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SELF-EXAMINATION--AN INVESTIGATION OF  
I CORINTHIANS 11:28

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

SELF-EXAMINATION; THREINEN; S.T.M., 1962

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Lord's Supper is one of the greatest gifts which the Lord has granted to His Church. In this gift Christ offers Himself sacramentally to His disciples, binding them to Himself and to each other. By eating and drinking the Lord's body and blood, His followers are assured of the forgiveness of sin because of Christ's suffering and death which has sealed God's covenant of grace for them. They, furthermore, eat in anticipation of the eschatological banquet which awaits them after this life.

Thus the Lord's Supper is an important means of grace for the believer. Yet it can have the opposite result for the person who does not eat and drink worthily. Such is the two-fold possibility whenever a person confronts the Lord and His grace. He who accepts the Lord in faith is blessed. He who does not come in faith is in danger of eternal condemnation.

For the believer there is always the very real possibility of falling away from grace. Paul realized this. Because of this, Paul exhorted the believers at Corinth to examine themselves and so eat and drink. The possibility of eating and drinking unworthily has been the concern of believers since these words of Paul were written. In the early Church the doctrine of repentance grew up as

a result of this concern. In the Lutheran and Anglican traditions this concern has given rise to close communion and related customs. Frequently, however, self-examination has become an externalized rite and has all but lost its true meaning because of a legalistic interpretation.

In spite of the concern that Christians should not take the Lord's Supper unworthily, the exact content and nature of self-examination is frequently left nebulous. Commentators generally give the subject little more than a passing comment. Lutheran dogmaticians occasionally lose sight of it as they define and defend the real presence. Historical theologians tend to overlook it in discussing the formal categories of repentance, confession and absolution.

This study is an attempt to investigate self-examination on the basis of Paul's statement in I Cor. 11:28. Since the context of the passage is very important, Chapter II studies the immediate context of I Corinthians 11 and the wider context of the entire epistle. Paul's interest throughout the epistle is the concern that the Corinthians recognize Christ as the *κύριος* in their lives.

Chapter III is an attempt at a thorough exegesis of I Cor. 11:28. First the key words, *δοκιμάσειν, ἑαυτόν* and *οὕτως* are examined. Then the three passages which best shed light on Paul's use of *δοκιμάσειν* are considered. These are II Cor. 13:5, I Thess. 5:21, and Eph. 5:10.

In Chapter IV we attempt to systematize and make relevant the study by gathering together the conclusions derived from a consideration of the content of self-examination.

Chapter V is a summary of self-examination in the history of the Church until the time of the Reformation. Chapter VI attempts to articulate the understanding of self-examination in the Lutheran Reformation as reflected in the Lutheran Symbols and in Luther.

The final chapter briefly mentions some uses and abuses which are made of self-examination, and adds some concluding summary statements.

Unless otherwise indicated, the Scripture passages quoted in English are taken from the Revised Standard Version. The quotations in German from the Lutheran Confessions are based on Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONTEXT OF I CORINTHIANS 11:28

Paul directs the Corinthians, "Let a man examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (11:28). These words are very intimately connected with their immediately preceding and subsequent context. They cannot, however, be fully understood unless they are also viewed in the larger context of the entire epistle.

In the beginning of the eleventh chapter, Paul commends the Corinthians for keeping him in mind and maintaining the traditions which he had handed on to them (11:2). Evidently Paul has in mind certain customs pertaining to proper demeanor in the service of worship. He goes on to explain why it is good practice for a man to participate in the service with his head bare while the woman should have her head covered (11:3-16).

Also the remainder of the chapter relates to proper conduct in the church service. However, in this portion of the chapter Paul is not commending the Corinthians. Rather, he is reprimanding them and attempting to show how they ought to act in view of the seriousness of the situation. Whereas the previous section deals primarily with external form, this part deals rather with basic attitudes and understanding.

Paul calls attention first to the divisions which are



apparent when the Corinthians assemble for worship (11:18). One of the reasons for their divisions is the loveless, self-centered way in which some of them misuse the common meal.<sup>1</sup> When the Corinthians gather, each one thinks only about himself and his own appetite. The result is that some go hungry while others are drunk. Higgins maintains that the cause of the apparent divisions was social inequality. The rich began to eat without waiting for the arrival of the poor brethren who came late because of their occupations. The wealthy ate and drank to excess, while the poor went hungry.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it was true also that those who had food aplenty refused to share it with the others. In doing so they completely disregarded those present who were so poor that they could bring little or nothing. There is also the possibility that the food brought was put into a pool and that each took as much as he could for himself when the common meal began. Thus a situation would

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<sup>1</sup>This common meal, quite evidently eaten along with and probably preceding the Eucharist proper, is generally called the agape feast. There is evidence for its early appearance in Acts 2:42-47. Meals of this nature may have been the chief reason for the appointment of the seven deacons (Acts 6:1ff.). In most cases where the reference is made to the breaking of bread, it is difficult to determine whether this meant only the Lord's Supper proper or included also the common meal. Probably the latter was meant quite frequently. In I Cor. 11:20 the term "Lord's Supper" seems to include the whole of the common meal concluding with the Eucharist proper.

<sup>2</sup>A. J. B. Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1952), p. 71.

arise in which some less favored would have nothing and would feel humiliated (11:20,22). Paul had previously asserted that not many of the Corinthians were wise or powerful or of noble birth by worldly standards (1:26). For this reason and because Paul seems to be speaking to the whole church at Corinth rather than to a few individuals, the last explanation seems very defensible. Yet, regardless of what the exact nature of the disorderly conduct in the Corinthian Church was, there was one basic reason for this conduct. The Corinthians failed to understand, or they disregarded, the true meaning of the Lord's Supper and the common meal connected with it.

Paul tells the Corinthians, "when you meet together it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat" (11:20). The full understanding of what Paul means by κυριακὸν δεῖπνον can be gained only if one bears in mind what the word κύριος meant to Paul. When he calls Jesus Christ the κύριος, Paul is designating Christ as the One who was obedient unto death and whom God glorified. Paul brings out this full force of κύριος best in his well-known words in Phil. 2:8-11:

ἔταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ. διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερυψώσεν. καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων, καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται ὅτι ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.

In Rom. 10:9 Paul expressly sets the confession of the Lordship of Jesus parallel to the heart's faith that God

has raised Him from the dead.<sup>3</sup> The cardinal reason for Christ's death and resurrection is that He might be κύριος both of the dead and of the living (Rom. 14:9).

Thus when Paul talks about the κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, he has in mind a meal where the κύριος is the host. In this meal the κύριος feeds His guests with His own body and blood. The κύριος, however, is not only the crucified Christ but also the risen and glorified Christ. He is the Christ who rules over all things in the world and in the Church. He is the Christ who lives within His followers and grants them the forgiveness of sins which they accept by faith.

To approach the supper of the κύριος in a disorderly or careless manner is to disregard the host of this sacred meal. The disorderly conduct of the Corinthians was a serious matter because it showed irreverence for the κύριος whose guests they were supposed to be. This irreverence was a symptom of a deeper malady, however. It indicated that the κύριος was not the primary focal point in the lives of the Corinthians. Thus when they met together, the Corinthians were eating the Lord's Supper with a negative result. They were desecrating the Lord's Supper by their disrespect

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<sup>3</sup>The Vaticanus, a fourth century manuscript, has the following reading in Rom. 10:9: ὅτι ρῆμα ἐν τῷ στόματι σου ὅτι ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ. This reading evidently reflects the earliest creedal formulation. This early creedal formulation is reflected in similar fashion in I Cor. 12:3 and in a somewhat extended form above (Phil. 2:11).

for the κύριος. The result was that the supper, which the κύριος had instituted for the bestowal of His blessing, became detrimental to the Corinthians.

To outward appearances the Corinthians were not eating the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a meal of fellowship where all recognize the κύριος as the host. It was quite apparent that such fellowship was absent when the Corinthians assembled. The Corinthian assembly had degenerated into a gathering of individuals each eating his own supper. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they have their own houses for this purpose (11:22). To feast in utter disregard for the people who have nothing is to show contempt for the Church of God because it humiliates these people. Paul also reminds the Corinthians that he had received the Sacrament which they violate by their conduct from the κύριος (11:23). The Lord's Supper was not something which Paul or any other man had originated. It was instituted by the Lord Jesus "on the night in which He was betrayed." The fact that the κύριος Himself instituted the Lord's Supper and has given it to His followers attests to the seriousness with which a person is to approach this Sacrament. The Corinthians needed also to be reminded of the mysterious character of the Sacrament. They needed to be told that the Lord's Supper is very intimately connected with Christ's death, that it is a constant memorial for the believers of the new covenant which Christ

effected by the shedding of His blood. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is in fact the means by which the promise of God's forgiveness in view of Christ's sacrifice is offered to believers. The person who approaches this Sacrament must be ready to accept in faith the forgiveness offered there. To approach the Lord's Supper with anything less than faith is to eat and drink unworthily. Paul reminds the Corinthians that a person who does this is guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord (11:27). Only by approaching the Lord's Supper in faith does a Christian recognize Christ as the κύριος in this sacrament. The hand of faith reaches out and appropriates the promises of Christ's grace. The Corinthians had disregarded the κύριος as the focal point of their service of worship and so were not coming to the Sacrament in faith. Where this was the case the real possibility of actually being guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord was present.

For this reason Paul tells the Corinthians to examine themselves and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup (11:28). The great necessity of self-examination in view of the seriousness of eating and drinking unworthily is brought out even more in the subsequent context. Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks *they* judgment (κρίμα) to himself (11:29). Paul asserts that this is the reason that many of the Christians in Corinth were weak and ill and some had even died (11:30). Sickness

and death was used by God as a chastisement to make the Corinthians aware of the reality of their precarious situation.

Paul uses a very striking and effective play on words to emphasize the necessity of self-examination in view of the impending judgment. He says in 11:31 that if we correctly evaluate ourselves (*διακρίνειν*), we will not be judged (*κρίνειν*). Presumably the subject of this latter judging is God. If, however, we are judged (*κρίνειν*) by the Lord, the Lord intends this to be a chastisement (*παιδεύειν*) for us. His chastisement is an attempt to avert the possibility of participants in Holy Communion succumbing completely to the world and being condemned (*κατάκρινειν*) with it (11:32). All this emphasis on judgment shows the seriousness with which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to be viewed.

Thus Paul entreats the Corinthians to display the outward manifestations of people who have accepted God's forgiveness for Christ's sake. They are to act in love to each other. When they gather, each should wait for the others and if anyone should be too hungry, he should eat at home before coming to participate in the worship service. For if the Corinthians continue in the present manner, they would be denying the *κύριος*. The result would be that instead of receiving God's grace by faith, they would then be gathering to their own hurt. The Sacrament, which was

intended to convey divine forgiveness to be accepted by faith, would become an occasion for divine judgment.

In examining the immediate context of I Cor. 11:28, we have attempted to point out Paul's great concern that the Corinthians recognize the *κύριος* as they gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Flagrant disregard of the *κύριος* desecrates the Sacrament and invites the condemnation of God. Since it is possible to desecrate the Sacrament in this fashion, the Corinthians are enjoined to examine themselves.

