paucity of

reference to the Supper on the one hand and wealth of reference to Baptism and the oral proclamation on the other hand merits some discussion.

In the Acts of the Apostles the following baptisms are specifically mentioned: on the Day of Pentecost, following Peter's sermon (2:41); in Samaria, following Philip's preaching (8:12); Simon in Samaria (8:13); the eunuch (8:38); Saul of Tarsus (9:18); Cornelius' house (10:48); Lydia and her house (16:15); the jailer of Philippi and his (16:33); many of the Corinthians (18:8); certain disciples of Ephesus (19:5).

In 1 Corinthians Paul specifically mentions the Baptism of Crispus and Gaius (1:14) and of Stephanas' household (1:16). In 1 Corinthians four references to Baptism are written (1:13; 6:11; 12:13; 15:29). In Romans Paul asks: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (6:3). In Galatians he states: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:27). Two passages in Ephesians (4:5; 5:26) refer to Baptism, and one in Colossians (2:12). In Titus there is one reference to Baptism (3:5). Here are ten passages in which Paul speaks of Baptism, and this despite the fact that Paul had not set out to baptize. "Christ sent me not to baptize," he writes, "but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 1:17). Both Hebrews (6:2) and First Peter (3:21) mention Baptism once. It is not my intention to reduce all of this matter to a mathematical formula; yet one cannot escape the conclusion that Baptism receives far more emphasis than the Supper. Why? Since we are here interested only in the "when" of Communion, a possible answer concerns itself only with that thought. With regard to Baptism there was something definite as to the "when": individuals were baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost when they entered the church. But the "when" as to Communion was not definite. Here there was a certain liberty. Here the directive "This do" pertained, and here it was taken for granted that Christians would do it "oft." Here there was not the strictness as to time that necessarily pertained to Baptism.

Many, many passages refer to the oral proclamation of the Gospel. In a most solemn vein Paul wrote to Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall

judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1). He does not merely tell Timothy; he charges Timothy and calls upon God as a witness. And this is the charge: "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). This preaching refers to public proclamation before the congregation. "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," Paul tells Timothy (2 Tim. 4:3). And with regard to Titus' activity in the church Paul writes: "Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (2:1). In fact, much of the Epistle to Titus concerns itself with: "Exhort. Put them in mind. Speak. Rebuke." This fact just cannot be ignored: in Scripture there is this strong emphasis on teaching by word of mouth, not only on the part of the apostles directly called, but also on the part of their hearers, pupils, and successors. And this preaching is to be continual. There is no thought here of poor or wrong teaching. Rather: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). And: "Hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). And: "Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). When the Word is taught and applied faithfully, there is no danger of detracting from the great things that God has done. Nowhere is the thought expressed that the reception of the Lord's Supper is a pure proclamation of the death of Christ, whereas something else is liable to creep in when men preach.

The churches gathered together in apostolic times, but not in the formal manner to which we are accustomed. In Jerusalem they gathered in the temple (Acts 2:46), at times taking part in the temple worship (3:1; 21:24). But the distinctly New Testament gatherings – if I may so designate them – were in many instances in houses. After Peter's miraculous release the apostle "came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12). And in the epistles one finds numerous references to the churches in certain houses. Also other places were used for these gatherings. For two years Paul spoke daily in Ephesus in the school of a cer-

tain Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). In this time no formal mode of conducting worship developed. There was teaching, there was prayer, there was thanksgiving, there was praise, there was display of those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, there was a reception of the Supper. But there was no elaborate liturgy which began with the Introit and culminated in the reception of the Supper. It may be well to look at some of these gatherings. After the ascension, "they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James, and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas, the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren" (Acts 1:13, 14). After Peter and John were released, they went to their own company and reported. When the faithful "heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord" and prayed. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:23, 24, 31). This was in Jerusalem. I have already pointed to the daily gatherings in Ephesus in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. The Colossians were to teach and admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in" their hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16). The Corinthians, on one occasion, when they gathered together, were to deliver that immoral person unto Satan (1 Cor. 5:4, 5). The entire 14th chapter of First Corinthians is devoted to the gatherings of the Corinthian church. When they came together, one had a psalm, another a doctrine, another a tongue, another a revelation, another an interpretation (14:26). The apostle admonishes that there be no confusion; all should be done decently and in order. These were not closed gatherings in Corinth. Believers were present, but also unbelievers came in. Some Corinthians spoke with tongues. The apostle does not condemn this; but he tells them that it is better to prophesy. "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." Such prophesying the apostle commends, for through it believers and unbelievers were benefited. Yes, edification, that was the important matter. And at evening gatherings the misuse of the Supper occurred in Corinth (1 Co-

