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A THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER
AS EXPRESSED AT THE HANNOVER CONVENTION
OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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SHORT TITLE

Baptism and Communion in LWF, 1952

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Objectives and Value of the Study

The study which here presents the theology of Baptism and the Lord's Supper expressed at the Hannover Convention of the Lutheran World Federation is an outgrowth of the writer's concern to know what was said on theological matters by members of the Lutheran World Federation assembled in their first official convention as a federation of Lutherans.

At the outset it was intended that this research take up not only Baptism and the Lord's Supper but also such topics as Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, justification, sanctification, law and Gospel, the doctrines of God and man, as well as a review of what Lutherans mean by missions and worship.

It was felt that such a study would be beneficial not only to the writer but especially to members of the Synodical Conference who are interested in the theological issues being discussed by the Lutheran World Federation at a time when the ecumenical movement is being earnestly considered by Lutherans the world over and for whom the question of whether or not to participate is a genuine concern.

Even though the material presented here does not include a discussion on all the topics listed above it did fulfill the expectations of the writer in this that it gave him an opportunity

to study the Lutheran World Federation, its history, constitution, membership, publications, and work as reported in the proceedings of the 1952 convention.

Since the writer is an aspirant to the office of the holy ministry in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and since at the present time (1956) there is considerable discussion both pro and con as to the position the Missouri Synod is to take over against the Lutheran World Federation, it is certain that, regardless of the official decisions of his synod, he will come into contact with men, policies and projects of the Lutheran World Federation in the course of that ministry. In such contacts, a more-than-survey knowledge of the beginnings of and theological position of the Lutheran World Federation will be valuable.

Limitations of the Study

The material presented here is limited to a study of Baptism and the Lord's Supper for these reasons:

First, it was found in a cursory survey of the material at hand that these two sacraments were often mentioned.

Second, it was felt that a study of the sacraments was a good starting point to construct a study of Lutheran Theology since the Means of Grace are viewed as most important both in Holy Scripture and in the Lutheran Symbols. Although a study of the Word as a Means of Grace is vital to Lutheran Theology it was not included here because of the many implications involved in the exact meaning attached to each usage of the word "Word" since

both the theme, "The Living Word in a Responsible Church"¹ and the express intention to use a Johannine approach in the discussions of the Word,² give connotations which are subject to misinterpretation.

Third, the writer's personal interest in studying the doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper caused him to single them out.

Material Consulted and Used

Various materials were consulted in the preparation of this thesis. First, a survey was made of the history which preceded the formation of the Lutheran World Federation. This included a review of the Lutheran World Convention, the Lund Convention in 1947, and reports made during the five year interim between Lund and Hannover. This was followed by a review of the ecumenical movement and factors which led Lutherans to be concerned about retaining their distinctive confessional character as Lutherans in the ecumenical movement.³ Then materials immediately available on the Hannover convention itself were studied. These included lecture guides, outlines, essays, and reports made to the various

¹E. Theodore Bachmann, Epic of Faith: The Background of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, 1952 (New York: The National Lutheran Council, 1952), p. 27.

²The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, edited by Carl E. Lund-Quist (Gunzenhausen, Bavaria: Buchdruckerel Riedel, 1952), p. 43.

³Bachmann, op. cit., p. 46.

sections of the convention; especially Section I which dealt with Theology. Finally, the official publication entitled The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation⁴ was studied with the view toward lifting out and synthesizing specific comments made on Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Although a goodly number of the essays read to the various sectional study groups were available and were studied, they were not considered in the final development of this thesis. To do them justice, it was felt, one ought to have access to all the reports made at Hannover together with the comments they evoked in the sectional meetings. It is hoped that the good points brought to the attention of Section I in its discussions which do not appear in the actual report to the assembly--for the printed report is merely a duplication of the pre-convention study document--will have been taken up by the newly formed Department of Theology and will be included in its report at the next convention at Minneapolis, Minnesota, U. S. A., in 1957. The introductory remarks of Section I which speak of this say:

Complete agreement with respect to all the theological problems was not achieved in the course of the sessions. We could hardly be expected to arrive at a theological consensus in view of the limited time at our disposal and the magnitude of the problems involved. It is noteworthy that most of the criticisms were directed toward the introductory lectures and toward some of the contributions to the discussions rather than toward the study document itself. This is one of the reasons why Section I resolved unanimously to

⁴The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, edited by Carl E. Lund-Quist (Gunzenhausen, Bavaria: Buchdruckerei Riedel, 1952):

suggest to the Assembly to receive the document without change and to send it to our churches for further study. . . . As a supplement to this printed document we submit to the Assembly the critical reactions to the document which we have received during the past year; also, a detailed report on the various sessions of Section I. This rather voluminous material has not been duplicated but will be delivered to the Theological Department established by The Lutheran World Federation, for further study. May we suggest that this Department, or any study commission which may be appointed, take cognizance of this supplementary material and properly evaluate it. Only a systematic study of this material will disclose its real significance, and may also reveal those problems that need further elaboration and study.⁵

Therefore, even though many sources were consulted in the course of study, the final development is based entirely on those materials published in the official proceedings of the convention whose table of contents is reproduced in Appendix A.

It must be pointed out, however, that even though these materials are found in the official proceedings they do not necessarily represent "official statements of the Assembly." They are merely statements by individuals or by committees received by the Assembly for information. This point was clarified at Hannover with regard to the report of Section VI on August 1, 1952, where the minutes say:

The chairman asked for the guidance of the Assembly on the disposition which should be made of the reports of the several Sections. He suggested that inasmuch as such reports are not official statements of the Assembly, they be merely received as information. By common consent this suggestion was adopted.⁶

⁵Ibid., pp. 115f.

⁶Ibid., p. 19.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized in such a way that the chapter following this introduction gives a brief summary of the events which preceeded the organization of The Lutheran World Federation together with comments on the Hannover convention itself. References to the Sacraments have been taken from the official proceedings, evaluated in the light of their context and organized in such a way that the result is intended to show the reader what was said about them at Hannover. The Sacrament of Baptism is taken up in Chapter III and the Lord's Supper in Chapter IV. The final chapter gives a brief summary together with a few comments expressing concern for continued study on theological matters among Lutherans.

Brief Summary of Findings

The Lutheran World Federation is the successor to the Lutheran World Convention. It came into being at Lund, Sweden, in 1947, when a constitution was adopted and an executive committee appointed. The Second Assembly met in Hannover, Germany, in the summer of 1952. Besides hearing summary reports on the many activities carried out by the Federation between the conventions, Hannover recognized the formation of a new department, the Department of Theology, which is to become one of the most important units in the Federation. It is to set the tone and give a theological basis to the Federation's world-wide work.

No final position was taken by the Assembly on the doctrines

of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, treated at greater length in the pages which follow. Nevertheless, a study of the lectures and reports made to the Assembly shows which points were regarded as important.

The importance of the Sacraments lies in their being divine institutions. They are not mere rites and ceremonies of the Church but come to men from Him Who suffered, died, and rose again to redeem mankind. Their efficacy depends on Him and the redemptive work which He accomplished. Those persons err who look to the authority of the priestly orders or to a change in the visible elements or who are concerned merely with the symbolic significance they bear.

The purpose of their being instituted by God was to accomplish His saving work in men. In Baptism He comes and does something to the unregenerate heart. He turns it from spiritual death to life in Him. He brings men to faith, forgives their sins, and keeps them until the Day of His Coming.

Those who are in the Faith, whose lives have been changed, live now as children of God in a new life manifested in works of love, in the imitation of Christ and in living for Christ. Their new life places them into a new relationship both with God and with man. They are reconciled with God in Christ and in Christ are united with all other members of the ecclesia. Together with them, they approach the throne of grace in an attitude of prayer, worshipping and praising God for His gift of salvation.

It is to them, the children of God, that the Sacrament of the

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Holy Supper has meaning. They recognize in the sacrament not merely the symbolic presence of their Lord but believe He is truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine. He gives to them the forgiveness of sins and strength to live a life for Him.

Some mention was made at Hannover of altar fellowship. Close communion was advocated but the question of open communion for Lutherans at Lutheran altars was considered.