Paul's emphasis on the primacy of the *κύριος* is seen also in the larger context of I Corinthians. The problems in the Corinthian church to which Paul addresses himself ultimately stem from the failure of the Corinthians to fully acknowledge Christ as the *κύριος*. Paul addresses his epistle to the ekklesia of God at Corinth, to those who have been made holy in Christ Jesus. He reminds them that God has called them to be people set apart together with all those everywhere who call upon the name of the *κύριος* (1:2). Paul gives thanks to God for the grace which He showered on the Corinthians and expresses his confidence that God will sustain them to the end. The basis for Paul's confidence is the fact that God is faithful who has called the Corinthians into the *κοινωνία* of His Son, Jesus Christ, their *κύριος* (1:9).

One of the external manifestations of the Corinthian

problem was the divisions in the church. Paul addresses himself to these divisions in the first chapter when he shows how foolish it is to break up into party groups. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1:13). The Corinthians would not have displayed these sectarian tendencies if they had fully recognized Jesus Christ as the κύριος. This is why Paul appeals to the Corinthians διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ that they agree and that there be no dissensions among them (1:10).

The way by which Christ becomes the κύριος earthly wisdom neither effects nor approves. For this reason Paul did not in the beginning come to the Corinthians with eloquent wisdom (1:17). Earthly wisdom would not accept the Gospel about the κύριος because this Gospel was the word of the cross. By way of the cross Christ became the κύριος. The word of this Gospel is a power of God which works faith in those who should be saved (1:18). The Jew stumbles at this Gospel because he wants a sign which will overwhelm him. The Greek regards this Gospel as folly because he wants a message which will convince him by its great wisdom (1:23). This word of the cross presents a Gospel which must be believed (1:21). The Corinthians themselves illustrate the power of God which operates through this Gospel. God chose the Corinthians who were poor and despised and gave them divine life by putting them



into fellowship with Christ. God made Christ to be their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1:30). Thus, if the Corinthians boast, they may only boast of the *κύριος* (1:31). With the *κύριος* as the object of their boasting there would be no petty rivalry.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that he did not come to them proclaiming the mysteries of God in lofty words or wisdom (2:1). Rather, Paul resolved to keep the crucified Christ always before those to whom he preached (2:2). This message of the cross was effective not because it was based on man's wisdom but because it was used mightily by the Spirit of God. The faith which the Corinthians experienced as a result of the Gospel proclamation was due, therefore, not to human wisdom but to divine power (2:5). The wisdom which Paul imparts to the mature is not wisdom characterized by this present age (2:6). What Paul imparts is a secret and hidden wisdom of God about His eternal purposes (2:7). This wisdom can only be revealed to Paul and the Corinthians by the Spirit of God (2:10). In effect this wisdom of God is the recognition that Jesus is the *κύριος*, for Paul says, "None of the rulers of this eon understand this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the *κύριον τῆς δόξης*" (2:8). If the Corinthians approach the gifts of God's Spirit apart from the recognition that Christ is *κύριος*, they are unable to receive the gifts. These gifts of the Spirit become folly to such

people (2:14). Only those who have the "mind of Christ" can receive what the Spirit teaches (2:13,16).

Strife and jealousy showed a basic lack of maturity in the Corinthians' understanding of what really is important (3:3). Instead of looking at issues in the light of the Lordship of Christ, they fasten their loyalties on men (3:4). The apostles may not claim any loyalties because they are only ambassadors of the *κύριος*. Through them God works among His people (3:5). Even Paul himself, who was the first missionary among the Gentiles, carried out his task only because he had been commissioned by God (3:10). The work of the apostle was to lay the foundation of a Christian community though in some cases the apostles built on work begun by others. Whatever the nature of the apostle's work may be, the only true foundation for the Christian faith is Christ Himself (3:11). If anyone presumes to build on this foundation, his work must be doctrinally sound. Unsound work will be destroyed in the judgment on the Last Day (3:13). What the lasting works are, Paul suggests in part when he reminds the Corinthians that they are God's temple (3:16). They became God's temple because they accepted the Lordship of Christ in faith. God has made the Corinthians what they are by faith through the preaching of the cross. Human wisdom had no part in bringing about their all-important relationship to the *κύριος*. For this reason Paul warns the Corinthians not to deceive themselves and to fasten their

hopes on worldly wisdom (3:18). The Corinthians are not to boast of men, for they must realize that they belong to the *κύριος* (3:22).

Paul deprecates himself and Apollos by human standards so that the Corinthians might see the true position of the apostles under the *κύριος*. The highest loyalty of the apostles is due the *κύριος*. They are His servants and stewards of God's mysteries (4:1). Paul displays his humility to give the Corinthians an example so that they might learn to live as the Scripture directs (4:6). Human pride is eliminated under the recognition of the Lordship of Christ. Since the Corinthians received everything which they had from the Lord, Paul sees no cause for pride in themselves (4:7). Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him in his willingness to suffer for Christ's sake (4:16).

Paul's advice about the immoral man in the Corinthian congregation was so severe because the man had abandoned even the natural law of decency in pursuing his own interests (5:1). The purpose of ordering the excommunication of this man from the Corinthian congregation was to show him the seriousness of his action. He had to be made to see that his action was a denial of Christ as the *κύριος* in his life. By removing this man from the Christian community, Paul hoped that the immoral man would realize his separation from God and be brought back under the Lordship of Christ (5:5). Furthermore, the tolerant attitude of the rest of

the congregation shows that Paul's harsh admonition was necessary to bring the entire congregation to the realization of what it meant to have Christ as their *κύριος* (5:2,7,8).

The occasions for lawsuits by believers against their brothers in Christ provide further evidence of the Corinthians promoting their own advantage. Instead of filing suits against one another in pagan law courts, Paul urges the Corinthians to settle their differences among themselves so that they do not give the world a false picture of what the Christian life should be like (6:1). Indeed, rather than go to court, believers should suffer wrong (6:8). Paul reminds the Corinthians that the saints will judge the world (6:2). The unrighteous, however, will not inherit the Kingdom of God (6:9). The Corinthians have Christ as their Lord. They should resolve their problems among themselves as disciples of this Lord. Though the Corinthians were unrighteous in the past, they had been baptized and were sanctified and justified in the name of the *κύριος* (6:11). This relationship should have had some definite implications for the Corinthian's outlook on life. His body was not meant for immorality but for the *κύριος* (6:13). Indeed, his body was a member of Christ (6:15) and a temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19). The Corinthian believer had been united with the *κύριος* and had become one spirit with Him (6:17). Therefore, he ought to shun immorality (6:18).

In the matter of marriage relations, Paul directs the

Corinthians to regard their responsibility toward their spouses as paramount. Husbands and wives should give one another their due right (7:3). They should maintain the marriage bond intact (7:10,11) if possible, even if the spouse is not a believer (7:12,13). The ultimate goal of each person—married or unmarried, slave or free, circumcised or uncircumcised—should be to lead the life which the *κύριος* has assigned to him and in which God has called him. Paul is acutely aware as he gives this advice that all have been bought with a price (7:23). This means that the Corinthian believer has been freed from slavery to the world. Positively it means that he has been freed to serve Christ and acknowledge Him as his *κύριος*.

Paul directs the Corinthians to exercise the principle of responsibility under God also toward the weak brother. Paul and his Corinthian readers do not need to have conscience qualms at eating foods offered to idols. They know that the idols are nothing. For them there is one *κύριος*, Jesus Christ (8:6). Yet, for them to assert their personal freedom and in this way wound the weak brother would really involve sinning against Christ (8:12). Acknowledging Christ as *κύριος* should naturally result in concern for others for whom Christ died (8:13).

To give the Corinthians a concrete example of what acknowledging Christ as the *κύριος* actually meant, Paul points to himself. He asserts that he had the right, as

an apostle, to be married (9:5) and live off the material substance of those to whom he preached (9:14). Yet, Paul chose to earn his own living while he was preaching the Gospel (9:15). He became all things to all people so that he might bring some under the gracious control of the Gospel (9:22).

The Corinthian believer is also reminded that he can never be complacent in his faith. The accounts of the Old Testament which told how the Israelites were destroyed for various failures in the desert are warnings for the believer to avoid evil (10:11). Paul assures the Corinthians that no temptation will come along which they will not have the power to overcome (10:13). Yet the complacent person should take heed that he does not rely on himself lest he should fall (10:12). He should not put himself in positions of temptation such as the worship of idols (10:14). He should not feel compelled to exert his Christian liberty where it will be detrimental to his neighbor (10:24). Whatever the person does, he should do all to the glory of God (10:31). This warning to the complacent man seems to have the same meaning as Paul's advice to the Corinthians that a person should examine himself (11:28). In both cases Paul reminds the Corinthians that the possibility of condemnation still exists even for those who are called the people of God. The Corinthians must always be aware of and remind themselves that Christ is the κύριος. To live

in a loveless or thoughtless manner is to forget or deny the Lordship of Christ.

In the discussion about spiritual gifts (12:1ff.), Paul affirms that they are all varieties of the same Spirit's work (12:6). Even the confession that Jesus is the *κύριος* cannot be made without the Holy Spirit. These spiritual gifts are all to be used for the greater welfare of the Church (12:25). Though there is a variety of gifts, they are all exercised under one *κύριος*. When the Corinthians realize fully that Jesus is the *κύριος* they will recognize that these spiritual gifts are not of any significance by themselves. Agape is to direct and motivate the use of these spiritual gifts. Paul emphasizes that agape should characterize all of the Corinthian believer's life as he lives under the *κύριος*. The believer should desire spiritual gifts only as a means by which agape may work more effectively in his own life (14:1ff.).

The nature of agape would direct that order should be kept in the assembly of worship. Only in an orderly service can the edification of all take place (14:26) and the outsider in the service be converted (14:24,25). Also for the purpose of order women should maintain a subordinate position of silence in the churches (14:34).

Paul reminds the Corinthians that the Gospel of the *κύριος* is what brought them to faith. This Gospel was given to Paul by God (15:3), and its content was the news

of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ by which He became the *κύριος*. Paul reiterates that he is an apostle solely by the grace of God (15:10) and when he works hard it is really the grace of God working through him. Now, if the Corinthians believe the Gospel of the *κύριος*, this has some very definite implications for them. It means that the denial of the resurrection from the dead is impossible (15:12f.). Christ's resurrection is the proof that the believers who have died will rise (15:20). The quality of the Corinthians' daily conduct is important. In view of the certainty of the resurrection and the subsequent judgment, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to grow increasingly in doing the work of the *κύριος* (15:58). Paul assures them that in the *κύριος* their labor is not in vain. Among the acts of increased service, Paul directs them to the proper, orderly way of collecting funds for the poor in Jerusalem (16:1ff.). He concludes his epistle by anathematizing anyone who has no love for the *κύριος* and by praying that the grace of Jesus the *κύριος* might be with his readers.

Thus we see that Paul stresses throughout I Corinthians the necessity of acknowledging Christ as the *κύριος*. The problems in the Corinthian congregation were the result of not fully recognizing Christ as the *κύριος*. Failure to do so put the Corinthians in a very precarious situation. It is within this larger context that Paul discusses the Lord's Supper and the dangers of eating and drinking



unworthily. To guard against the latter, Paul directs the Corinthians to examine themselves.

Ray Beards in *J. Jour.* 21:27

We have examined the Septuagint version of 1 Cor. 11:28 and have also noticed the same phrase in the other copies of 1 Corinthians 11:28. The Septuagint has the following Greek words explained by Paul in 1 Cor. 11:28. They are *επιεσθαι*, *δοκιμασαι*, *αυτους*.