rinthians 11). In all of this there is no indication that the apostolic church considered worship without the Supper as incomplete. When they came together as a church, they prayed. When they came together as a church, they spoke the Word of God. When they came together as a church, they praised God. When they came together as a church, they celebrated the Supper. It may be that several of these acts took place in one gathering. But in all of this there was no strict formality and definite procedure. They prayed (Acts 12:5). They prayed and spoke the Word (4:31). In Corinth there was even a confusion; probably several endeavoring to talk at the same time (1 Corinthians 14). They came together to eat the Supper. But although formality is lacking, sincerity in most instances is not. Now certainly, if the Lord had desired anything definite as to the "when" of Communion, the apostles would have instructed the churches in this matter, and the churches would have observed it. And would this observing of a definite rule not have been indicated in at least some of the examples just quoted?

When Luther began his reformatory work, worship and all connected with it were definitely established. Luther retained what was not contrary to Scripture and discarded what was wrong. It was not a transition such as the early church experienced: a complete change from Old Testament form or from idol cultus to Christian form. While Luther discontinued the abominable practice of daily private Masses, he retained the frequent administration of the sacrament. The Lutherans declared at Augsburg: ". . . we hold one Communion every holy day (*an Feiertagen, singulis feriis*) and, if any desire the sacrament, also on other days, when it is given to such as ask for it" (AC, XIV 34). And in the Apology they stated: "At the outset we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us Masses are celebrated every Lord's day and on the other festivals, in which the sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved" (Ap, XXIV, 1). Both of these quotations state a historical fact: the Lutherans administered the sacrament every holy day and on other days when it was desired. There is no declaration that such is the divine will and that thus it must always be.

PRINCIPLE

There is no command of God which makes it obligatory to administer the sacrament in each service, nor is there a command which obligates the church to distribute Communion every Sunday morning and every holy day. Any attempt to foist upon the church a rule with regard to the "when" of Communion would be contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. That uniformity would prevail in the churches would be desirable, though not necessary. In writing about the question, "When and How Often Pastors Should Celebrate the Holy Supper,"³³ Luther points out that it stands to reason no one should be forced to come to the sacrament or be prevented from coming, nor should a definite time or place be set in order to snare consciences; but because St. Paul teaches that all be done in order among Christians, he (Luther) would think well of it if the *Proebste und Kirchendiener* would gather together and of their free will reach a conclusion in this matter, and so uniformity would thereafter prevail. He would suggest for that particular place that one or two Masses be held in the parish churches each Sunday or holy day, depending upon the number of communicants. During the week one could conduct Mass on the days it becomes necessary, if some communicants ask for Communion and desire it. So, he concludes, no one would be forced to take the sacrament, and each would be sufficiently served. Luther saw clearly that no divine command could be cited.

In the churches are those who all but insist on the administration of the Supper in every Sunday service and on holy days, and in the church are those who consider a bimonthly Communion sufficient. Very infrequent Communion were the rule in some European churches. This practice of former years exerts an influence on some of our people today: they continue the practice of their fathers and commune only once or twice a year. In this matter neither legalistic demands nor loveless judging are in place. The principle to be followed in this matter is: **NO ONE SHOULD BE FORCED TO PARTAKE OF THE SUPPER, NOR SHOULD ANY ELIGIBLE COMMUNICANT BE PREVENTED FROM PAR-**

³³ St. L. X:2256.