It was suggested that in the future the New Testament be the guide for answering questions in which there is disagreement instead of following past experience as a norm.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL SETTING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE

1952 LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION CONVENTION

Prior to Hannover

To establish the historical setting for the Lutheran World Federation one could reach into early church history to show how the early Christians viewed the need for a united front against the world, witnessing together as followers of Christ. One might also look to the Reformation period and take up the symbols of the Lutheran Church, especially the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as showing the position Lutheran Christians hold over against all sects and religious bodies. Both are a background against which present-day Lutheranism is viewed.

However, more specific beginnings of the Lutheran World Federation can be traced to a general body called the Lutheran General Conference formed in Germany in 1867. Its contacts expanded and eventually included also the Scandinavian countries. After "the most fruitful meeting of this general body . . . in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1911" it was hoped that contacts with the American Lutheran General Council could be furthered, but World War I interfered.¹

¹E. Theodore Bachmann, Epic of Faith: The Background of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, 1952 (New York: The National Lutheran Council, 1952), p. 11.

During the war years there was a beginning effort in the United States at bringing Lutherans together. This is seen in the formation of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America in 1917 (now the Evangelical Lutheran Church), the United Lutheran Church in America in 1918, and the National Lutheran Council in 1918. When the latter organization began helping the needy Europeans after the war they began to think of Lutherans in America as belonging to a "giving church."²

Lutheran churches from the continent, Scandinavia, and America finally gathered together in the historic town of Eisenach, Germany, in 1925 to form the Lutheran World Convention. Key figures in its formation were Bishop Ludwig Ihmels of Saxony, Germany, John A. Morehead from the United States of America and Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, Primate of Sweden.³

Topics discussed at Eisenach included: the ecumenical character of the Lutheran Church; the Confessions as the indispensable foundation of the Lutheran Church; the importance of unity; the challenge of missions and the care of scattered and isolated constituencies in Europe, South America and elsewhere.⁴

A resolution at Eisenach gave these directives for action to the first Executive Committee: "The Committee . . . shall give its first attention to three tasks: (1) works of mercy; (2) foreign missions; (3) the care of migrating Lutherans." Another resolution

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 13.

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

set forth the confessional basis of the Lutheran World Convention seeing, "especially in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, a pure exposition of the Word of God."⁵

Two comments by men who were there indicate the spirit of that first gathering. Söderblom said:

We have not come together to organize ourselves, but to edify one another and to strengthen one another in our common faith. Within Christianity as a whole, it is our special mission as Lutherans to cultivate the strength of the inner life.⁶

and:

In summing up his impressions of the Lutheran World Convention, Dr. Abel Ross Wentz--the only one of the eighteen American delegates still living and who is today (1952) the active Vice-President of the Lutheran World Federation--declared that, "the Convention by the grace of God has achieved success beyond the most sanguine hopes of those in whose hearts the idea . . . was born". He therefore believed that, "a glorious future lies before our Lutheran Church . . . Many of us go away from this first Lutheran World Convention with high hopes that what has here been done is really the beginning of a new period in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church."⁷

The direction that the mutual edification took can be seen in the work of the Lutheran World Convention as it served the needy through organized relief. Expression of the progress and intention for future work was given in the next meeting held at Copenhagen in 1929. One of the resolutions made there says:

In all its work of serving love the Lutheran World Convention and its committees shall, so far as the means are

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

available, assist the needy and deserving churches of the faith, without respect to race, language, or political alignment.⁸

Of this and similar resolutions it has been said:

In these resolutions lies the basis for the vast program of relief and rehabilitation undertaken since World War II by the Lutheran World Federation, the eventual successor of the Lutheran World Convention.⁹

The next meeting at Paris in 1936 was important because it established the office of Executive Secretary--Dr. Hanns Lilje became its first incumbent--and because it recommended that the Lutheran Churches of the world

should proceed with united front in their relations with ecumenical Christian movements, general co-operative organizations, or Christian churches claiming universality. They should agree among themselves as to their united participation or non-participation.¹⁰

Because World War II fell upon the world at this time the 1940 meeting, intended for Philadelphia, was never held. Despite the chaotic conditions of the world, work of the Lutheran World Convention bore fruit during those years. It resulted in efforts toward the formation of a new organization by an augmented Executive Committee of the resurrected Lutheran World Convention at

⁸ Proceedings of The Lutheran World Federation Assembly, Lund, Sweden (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1948), p. 127.

⁹ Gilbert A. Thiele, "The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America and its relations to the Ecumenical Movement in the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches," (unpublished dissertation in the possession of the author, St. Louis, Missouri), p. 143.

¹⁰ Bachmann, op. cit., p. 15.

Uppsala, Sweden, in 1946.¹¹ From past experience Lutherans had learned that a more permanent type of organization was needed. To that end the Lutheran World Federation was formed at Lund, Sweden, in 1947. From the constitution adopted we see its purposes expressed in active verbs, "to bear united witness, to cultivate unity, to promote fellowship, to foster participation, to support, to develop a united approach"¹² The nature and purpose of the new body was defined as

a free association of Lutheran churches. It shall have no power to legislate for the churches belonging to it, or to interfere with their complete autonomy, but shall act as their agent in such matters as they assign to it.¹³

The doctrinal basis upon which member churches took their stand was acknowledged as:

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the only source and the infallible norm of all church doctrine and practice, and . . . the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism, as a pure exposition of the Word of God.¹⁴

In addition to organizing as a federation with a constitution, these major items were given attention:

(1) a theology section discussing ways and means of "confessing the truth in a confused world"; (2) an evangelism, stewardship, missions, reconstruction and inter-church aid section discussing The Lutheran Church "performing her

¹¹Ibid., p. 10.

¹²Ibid., p. 16.

¹³Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 11.

mission in a devastated world" and (3) a group discussing practical problems under the theme "facing the problems of a troubled world."¹⁵

A final word from the Assembly at Lund says,

The federation of the Lutheran Churches of the world has now become a reality. Based on solid Scriptural foundations, it has been formed in Christian faith and love. This brings to fulfilment at last a great dream that for centuries has lived in the hearts of Lutheran people¹⁶

The organizational structure under which the Lutheran World Federation operates is such that "The Assembly, which meets every five years, is the highest organizational authority."¹⁷ It elects a president and members of an executive committee and appoints special commissions, national committees, and administrative departments at the Federation headquarters.¹⁸ Bishop Hanns Lilje was elected president at Hannover for the present five-year period and Carl E. Lund-Quist continues to serve as executive secretary.

We wish to stress at this point the important place given to theology in the Lutheran World Federation. Shortly after its organization at Lund a department of Theology was created. It was authorized officially by the Executive Committee in July of 1951, and played a vital role in the 1952 convention at Hannover. The following comments by Theodore Bachmann in his Epic of Faith, a monograph written to show the background of the Second Assembly

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 23.

of the Lutheran World Federation, voice a genuine concern to keep theology in the center of all Lutheran World Federation work:

Theology is the starting point of co-operation among Lutherans. Their doing of things together presupposes a theological consensus which, in turn, reflects long adherence to a specifically evangelical heritage--born of the Reformation and conveyed primarily through the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism. Lutherans thus have a common treasure which helps to shape their theological thought and give them an overall likemindedness which is perhaps unique in Protestantism.¹⁹

With the establishment of an organization as large as the Lutheran World Federation, it was realized from the start that publicity would be an important item to keep members informed and give opportunity for mutual sharing of problems and interests. Various publications, many of which are no longer in use, have served that purpose since 1947 including a "News Bulletin" in both German and English, a monthly "Information Service of the Lutheran World Federation," a quarterly "The Lutheran World Review" and its German counterpart "Lutherische Welt Rundschau," a bi-monthly house organ for Europeans called the "Lutherische Rundschau," besides using the coverage of "Lutheran Quarterly," "The Lutheran," and frequent releases from the National Lutheran Council News Bureau in the United States. The current (1956) publication of the Lutheran World Federation is a quarterly entitled "Lutheran World" in English and "Lutherische Rundschau" in German.

Official Lutheran World Federation headquarters have been established on the campus of the World Council of Churches in

¹⁹Ibid., p. 27.