As stated in the margin of the Septuagint in Greek only "to eat or to drink which is not of that who pure." When this verb was used of persons, it meant "to try them to the trial, to test of persons who they." A secondary meaning was "to examine or examine persons" as a consequence of any trial.

The Septuagint has *επιεσθαι* in the plural form *επιεσθητε* in 1 Cor. 11:28. The words *επιεσθητε*, *δοκιμασαι*, *αυτους* have the meaning of "eat, drink, and try." They also mean "eat, drink, and try" as "to try" verb. In a similar way they are

*Septuagint* and *Septuagint*, a Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, The American Bible Society, 1907, p. 40.

*Septuagint* and *Septuagint*, a Concurrence to the Septuagint, The American Bible Society, 1907, p. 40.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EXEGESIS OF I CORINTHIANS 11:28

#### Key Words in I Cor. 11:28

We have examined the immediate context of I Cor. 11:28 and have also briefly focused attention on the wider scope of I Corinthians 1-16. We now consider the important Greek terms employed by Paul in I Cor. 11:28. They are δοκιμάζειν, ἑαυτόν, and οὕτως.

In classical Greek the meaning of δοκιμάζειν is basically "to assay or test metals to see if they were pure." When this verb was used of persons, it meant "putting them to the trial, testing or scrutinizing them." A secondary meaning was "to approve or sanction someone" as a consequence of such a trial.<sup>1</sup>

The Septuagint uses δοκιμάζειν to translate five different Hebrew words. These are  $\text{ןַבִּז}$ ,  $\text{רַבִּז}$ ,  $\text{רַבִּז}$ ,  $\text{רַבִּז}$ , and  $\text{רַבִּז}$ .<sup>2</sup> These Hebrew words have the meaning of "examine, scrutinize or try." They also mean "prove, test, or try," as "trying" gold. In a similar way they are

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<sup>1</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (Ninth edition; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 443.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1847), p. 339.

used non-metaphorically of "testing" persons.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Septuagint and classical Greek uses of δοκιμάζειν are basically the same.

In the New Testament, Luke uses the basic meaning of δοκιμάζειν where he mentions that one of those who were invited to the banquet excused himself. The man's excuse was that he had bought five yoke of oxen and wanted to "test" them regarding their usefulness (Luke 14:19).

Peter uses δοκιμάζειν in I Pet. 1:7 where he likens the faith of his hearers to gold which is "tried" by fire.

The entire background of the Greek use of δοκιμάζειν seems to indicate that Paul had in mind the idea of "testing" or "scrutinizing" when he uses the term. This "testing" or "scrutinizing" presupposes a standard or an absolute on the basis of which the person or thing can be tested. In the classical use of δοκιμάζειν, gold was "tried" with fire so that all impurities might be removed. The absolute sought was pure gold. When Luke speaks about the man who goes to "try" his newly-purchased oxen, the man evidently had a certain standard in mind which involved strength, health, submissiveness.

In I Cor. 11:28 Paul speaks about a man "examining himself." Where classical Greek used δοκιμάζειν of persons

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<sup>3</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 103 et passim.

it implied an inquiry whether these individuals measured up to certain qualifications. For example, orators were tested as to their right to speak.<sup>4</sup> In similar fashion, Paul directs the person about to partake in the Lord's Supper to examine himself. He examines himself to see if he is eating and drinking "worthily." In the previous verse, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the person who eats the bread and drinks of the cup unworthily will be guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord (I Cor. 11:27). The context shows that Paul is not so much concerned with the outward actions of people per se as he is with the spiritual failure which underlies these actions. Therefore, the examination process must not involve first of all the behavior of the believer but rather his spiritual status, motives, and attitudes. The external behavior is a symptom of more basic factors.

Paul tells the Corinthians that a man is to examine "himself"—ἐαυτόν. We cannot presume that Paul is suggesting a probing into oneself similar to the Socratic injunction γνῶθι σεαυτόν. This latter would be very anthropocentric. Paul's injunction suggests rather a Christocentric action of self-examination. That a man should examine "himself" is a New Testament concept. Grundmann maintains that it has its origin in the situation of the Christian

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<sup>4</sup>Liddell and Scott, op. cit., p. 443.

existence. The Christian existence is peculiar because of the dual certainty of attained salvation and impending judgment.<sup>5</sup> The conduct which arises is the effort of the believer who endeavors to live as a disciple of Christ his κύριος. Yet the Christian cannot rely on this conduct for his salvation. This has been accomplished by Christ and can only be accepted in faith. It is within this setting of the Christian existence that self-examination takes place.

In the Old Testament it was God primarily who did the examining, who searched the innermost thoughts and intents of men. Moses told the people that God had come to "prove" them (Ex. 20:20). God would allow false prophets to arise who would attempt to lead the Israelites into idolatry. But God would do this to "test" them so that He might know if they loved God completely (Deut. 13:2). The Psalmist prays for assurance that when the Lord "tests" his heart and mind, He will discover that the psalmist trusts completely in the Lord.

The thought that it is God who tests the hearts of men is expressed also by Paul. In I Thess. 2:4 Paul asserts that he and his companions speak not to please men but to please God who "tests their hearts." Paul is aware that God searches out the thoughts, words and actions of all men.

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<sup>5</sup>Walter Grundmann, "δόκιμος, δοκιμάζω," Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935), II, 259.

Because he is aware that his actions are under God's judgment Paul lives his life in a very purposeful way. Even for Paul the possibility of being rejected is very real. He subdues his body lest after preaching to others he himself is disqualified (I Cor. 9:27).

In I Cor. 11:28, however, it is man who is to examine himself. The reason for this self-examination is that God will not need to judge him. Paul tells the Corinthians, "If we judge ourselves (ἐαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν), we will not be judged (ἐκρινόμεθα)." If the judging of the Lord is necessary for believers it will take the form of chastisement. Paul's ultimate concern is that the Corinthians do not lose their faith and be condemned with the world.

Previously Paul had enjoined upon the Corinthians that anyone who thinks he stands should "take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). Complacency, so Paul intimates, is not good because it stresses reliance on self instead of on God. Paul tells the Corinthians that God may have to chastise them to counteract this complacency. If God's chastisement does not produce the desired result, there is the very real possibility that the Corinthians would be condemned with the world (I Cor. 11:32).

Paul wants to impress the Corinthians with the fact that self-examination is particularly important as the believer approaches the Lord's Supper. This Sacrament is a means of grace. Its benefit can only be received as the

recipient grasps in faith the promise of forgiveness offered. A Christian must recognize the centrality of Christ in his life to receive this Sacrament worthily. Paul is here intimating what he stresses throughout First Corinthians. The Corinthians must acknowledge Christ as the κύριος. This is especially true as they come to the Lord's Supper.

A person should examine himself and "so" (οὕτως) eat of the bread and drink of the cup. To take οὕτως in the sense of "in this manner" would seem to suggest a certain outward demeanor. The Corinthians met for the Lord's Supper consciously aware of divisions, perhaps outwardly displaying haughtiness and disdain. Their main concern was their own stomachs and their own enjoyment. The converse might be reflected by a person who comes to the Lord's Supper and maintains an attitude arising out of morbid introspection. Downcast features because of the consciousness of sins committed would characterize such a person. He would be in constant penitential mourning while receiving the Sacrament. The various ways in which Paul directs the reader to the seriousness of the occasion would seem to support the understanding that a person should partake of the Sacrament with penitential mourning. The fact that Paul received the account of the Lord's Supper from the Lord Himself (11:23); that he links it very closely to Christ's death (11:23-26); that unworthy eating is desecration of the

Lord's body and blood (11:27); that the judgment of God is a constant possibility (11:32), all point out the seriousness connected with the receiving of the Lord's Supper. However, to over-emphasize this aspect tends to make a somber demeanor the good work which makes man worthy to receive the Sacrament. It focuses attention on man and his penitence rather than on God and His grace.

Another possibility is to take οὕτως in the temporal sense as J. B. Phillips does. Phillips' translation reads, "A man should thoroughly examine himself, and only then should he eat the bread or drink the cup."<sup>6</sup> This translation might suggest that Paul had in mind certain prescribed acts such as formal confession when he wrote δοκιμάστω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτόν, καὶ οὕτως . . . ἐσθιέτω καὶ . . . πινέτω.

Bengel takes a position which might be interpreted in similar fashion. He asserts that eating and drinking unworthily is done not only "by those without repentance and faith, but also by those who do not examine themselves. . . ."<sup>7</sup> Bengel seems to envision examination as an external act which is necessary apart from repentance

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<sup>6</sup>J. B. Phillips, The New Testament in Modern English (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 368.

<sup>7</sup>John Albert Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament, translated by C. T. Lewis and M. R. Vincent (Philadelphia: Perkinpine & Higgins, 1862), p. 231.



and the presence of faith in order to eat and drink worthily.

Probably οὕτως is best interpreted as referring to a certain state in which a person ought to find himself. A person in whom faith exists should "eat of the bread and drink of the cup." For the believer to examine himself does not make him worthy. Rather his self-examination should remind him of what Christ has done for him. Looking at his own life reminds him that he may not approach the Lord's Supper relying on his own merit. Self-examination ought to produce repentance. Thus Paul is directing the Corinthians to eat and drink when self-examination reveals that they have faith. This faith is not merely an intellectual assent to certain truths but it is a realization that Christ is the κύριος. What the full implications of this are for self-examination is brought out as we examine how Paul uses δοκιμάζειν in other passages.

#### II Corinthians 13:5

The passage which may be most helpful in shedding light on the precise meaning of δοκιμάζειν in I Cor. 11:28 is II Cor. 13:5. Paul tells the Corinthians that they should examine themselves (ἐαυτοὺς πειράζετε) to see whether they are in the faith. He says, in the same verse, "test yourselves" (ἐαυτοὺς δοκιμάζετε). Then Paul asks them "Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?" adding almost as an afterthought, "unless indeed you fail to meet the

test." No specific context is given here for the self-examination. However, the content of the examination is explicitly given. Paul directs the Corinthians to examine themselves in regard to the presence of faith.

To be in faith is to have Jesus Christ in you. Paul uses the expression "Christ in you" a number of times to describe the man of faith. Paul uses it when he speaks to the Romans about their freedom from death through the Spirit. Paul tells them that if Christ is in them, though their bodies are dead because of sin, their spirits are alive because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10). Paul puts this in more practical terms when he asserts that the Romans are no more bound to live according to the direction of the flesh (Rom. 8:12). To become a slave once more to the flesh is to fall under the pall of death (Rom. 8:13). But with Christ in them, their spirits have a vital connection with the Spirit and they are alive because of the righteousness of faith (Rom. 1:17).

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul uses the expression "Christ in you" when he speaks about being crucified with Christ. Paul says that now that he has been crucified with Christ, it is no longer he who lives but Christ who lives in him. The life that Paul now lives according to the flesh, he lives by faith in the Son of God who gave Himself for him (Gal. 2:20).

Paul prays to God that He might strengthen his readers

at Ephesus mightily "in the inner man" and that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17).