TAKING OF IT. Where very frequent Communion prevail, participation should not be a matter of law. And where infrequent Communion prevail, some might be prevented from participating as often as they desire. If each church would consider both sides and be guided accordingly, a God-pleasing use would result. Luther could suggest that the *Proebste und Kirchendiener* of one town get together and set up a uniform practice. If he were in the Missouri Synod in this year 1954, he would probably consider it the better part of wisdom not to make such a suggestion. We would probably not come to an agreement when and how often the Supper be celebrated, not even in one town; nor is it necessary that we come to such an agreement. If the principle voiced already by Luther is followed, there need be no strict uniformity. Our churches should not make communing a matter of law, but should administer the sacrament so frequently that everyone be given an opportunity to attend as frequently as he desires. And incidentally, it is the duty of parish pastors to teach their parishioners what benefits and blessings await them in Communion, and so instill in them, by the grace of God, the desire to be frequent guests at the Lord's Table. The words written in the preface to the Small Catechism are probably still etched in the minds of many of you: "Lastly, since the people are freed from the tyranny of the pope, they no longer desire to go to the sacrament, but despise it. It is necessary to be urgent on this point, remembering, however, that we are to force no one to believe or to receive the sacrament, nor to fix any law, time, or place for it, but so to preach that they will be urged of their own accord, without our law, and will, as it were, compel us pastors to administer the sacrament. . . . Therefore you need not make any law in this matter, as the pope does; only set forth clearly the benefit and harm, the necessity and use, the danger and blessing, connected with this sacrament, and the people will come of themselves, without your compulsion. But if they do not come, let them alone, telling them that they are of the devil, as they do not regard nor feel their great need and God's gracious help. Should you, however, fail to urge this matter, 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 keep silence?"

LITURGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations as to liturgy cannot unduly influence the church in establishing set times for the administration of the sacrament. The church cannot say: "The liturgy requires a celebration of the Supper in each Sunday morning service." The church should not declare: "A service without Communion is a mutilated service." The church should not state: "It is improper to end the service with the sermon and a number of prayers."

Happily the time is past that churches and churchmen in our midst ignore matters pertaining to liturgy. Considered purely as a matter of good taste, there are still many crudities to be seen in churches throughout our denomination. But all in all the picture looks better than it did at one time. It is well for the sake of uniformity and for the sake of good taste that more and more congregations follow "The Order of Morning Service" and "The Order of the Holy Communion." F. R. Webber in his excellent book, *Studies in the Liturgy*, points to the real objective of liturgy when he writes (p. 224): "After all, you and I are not there as mere spectators, and the liturgy is not a carefully rehearsed dramatic production, where each man says lines which have been memorized with painstaking care. Our objective in it all is to remind one another, clergy and congregation, of the great facts of man's sinful nature, his helpless condition, and the one and only way of salvation — the unmerited grace of God in our Lord Jesus, our Savior." And most emphatically would we respond with a yea and an amen to his concluding remarks (p. 226): "The liturgy itself cannot save. It can only declare audibly the truths of God's Word. It is a good thing, therefore, to have an unmutated and a doctrinally pure liturgy. It is a better thing to have an unmutated and doctrinally pure understanding of the teachings of our Lord, and to believe in them. We can, if need be, dispense with all liturgies; but we can never dispense with the saving truths which the Lord has made known to us."

Much as we strive for orderly services, be they Sunday morning services, be they holy-day services, be they matins, or be they vespers, we should not look to the postapostolic churches or the medieval churches or the churches of the Reformation period, consider the rites of these churches, and then conclude categorically

that any service which fails to follow a set pattern is really not a service. In the church we could on occasion pray to God without hearing a sermon and without celebrating Communion, and it would be a God-pleasing worship. In the church we could on occasion receive Communion without singing hymns and without hearing a sermon, and it would be a right use of the means of grace. In the church we could on occasion merely hear the Scriptures expounded, and it would be a right use of the means of grace. Preaching must be continued in season and out of season and must be pure; the sacrament must be administered according to Christ's "This do"; the "sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15) should not be lacking; and prayer should be made without ceasing—all this is essential. But the Lord does not tie prayer and praise and His means of grace to a set liturgical practice. This is so obvious that I feel somewhat out of place even mentioning it. And yet voices are heard now and again which would cover up and hide this principle. When Luther in 1523 suggested an order of service, he stated that there would probably be those who would desire that the order be verified by writings and examples of the fathers. This would not trouble him, for in this matter there can be no coercion, and the consciences of Christians cannot be made captive by laws or commandments. Therefore also the Scriptures do not order anything final in this matter. He continues: "So also the examples of the fathers are partially unknown, those, however, which are known are of such various sorts that nothing definite can be concluded therefrom or regulated thereby, because they, too, used their liberty. And even though they were certain and unanimous, yet we would be compelled neither by law nor necessity to follow their example."³⁴