Geneva, Switzerland, at 17 route de Malagnou. This geographical location has legal implications because,

As a legal entity, the Federation is therefore a Swiss organization, and the hope is that in years to come it may have all the advantages of political neutrality when dealing with the needs and interests of a worldwide communion.²⁰

Before reviewing the activities of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation at Hannover, Germany, it is fitting to call attention to the work of Executive Secretary Dr. Sylvester Clarence Michelfelder to whom much credit for the organization of the Hannover Convention is to be given. At the close of the war in 1945, he was released from his Toledo, Ohio, congregation to give his services in aiding the distressed. His untiring efforts on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation, seen at Lund and remembered at Hannover, came to an unexpected end September 30, 1951, when death took him. His words on the nature of the Lutheran World Federation are noteworthy:

The Lutheran World Federation is not an aggregation of select individuals. It is all of us. And what we do or do not do together determines the character of our worldwide fellowship."²¹

Hannover Itself

The Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation was in session from July 25 to August 3, 1952, at Hannover, Germany. Hannover is the capital of the German state of Lower-Saxony, and the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

²¹ Ibid., p. 23.

chief city of the former Hanoverian kingdom.

Known for its churchliness and its international rather than purely national interest, as well as for its traditionally sound evangelical Christianity, Hanover as a city, and its surrounding state of Lower-Saxony, present an attractive setting for the second assembly of the Lutheran World Federation.²²

Nine-tenths of all Lutherans in the world were represented there during those days.²³

Much work went into the preparations for the Assembly, at which delegates from fifty-two churches in twenty-five countries representing 50,000,000 Lutherans, came together.²⁴ More than 140 special trains and uncounted buses were pressed into service to bring tens of thousands to this "most representative international convention of Lutherans ever held."²⁵

The major items of business were conducted in the seven plenary meetings of the Assembly held

under the great domed ceiling of the Kuppelsall where the curse of Babel was alleviated by a wireless headphone arrangement which gave delegates and visitors the choice of hearing in his own language or in one of two simultaneous translations.²⁶

²²Ibid., p. 8.

²³Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴National Lutheran Council News Bureau, "The Living Word in a Responsible Church, Hannover: 1952," The National Lutheran, XXI (September-October, 1952), 13.

²⁵Paul M. Bretscher, "Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation at Hannover, July 25 to August 3: Impressions and Observations of an 'Official Visitor'," (unpublished report in the possession of the author, St. Louis, Missouri), p. 1.

²⁶Martin H. Franzmann, "Missouri and the Lutheran World Federation," The Lutheran Witness, April 14, 1953, p. 124.

Six sectional study groups heard and discussed many lectures and essays crystallizing their findings in reports to the Assembly.

Meeting simultaneously with the regular convention were the conventions of both the Lutheran youth and the Lutheran women.

A variety of special events was offered to occupy the attention of all including such attractions as the world premier of the film "The Obedient Rebel," the Wagner College Choir, the Bach Choir of Hannover, mystery and morality plays, poetry reading, organ concerts, lectures, missionaries' reports, song festivals and rallies. The offices of Matins and Vespers were prayed daily at the Nieder-sachsenhalle. Other services were conducted in the various churches according to the rites of representative Lutheran communions. Holy Communion was celebrated under the auspices of the local congregations. Visitors and delegates were invited to these celebrations.

Twenty-four "official visitors" representing The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod were in attendance at the convention.²⁷ Positive witness and expression of faith was given not only by their presence but also by their several contributions to discussions both formal and informal. Dr. J. W. Behnken, president of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, read a prepared statement to Section I (Theology) on July 29.²⁸ The twenty-four man delegation met regularly throughout the days of the convention to discuss what they were hearing and seeing. An excerpt from the written impres-

²⁷The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, edited by Carl E. Lund-Quist (Gunzenhausen, Bavaria: Buchdruckerei Hiedel, 1952), p. 192.

²⁸Bretscher, op. cit., p. 3.

sions of one of the official observers at the close of the convention follows:

when we shall have read the official reports, when we shall be able to view the convention from a vantage point where there will be no more ahing and ohing but only the sincere desire to speak in the fear of God who is the Judge of all, even then the writer of these impressions will be compelled to register the following observations: (1) The Hannover convention was marked by a genuine effort to glorify the name of God and the Savior Jesus Christ above every other name that is named; (2) The convention attempted to do its task in the fear of the Lord of the Church; (3) The convention sounded forth over and over again the privilege and responsibility of the Lutheran Church to bring the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to all men; (4) The convention, in its report of Section I (Theology), confessed clearly and boldly, in the face of current errors, the great and imperishable truths of Scripture and of the Lutheran Confessions regarding the person of Jesus Christ, the reconciliation which He effected by His sacrifice on Calvary, His bodily resurrection, His return to glory, the nature of the Christian Church, the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; (5) The convention sought to include in its purview all basic activities of the Church which faith in the Living Lord and in His Gospel produces.²⁹

Significance of Hannover

The importance of the 1952 Lutheran World Federation Convention cannot be accurately stated at this early date. Nevertheless, we would like to offer this one thought as being significant, i.e., the high degree of interest and concern over theology. This was shown by the interest of members present in the work of Section I which dealt with theology, by their interest in the new Department of Theology and its duties, and by the

²⁹ibid., p. 2.

expression of need for a "clarification of the basic theological issues"³⁰ by several of the committees reporting on their work, especially by the men acquainted with missions.

It is interesting to note from the introductory remarks to the proceedings that "the central message of the Gospel--the forgiveness of sins, for Christ's sake--formed the basis of all . . . deliberations."³¹

One could not expect definitive statements on theological issues but it is encouraging to see that Section I faced its responsibilities, admitting "that on a number of subjects there is among us neither perfect unanimity nor sufficient clarity,"³² and recommended that these items "be studied within the churches of the Lutheran World Federation."³³ Its prayer is stated as follows:

Our oneness is God's gift to us. May our Lord, this is our prayer, grant us in the years to come a deepened appreciation of our fellowship, and also the strength to practice our oneness within the Lutheran churches everywhere, in obedience to the Scriptures and our Confessions. And may the new Department of Theology and the modest contribution of our Section also serve this high purpose."³⁴

We now take up a study of what was said at Hannover concerning the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

³⁰ Lund-Quist, op. cit., p. 8.

³¹ Ibid., p. 7.

³² Ibid., p. 116.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

CHAPTER III

A STUDY ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

A Mark of Separation

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is a mark of separation. In his report on "Lutheran Ethics and Lutheran Missionary Practice" Gustav Stählin, Professor of New Testament Theology in the University of Erlangen, relates that missionaries in India have difficulty with some of the well educated Hindus.¹ They refuse to be baptized into the Christian religion because they recognize Baptism as a mark of division. For them to be baptized means first that they become members of one of the many so-called Christian denominations found in India today. Rather than belong to a small denomination they prefer to think of themselves as members of a world wide fellowship of disciples who believe in Christ but are not yet baptized. Such truth of denominational division within Christianity is tragic and we can sympathize with the Hindus' point of view. But they also see a second mark of division in Baptism. They recognize the fact that the full implications of Baptism divides them from their beloved Hinduism and demands a total renunciation of all pagan elements. The truth of this radical break with all other philosophies of life is the very point we wish to

¹The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, edited by Carl E. Lund-Quist (Gunzenhausen, Bavaria: Buchdruckerei Riedel, 1952), p. 66.

make here with regard to Baptism as a mark of separation.

The separation is one from a former way of life dominated by sin and entrance into a new life in Christ. Anders Nygren, Bishop of Lund and former president of the Lutheran World Federation, in his keynote address, "The Living Word in a Responsible Church," says it this way:

We are engrafted into Christ by our Baptism. By our natural birth we are made members of the human race; as such we share the sinfulness and decay which are the inescapable destiny of all mankind. But by our new birth we are received into the membership of the new human race which is designated as the Body of Christ, and as such we share His righteousness and His life. We are, as the apostle expresses it, planted together with Christ, we "coalesce" with Him, in the likeness of His death and in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5),²

Being planted with Christ separates the Christian from his former life of total submission to Satan and all his wicked ways. It is this same separation from the old life of which the theology section report says:

The Living Word gives righteousness and life to the sinner under condemnation of death. Death no longer rules over him, eternal life begins, he is born from above.