Paul uses a number of expressions to describe the man of faith in a similar way. To indicate somewhat more fully what Paul means when he tells the Corinthians to examine themselves whether they are in the faith, it may be useful briefly to investigate some of these phrases by which Paul describes the believer. Probably the most characteristically Pauline expression is the phrase "in Christ." Paul sees the life of the believer participating by incorporation in the various acts of Christ. This participation is made possible as the believer in faith accepts God's promise of forgiveness for Christ's sake. As soon as a person receives faith by the working of the Holy Spirit, he is "in Christ." As Christ is in the believer so he is in Christ. By Baptism the believer is buried with Christ in His death and as Christ was raised from the dead so the believer walks in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). The result is that sin no longer has complete authority over the believer. He is to consider himself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11. Cf. Col. 2:12ff.). In the passage referred to above (Gal. 2:20), Paul describes himself as being crucified with Christ. The result is that Christ now lives in him.

The life principle which was Paul is dead; and Christ

has become the life principle in him. The self of Paul is dead, and in its place Christ lives in him.<sup>8</sup>

To the Ephesians, Paul says that God has made believers alive with Christ and raised them up with Him and made them sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5,6). What Paul stresses is that faith is the result of God's creative action. The man who is in Christ is a new creature (II Cor. 5:17).

The man of faith is furthermore a "son of God." Paul tells the Romans that if they by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, they will live (Rom. 8:13). The reason for this is that all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Rom. 8:14). The implication is that, as a son, the believer will not want to engage in sin. Being a son of God, the believer has a share in the kingdom, for he is an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

In summary, when Paul asks the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith (II Cor. 13:5) he is asking them to test their relation to Christ. Do they fully acknowledge Him as the *κύριος*? Are they willing to rely entirely on the grace which God gives for Christ's sake? Are they willing to empty themselves of the life principle which was the flesh and allow "Christ in

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<sup>8</sup>William Barclay, The Mind of St. Paul (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 352.

them" full reign? If a person acknowledges this relationship with Christ, which is called faith, he is "in Christ" and "Christ is in him." The believer is a "son of God" who is led by the Spirit. This will mean that he will not allow himself to become a slave to the flesh. By the nature of his existence, the man of faith fights against the tendencies within himself which could be branded as fleshly.

#### I Thessalonians 5:19-22

The value of I Thess. 5:21 for shedding light on Paul's use of δοκιμάσειν in I Cor. 11:28 depends to a large extent on what position is taken with regard to a syntactical problem. The question is whether the phrase πάντα δὲ δοκιμάσετε should be linked in thought to its preceding context or its subsequent context. The punctuation in the text is clear. However, most modern translations seem to find difficulty in maintaining the punctuation of the text in translation.

The passage under discussion stands among the concluding remarks of Paul to the Thessalonian congregation. Paul tells the Thessalonians: Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying; (but) examine everything, hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil (I Thess. 5:19-22). It is doubtful that the particle δὲ should be translated "but." The punctuation of the text

seems to preclude any comparison with the preceding phrase. Probably the  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$  is more accurately translated "and" or not translated at all. Omitting the  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$  in translation would present three rather terse statements which sum up the main points of the epistle.

Modern translations emphasize the particle  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$  and, omitting the punctuation of the text, link the  $\delta\omicron\kappa\iota\mu\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$  phrase with the preceding context. The impact of the passage would then be much like John's concern when he tells his readers to test the spirits to see whether they are of God (I John 4:1). The New English Bible brings out this Johannine emphasis very effectively in this translation of I Thess. 5:19-22.

Do not stifle inspiration, and do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test and then keep what is good in them and avoid the bad of whatever kind.<sup>9</sup>

This idea of testing the spiritual leaders to be assured of their genuineness is foreign to First Thessalonians. Paul does not discuss anything of this nature. For this reason it is strange that Paul should mention it by way of a closing farewell advice. Paul's emphasis in First Thessalonians is rather on the high respect with which the Thessalonians should regard their spiritual leaders. It is through these spiritual leaders that the Spirit and the Gospel came to

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<sup>9</sup>The New English Bible, New Testament (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 352.

them (e.g. I Thess. 1:5; 4:1-2). First Thessalonians also emphasizes that the believer should live a life of holiness since he has been called by God (e.g. I Thess. 4:1,7,9-12). Finally, Paul warns that the Thessalonians should also abstain from evil.

After thoroughly examining the content of First Thessalonians, we conclude that Paul is not referring the action of δοκιμάζειν to the content of the prophecy. Paul is rather telling the Thessalonians to examine "everything" with a view to holding fast to the "good." They are to examine themselves in the light of God's call (I Thess. 4:7). That a person has been called means that God has justified him (Rom. 8:30). God has declared him righteous for Christ's sake (Rom. 8:34). The call does not depend on man's works but on God's purpose and the grace which He gave in Christ (II Tim. 1:9). Thus, examining everything would mean first of all that the Thessalonians examine the relationship which exists between God and themselves.

It would furthermore mean that believers examine their own works to see if these works are consistent with what they are as people called of God. Though the call originates in the gracious activity of God, it is always a call to something. It is not a call to uncleanness but to holiness (I Thess. 4:7). As people who are called, believers are all sons of light and sons of the day. They are not of the night or of darkness (I Thess. 5:5). It means that God has

not destined them for wrath but to obtain salvation through Christ who died for them (I Thess. 5:9-10). So the apostle urges believers that they be sober (I Thess. 5:8). They should encourage one another and build one another up (I Thess. 5:11).

Believers are to examine the situations around them. They should look at the way other people find expression for their Christian faith in concrete action. For this reason Paul tells the believers at Thessalonica to be imitators of him and of the Lord (I Thess. 1:6). Paul is not holding himself up as a man who had attained perfection. Paul rather holds himself up as a man in whom God's grace had been particularly effective. His life displays that Christ is the *κύριος*. Because Christ Jesus was in him, Paul can remind the Thessalonians how blameless and holy and righteous his own behavior was (I Thess. 2:9). By his own example and by his works Paul exhorted and encouraged the Thessalonians that they, too, should live a life worthy of God who called them into His kingdom and glory (I Thess. 2:11-12). Thus believers are also to examine the lives of mature Christians and of Christ. By imitation of their good example believers can learn how to live in recognition that Christ is the *κύριος*.

In summary, when Paul tells the Thessalonians to examine everything and hold fast to the good, he is speaking to people with whom he has stressed God's call. They



should examine everything in the light of their call and hold fast to the good while rejecting the bad. They are to examine themselves and their relationship to the gracious God. They are to examine their own works since these are symptomatic of the condition of faith or unbelief. They are to examine the lives of Christ and mature Christians and imitate the good which they see there.

Ephesians 5:10

The general tone of this latter part of Ephesians seems adequately to be reflected in the words: "I . . . beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1). The passage in Ephesians 5 is similar to the passage in First Thessalonians above. The basic idea of the call also permeates the context of this passage. With this setting Paul calls upon the Ephesians to "examine what is pleasing to the Lord" (Eph. 5:10).

Prior to this injunction, Paul reminds the Ephesians that they are now light in the Lord, though they were once darkness (Eph. 5:8). Since they are light, the Ephesians should walk as children of light and examine what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph. 5:10). They should not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). The context contains numerous examples of the things in which the believer is to have no part. Believers are not to live as

the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds (Eph. 4:17). They should put away falsehood (4:25), shun immorality and all impurity (Eph. 5:3ff.), not get drunk with wine (Eph. 5:18).

To walk as children of light is to produce the fruit of light. The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true (Eph. 5:9). Paul gives examples of how this works out in the practical applications of the marriage relationship (Eph. 5:21ff.), in the child-parent relationship (Eph. 6:1ff.) and in the slave-master relationship (Eph. 6:5ff.). To walk as children of light is the same as saying: "Walk in love" (Eph. 5:2). The person who walks in love imitates God (Eph. 5:1).

Thus when Paul tells the Ephesians that they should examine what is pleasing to the Lord, he seems to be referring to an examination of the situations which the believer faces. Paul infers that there is always the temptation to fall back into certain practices which would not be consistent with the basic nature of the believer as "light." Paul assumes, however, that his Ephesian readers acknowledge the Lordship of Christ in their lives. Where this is true, the believer should be attempting to discern which avenues would be considered pleasing to the Lord. He should attempt to avoid those areas of conduct which would not be pleasing to the Lord.

Because the believer is simul justus et peccator, Paul's

exhortation to the Ephesians probably also directs the believers to examine the actions of their own lives and their faith-relation to God. In their own lives an examination would be necessary to help them recognize what attitudes and actions are pleasing to the Lord. Paul assumes that there would be repentance over any undesirable conduct and an attempt by the power of the Holy Spirit to correct it. Furthermore, the activity of examining what is pleasing to the Lord would involve an examination of the believer's faith-relationship. Paul's constant emphasis also in Ephesians is the fact that Christ is the *κύριος*. When the man of faith recognizes this, Christ should become the center of his entire existence. By faith he must accept the grace of the *κύριος*.

Thus, when Paul tells the Ephesians to examine what is pleasing to the Lord, he is directing them particularly to examine their conduct. They have been called by the *κύριος* and now they should lead a life worthy of this high call. To do this, potential and actual conduct must be examined whether it is pleasing to God. Indirectly Paul's injunction also directs the Ephesians to examine themselves whether they have faith, since the works of light or darkness are indicative of the presence or absence of faith.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONTENT OF SELF-EXAMINATION

This chapter is an attempt to systematize and give greater focus to the study pursued to this point. It will present, first of all, some of the presuppositions which must be taken into account so that a thoroughly Biblical, Pauline concept of self-examination is attained.

In spite of the very absolute way in which the believer is exhorted to live a Christian life, he is in the paradoxical position of being simul justus et peccator. He is at the same time saint and sinner. The result is that Paul can call the Corinthians κλητοῖς ἁγίοις (I Cor. 1:2). They are called saints in spite of the many loveless acts and mistaken notions for which Paul must reprimand them and for which he must correct them. Paul recognizes that he himself cannot perfectly follow Christ in his life. Speaking from the vantage point of the natural man he says, "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Rom. 7:18-19). On the other hand he can say about his life, "You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers" (I Thess. 2:10).

Paul resolves the dilemma which is presented when he describes his own struggle. After recounting his full qualifications as a strict Jew, Paul says,

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own based on law, but that which is in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (Phil. 3:8-9).

Of himself, man cannot have any righteousness before God. He cannot do anything in a worthy manner. The only righteousness which is of any value is that which God gives for Christ's sake. This righteousness can only be received by man through faith.

All of the ways in which man is described as a believer point to the fact that God has made him what he is. Man can only accept what God gives. One can see God's creative act in the basic condition of the believer when Paul calls him a "new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). God "calls" him and "sets him aside for holy use" (I Cor. 1:2). In Baptism the believer "is buried" with Christ in His death (Rom. 6:4). Paul asserts that God has "made us alive" with Christ and "raised us up" with Him and "made us sit" with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5,6). The believer is a "son of God" by adoption (Gal. 4:5). God has "predestined," "called," "justified" and "glorified" the believer. All of these descriptions serve to illustrate that the man of faith can only accept what God gives. Whatever he is, the believer is this by the grace of God. He is a sinner by nature but because God has declared him

righteous for Christ's sake, he is a forgiven sinner. As he approaches God, he can only do so with the hand of faith open to receive God's grace. He comes recognizing his utterly bankrupt condition before God and relying on the righteousness which has been imputed to him.