I would be among the last to abolish a correct liturgy. Let us have liturgies. Let us follow them. Let us study the liturgical heritage of the church. But at the same time let us not lose sight of the fact that all liturgies are subject to Christian liberty, so long as they contain nothing contrary to the Word.

The first consideration in our church services is edification. The church must teach. This truth receives much emphasis in 1 Corin-

³⁴ St. L. X:2253.

thians 14. Our pastors must not shun to declare unto their people the entire counsel of God. They must be certain of what they utter, and they must speak as men who really mean it. Their utterance should not be a lifeless recitation; it should be a proclamation of the great things that God has done for the salvation of mankind. Hearers will receive little edification where certainty and personal conviction on the part of the preacher are lacking.

Then, prayer and thanksgiving must not be neglected in the gatherings of Christians.

And Christians must be given frequent opportunity to assemble about the Lord's Table in order to partake of the body given for them and of the cup which is the new testament in His blood. When these matters are considered, time and place will present no problem: the "when" of Holy Communion will then not be a matter of controversy.

PRIVATELY

The Supper is not to be celebrated by groups in private, for example, in homes. We have the example of the Corinthian congregation. Although the Corinthians misused the Supper, they came together for the purpose of celebrating the sacrament. It seems that they brought bread and wine from their homes. The apostle even tells them to satisfy their bodily hunger at home. But the Lord's Supper was to be eaten together. Paul expressly urges them: "Tarry one for another." Add to this that their eating and drinking was to be a showing of the Lord's death. It was to be a proclaiming. And a proclamation is not made in private. I would again point to the example of Luther, and here, as well as in all that has already been said concerning the Reformer, he is quoted not as a final authority but as an example of evangelical practice. Luther takes up the question a number of times.³⁵ One housefather who asked whether or not he could commune himself and his household because the tyrannical churchmen refused him and his house Communion was told that he had neither call nor command to do this.³⁶ A housefather has the duty to teach his household the Word of God, but the sacrament is a public confession and should have

³⁵ St. L. X:2226, 2228.

³⁶ St. L. X:2224.

public servants (*offenbarliche Diener*) and is celebrated to proclaim or preach Christ's death. And even though the sacrament is wrongfully denied him, "nevertheless he can be saved in his faith through the Word" (*dennoch wohl kann in seinem Glauben selig werden durchs Wort*).³⁷

SICKROOM

Should the sacrament be administered privately to Christians when they are sick? The comfort of the sacrament should not be denied them. At such times the sacrament is administered by the church through the called minister. That much is in conformity with proper use. But I must admit, and probably many another pastor would join me, that the question of communing good Christians privately has given me some concern. So many times none but the administrant and the communicant are present when the Supper is given to one who is sick. In a hospital room the pastor and the patient are present. In a home a shut-in and the pastor are present. What about the matter of showing Christ's death on such occasions? Would it perhaps not be best that every effort be made that others be present when the Supper is administered privately? In *Liturgische Monatsschrift* (July 1885) Friedrich Lochner gives a short form of sick Communion. This form contains the rubric that the pastor and the sick be left alone when confession is made and absolution is given. But after the confession and absolution the relatives, servants, friends, and neighbors who are present are to be asked to come into the room. With these present Communion is to be administered.

DEATH

More or less regularly every pastor comes into contact with the attitude that Communion must be celebrated shortly before death. It reminds one very strongly of extreme unction. Even Melancthon writes: "The significance of this sacrament lies in its function of confirming us as often as our consciences do waver, or as often as we doubt God's good will toward us. This indeed happens at other times, but especially when one comes to die. Hence the dying are to be confirmed by it in an especial manner."³⁸ Certainly, the

³⁷ St. L. X:2224.