This new birth takes place in baptism³

What is meant by the new birth is aptly expressed in these words:

Sinful man is born unto eternal life in Jesus Christ in that his old, self-sovereign life of sin dies with Christ on the Cross, and a new life, a life of faithful devotion to Christ is raised with Christ from the dead. Baptism is the new birth because it means dying and rising with Christ.

²Ibid., p. 46.

³Ibid., p. 126.

"We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).⁴

Having established these preliminary thoughts on Baptism as a mark of separation from an old life and entrance into life in Christ, we proceed to the Sacrament itself. We shall be concerned with its origin, its administration and benefits, faith and Baptism, infant Baptism, falling out of baptismal grace, and the responsibility of the Church in Baptism.

The Origin of Baptism

In the sense that the Sacrament of Baptism is a means of grace we could say its origin in point of time is with God in eternity. Peter Brunner, Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Heidelberg, in his article "Our Church Service,"⁵ makes the point that before one can truly worship he must have experienced a change in his life. This change becomes a reality for men today in Baptism but it was planned already by God long ago. He says:

Long ago, long before you were born, Jesus had received you as a member of His Body, taken your guilt upon Himself, and redeemed your life. But now, since you have been born, the things which were realities in Him, must become actual realities also in your present bodily existence. This has been accomplished in your Baptism. Your Baptism means that you, as a being with physical existence, have an actual share in Jesus' death, and that you, as a being with physical

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 49.

existence, have a share in His life. By your Baptism you were incorporated in the sacrificial Body of the crucified and exalted Lord.⁶

According to these words the sacramental significance was given to Baptism long before the present age.

Furthermore, Christ by His death and resurrection made possible the benefits of Baptism. His victory over sin, death, and the devil gives Him the authority to establish it as a means of grace. As the report of the section on theology points out, it was

Christ Himself [Who] instituted it when He said, Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).⁷

This same report bears witness to the fact that it is Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, who not only instituted Baptism but truly is present and acting in Baptism. The words cited in confession of Him are these thoughts paraphrased from the Apostles Creed:

Through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, dead and buried, risen on the third day, ascended into heaven and sitting on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, is really present in baptism and receives the lost sinner into His own eternal life.⁸

Besides these statements on Christ's presence and action in the Sacrament, reference is made to God the Holy Ghost. Just as in Luther's Small Catechism, Titus 3:5 is quoted which says Baptism

⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

⁷ Ibid., p. 126.

⁸ Ibid.

is the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Further mention of the Holy Spirit being present and operative in Baptism is made in connection with His using the Sacraments as means by which He calls, gathers, enlightens, and gives strength and inspiration to His followers.⁹

Proper Administration and Benefits

It was said above that Baptism is a mark of division whereby people who believe in Christ are called apart by the Holy Spirit into a body called the Church. It is to this Church, the Body of Christ, that the administration of the Sacraments has been entrusted. To show more conclusively what we mean by the Church we refer to the following comment taken from the sectional report on World Missions:

The church is the Body of Christ created, maintained, and ruled by Christ Himself through the creative, sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit in the means of grace. Being one with its Savior and Lord, the church is both hidden within the visible religious organization and revealed by God through the means of grace. At every place where the Word of God is proclaimed in its purity and the sacraments rightly administered, the church, the Body of Christ, is present. The means of grace, which are the marks of the church, also create and encompass other external signs, such as a common confession, an ordered ministry, some forms of liturgical service, and works of charity.¹⁰

Thoughts on the proper administration of the sacrament were not developed as such at Hannover but from the comments made we

⁹Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 136.

can see that the following points were assumed: (a) A rightly administered Sacrament is made in the Name of the Triune God, as is implied in this statement: "This new birth takes place in Baptism in the name of the triune God, as Christ Himself instituted it" (b) It is performed when the officiant uses both water and the Word. This is supported by the quotation from Luther's Small Catechism: "Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water used according to God's command and connected with God's word." (c) It is a "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" as is written in Titus 3:5.¹¹

The washing of regeneration is also to be regarded as a benefit of Baptism. As was mentioned above, Baptism is a change, a regeneration from an old life to a new life in Christ. This does something to a person. It takes him out of death into life. It is a life in which the regenerated man no longer fears death and damnation but enjoys the benefits available in the Sacrament due to the meritorious work of Christ. Peter Brunner said it this way: "When you passed through the baptismal door, Gospel and Baptism gave you all that pertains to salvation."¹² To show more fully what this means to the individual, the following comment is beneficial:

Mankind today suffers from loneliness. The natural bonds of human society are disintegrating and gradually give way to all kinds of mass organizations which only accentuate

¹¹ Ibid., p. 126.

¹² Ibid., p. 50.

the loneliness of the individual. But baptism removes man from his state of loneliness, which basically is the loneliness of sin, and calls him into true fellowship with God and with men. It is the Church's responsibility to acknowledge this fellowship as the gift of God and to witness to it, in word and in deed.¹³

Thus through Baptism, the sacrament entrusted to the Church by Christ, an unregenerate person is changed and brought into an active fellowship with Christ and with those men who are likewise in Christ. He is one with them, who have all that pertains to salvation. Gustav Stählin says on this point:

In Baptism there occurs the incorporation into Christ and simultaneously into His Body, the church. Incorporation is meant literally here: the baptized person is made a member of the large, living organism of the new creation.¹⁴

Faith and Baptism

Faith plays a vital role in the Sacrament of Baptism from various points of view. We know that man's ultimate salvation depends on whether or not he accepts Christ as His Savior. In connection with man's refusal to heed the word of the Sacraments and his turning away from Christ in unbelief, these words of John are cited:

Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life (John 5:39-40).¹⁵

To refuse Christ is unbelief and to refuse Him is to refuse life

¹³Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 119.

with Him. He who refuses Baptism would therefore also refuse Christ and be lost.

On the other hand he who is born again in Baptism and who in faith has put on Christ, being incorporated into His Body, is heir to all that pertains to salvation. He has access to real life with God. It is his through Faith in Christ. The Section I report says the nature of Faith is "altogether a receiving of the life and the activity of Jesus Christ."¹⁶ This is the new life of which the same report says just prior to these words:

The new life, then, is faith. Faith is the constant devotion of one's own life to God in repentance and in love as well as a constant reception from Jesus Christ of the new life of His victory over sin and death and all their power. This is man's only access to a life in the presence of God. Hence the entire new life bears the signature of baptism.¹⁷

In the report on World Missions the question is raised: What comes first, the new life and faith or Baptism? Or a resultant question: How much faith is needed to warrant Baptism? There the statement is made: "The first goal of the missionary proclamation is faith, which includes turning away from the old, toward the new. The second goal is Baptism."¹⁸ Following immediately is the thesis, "The New life is not the antecedent of Baptism but its gift and its goal," which is developed as follows:

The latest research into the problem of Baptism (by Werner Gensichen) has established very firmly that God's action,

¹⁶Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 65.

not man's decision, is the first thing; but then, in the same moment when faith is accepting God's gift of grace, the decision to live a new life is being made, simultaneously. Baptism is the beginning of the imitation of Christ. This implies on the one hand that our missionaries regard the earnest desire for Baptism and the faith that prays, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief" as sufficient ground for Baptism, even though the candidate for Baptism may lack a great many of the qualities of Christian discipleship; they baptize him, trusting in the power of the living God. And on the other hand our missionaries set up high standards for the baptized person; they expect him to have the earnest intention to live a new life henceforth, to make progress in the imitation of Christ; they let him know that it is up to him to will and to work as though all depended on him alone, and at the same time to depend exclusively on the grace of God as though all human endeavors were of no avail.¹⁹

It appears on the surface that in the first instance Stählin is saying that faith--which includes turning away from the old to the new--precedes Baptism, while in the latter he maintains that the new life is not the antecedent but rather the gift of Baptism. Whether these two are to be placed alongside each other and viewed as contradictions doesn't seem to be likely. In keeping with the purpose of his point under discussion, that of "The Building of the Church in the non-Christian World,"²⁰ it is quite possible that he means to emphasize the fact that the missionary is first concerned about proclaiming the Gospel which brings men to Faith. Having been turned by God's action to confess their weak faith they are baptized despite their lack of many qualities of Christian discipleship. The question, although it may be inherent in this connection, does not seem to be concerned with whether Baptism works the initial

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

faith or whether children are neglected until such a time as they profess their faith. It is clear, however, that in this situation adults are baptized before receiving full instruction in the fundamentals of the Christian religion and that their baptism is intended to be a source of strength for future growth in sanctification as they both work out their salvation and trust in the grace of God.