Because he relies on God's grace, however, does not mean that the believer should be unconcerned about his conduct. He does not sin the more so that God's grace might much more be apparent (Rom. 6:1). Rather, he recognizes that he has been bought with a price—the precious blood of Christ (I Cor. 6:20). Because of this, Christ is the *κύριος* in his life. To abandon himself to sin is to reject Christ's grace and choose the slavery to sin and death from which Christ has set him free (Rom. 8:2). The believer is a son of God by adoption which means that he endeavors to live by the Spirit. He is light and so he tries to produce the works of light.

The believer never succeeds fully in being in his conduct what God has made him in faith. The evidence of the flesh is always present. Thus he is driven back to God's forgiveness again and again. Where he succeeds in living as a believer, he must acknowledge that this is Christ in him. It is the Spirit working within him, guiding him and directing him. This struggle of the new man born of God, struggling against the forces of sin even in man's own body, is a daily battle. Daily the man of faith must use his

Baptismal grace. Daily he lives by the grace of God.

Within this setting of the Christian life Paul tells the believer to examine himself and so eat the bread and drink the cup (I Cor. 11:28). The concrete life situation of attending the Lord's Supper is the context in which this exhortation stands. Behind it is set the background of judgment.

From the context of the passage itself, the nature of the examination seems to be to lead a man to discover whether or not he eats and drinks worthily.

Since a man can claim no righteousness before God except that which he receives from God, the content of self-examination appears to be whether a person has faith. Paul does not specifically speak about eating and drinking worthily. It is only the unworthy eating and drinking against which he warns. The implication, however, is very definitely present in the  $\acute{\omicron}\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omega\varsigma$  — "and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." The communicant is warned not to eat and drink unworthily. Therefore, when he is told to eat and drink, this must mean that it is done in a situation in which he is considered to eat and drink worthily. This latter can only be done in faith.

If this is the case then the passage in II Cor. 13:5 could be used very specifically to illuminate the content of self-examination. In II Cor. 13:5, Paul tells these same Corinthians, "examine yourselves to see whether you are in

the faith." Examining oneself regarding faith could be a rather empty, fruitless venture if a person intellectualized it. Philosophers could speculate to considerable length on it. However, Paul was a Pharisee by educational background. Faith to him as to any Jew would be the accepting of God's covenant of grace and the obedience to the Will of God. It would imply an emptying of man's own sufficiencies and the opening of his heart and self to what God wills to supply.

For Paul, faith could not be conceived of as an abstract reality. It must always flow out in man's life. Man's conduct is the outward, visible manifestation of his faith. Truly, Paul emphasizes that man is justified before God by faith without the works of the law. The works of the law do not merit justification or God's favorable inclination. Yet Paul would agree with James that faith without works is dead. Faith without its natural fruit of works can hardly be called faith at all. In a similar fashion, evil works can destroy faith, or show lack of it. Thus we have the situation where the conduct of individuals becomes a type of barometer to indicate the conditions which exist within the person. Good or bad works may be indicative of the presence or absence of faith.

When Paul talks about a person being "in Christ" or having "Christ in him," this is a very real situation in which man becomes a *δοῦλος* of Christ and Christ becomes his *κύριος*. The relationship is very intimate and very



inclusive. It involves accepting Christ completely and relying on His grace. Yet this is not a mystical experience which a person reaches in ecstasy or in deep contemplation. It is a very real experience which affects the believer's whole life. Thus Paul would be very much concerned that works of love are evident to show the presence of faith. He would be very much concerned where un-Christian actions, especially those wilfully done, exhibit themselves in the professing believer's life. For the man of faith, since he accepts Christ as the *κύριος*, should fight against the fleshly tendencies in his life.

Thus Paul primarily directs the believer to examine himself in regard to his faith. Unconcern about one's faith easily leads to complacency. A complacent person tends to forget that Christ is the *κύριος* and to rely on himself. To such a person Paul gives the warning that he who thinks he stands should take heed lest he falls. Examining himself regarding his faith would remind a person of the grace of God and the forgiveness of Christ. On this basis alone he can stand confidently in view of the imminent judgment. Examining himself regarding his faith would also assure the believer that he can eat the bread and drink the cup without desecrating the body and blood of Christ. The fact that the believer has faith assures him that he does not eat and drink unworthily. He is not gathering with others to be condemned but to receive the full benefit of the Lord's

Supper.

Present day Lutherans who have written about self-examination, have generally stressed that an important part of its content was intellectual assent to the real presence. Thus Mueller writes,

Before partaking of Holy Communion, a Christian should examine himself not only with regard to his Christianity in general, whether he truly acknowledges and repents of his sins and believes in his divine Savior, who died for him, but as to whether his attitude is right, in other words, whether he truly and fully believes that Christ in this most holy Supper offers him His true body and blood for the remission of his sins.<sup>1</sup>

This accent is correct and necessary today. It is doubtful, however, whether Paul had in mind this aspect of his situation when he wrote to the Corinthians.

More recently, Lutherans have become more conscious of the Pauline meaning of  $\epsilon\omega\nu\alpha$  as the Church. Thus a difficulty has arisen in regard to the interpretation of "not discerning the  $\epsilon\omega\nu\alpha$ " in I Cor. 11:29. This difficulty has led a writer to the following conclusion about the content of self-examination:

The communicant must test himself as to his evaluation of the food received in the sacrament—that he is receiving the body and blood of the Lord. And secondly, he must test himself respecting his relationship to the members of the Body of Christ, the Church, for the communicants are all united into one body by their common sharing in the body of Christ given into death for them and the blood shed for the remission of their

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<sup>1</sup>John Th. Mueller, The Church at Corinth (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928), p. 117.

sins (I Cor. 10:16-17).<sup>2</sup>

Though these two emphases are proper ones, they are both an outgrowth of faith. Faith is essential for partaking worthily of the Lord's Supper. For this reason, the main content of self-examination must be whether a person has faith.

Yet, though the main content of self-examination is faith, Paul could never have thought of it apart from the fruits of faith. Man's conduct, too, must come under examination. This is not to say that a believer's works earn God's favor or make possible worthy participation in the Sacrament. Yet as barometers of the faith within, works must also come under the scrutiny of self-examination. With works viewed only as fruits of man's spiritual condition, a self-examination of conduct would not become a preoccupation with self or a morbid introspection. The failures in Christian living would drive a person back to the assurance of God's forgiveness and a reliance on His grace. The spiritual successes would make a man rejoice that God works in the lives of His people. Always there would be the resolve of the forgiven man of faith to pursue the way of the Lord.

As the man of faith is in the world, however, he must

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<sup>2</sup>Albert H. Buelow, "The Eschatological Elements of the Lord's Supper," (unpublished Master of Sacred Theology thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., 1961), p. 43.

face various situations. It is necessary for him to live his life of faith at the time and in the setting in which he has been placed by God. Guided by the Spirit, he must examine the situations which confront him. Some situations can be entered into with the assurance that they will serve to glorify God. Others must be avoided and condemned as the works of darkness. Where Paul tells his readers to examine all things and hold fast to the good, he may well be including the various situations which the believer faces as he lives in the world. A similar meaning may be inferred when Paul tells his readers in the Ephesian congregation to examine what is 'pleasing to the Lord. Paul may also include in this examination the observing of the lives of mature believers. The purpose of this would be to discover a pattern of Christian living which could be imitated to the extent that this would help less mature Christians grow in Christ.

To be sure, the examination of situations which a man of faith faces is not going to be practical in the self-examination which Paul enjoins in I Cor. 11:28. There the self-examination is specifically placed in the context of the Lord's Supper. Neither will examining the lives of mature Christians as examples to follow be completely practical in that context. However, the fact that the Lord's Supper is the one explicit context in which self-examination is enjoined, does not mean that it must be

confined to the Sacrament. The life of the Christian as he lives under Christ the *κύριος* demands that self-examination be a frequent experience for the believer. Though the examination of situations which the believer faces and of God's activity in other people may not seem to be related to self-examination, it must be taken into account. For as the man of faith examines himself and his existence under God's grace, the examination of these external situations will be necessary. As he struggles to see God's will for him at a certain time and place, the believer must examine the external situations in the light of his own existence under the *κύριος*. Whether he can allow these circumstances and examples of other people to become factors in his own life must be determined by his examination.

Very specifically, however, in regard to self-examination in the context of the Lord's Supper, the communicant should examine himself primarily whether he is in the faith. He should examine himself whether he recognizes Christ as *κύριος*. As symptoms of faith or unbelief, a person's own conduct should be examined.

A valid question would be directed to the criterion by which works could be examined so that people might understand their negative or positive implications. Simply to say that those works which are Spirit-directed favorably indicate faith does not clarify the issue.

One would imagine that Paul, as a former Pharisee,

would operate in a matter of this nature on the basis of some concrete principle or rule. One might assume that Paul may have had the Decalogue in mind as the basic revelation of God's will for men. This does not say that he would advocate slavish adherence to the letter of the Ten Commandments. To advocate keeping the Ten Commandments legalistically, would suggest that they would merit salvation. Paul would readily admit that strict adherence to the Decalogue would be impossible. However, Paul might have indicated that the Decalogue could serve as a guide or rule of God's will for God's people as they live under grace.

Where the Decalogue is rejected as a guide for the life of the believer, the only other alternative is agape. Agape is the unselfish love which God displayed in sending His Son into the world for sinners. Paul uses the term also, however, for the love which the Christian shows to his neighbor. Paul does not conceive of the believer as a center of activity independent of God. In the life that is governed by agape, the motivating force is not within man himself but Christ in the believer. Thus Paul's entire religion and ethics are theocentric. On the other hand, agape spells judgment on the life that centers around the ego and its interests.<sup>3</sup> Gal. 5:19-23 seems to support this view about Paul using

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<sup>3</sup>Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, translated by Philip S. Watson, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 129-130.

agape as the criterion for self-examination. For Paul the works of flesh which he mentions specifically are all the result of self-love and its interests. On the other hand, the fruits of the Spirit are very much agape-directed.

Furthermore, the agape criterion would fit very well into the scheme for self-examination if the main content of examination is assumed to pertain to faith. For the primacy of faith as the content of self-examination assumes that great importance is placed on the relationship which exists between the man of faith and the loving, gracious God. With agape as the criterion of self-examination pertaining to conduct, this same relationship is stressed. Conduct will have agape content only to the extent that this relationship exists. On the other hand, agape and self-love are so easily merged in varying degrees that the value of agape as a standard is questionable. Perhaps Paul had agape in mind, but agape, too, must receive its content from the directives of the second table of the Decalogue if it is to escape subjectivity.

## CHAPTER V

### SELF-EXAMINATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

#### The Early Church

Though I Cor. 11:28 is not quoted to support the practice of the early church regarding confession, we can assume that this passage taken together with Matt. 5:23-24 was the starting point. The possibility of being an unworthy communicant was an object of real concern. The Didache (chapter XIV) prescribes,

On the Day of the Lord come together, break bread and hold Eucharist after confessing your transgressions that your offerings may be pure; but let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until he be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled.<sup>1</sup>

We can probably assume that self-examination was regarded to be necessary for the individual so that he might know where he had sinned and thus be able to confess his transgressions. The nature of his "self-examination" would, of necessity, be a probing into his life regarding his sins. Thus we see that already at this early age the Church was preoccupied with individual sins committed. Confession of sins seems to have taken on a position of importance in the process of offering a pure sacrifice of praise. An unresolved fracture of relations with a fellowman was reason

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<sup>1</sup>Paul E. Kretzmann, "The Eucharist between 30 and 325 A.D.," Concordia Theological Monthly, I (March, 1930), 172.



enough to exclude someone from the worship gathering. God's forgiveness for sins is not mentioned. The importance of appropriating God's forgiveness by faith is not mentioned. The fact that faith is the necessary factor for participating in the Sacrament worthily is apparently not recognized.