³⁸ "On Participation in the Table of the Lord," *Locl*, 1521.

sacrament with its consolation of sins forgiven should be brought to the dying. But any thought that the mere outward deed is meritorious or any thought that when the pastor comes with Communion death is imminent should be corrected. Some do not desire the sacrament to be brought in until death is certain. Where is the pastor who has not been called and told: "You need not administer the sacrament, for so-and-so is better today"? These wrong notions deserve to be corrected by instruction concerning the proper use.

OTHER

Since we have local congregations, the rule ought to be followed that communicants receive the Supper in their own churches. This statement does not rest on a divine directive, but rather on the general principle of order in the churches; hence exceptions can occur. Let me point out also that there is no justification for mass Communion at conventions and gatherings. Such as attend these gatherings have the opportunity to commune at home. *There* they ought to receive the blessings of the sacrament, and *there* they ought to testify as to the oneness spoken of by Paul.

When Communion is celebrated in our synods and in our conferences, it is administered by the local congregations through their called pastors.

When Communion is administered by institutional chaplains or by Armed Services chaplains, the same principles apply which apply in the church. As far as the proper use is concerned, there can be no pointing to emergency conditions or peculiar conditions. Conditions do not determine the use of the Supper. The use is established in Scripture. The use remains the same in congregations and in institutions, in peace and in war.

One last word of caution is in place. Statistical reports as such should not be used as an inducement to more frequent Communion and more frequent communing. Statistical reports reflect conditions; that is all. No one should confront a congregation with statistical reports and say: "The average in our church body is so and so many times a year. You have fallen short of this. May you do better this next year." Statistics may be compared. But if Communion are held to satisfy statistical reports, no good results.

IV. RECEPTION BY COMMUNICANTS

Turning now from the Supper as administered by the church, we center our attention on the reception by the communicants. Certain facts as to this point may be gleaned from the evangelists' accounts; yet the chief source of instruction is 1 Corinthians 11. Paul's words to the Corinthian communicants apply to the present-day Christian communicants.

WORTHY RECEPTION

Much has been made of the words: "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And rightly so! The warning is always in place. However, the communicant should understand them correctly. These words are not intended to fill the Christians with fear and dread as to the reception of the Lord's Supper. The consciences of some Christians are plagued because of these words just quoted and because of the following: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." (Nestle drops the word "unworthily" in this 29th verse. The RSV translates: "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.") Some good Christians feel that they are unworthy and ought therefore to abstain from receiving the Supper. Some feel that they received the sacrament unworthily, and so they go about fearing an impending judgment. Others approach the Table of the Lord with horror. So the sacrament becomes an object of dread instead of a source of comfort.

We would immediately agree that unbelievers are unworthy guests. Our Lutheran Symbols repeatedly use the term in that sense. This quotation is taken from the Formula of Concord: "But it must be carefully explained who are the unworthy guests of this Supper, namely, those who go to this sacrament without true repentance and sorrow for their sins and without true faith and the good intention of amending their lives, and by their unworthy oral eating of the body of Christ load themselves with damnation, that is, with temporal and eternal punishments, and become guilty of the body and blood of Christ."³⁹

³⁹ FC, Th. Decl., VII, *Trigl.*, p. 997.

At the same time we must agree that not even the best Christian may point to a personal worthiness. Which one of the twelve disciples was a worthy communicant? And look at the Corinthians: filled with a factious spirit, some of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Cephas, some of Christ. Here there was no worthiness of the individual person. Looking at himself, the Christian must say with Peter: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."⁴⁰ If personal worthiness were a requirement, no guest would ever sit at the Lord's Table. Large Catechism: "For no one will make such progress that he will not retain many daily infirmities in flesh and blood. . . . Therefore such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we go to confession because we are pure and without sin, but the contrary, because we are poor, miserable men, and just because we are unworthy."⁴¹