This entire discussion is related to the next thesis of the report by Stählin entitled: "Without Baptism no Genuine Discipleship, no True Christianity."²¹ The development of this thought--which includes the opening comments of this chapter on the educated Hindus recognizing Baptism as a mark of separation--is entirely consistent with the practice of baptizing adults without detailed instruction. When one has once come to faith he is a member of the Body of Christ. The comment is made that the Hindus are told:

Jesus has not only issued the command that all the nations be baptized; He has not only laid upon His disciples the sacred obligation of confessing Him . . . but above all, Baptism is Christ's act of appropriating me personally and totally; if I remain unbaptized I am not in my total physical-spiritual existence connected with Christ and with the Christians.²²

Thus Baptism is a mark of separation from an old life to an entrance into a life in and for Christ.

²¹Ibid., p. 66.

²²Ibid.

Infant Baptism

To return to one of the questions raised in a preceding paragraph, which is also related to the connection between faith and baptism, we comment on what was said at Hannover about infant baptism. The very fact that the nature of faith is such that it is "altogether a receiving of the life and activity of Jesus Christ,"²³ is one of the strong points in favor of infant baptism. It seems to have been asserted by some that the very fact that many have fallen out of their baptismal grace in later years should be an argument against infant baptism. Rather than to allow such an assumption it is explicitly stated:

If baptism is the washing of regeneration it is highly important that infant baptism be considered as truly a washing of regeneration, especially today when strong criticism of infant baptism is voiced in many parts of the Protestant world. The nature of faith as altogether a receiving of the life and the activity of Jesus Christ finds in infant baptism its strongest bulwark against attempts to re-interpret faith as an act of religiosity apart from the Word and work of God (Matt. 18:3). The theory that infant baptism is a baptism without faith finds support neither in the Bible nor in the Reformers.²⁴

It may be added at this point that no reference was found by this writer which in any way discouraged the baptism of infants on any grounds. Rather the discussion above on the nature of faith and its development upheld the practice as being Biblical.

²³Ibid., p. 127.

²⁴Ibid.

Falling Away

Allusion has been made to the possibility that a baptized person can fall away. This problem was discussed briefly in the report from the section on theology. It was pointed out that when a person who has fallen away is converted again he is not to be re-baptized because "baptism is not subject to repetition,"²⁵ but in his conversion returns to his baptismal covenant. It does not follow that once one has been baptized he is certain of ultimate salvation. The comment is made: "There is . . . the possibility that a baptized person may completely fall away from the covenant of baptism."²⁶ This remark is made in connection with the observation that in many churches thousands of baptized persons are found who apparently live totally outside of the church. The mention of it here is not intended to suggest a change in the administration of baptism nor is it to refute the power of the Holy Spirit who works in the Sacrament but rather is in the tone of a warning to all who are baptized to return to their baptismal covenant lest they too fall away. Such a return is urged by Peter Brunner to be a daily renewal for he speaks about the Christian's worship life here on earth being made imperfect due to the constant struggle with the old Adam: "Therefore our worship will only then be service to God when we live a baptismal life, when we daily die

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

unto self and though dying live with Him."²⁷

Responsibility of the Church

The very fact that it is a struggle to stay in the Faith and that it is possible to fall away points up the responsibility of the church over against those who have been baptized. As was said before, Christ entrusted the ordering of the Sacraments to the Church and those who are baptized become members of a true fellowship with God and men. "It is the Church's responsibility to acknowledge this fellowship as the gift of God and to witness to it, in work and in deed."²⁸ An interesting comment from the report on the youth section points to this responsibility by saying:

by confessing the reality of baptismal grace, the church has accepted responsibility for the spiritual welfare of its youth; this involves, on the one hand, nurturing them with the living Word so that they may remain in the fellowship with Christ, and on the other hand, seeking, calling, and reclaiming those who have broken that relationship which once was theirs by virtue of their Baptism;²⁹

The words "to nurture them with the living Word" reminds us that the Sacrament of Baptism is connected with the Word, not only in its administration where the water is comprehended with the Word but also in this that the Church performs Baptism as a part of its worship. Peter Brunner says that the actual relationship between Baptism and the Service of Worship is such that "Baptism is the

²⁷Ibid., p. 56.

²⁸Ibid., p. 127.

²⁹Ibid., p. 163.

foundation of the worship service"³⁰ because:

only now, after crossing the baptismal threshold and after joining the eschatological people of God, only when you are a member of the Body of Jesus, a member of the ecclesia, only now your service of God can commence.³¹

Summary

In summary we recall that baptism is a mark of separation from an old life of death to a new life in Christ. Its benefits are stated to be all that is included in salvation, valid because of the meritorious work of Christ. Faith in Christ is necessary for salvation, which faith does not refuse baptism and the responsibilities of the new life. The nature of faith is such that it accepts Christ as Savior, even though the person is an infant. Since the possibility exists that one may fall from grace, the need is emphasized for a daily return to the baptismal covenant and a strengthening of the Faith. In this, the fellowship of believers is charged with responsibility to aid the brother. The struggle with the old Adam is always present which fact indicates that the Faith of Baptism needs to be nourished. This nourishment is received through the Word and Sacraments--a point which is further developed in the following chapter on the Lord's Supper.

³⁰Ibid., p. 50.

³¹Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

A STUDY ON THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

What Goes On

No official celebration of Holy Communion was conducted under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation at the Hannover convention. Nevertheless, the Holy Eucharist was celebrated by the local churches and persons attending the sessions were invited. Such a celebration was held at the opening service in the Marktkirche on July 25.¹ The same evening 1500 young people gathered in an outdoor setting for a communion service of their own. There a drizzling rain dampened their bodies but not their spirits. Even though the communicants were from many lands representing different races, they partook of the sacrament as one--one in the Body of Christ. What did the Sacrament mean for them? From the reports given to the General Assembly, to which they gave their assent in days following, we trace what they said about it and from those reports see that the following elements of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper were treated.

Holy Communion is the second of the two sacraments recognized by the Lutheran Church. In the foregoing chapter it was said that Baptism is the initial sacrament by which a person is made a member

¹The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, edited by Carl E. Lund-Quist (Gunzenhausen, Bavaria: Buchdruckerei Riedel, 1952), p. 5.

of the ecclesia.² By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost a new life is engendered--the life of Faith. The new life needs to be nourished and this is done through the Word and through the Holy Supper.³ The two sacraments were brought together nicely in the report of the section on theology when it said:

Jesus Christ, into whom men are incorporated through baptism, is the Head of His body, the King of His people. Baptism in the name of the triune God is therefore the entrance into the congregation of Jesus Christ. "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13). The life which we live in Christ in faith, is a life of love in the congregation. For this reason one cannot speak of baptism, the sacrament of faith, without at once also speaking of the Holy Supper, the sacrament of the body of Christ.⁴

We found no definition, as such, for the Holy Supper in the Hannover reports. Most likely it was taken for granted that Lutherans gathered together knew what was meant when reference was made to it. It was referred to by a variety of terms, such as: The Sacrament of the Body of Christ,⁵ Holy Supper,⁶ Sacrifice of thanksgiving,⁷ Sacrament of union with the body of the living Christ,⁸ Table of the Lord,⁹ Sacrament of renewal.¹⁰ All of these terms

²Ibid., p. 50.

³Ibid., p. 130.

⁴Ibid., p. 127.

⁵Ibid., p. 41.

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

⁷Ibid., p. 46.

⁸Ibid., p. 128.