From its inception the Church was faced with the problem of what to do with its members who sinned. A fundamental misunderstanding of grace and forgiveness seemed to have crept in very early. Grace and forgiveness was something given by God and accepted by men at Baptism. Baptism was viewed as the beginning of the believer's life in Christ. Baptism washed away only those offenses which were committed before it was administered. Theoretically, after Baptism a person was supposed to walk worthy of his divine calling. In actual fact this did not happen. So a question arose regarding the forgiveness of sins after Baptism. Which acts were considered lesser sins and had only to be confessed before partaking of the Eucharist, and which were serious enough to sever connections with the Church, we can only guess.

During the persecutions many Christians denied the faith. Thus, after the persecutions ceased and the multitudes poured into the Church this problem regarding forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism became serious. If any custom of self-examination was in use, the privilege of its use was reserved for those who had maintained the faith

against great odds. It was certainly not recommended by the Church to be used by those who had defected.

Apparently the policy of the Church against those who had denied the faith was based on Heb. 6:4-8. In Heb. 4:6-8 no opportunity of repentance was seemingly given to those who had been Baptized and then committed sin. But in accordance with an alleged special revelation, Hermas proclaimed the possibility of a second repentance.

all the sins which they have formerly committed shall be forgiven to all the saints who have sinned up to this day, if they repent with their whole heart and put aside double mindedness from their heart . . . if there be still sin after this day has been fixed, they shall find no salvation; for repentance for the just has an end. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Because of the authority of the Shepherd of Hermas, the idea of a second repentance secured general acceptance. Yet, though this view seems to reflect Paul's concern for self-examination and repentance, it is just as legalistic toward sins committed after the second repentance as the Church's former position. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-213) explains the Church's stand against allowing successive repenting. He maintained that if Christians were allowed continual and successive repentings for sins, they would not differ from those who had never been Christians.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Hermas, "The Shepherd," Vix. II. ii. 4-5, quoted in J. Stevenson, ed., A New Eusebius (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 215.

This seems very different from Paul's position where the number of times which a person could repent and in faith accept God's forgiveness is not even suggested.

The situation which emerged by the end of the second century was that a discrimination was made among different types of sins. Daily sins might find forgiveness at once through the mediation of Christ, through prayer, good works, and intercession. By these means the sinner could offer sufficient satisfaction to the offended God. Self-examination, forgiveness for sins committed, and coming before the Lord with the confidence of faith have disappeared. Merit by works had taken their place.

Other sins were more serious and destructive and merited removal from the Christian community. Sinners in this latter group were granted the second repentance only if they felt bitter regret. They had to manifest this by their outward manner of life. They had to request intercession in their behalf and they had to make the required confession in the presence of the assembled congregation.<sup>4</sup> Here one sees the beginning of the distinction between venial and mortal sins.

Tertullian (ca. 150-225) formulated the doctrine of repentance as it existed at that time. He declares that if

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<sup>4</sup>Reinhold Seeberg, Text-book of the History of Doctrines, translated by Charles E. Hay (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), I, 175.

we sin we offend God. Satisfaction must now be rendered in view of the wrath of God. This is done by repentance which consists of heartfelt sorrow (paenitere ex animo) and confession (confessio). In this fashion the sinner earns forgiveness for himself. By punishing himself temporally, man frees himself from eternal punishment.<sup>5</sup> Even though the doctrine has been made a doctrine of forgiveness through works, perhaps a semblance of Paul's self-examination is still seen in this doctrine of repentance over more serious sins. Examination would result in sorrow over sins and confession (to God, at least). Apart from these two aspects, however, all traces of Paul's doctrine are gone.

Origen in speaking about the treatment of lapsed Christians says:

But Christians mourn as dead men those who have been overcome by licentiousness or some outrageous sin because they have perished and died to God. They admit them some time later as though they had risen from the dead provided that they show a real conversion, though their period of probation is longer than that required of those who are joining the community for the first time.<sup>6</sup>

The general feeling in the early church was that some sins were absolutely excluded from this second repentance. Those usually included in this category were the worship of idols, murder, fornication, and adultery. However, by the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup>Origen, "Against Celsus," III, 51 quoted in Stevenson, op. cit., p. 225.

publication of a new penitential order, Callistus, Bishop of Rome (217-222) publicly sanctioned and established a milder practice which allowed a second repentance for fornication and adultery. He defended his innovation with Biblical arguments. His argument was that the aim of repentance is forgiveness. Fellowship may be withdrawn from the sinner but only until he repents.<sup>7</sup>

By 250 A. D. this position of Callistus had gained universal acceptance. The circumstances of the congregations during the persecutions under Decius (249-260) produced a further and logically consistent step ahead. Even those who had denied the Christian faith could return to the Church via repentance. This was chiefly justified by Cyprian (ca. 200-258) as reflected in De lapsis and De Catholicae ecclesiae unitate.<sup>8</sup> The development of the doctrine of repentance took place in connection with the development of the hierarchy. It should be noted that the regulation of repentance at the time of these innovations was affirmed to belong to the council of bishops on the basis of the power of the keys.<sup>9</sup>

Augustine (354-430) presents his view of repentance in

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<sup>7</sup>Seeberg, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>9</sup>J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1943), I, 77.

his Enchiridion. It is merely a continuation of the teaching of the ancient Church. If one includes the repentance before Baptism, the Western Church at the time of Augustine recognized three kinds of repentance. They are repentance for sins committed before Baptism, the daily repentance for the lighter daily sins, and repentance in the proper sense over grave sins for which the person was excluded from the Holy Communion. The first type of repentance was closely connected with Baptism. The second could occur through daily use of the Lord's Prayer and through alms and fasting. The third involved confession to the bishop who assigned appropriate "satisfaction." If the particular sin was public knowledge, he directed the sinner to repeat the confession before the Church.<sup>10</sup> Used effectively to increase and maintain the power of the hierarchy, this latter type of repentance became the most important sacrament for the baptized person. Theoretically it should have been used to stress the importance of the Holy Communion. Actually it became important as a distinct act for itself.

#### The Rise of Private Repentance

Gregory the Great, who was the pope of the Western Church from 590-604, depicts the course of the Christian

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<sup>10</sup>Seeberg, op. cit., p. 364.

life and finds it "interrupted" by many sins. God is offended by these, so man must abstain even from some things not unlawful. By so doing, he makes satisfaction with the result that his sin is forgiven. This is repentance. It involves, first of all, compunctio or contritio. This could be effected either through fear of deserved punishment or through love as the sinner longs for heaven. Secret sins in the thoughts are washed away by the sinner's tears of penitence and his good works. In the case of public repentance, however, there follows a public confession of sins. When repentance is effected, absolution is granted. But the pastor also lays a penalty on those who must publicly confess their guilt. This is the satisfactio which the sinner renders to God. Thus the sinner receives forgiveness from God, who takes the offering for the offense. Gregory sums up the doctrine of repentance:

For there are three things to be considered in everyone penitent, i.e., the change of the mind, the confession of the mouth, and the punishment of the sin.<sup>11</sup>

Public repentance around the beginning of the ninth century became limited to those sins which were done in public. So it was only gross actual sins which were regarded as demanding public repentance.<sup>12</sup>

The custom of private repentance arose about this time.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., II, 24, quoting Gregory, I reg. vi. 2.33.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

It originated in Ireland and England as a form of cloister discipline. It was introduced into the Frankish empire around 700 A.D. and from there spread to other countries. At first, as the Council of Chalons in 813 shows, the practice was only urgently recommended. However, as private repentance became more widely used, it was made a positive requirement of the church and replaced public repentance. Penitential books gave directions to the clergy for questioning the wrongdoer about his sins and for determining the appropriate works of satisfaction.<sup>13</sup>

Private repentance forced the sinner to examine his entire life in search of his sins. Yet this was far from the type of self-examination which Paul advocated. Here was a preoccupation with man and his sins. The sinner had to look for, recognize, and mourn as sins not only gross outward offences but also the inner evil desires. It was necessary to confess to the priest not only mortal sins but every sin by which God was offended. Venial as well as mortal sins were included. Venial sins were considered to be absolved by the use of the Lord's Prayer. Mortal sins were considered to be absolved through the fruits of repentance. Yet it was necessary to make satisfaction which consisted in sorrow of the heart, confession before the priest, and the performance of appointed works of penance.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



The person who did this was regarded as worthy of God's mercy since he had rendered satisfaction to His righteousness. In reality reconciliation was held to occur only after the performance of the works of penance. But in order that penitents would not be driven to despair, the Church usually admitted them to prayer fellowship or even full fellowship before the expiration of the penitential period. It was assumed that the required penances would be performed subsequently, for the sinner was not pardoned alone through his confession. The effect which sorrow for sin and confession to the priest actually had was to change mortal sins into venial sins. Thus they were no longer subject to the punishments of hell. Yet, if no fruits of repentance were brought forth, the sinner would have to endure purgatory.<sup>14</sup>

It became the custom very early to substitute other good works, especially the payment of money, for the required acts of penance. The reconciliation of the sinner became more and more dependent solely on penitential sorrow and confession. In the concept of repentance, the forgiveness of sins became associated with a penitential frame of mind and confession, while the works of satisfaction were associated with deliverance from purgatory. When this became prevalent, repentance became a sacrament in the strict sense. Now the theory of opus operatum was applied

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 43-44.

to it as to the rest of religion which had by the time of the early Middle Ages become completely externalized.<sup>15</sup>

### The Scholastic Period

During the scholastic period, the great men of the period waged the intellectual battle over when, in the doctrine of repentance, forgiveness was actually granted. Abelard (1078-1142) and his school taught that true repentance consists in contrition of the heart. When this exists, God grants forgiveness of sins. Confession will usually follow contrition immediately, though it is not a condition required for the forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness had reference only to the eternal punishments of sins. The penalty of satisfaction, which included confession, was necessary to release the sinner from all temporal punishment of sin either in this life or in purgatory. The difficulty which Abelard's position raises is that absolution seems to be robbed of its chief significance. The priest becomes merely a counselor regarding works of satisfaction for temporal penalties.<sup>16</sup>

Hugo of St. Victor (ca. 1097-1141) represented the position of hierarchical orthodoxy. In his view of repentance, contrition is presupposed and forgiveness is actually

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 45-47.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

secured only through confession and satisfaction. Absolution by the priest follows confession but is granted in view of the satisfaction imposed in connection with the former.<sup>17</sup>

Robert Pullus (d. 1150), noted for his writing on repentance, locates the essence of the sacrament in absolution and confession. The priestly absolution is the announcement of forgiveness which God, on the ground of penitence, grants to the sinner. If, after absolution, penitential works are not rendered, they will be completed by penalties suffered in purgatory.

It was Peter Lombard (d. 1164) who assured absolution, by virtue of its close connection with confession, a secure place in the sacrament. For him forgiveness presupposed only contrition and confession before God. Confession was followed by absolution. The necessity of confessing to the priest was already a kind of punishment for sins. The priests decided whether, in the view of the church, the sinner is regarded as released. They further bound and loosed by imposing and mitigating satisfaction. When purification by the rendering of the required satisfaction had taken place, they admitted the sinner to the sacrament.<sup>18</sup> If Peter Lombard had been able to view the doctrine of repentance from the viewpoint of divine grace rather than

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

divine justice, his doctrine would have been quite close to that of St. Paul. Contrition and confession take place before God. These, in Peter Lombard's view, earn forgiveness. For Paul, faith accepts the forgiveness which God gives for Christ's sake.