It should be noted that Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 does not speak of worthy communicants or unworthy communicants. Paul writes: "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily." Paul's words refer to an unworthy reception. He receives the sacrament unworthily who does not discern the Lord's body. The communicant who comes to the altar, kneels there, eats the bread, drinks the cup, but fails to recognize that he is eating Christ's body and drinking Christ's blood, which were given and shed for the remission of his sins — that communicant eats and drinks unworthily. You, the Christian communicant, should come to the Lord's Table believing: "I shall now receive the body which was given for me, and I shall drink of the cup which is the new testament in Christ's blood." Christ died to redeem you. This you learned from the word of the Gospel. Now Christ has instituted also a sacrament. Because He once said: "This is My body. . . . This is My blood," therefore the given body and the shed blood are actually present when you eat and drink.

By way of contrast, how unfortunate are those who commune at Reformed tables! They are deliberately told: "This is not Christ's body and blood." Purposely they are led not to discern the Lord's body.

⁴⁰ Luke 5:8.

⁴¹ *Trigl.*, p. 767.

EXAMINE HIMSELF

Writing of eating and drinking unworthily, the apostle admonishes: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." So eat and drink! How? Discerning the Lord's body! Any examination as to worthy eating and drinking must therefore concern itself with the question of discerning the Lord's body. The communicant should ask himself: "Do I believe that the body of Christ which was given and the blood which was shed for me are really given me in this sacrament?" Whoever answers that question aright acknowledges himself as a sinner. Whoever answers that question aright recognizes Christ as the Savior. It is, of course, entirely right that the questions of sin and the Savior be still considered in a self-examination, but the question with regard to discerning the Lord's body cannot be omitted. The Christian of Reformed persuasion acknowledges himself as a sinner, recognizes Christ as the Savior, and as a regenerated individual desires to live a Christian life. And yet he would not receive the sacrament worthily, for he does not discern the Lord's body. So communicants should be concerned about the question of the real presence. The Corinthians were not concerned about that question. And Paul wrote to them in terms which were firm. They were not coming together to eat the Lord's Supper. Yet, after he had chided them severely, he still addressed them as "my brethren" (1 Cor. 11:33). Paul cannot mean anything else than Christian brethren. He does not accuse them of impenitence and unbelief. But he does accuse them of not discerning the Lord's body. And as to that they should examine themselves. Lutheran communicants should heed that admonition. They should desire to receive body and blood of their Lord worthily. As they approach their altars, let them say: "I know that now Christ will give me His body and blood as I partake of the earthly elements, that same body and blood which were crucified and shed for me. What a consolation that is to me, unworthy sinner that I am, that Christ would humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and that He here gives me such a pledge that my sins are truly forgiven. Out of gratitude I must dedicate myself to His service."

FREQUENT RECEPTION

How often the communicant is to receive the Lord's Supper is not a matter to be determined by lapse of time. The Christian communicant does not attend the Lord's Table simply because he has not attended for three months. This matter should not depend upon a time element. The Christian does not on January 1 make the resolution to partake of the sacrament four times in the ensuing year. Or six times! Or ten times! Or twelve times! He does not follow a custom laid down in his family years previously.

Too often attendance at the Lord's Table becomes such a formal matter. Two times a year or four times a year clothes are carefully selected, things are brushed and polished, and very solemnly some then proceed to the altar. Though we adhere to the principle that bodily preparation is a fine outward training and that we should approach the Lord's Table with due modesty and reverence, yet we cannot subscribe to this stiff formality determined by the calendar.

The Christian approaches the Lord's Table because Christ directed: "This do." And he approaches the Lord's Table frequently because of his own need and because of Christ's gracious promise. Taking a look at the gracious economy of God in its entirety, we see that God has declared the world righteous, from the first Adam to the last infant born before the dawn of Judgment. All are forgiven for Christ's sake. Christians have taken hold of this forgiveness by faith. They are justified, be their faith like a smoking flax or be it a strong childlike faith. Their old Adam, however, has a habit of asserting himself continually, even after conversion. This fact moved Paul to declare: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). In anguish Paul cries out: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then Paul remembers God and in gratitude sighs: "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." God has forgiven because of Christ. God has regenerated. Even though the law of sin which is in his members asserts itself, yet Paul is forgiven and will finally be delivered entirely from the body of this death.