⁹Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 128.

bring out fine points of distinction to tell more fully what goes on in the Holy Supper but they still fail to give a definition. B. Dr. Martin Luther's definition was quoted which says it is the "true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself."¹¹

To bear out the point on its being instituted by Christ we quote this interesting statement: "The Lord's Supper which we celebrate, was instituted by Jesus. To deny that Jesus Himself instituted the Lord's Supper means to discard the Sacrament."¹² It is to this Sacrament, instituted by Christ Himself, that the comments of this study have reference.

When Peter Brunner was speaking about the character and meaning of the Lord's Supper for Christians gathered in worship he said it is "the most distinctive part of the worship service of the church."¹³ Its distinctiveness is seen in that

The Lord's Supper is a special gift of Jesus for those who have entered through the door of Baptism; it is the specific means of grace for the organized congregation of His followers.¹⁴

As a specific means of grace for those who are in the Church it becomes a vital part of life both to the individual and to the assembly of believers. Inasmuch as Holy Writ says that we are to

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 54.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

"Serve the Lord!"¹⁵ it is good to be reminded again that

the disciples of Jesus cannot serve the Lord without assembling in His Name in order to hear the Word of God, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to offer prayer, praise and thanksgiving.¹⁶

Of prayer and the sacrament it is said:

The Holy Supper can be celebrated only in an atmosphere of prayer. Prayer, as Doerne says, is a Totaldimension of the church service i.e., permeates every part of it.¹⁷

In addition to prayer, mention is made of the attitude of praise and thanksgiving. The Sacrament is a Eucharist not in the sense that it is a meritorious thank-offering but in the sense that Luther and Melanchthon speak of the offering of thanks in the Sacrament of Thanksgiving when they

now and then called the Lord's Supper a sacrifice of thanksgiving. By thank-offering they meant an acceptance of the gift in faith. The actual reception of Christ's true body and blood in the bread and wine of the Holy Supper is a miracle. Faith accepts this miracle with praise and thanks.¹⁸

In this spirit the Church celebrates the Eucharist now, until He comes again.¹⁹

The Sacrament celebrated by the followers of Christ in an attitude of prayer, praise and thanksgiving is at the same time one of the distinctive marks which distinguishes them from those who as yet have not been brought to faith. Thus the Lord's Supper is

¹⁵Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 52.

mentioned as being a mark of the church, together with the Word, in the sense that where they, the Word and Sacraments, are found to be preached and administered according to Christ's Command and words of institution, there is the Church. This truth was explicitly stated in the report from Section II dealing with world missions: "At every place where the Word of God is proclaimed in its purity and the Sacraments rightly administered, the church, the Body of Christ, is present."²⁰ The importance of this was brought out again by Gustaf Wingren, Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Lund, in his review of "Lutheran Theology and World Missions," when he said: "Wir müssen wieder neu lernen, dass Wort und Sakrament die Kirche begründen."²²

It is to these same followers of Christ to whom the preaching of the Word and the proper administration of the Sacraments have been entrusted, so that the Church may be built up as the Body of Christ and may carry His Message into all the world.²³ By a proper administration is meant that it be performed as it was "instituted by Christ Jesus."²⁴ This in no way means to imply that the power

²⁰Ibid., p. 136.

²¹Ibid., p. 71.

²²Das lebendige Wort in einer verantwortlichen Kirche: Offizieller Bericht der zweiten Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes, Hannover 1952, herausgegeben von Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist (Hannover: Lutherhaus-Verlag, 1952), p. 76.

²³Lund-Quist, The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, p. 125.

²⁴Ibid., p. 118.

of the Sacrament depends on the rite itself. The rite itself is important but does not cause a valid reception of the gift of the Lord's Supper. Rather faith in Christ, in His Work of redemption and real presence, is the indispensable element, as is pointed out in these words:

Luther at all times emphasized the indispensability of faith in receiving the gift of the Lord's Supper and he rejected the doctrine that the sacrament's efficacy depended merely upon the proper administration of the rite (ex opere operato).²⁵

Nor does the validity of the sacrament depend on the status of the celebrant. As a rule this privilege is reserved for members of the clergy but it is to be kept in mind that the proper administration and ordering of the sacraments was entrusted to the Church.²⁶ In actual practice this is carried out by the clergy. It is even listed as one of the duties of the pastor in the report of Section IV on Evangelism and Stewardship in connection with promoting and practicing evangelism, in the comment: "The Pastor . . . preaches God's Word and administers the Sacraments."²⁷ The problem may arise, as, according to the report on world missions, it has in certain areas of the world, that a church with a large membership may have too few pastors. Since the responsibility to bring the Gospel to our world rests upon laymen and clergymen alike it is suggested that "Churches with large membership and few ordained pastors should

²⁵Ibid., p. 129.

²⁶Ibid., p. 125.

²⁷Ibid., p. 153.

study the possibility of the administration of Sacraments by means of an ordained part-time ministry."²⁸ This is not to say that their ordination makes the sacrament valid but that the church would serve itself better by having additional men in the ministry.

Thus far we have seen that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a gift of grace from God, instituted by Christ Himself, administered to His followers by the clergy on behalf of the congregations in an attitude of prayer, praise and thanksgiving for the nourishing of the new life of faith engendered in Baptism. We continue by expanding the last item trying to show the benefits of the Sacrament.

Benefits of the Sacrament

The new life engendered in Baptism through the working of the Holy Spirit is nourished in the Holy Supper. For this reason the Holy Supper is referred to as the sacrament of renewal, in which sacrament the communicant receives "the Bread of Life given us for the pilgrimage through the desert of life (John 6:53-58)."²⁹

Under the previous discussion on Baptism a question was raised with regard to whether or not faith could be lost. Most assuredly it can be lost and for that reason the Lord's Supper and its nourishing benefits are so very important. The following words clearly bear this out:

²⁸Ibid., p. 135.

²⁹Ibid., p. 128.

But salvation may be lost, squandered, or abandoned. You need to watch over it, especially in seasons of affliction; you will have to struggle valiantly in order to preserve it. But the only way to preserve our salvation is by a continual return to Baptism, i.e. by abiding within the saving Gospel and by abiding within the Body of the crucified and exalted Lord. To this end we have been given the preaching of the Word and the Lord's Supper.³⁰

The need for a continual return to Baptism and the assurance of the forgiveness of sins is present for all people as long as they are in this life. Sin, death, and the devil still wage war even on the children of God. They have not reached such a state of sanctification in Baptism as to be without the need for daily repentance and forgiveness. These truths are stated well in the words:

As long as we walk in this earthly body we sin daily and daily deserve the wrath of God. For this reason, the Christian Church devotes supreme attention to the forgiveness of sins, also when it conducts worship services. The living Word and the Sacrament of the Altar were given us in order that we may receive forgiveness of sins, ever and again.

Whenever man in faith accepts the forgiveness of sins, he actually experiences the new creation: the old Adam dies and the new man is raised, who accepts God's saving gift and glorifies His Name.³¹

Thus we see that the manner in which the new life is nourished is through forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is available to man by the grace of God who redeemed the world through His Son and who gives Him and His gifts to the believer in the Lord's Supper.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 50f.

Forgiveness is given to the believer only because of the love of God in Christ. This truth may be stated quite simply or may be expanded through the use of many figures of speech. It is still the same comforting truth that forgiveness of sins is given by God through His Son. Some of the most explicit statements of this truth from the material under study follow. From the lecture, "Our Church Service," by Peter Brunner:

Forgiveness of sins and life eternal are given us in the Lord's Supper in this manner: they are included in the sacrificial Body of Jesus which is really present in the eucharistic food. The treasure chest--the sacrificial Body--and the treasure--forgiveness of sins--are here united and identical. Nothing is interposed between the Cross and forgiveness. The gift and the Giver are one, the sacrifice and its effect are one.³²

From the report of Section I:

The gift of the Lord's Supper is the true body of Jesus Christ and the true blood of Jesus Christ, given for our sake and received by us unto the remission of sin.³³

And again in the same report linking together both the need for forgiveness and the resultant freedom it brings:

Men today are oppressed by the cruel necessity of self-preservation. In the inescapable struggle among individuals, classes, and nations for self-assertion they find themselves under the awful coercion of battling for survival and security of self. In the sacrament of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper, however, men are drawn by the gift of Christ's true body and blood into the sphere of Christ's sacrificial love, where the spell of self-centeredness is broken and men are made free to praise and to love.³⁴

³²Ibid., p. 55.