By the end of the twelfth century, repentance was regarded as the chief sacrament with indulgences being largely substituted for the actual performance of works of satisfaction. Public repentance for public offences, theoretically still maintained, was abandoned entirely in many places. At the Fourth Lateran Council (1215 A.D.), Innocent III established the following rule:

Let every believer of either sex, after arriving at the age of discretion, faithfully confess all his sins alone at least once a year to his own priest, and endeavor with all his strength to observe the penance enjoined upon him, receiving at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist. . . . Let the priest be discreet and cautious . . . inquiring diligently as to the circumstances of both the sinner and the sin, from which he may prudently judge what counsel he ought to give to him and what kind of remedy he ought to impose.<sup>19</sup>

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) introduced the idea of attritio into the doctrine of repentance. The person who has fallen into a mortal sin cannot produce contrition in himself. Thus attrition, a purely human inclination toward the reception of grace, is enough. It does not fully merit the forgiveness of sins and so room is left for confession

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<sup>19</sup>Quoted ibid., p. 93.

and absolution. Confession is made before the priest who alone has authority over the means of grace, and the absolution which follows brings God's forgiveness. It brings divine forgiveness by effecting at the same time abolition of the mortal sin by an infusion of grace. This gratia infusa effects the forgiveness of the liability of eternal punishment as well as something of the temporal punishment.

Duns Scotus (1265-1308) has basically the same position. Since absolution infuses grace, it creates love and in this way transforms attritio into contritio. Basically we can say that absolution transforms eternal into temporal penalty and in this way it forgives eternal penalty. Gabriel Biel (d. 1495) held the same general view as Thomas and Scotus.<sup>20</sup>

In summary, it can be seen that in the doctrine of repentance the emphasis was first laid on satisfaction. Later contrition was stressed and then confession. From Thomas on, attrition was introduced to emphasize confession and absolution. A new question arose. If absolution brings grace, what then is the need of subsequent works and of indulgences?

#### Rejection of the Theory of Indulgences

The system of repentance became very externalized

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 136-138.

especially when indulgences were introduced to take the place of works of satisfaction. This the Church herself promoted. However, there were voices emphasizing the seriousness of repentance and its works. These were the German mystics—Master Eckhardt (1260-1327), Johann Tauler (ca. 1300-1361) and others. Rather than these specific works of satisfaction, the German mystics stressed the pious life. They maintained that the sacrament and the Word of God exerted an influence in turning the person from himself to God. Repentance and the Lord's Supper are reinforced in this by prayer and contemplation of God's love. The result is a life of continuous and earnest self-examination and penitence.<sup>21</sup> The emphasis of the mystics seems to have been very Pauline. Undoubtedly this came from a study of the Scriptures and a devotional use of the Lord's Supper. It is difficult to know what their self-examination consisted in. However, their emphasis on God and His grace could indicate that they recaptured Paul's understanding of self-examination.

It does not appear that the mystics attacked the system of repentance directly. However, the pre-reformers such as John Wycliffe (1320-1384), John Hus (1369-1415) and others attacked very directly the theory of indulgences.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>22</sup>Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 43.

Undoubtedly it was the abuses which resulted when indulgences took the place of actual penance that prompted these attacks. However, these seemed to have led the pre-reformers as well as Luther to reject completely the theory of specific works of satisfaction for certain sins committed.

Without a doubt it was the sale of indulgences by Tetzel and the effects which these sales had on the common people that prompted Luther to post the ninety-five theses in 1517. That these were posted only for theological discussion and not to arouse the public is seen by the fact that they were written in Latin. Yet in sermons in 1516 Luther questioned the efficacy of indulgences and declared that the pope had no power to release souls from purgatory.<sup>23</sup> The question of indulgences proved to be the trigger for the chain of events which finally led to a break with Rome.

It was the doctrine of repentance and the teaching of work-righteousness which caused Luther's spiritual struggles. In the ninety-five theses Luther reflected his own religious experience to a large extent. He distinguished between repentance which was the attitude of the contrite sinner and penance which was the formal sacramental act. He asserted that the sinner who is truly penitent will not attempt to escape punishment by indulgences but accept it in humility

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<sup>23</sup>Latourette, op. cit., p. 708.

and faith. Contrition, the most important part of the sacrament of penance, resulted in forgiveness without indulgence.<sup>24</sup> In Luther's view, contrition sprang from meditation upon the blessings conferred by God and upon man's ingratitude as revealed by his sins. Yet neither the completeness of this contrition nor the confession following it gives certainty of forgiveness. This comes only through faith. By stressing the place of faith in the doctrine of repentance, Luther made possible again a truly Pauline understanding of self-examination. The true satisfaction according to Luther is a service of the whole Christian life. Thus Luther replaced the sacrament of repentance with the concept of faith and justification as the center of the Christian life.<sup>25</sup> Basically faith produces and maintains contrition which is experienced daily through the whole of life. This type of repentance, motivated by the Gospel, produces the positive desire to perform good works.

Luther maintains that we are under obligation to confess our sins only to God, though he commended the practice of voluntary private confession. Absolution is effectual only as far as the person receiving it believes the divine promise. Everything depends on faith in the institution of

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<sup>24</sup>Grimm, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>25</sup>Seeberg, op. cit., p. 234f.



absolution by Christ.<sup>26</sup>

For Calvin, repentance is conversion and regeneration extending through the whole life of the believer. It consists in anguish of the soul in view of recognized sin together with the crucifying of the old man and the effort to live a holy and pious life. Both penitence and the new moral striving come from fellowship with Christ. The new life is possessed only in a constant conflict of self-preservation. The goal of perfect sonship cannot be reached in this life. Yet believers have a duty to strive earnestly to advance upon the road which leads to it and in this way, in obedience to God's will, to promote the glory of Christ.<sup>27</sup> Thus with Calvin, self-examination would extend only to man's sin with the view to moral improvement. The result is still an emphasis on man rather than the grace of God. Though the externalized form of the Roman Church had been discarded, the doctrine remained anthropocentric. This is quite different from Luther's view where self-examination would be basically theocentric and Christocentric.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 402-403.

## CHAPTER VI

### SELF-EXAMINATION IN THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION

#### The Lutheran Symbols

The Lutheran Reformation, with its Pauline emphasis on justification by faith without the works of the law, once more made possible a truly Pauline understanding of self-examination. This is reflected in what the Lutheran symbols say about repentance and confession.

Basically the Word of God confronts man with the Law and the Gospel. The result is that man's response, if he does not reject God, is contrition and faith. The Lutheran symbols call this dual response repentance.

Nun ist wahre rechte Buss eigentlich nichts anderes  
dann Reue und Leid oder Schrecken haben über die  
Sünde und doch daneben glauben an das Evangelium und  
Absolution, das die Sünde vergeben und durch Christum  
Gnad erworben sei. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Justus Jonas, in translating the Apology into German, distinguishes between these two responses as he inserts a further explanation to Melanchthon's original version. He is expounding on the basis of Rom. 6.

Das wir der Sunden gestorben sein, das geschieht durch

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<sup>1</sup>Die Augsburgische Konfession, XII, 3-5. All German quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this chapter are based on Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (2. verbesserte Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952). From here on they will be identified only by reference to the particular writing from which they have been taken.

Reue und Schrecken, und wiederum sollen wir mit Christo auferstehen, das geschieht, so wir durch Glauben wiederum Trost und Leben erlangen.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, as the Word of God confronts the believer, self-examination will be a natural result. Only the complacent man or the unbeliever could do otherwise. Under God's Word the man of faith must react, after self-examination, in this two-fold manner of contrition and faith. The complacent man or the unbeliever does not take the Word of God seriously. He would feel no need for self-examination nor for contrition.

This self-examination is an action undertaken under the Law. Luther directs, "Da siehe Deinen Stand an nach den zehen Geboten."<sup>3</sup> Self-examination is not an abstract, mystical action. Contrition which results from self-examination is sorrow over concrete sins committed. Yet the great concern is not primarily for individual "sins." Contrition is not restricted to concrete thoughts, words and actions. For concrete sins show man not only that he is committing "sins" but also and primarily that he is a "sinner." This is why there is not the great concern over recalling every sinful act which a person has committed. There is not the morbid introspection so characteristic of the doctrine of repentance in the early church. Luther can say,

Fur Gott soll man aller Sunden sich schuld geben, auch

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<sup>2</sup>Apologia der Konfession, XII, 46.

<sup>3</sup>Der Kleine Katechismus, V, 20.

die wir nicht erkennen, wie wir im Vaterunser tun. Aber für den Beichtiger sollen wir allein die Sünden bekennen, die wir wissen und fühlen im Herzen.<sup>4</sup>

Forgotten sins are confessed in a general way before God.

Genuine contrition is of this nature:

denn sie [die Busse] disputiert nicht, welches Werk Sünde oder nicht Sünde sei, sondern stösst alles in Haufen, spricht es sei alles und eitel Sünde mit uns.<sup>5</sup>

Faith, on the other hand, clings completely to the Gospel. It is the affirmative response to the question of the confessor, "Do you believe that the forgiveness I declare is the forgiveness of God?"<sup>6</sup> The sinner receives forgiveness only because of Christ's merit.

Allbeck reflects the relationship between contrition and faith in repentance in the Lutheran Confessions in this way:

In the strictest and narrowest sense, repentance is contrition, a conscientious distress over sin. But in a broader sense, the second aspect must be included, viz., faith. Evangelical doctrine must give prominence to the Gospel. The turning away from sin must be matched with a turning to God. The terrors of conscience must be relieved by the consolation of God's grace. Absolution is the announcement that for Christ's sake sins are forgiven.

It is faith, therefore, which is the chief feature of the repentant life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., V, 18.

<sup>5</sup>Schmalkaldische Artikel, III, iii, 36.

<sup>6</sup>Small Catechism, V, 27, translated by T. G. Tappert in The Book of Concord (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 351.

<sup>7</sup>Willard D. Allbeck, Studies in the Lutheran Confessions (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), p. 93.

It is just in this respect that self-examination plays a part. The distress over sin will result from self-examination but it must always have the positive thrust of throwing man on the mercy of God. By His grace the man of faith lives as a forgiven sinner.

Schlink compares the relationship of contrition and faith in repentance to that of Law and Gospel in the Word of God.

In repentance, then, contrition and faith must be carefully differentiated. Their unity is as little subject to logical comprehension as is the distinction between law and Gospel. They indeed have their unity in the activity of the one Holy Spirit in one and the same human being. But the "how" of this unity is beyond analysis. The look at the law and the look at the Gospel, the despair of contrition and the confidence of faith, the antithesis of terror and peace are joined in the act of repentance, not indeed as a result of contrition and faith but as simultaneous experiences.<sup>8</sup>

The place which repentance, interrelated with self-examination, will have in the life of the believer is important. It is the daily experience of the Baptism which was experienced at the believer's entrance into God's family.

also dass ein christlich Leben nichts anders is denn eine tägliche Taufe, einmal angefangen und immer darin gegangen. Denn es muss ohn Unterlass also getan sein, das man immer ausfege, was des alten Adams ist, und erfürkomme, was zum neuen gehöret.<sup>9</sup>

Because of the Gospel which is clasped in faith during

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<sup>8</sup>Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated by P. F. Koehneke and H. J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 143.