Every believer has a similar continual experience. The flesh keeps up a constant agitation, inciting him ever and again to do what is wrong. Being a Christian, he will be concerned about this repeated resurgence of the old Adam. In the Gospel the forgiveness once declared by God for Christ's sake is repeatedly given to him individually; yes, the very body and blood which earned the forgiveness are given him to eat and to drink. With this warfare going on within him, the Christian needs the assurance of forgiveness. The Christian has forgiveness. Yet the gracious God in Word and sacrament — in the Word generally and in the sacrament individually — continues to give him that forgiveness which Christ earned when His body was given and when His blood was shed on Calvary. When Christ said, "It is finished," Christ had done enough. When Christ was raised again for our justification, God declared, really declared, all men righteous before Him. And when the individual is regenerated, he is really a new creature.

But there is the flesh which clings to the Christian until death. That flesh should not dominate. How else can it be kept under but by God's grace through the assurance that sin is forgiven? "For this reason we go to the sacrament, because there we receive such a treasure by and in which we obtain forgiveness of sins."⁴² For this reason, dear Christian communicant, you should partake of the Supper often. You experience this conflict between the flesh and the "inward man" (Rom. 7:22). And often the flesh succeeds in having you stumble! Go often and hear the words: "This is My body, which is given for you. This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins." Here very body and very blood are given you as a seal of forgiveness. Will you look at the calendar and say: "It's been three months. I better go next Sunday," or will you say: "I need the forgiveness which is offered me in the Supper"? If this latter is your conviction, then you will desire to partake of the Holy Supper often. Large Catechism: "Those who are true Christians and esteem the sacrament precious and holy will urge and impel themselves unto it" (V 43). When others compel you to go, little good may come of it; but if you are compelled by your own desire, then you will often kneel at the Lord's Table and receive His blessings.

⁴² LC, V, 21.

And keep also the promise of Christ in mind. Without His promise the Supper would be only another meal. But here Christ promises body and blood and with body and blood the forgiveness of sin. Thus faith is nourished and strengthened. Such a strengthened faith cannot but bring forth more fruit. So the Christian communicant will rely on the promise of forgiveness, will leave the Table with stronger faith, and will more and more "work out" his "own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Hence the Christian communicant approaches the Table often in order that through the gift of God his faith may grow stronger. The result will be a life given more and more in service to Him whom to know is to love and to love is to serve. In life the Christian is at times led along a path that winds down below in the bottom of the valley, at other times he climbs slowly along the path that leads from valley to rim, and at other times he saunters along a path that runs straight and smooth on the plateau. Be it in the bottom of the valley where thoughts of sorrow and distress abound, be it on the longer climb where thoughts of bread and shelter abound, or be it on the smooth path of prosperity where thoughts of worldliness and self-security abound — the Christian needs strength to deny himself, to take up his cross, and to follow his Savior. Let the Christian then come to the Supper often and in accord with Christ's promise be strengthened. And from such a strengthened faith will flow the resolve to dedicate himself entirely to Him who gave His life and shed His blood.

IN REMEMBRANCE

Man forgets easily. "Lest we forget," must be repeated continually to remind people of that which is past and of those who are gone. In the sphere of the spiritual this failing can be ruinous. To forget the redemption wrought by Christ means loss of faith, for only he that endures unto the end shall be saved. Hence Christians must be admonished to read, study, hear, meditate on the Gospel. And since the Christians are so prone to forget, is it not gracious on the part of Christ that He gives them also a sacrament of which He says: "This do in remembrance of Me"? Stated bluntly: Christians are to receive the Supper in order that they might not forget Him. Receiving the Supper, they should remember

Him who was made of a woman, who was made under the Law, who had not where to lay His head, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, who was crucified, and who died. But more than that! They should remember the benefits of Christ "and receive them by faith, so as to be quickened by them" (Ap. XXIV, 72). To remember Christ is to believe that His body was crucified and His blood was shed for me. To remember Christ is to believe that He earned the remission of iniquities for me. So Christian communicants approach the Lord's Table and partake of the Lord's body and blood also lest they forget the truth: "Given and shed for my sins."

SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH

At the same time this reception of the sacrament is a proclamation. After Paul had given the words of institution, he added immediately: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Here there is an interval of time between the Lord's visible departure and His visible return. In that interval every reception of the sacrament is a proclamation. Every time the Christian kneels at the altar and eats bread and drinks of the cup he preaches to others. He proclaims that Christ died. And he proclaims the meaning of Christ's death. Here is a blessed privilege. Here God gives, and through that giving permits the communicant to show others that Christ died. This opportunity, given by grace, should be seized by Christians. Until the Day of Judgment they should be ready to show the Lord's death in this manner.

ONENESS

When partaking of the Holy Supper the oneness of believers is clearly demonstrated. Paul wrote: "Because one bread, we, the many, are one body, for all share the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17 Greek). Believers show this unity also when confessing their faith orally. But here at the Supper they visibly demonstrate this oneness. There are many. At the celebration there may be five or five hundred. But all who believe are one in faith. There may be different races and different nationalities represented. But all who believe are one in faith. They all partake of the one bread. As there is one bread, so the partakers are one body. Here at the

altar they come together: rich and poor, employers and employees, learned and unlettered, gifted and simple. But here at the altar all possessions and all positions, all abilities and all achievements vanish. Here, partaking of the one bread, all believers are truly equal. At the altar, as nowhere else, they give public testimony of their unity. And certainly, this unity does not cease when they depart from the altar. Although it is then no longer so publicly demonstrated, yet, no matter what their workaday occupations and preoccupations, this unity persists. It is never disrupted so long as they remain faithful. And each time they eat and drink the Lord's body and blood they give new public evidence of it.

CONCLUSION

The church must always be intent on obeying her Master; hence she should make proper use of the sacrament of Holy Communion. All extremes must be avoided. There are those within the pale of visible Christendom who would solve all problems confronting the church by the celebration of Communion. The Lord of the church has not given His church this as a sole solution. But on the other extremity are those who would discount the use of the Holy Supper. They fail to recognize the benefits of this sacrament. On the part of the communicants in the church the abuse tends to lean mostly in one direction: there is not the recognition of the wonderful blessing and benefits and therefore not the resultant appreciation and frequent use. The church must view this sacrament in its proper perspective. And the members must be instructed with greater diligence and thus be induced to partake with greater frequency.

Hear a final quotation taken from a very instructive sermon preached by Luther in Wittenberg on Maundy Thursday 1522: "The Gospel should be preached in all the world. To what is failure to be attributed? Not to the Gospel, for it is right and true, useful and blessed. But people are lacking who are fit to preach. When these are lacking, silence is better than preaching; for it will only be falsified and preached shamefully. So also here, the sacrament and the use just stated are right and good, but where are the people fit to begin and use it? I have worked for it, and I wish that also the pope's law concerning a yearly reception of

the sacrament on the Easter festival would be abolished and each would be at liberty that he attend without coercion at the urging of his own conscience and from hunger of his soul, in order that the abominable, unchristian misuse and blasphemy would diminish, and henceforth hardly one would attend where now many hundred attend. So I note that Satan uses it that he might so profane both kinds, and make them more common than the pope has made his one kind, before Christians come into being that use it aright. He has in mind to make it worse on the right side than on the left; hence it is necessary for us to remain on the middle street and to ask God that He help us on it and preserve us, for Satan seeks us with earnestness." (St. L. X:2167)

Satan's activity continues with earnestness, also in the Lutheran Church. Profaning the sacrament or creating an indifference toward it, turning it into a meritorious sacrifice or bringing about a neglect of it — the means are immaterial to him, just so he achieves his purpose. To use all the means of grace properly must be a cardinal concern of the Lutheran Church in this day when the trump of God is already being raised and will soon herald the dawn of that other day, when the earthly activity of the church visible will cease forever. The saints who here below now receive His body and blood in the sacrament will then see Him as He is. "Till He come" may our Lutheran Church heed the directive: "This do in remembrance of Me."