³³Ibid., p. 128.

³⁴Ibid., p. 129.

The basis for all these quotations on the forgiveness of sins lies in the words of institution themselves which were quoted in this connection at Hannover. A special parenthetical notation, indicative of their importance, shows that this truth is recorded in four different places of the New Testament. These words read:

"Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins" (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul).³⁵

This well-known statement from Luther's Small Catechism follows immediately: "Where there is remission of sins, there is also life and salvation."³⁶

It is truly a gift of God's grace that forgiveness is offered in the sacrament and thrilling indeed when man experiences the new relationship with God in Christ by which he is free from the clutches of the Wicked one. An expression of joy over the assurance of forgiveness of sins is seen in these words taken from the short introductory chapter to the convention proceedings entitled: "Message of the Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation":

In the Hannover Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation we had a fresh experience of the truth recovered at the time of the Lutheran Reformation: that we have forgiveness of sins and peace with God through the crucified and risen Lord alone, and that He is present in His church, in His Word, in Holy Communion. To this church the promise is given: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord" (Psalm 118:17).³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., p. 128.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

The assurance of peace with God is comforting and results in new vigor of life both for the individual and for the assembly of believers. There is a freedom which expresses itself in praise and love. Its source is the same Word of life Who creates and nourishes faith, as was said about the character of the Word: "Being the Word of Jesus Christ the Word in sermon and Sacrament has life and gives life, It is His Word and therefore it lives."³⁸

A further reference to the fact that spiritual life is strengthened in the sacrament as the Holy Spirit works through it is found in the following fine expression made by Section III which dealt with Inner Missions:

There is but one source of power for the evangelism responsibility of the church which will enable us to fulfil Christ's command to "Make disciples." That is the power of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The Holy Spirit, working through the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the Sacraments, will give strength and inspiration to His followers. This is God's way and God's work, and He will give His blessing and His power to it!³⁹

In addition to giving forgiveness of sins and strength for spiritual life here in time, the sacrament also assures the believer of his ultimate salvation. There are overtones both of joy and hope in this aspect of the sacrament reflected in these words made in the lecture on the Church Service:

The Lord's Supper bursts all the locks and chains of this perishing world of death. Clothed with the garments of

³⁸Ibid., pp. 118f.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 152f.

salvation we ourselves are placed within the doorway which was opened by Christ's sacrificial death and leads directly into the coming world of God.⁴⁰

Thus far we have pointed out the benefits for the individual Christian but have passed over lightly the fact that the benefits of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are also reflected in the whole Body of Christ--the Church. One of the purposes of the Word and Sacraments among us is that the Holy Spirit works through them "so that the Church may be built up as the body of Christ and may carry His Message into all the world."⁴¹

Before we leave this discussion on the benefits of the Lord's Supper it is necessary to point out once again that they are all available, not because of anything man does but because of Faith in the merits of Christ. For this reason it is necessary to speak of both worthy and unworthy reception of the Sacrament. At this point it is true that man does have a part. Man is involved insofar as he is confronted with making a decision for or against Christ. About this it is said, as the writer speaks of facing Christ in an eschatological crisis:

Like the preaching of the Gospel, the Lord's Supper brings the congregation and each communicant into the eschatological crisis. When we meet Christ in the Lord's Supper, we meet Him person to person; this meeting requires a decision on our part, and it leads to a decision concerning us. "Let him that loveth the Lord come! If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema! 'Maranatha'." These words were recited in the apostolic age at the beginning of the Communion celebration; they are an earnest reminder that the Lord's Supper

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 125.

does not release us from the eschatological crisis.⁴²

Continuing this thought several paragraphs later and making the point that the Faith which receives Christ is God-given we find:

Our divine service is service of God only when we pass through the eschatological crisis in such a way that we accept in faith the proffered blessings of salvation. Unless God awakens us by Holy Spirit,⁴³

By contrast he who does not believe is to be classified as an unworthy communicant. The following lengthy portion taken from the theology section report is helpful:

Luther at all times emphasized the indispensability of faith in receiving the gift of the Lord's Supper and he rejected the doctrine that the sacrament's efficacy depended merely upon the proper administration of the rite (ex opere operato). Even today one often meets a tendency to divorce the gift of the Lord's Supper from the recipient's faith and thanksgiving. Therefore it is important to emphasize that the true body and blood of Jesus Christ are received as a blessing only in the congregation's sacrifice of thanksgiving. Where this thanksgiving with which faith receives the gift is lacking, the gift, which always remains the same, is received unto judgment. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (I Cor. 11:29; Author. Vers.). A worthy reception is not the reception by a person who regards himself as worthy, for "if we judged ourselves truly we should not be judged" (I Cor. 11:31; Revised Standard). A worthy communicant is precisely the sinner whose conscience has been accused and condemned by the Law, who is distressed and feels himself rejected. Only an accused and condemned person can hearken to the gospel of forgiveness. Only such a one can thank God and gratefully sacrifice his whole life to God and his fellowmen in voluntary service of love. The one who is "self-confident," who thinks that he is worthy, will always forfeit the consolation of forgiveness which is prepared for him at the table of the Lord.⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid., p. 55.

⁴³Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 129.

To summarize the benefits of the Sacrament of Holy Communion we recall that the faith engendered by the Holy Spirit in Baptism may be lost unless nourished through constant contact with the Word and Sacrament. In faith man receives the forgiveness of sins from the Sacrament and where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation. Where there is life and salvation there is an expression of joy and a longing hope for the final salvation of all those who are His. The strength and inspiration received from the Sacrament is the motivating force which moves the Church in its work of evangelism. Finally, the benefits may be lost unless worthily received by a God-given Faith in Christ. All the benefits revolve about Him and for that reason we now take up the discussion on the authoritative power in Holy Communion.

The Authority Behind Holy Communion

The question arises, by what authority or what power is Holy Communion a sacrament which gives such glorious benefits to those who believe and pronounces judgment on the unworthy? A definite answer was given in the lecture on the Church Service which states:

The Lord's Supper which we celebrate, was instituted by Jesus. To deny that Jesus Himself instituted the Lord's Supper means to discard the Sacrament. The sacramental reality of the Lord's Supper flows forth from the authority of Jesus' own act of establishing it and from the authority of His words of institution. The Supper which Jesus celebrated in the night in which He was betrayed, has the power within itself to release a chain of celebrations beyond the original meal held at a particular hour with a particular group of disciples; to inaugurate a series of identical suppers in which the original meal is ever and again re-enacted. The same Lord who in that memorable night acted and spoke in the fullness of messianic authority, now acts and speaks with the

same divine authority every time His congregation celebrates the Holy Supper in His memory; and thereby He constitutes it as His Supper.⁴⁵

To show more fully what is meant by the administration of the Sacrament according to "His Words of Institution" we cite a comment from the theology section which reproduces the words of Luther's Small Catechism when it says:

The nourishment of faith and love is the Holy Supper, the sacrament of renewal, the sacrament of "the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself" (Luther, Small Catechism) when He said, "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins" (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul).⁴⁶

The authority lies, therefore, in Christ Who instituted the Sacrament and Who gives the promised benefits to those who partake of His Body and Blood in faith and judgment to those who do not believe. His authority in turn stems from His victory on the cross expressed in these words: "Jesus victory on the cross . . . in the Gospel, in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, becomes contemporary with us, tangibly and truly present."⁴⁷

The Real Presence

Of great importance and worthy of fuller development is the mention of Christ's Body and Blood. The teaching of the real

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 128.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 53.

presence was upheld throughout the discussions at Hannover. Specific references follow together with a brief review of the context in which they were made. In order to keep from distorting the meaning by isolating certain words or phrases, some of the references include more than one item for consideration.