<sup>9</sup>Der Grosse Katechismus, IV, 65.

repentance, the act of repentance will also produce good works. Though good works do not earn forgiveness as a part of repentance, they will be a natural outgrowth. "Darnach soll auch Besserung folgen, und dass man von Sünden lasse; dann dies sollen die Fruchte der Buss sein. . . ."10

Confession was maintained as a practice by the Lutherans. The nature of it was changed considerably, however. The emphasis was on the absolution rather than on confession.

Von der Beicht wird also gelehrt, dass man in der Kirchen privatam absolutionem erhalten und nicht fallen lassen soll, wiewohl in der Beicht nicht not ist, alle Missetat und Sunden zu erzählen, dieweil doch solches nicht möglich ist. . . .11

The Roman Catholic Church had directed attention in a legalistic way to sins and offences against regulations by their doctrine of repentance. Gospel doctrine focused attention upon the mercy of God to be accepted by faith. Regarding the use of the sacraments the Lutherans asserted,

dass die Sakrament eingesetzt sind nicht allein darum, dass sie Zeichen seien, dabei man äusserlich die Christen kennen muge, sondern das es Zeichen und Zeugnis seien gottlichs Willens gegen uns, unseren Glauben dadurch zu erwecken und zu stärken, derhalben sie auch Glauben fordern und dann recht gebraucht werden, so man's im Glauben empfähet und den Glauben dadurch stärket.12

The Lutheran interest was not so much in acknowledging sins

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<sup>10</sup>Die Augsburgerische Konfession, XII, 6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., XI, 1-2.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., XIII, 1-2.

as in declaring God's grace. So also in self-examination it was not so much in contemplating one's sins as it was in directing attention to God's grace. The Lutherans turned the gaze of the believer to Christ and the cross. For this reason confession was not absolutely necessary for attendance at the Lord's Supper. To stress this Luther once gave the startling advice to go to communion without making confession.<sup>13</sup> The important thing was that the believer had examined himself and, confident of his faith, was attending the Lord's Supper worthily. Confession served as a reminder that man cannot come to God relying on himself. Furthermore, it gave the believer the opportunity to hear the proclamation of the Lord that his sins are forgiven.

Because of the concern that no one should take of the Sacrament unworthily, the Lutherans retained confession for all who wished to attend the Lord's Supper. In general the practice was retained of not administering the Sacrament to those who had not previously been examined and absolved.

Yet, confession did not make a man worthy or well prepared to partake of the Sacrament. It was faith which did this.

Wer empfähet denn solch Sacrament würdiglich? . . . der ist recht würdig und wohl geschickt, wer den Glauben hat an diese Wort: "Für Euch gegeben" und "vergossen zur Vergebung der Sunden."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Allbeck, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>14</sup>Der Kleine Katechismus, VI, 9-10.

Lack of faith made a person unworthy and unprepared.

Wer aber diesen Worten nicht gläubt oder zweifelt, der ist unwirdig und ungeschickt; denn das Wort, "Für Euch" fordert eitel gläubige Herzen.<sup>15</sup>

Relating directly to Paul's concern in I Cor. 11:28, the lack of faith makes a person unworthy. In the state of unbelief, he is eating and drinking to his own condemnation. Self-examination for the believer will disclose that he has faith and can confidently approach the Lord's Table. Confession is an outcome of the self-examination. In it the believer outwardly acknowledges his natural sinfulness and his reliance on God's grace.

The worthiness of the communicant consists entirely in the appropriation by faith of Christ's merits. This fact is brought to the believer's attention during the process of his self-examination and encourages him to accept the grace offered in the Lord's Supper. The Lutheran reformers are very clear on the nature of the believer's worthiness as he approaches the Lord's Table.

Wir glauben, lehren und bekennen, dass alle Wirdigkeit der Tischgäste dieser himmlischer Mahlzeit sei und stehe allein in dem allerheiligsten Gehorsamb und vollkommenen Verdienst Christi, wölchen wir uns durch wahrhaftigen Glauben sueignen, und des durch das Sakrament versichert werden, und gar nicht in unseren Tugenden, innerlichen und äusserlichen Bereitungen.<sup>16</sup>

In summary, the position of the Lutheran symbols on

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Konkordienformel, Epitome, VII, 20.



self-examination is very intimately bound up with the reformers' thinking on repentance. Within the categories of repentance and confession, self-examination gives primary emphasis to faith. This is seen particularly in what the symbols say about worthy participation in the Sacrament. In reality much of what is said about repentance could be applied to self-examination in the Pauline sense. Confession is really only the external manifestation of true self-examination and as such is a good practice to remind the believer of his personal need for self-examination. The guide for self-examination is God's will as reflected in the Ten Commandments. The man of faith looks to the Ten Commandments to discover what God's will is for him in his particular vocation and station of life. On the basis of this knowledge, the believer examines himself.

#### Luther's Guide for Self-examination

For Luther, where self-examination was concerned, the matter of faith was primary. In the Large Catechism he maintains that faith was the entire preparation for receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper worthily.<sup>17</sup>

In a treatise published in 1522 Luther very explicitly gave his views on self-examination. There he interpreted I Cor. 11:28 primarily to mean that man "should examine his

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<sup>17</sup>Der Grosse Katechismus, V, 36.

faith and determine whether it is genuine."<sup>18</sup> In a truly Pauline way, Luther extended the meaning of faith to involve the entire life. So self-examination also extended into the believer's life. The believer must find within himself a "smiting conscience which is weighed down with a sense of sin and longs for the grace of God." This is a conscience which "seeks and takes the Sacrament, firmly relying on Christ's Word, in order to receive such grace and strength and help. . . . That is the proof of faith."<sup>19</sup>

Beyond the inner matter of the conscience, Luther saw the need also of a person examining one's outward life. He directs the reader, "ask yourself whether you are showing love to your neighbor and are serving him." The fruits of love directed to the neighbor are the natural outgrowth of faith and so tend to show the presence or absence of genuine faith.

Luther is very much concerned where these works do not exist. Lack of works shows lack of faith. A situation of this nature is unfortunate. For to eat and drink the Sacrament in this state is to be condemned. For this reason Luther went on to say, "If you do not find these evidences of faith within yourself . . . by all means stay away from

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<sup>18</sup>Martin Luther, "Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament," translated by Abdel Ross Wentz, Luther's Works, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), XXXVI, 264.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

the Sacrament until you have become a different person."<sup>20</sup>

To make such a strong statement, Luther must have some type of guide for self-examination. He states what this is when he discusses confession. He says,

Reflect on your condition in the light of the Ten Commandments: whether you are a father or mother, a son or daughter, a master or servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, lazy, ill-tempered or quarrelsome; whether you have harmed anyone by word or deed; and whether you have stolen, neglected, or wasted anything, or done other evil.<sup>21</sup>

Luther here recognizes that the Ten Commandments represent the basic formulation of God's will for man. It is not a code which a man can keep to the letter. However, it is a concrete guide and norm by which the believer can put his actions under judgment.

Luther does not say that a person is to keep the Ten Commandments. Rather he sees that the Decalogue will have varying implications for different people depending on their station in life or vocation. So then the Ten Commandments are God's directives to provide a guide for the believer who is endeavoring to live a life characterized by agape. The Decalogue is what guards man against rationalizing his actions to quiet his conscience. It guards against a person viewing something which is motivated by egotistic love as being motivated by the Spirit of God.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Small Catechism, V, 20, translated by Tappert, op. cit., p. 350.

## CHAPTER VII

### USES AND ABUSES OF SELF-EXAMINATION

An investigation of Paul's theology of self-examination had led us to conclude that the primary content of self-examination is the question concerning the presence of faith. O. Kaiser captured this central Pauline emphasis when he said,

Alle Christen, ob Männer oder Weiber, ob jung oder alt, ob Pastoren oder Laien, sollen also ein Selbstprüfung anstellen. Sie sollen sich fragen: Wie steht es mit uns, mit unserm Glauben, mit unserm Christentum? Stehen wir noch in unserer Taufgnade? Befinden wir uns noch auf dem schmalen Weg, der zum Leben führt?<sup>1</sup>

To make the content of self-examination anything other than faith is to misuse it. In the history of the Church man's works were made the center of self-examination. As we have noted, this distortion of Paul led to legalism. It resulted in a preoccupation with man and his sins rather than an emphasis on God and His grace. The forgiveness of sins offered in the Lord's Supper became the reward which the communicant earned by his works. Instead of participating "worthily," (i.e. in faith) the communicant had to be "worthy" if he wished to participate. This is still the position of the Roman Catholic Church today.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>O. Kaiser, "Beichtrede," Concordia Theological Monthly, VII (May, 1936), 350.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Bernard Orchard, editor, A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scriptures (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), p. 1094.

In the Lutheran Church, too, there is the danger of making self-examination legalistic. When the communicant is made to feel that ecclesiastical forms and aids to self-examination are absolutely necessary for eating and drinking "worthily," true, Pauline self-examination has been lost.

Paul's concept of self-examination is lost, too, when the outward demeanor and dress of people are regarded as the contributing factors to worthy acceptance of the Lord's Supper. This seems to be Prat's position.

he [Paul] gives no other command than that of celebrating this liturgical repast together and with decency. It is therefore very probable that by the word "unworthily" he means not only bad dispositions, but also irreverence and a lack of suitable preparation.<sup>3</sup>

There can be no doubt that irreverence will be avoided when the communicant comes to the Lord's Supper in faith. However, to stress that this is necessary for worthy participation in the Sacrament again emphasizes man.

There is a tendency for people to stress the Busse in preparation for eating and drinking in the Sacrament. This also will make self-examination anthropocentric rather than Christocentric. Franke approaches this distortion of Paul's words when he describes the necessary self-examination in which a person should engage. He says that if a person is aware of having violated his baptismal bond,

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<sup>3</sup>Fernand Prat, The Theology of St. Paul (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1957), p. 127.

so muss er ja erst Busse thun Über solche seine Sunde; er muss ja erst einen Abscheu in seiner Seelen daran haben; eine wahre Zerknirschung und Reue, und ein wahres Lied-Wesen darüber in seinem Hertzen empfinden. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Though Franke eventually mentions the necessity of the communicant's accepting God's grace, there is the pre-occupation with contrition which characteristically makes confession seem more important for the believer than the Lord's Supper.

Thus we conclude that the primary content of self-examination must be whatever a person understands as the nature of eating and drinking "worthily." When a person regards man's works or feelings as the main emphasis of self-examination, then it must be concluded that works or emotions make him worthy to attend the Sacrament. When a person sees faith as the center of self-examination, then it must be faith in God's forgiveness for Christ's sake which makes for worthy participation at the Lord's Supper. Paul consistently asserts sola fides as the reason why a man can expect the forgiveness of sins. So it must also be man's faith which is the primary concern of self-examination. As we have attempted to demonstrate, man's works must also be subject to examination but only as symptoms of a more basic condition—faith or unbelief.

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<sup>4</sup>August H. Franke, Die Nöthige Priefung Sein Selbst Vor Dem Gebrauch Des H. Abendmahls (Augsburg: Caspar Mantz, 1737), p. 14.

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