Anders Nygren, in the opening message to the Assembly, exhorts the Lutheran Church to uphold the teaching of Christ's presence in the Sacrament when he says:

It is one of the special tasks of the Evangelical Lutheran Church to be on guard against each and every attempt to subtract any portion whatever from these articles of our faith in Christ: Christ did come in the fulness of the time; Christ is really present with us in Word and Sacrament; Christ will return in glory for the consummation of all things.⁴⁸

It appears as though both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are meant by the word "Sacrament" because the German account says at this point: "Christus Präsenz, der real gegenwärtig bei uns ist in Wort und in den Sakramenten."⁴⁹

These words above do state that Christ is truly present in the Sacrament, but even more specifically is it said by Peter Brunner: "In, with and under the bread and wine in the Holy Supper the Body and the Blood of our Redeemer are really present";⁵⁰ or by Section I: "The bread is the body of Jesus Christ, and the wine

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁹ Lund-Quist, Das lebendige Wort in einer verantwortlichen Kirche, p. 49.

⁵⁰ Lund-Quist, The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, p. 52.

is the blood of Jesus Christ."⁵¹ Brunner continues his development of the identity between Christ's Body and Blood and the visible elements of bread and wine with the words:

The innermost center of the Lord's Supper is created and also interpreted by the words which Christ spoke concerning the bread and the cup. "This is my body for you . . . This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you unto the remission of sins." These words do not interpret an action or a symbol. They state what the food is that is used in this action. The relation which Jesus establishes between bread and Body and between wine and Blood is "not analogy but identity" (Lohmeyer). The bread remains bread, and the wine remains wine. But by virtue of Jesus' word of institution this bread is His Body given into death for us, and this wine is His Blood shed for us.⁵²

As to how this is possible, it is said to be a miracle just as great a mystery as is the resurrection, in the words:

The actual reception of the true body and blood of Jesus Christ in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper is, like the reality of Christ's resurrection, not humanly provable; it is a miracle to be accepted and believed, not demonstrated.⁵³

Of special importance is the notation that although it is accepted and believed, the truth of the real presence does not depend on the faith involved. It is said that faith does not create the miracle, this the Word does. Even the unbelieving communicant receives the true body and blood of Jesus Christ.⁵⁴

Exactly when bread is Body and wine is Blood is not stated in

⁵¹Ibid., p. 128.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 54f.

⁵³Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 129.

Lutheran theology. It is rather affirmed that all four elements are in some manner present. Thus it was said:

The duality of bread and wine, of Body and Blood calls our attention to the fact that the Body which was sacrificed on the Cross and the sacrificial Blood of Jesus which established the new covenant, are really present under the eucharistic food and are offered to us and received by us as the bread and the wine are being distributed.⁵⁵

Although it is true enough to say Jesus Christ is present, it is better to say more specifically who is meant by Christ. He is the One who is true God and true man. It is He who suffered, died, rose, and lives today. To show the humanness of the Christ we find it stated this way:

The Body of Jesus which we receive in the Lord's Supper is the bodily humanness in which He accomplished our salvation. Jesus' saving work, Jesus' saving suffering, Jesus' saving victory, Jesus' entire physical life, lived for our sake, His death suffered for our sake, His victory for our sake--all of this is in His Body and is His Body which we receive in the Lord's Supper in the form of bread. Jesus' body, in particular, is His sacrificial Body. This Body and His sacrificial death are identical. In His sacrificial Body we have His sacrificial death. In the covenant-Blood of Jesus we have the presence of Jesus' covenant-sacrifice.⁵⁶

That Christ lives today was brought out repeatedly at Hannover, even in the theme of the convention which was "The Living Word in a Responsible Church." From Section V, the section which dealt with students and youth, comes the observation that it is one of the responsibilities of the church to help the youth to a right understanding of the church and its work. It is said that the

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁶Ibid.

churches must make it clear that their "perfection" exists only through the presence of the living Christ in Word and Sacrament.⁵⁷

In most discussions on the doctrine of the real presence one can expect to find some statements with regard to heretical views on the subject. Hannover was no exception. The real presence was defended and upheld over against both the Roman Catholic teaching of repeated sacrifices in the Mass and transubstantiation and the Reformed teaching that the visible elements symbolize sacrificial elements. Anders Nygren says of the Mass:

What has happened, need not be repeated and cannot be repeated. Christ offered up Himself, once for all (Heb. 7:27). The redemption which He obtained for us, is eternal (Heb. 9:12). Even the suggestion that His sacrifice be repeated ("sacrifice of the Mass") is an encroachment upon the perfect validity of Christ's work of salvation, a denial of the unique redemption which He wrought.⁵⁸

Again, the report from the section on theology warns about the use of the term "sacrifice":

The true sin-offering was made once for all on Calvary and cannot be repeated. What may and ought to be repeated is the offering of thanks with which the congregation in faith receives the sacrifice which was offered once for all. The Reformers exercised great caution in the use of the word "sacrifice" in connection with the Lord's Supper in order that they might not give the false impression that the celebration of the Lord's Supper was a repetition of the sacrifice offered once for all and that such a repetition constituted a work of merit.⁵⁹

Against a change in the elements it was said just prior to these

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 128.

words: "Nothing is here said about a transformation of bread and wine."⁶⁰ Finally with reference to a symbolical presence it was said:

What is happening, dare not be dissolved and spiritualized (i.e., de-materialized) as though Word and Sacrament were only signs pointing to another kind of reality. Word and Sacrament themselves are realities, not symbols. Here we have an est, not a significat.⁶¹

By way of summary we see that the Lutheran Church was urged to uphold the teaching of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. It was said that Christ is truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine. The bread is His Body and the wine His Blood. The relation which He established between bread and Body and between wine and Blood is not analogy but identity. This is a miracle whose truth depends neither on rationality nor on faith. The specific time at which Christ is present is not considered in Lutheran theology. Nevertheless, all four elements--bread, Body, wine and Blood--are in some manner present in every celebration. As for heretical views on the subject, the Real Presence was upheld over against both the Roman Catholic teaching of repeated sacrifices in the Mass and transubstantiation, and the Reformed teaching that the visible elements symbolize sacrificial elements.

Reasons for Celebrating Holy Communion

Having shown above that the Lord's Supper is celebrated by the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 47.

authority of Christ who is truly present and who gives remission of sins to those who believe and judgment to those who do not believe, we now look at several points which in general deal with the purposes or reasons for celebrating Holy Communion. The main reason, that of receiving nourishment for spiritual life through the remission of sins, already has been treated. We expand here on the facts that by the Sacrament Christians are united with Christ, they are united with each other, they are in a position to witness to each other and the world, they are in an eschatological relationship with Christ, they show their spiritual life in the fruits of faith and actions of love toward God and man, and they hope for the ultimate eternal union with Christ.

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion believers are united with Christ. The New Testament uses various pictures to bear out this truth such as the building and its cornerstone,⁶² the human body,⁶³ and the bride and bridegroom.⁶⁴ At Hannover frequent reference was made to Christ as the head of the Body--His Church. In the words of Anders Nygren:

Christ Himself is really present and in the most intimate possible manner literally "incorporates" Himself into the church, which is His Body, and into everyone of the faithful members of the church, who are members of His Body, by allowing them to partake of His Body and His Blood, and in this way He bestows upon them the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection.⁶⁵

⁶²I Pet. 2:5,6.

⁶³Col. 1:24.

⁶⁴II Cor. 11:2.

⁶⁵Lund-Quist, The Proceedings of the Second Assembly, p. 46.

The same thought was expressed in calling the Lord's Supper the sacrament of union with the body of the living Christ quoting John 6:56: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in Him."⁶⁶

Besides being a sacrament of union with Christ the Head of the Church in a vertical relationship, it is a sacrament of union with other members of the body in a horizontal relationship. It was said:

As the sacrament of union with the body of the living Jesus Christ it is also the sacrament of union with the other members of His body: "seeing that there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (I Cor. 10:17, alternate trans.).⁶⁷

As Christians partake of His Body and Blood they "not only receive God's gift of grace, but . . . also gratefully proclaim the Lord's death till He come."⁶⁸

Still another reason for the Christian congregation to celebrate the Lord's Supper is that in the celebration it bears witness to those outside the church of the fellowship in love it enjoys with Christ and with one another. This witness shows itself in loving service to people as the report on theology says: "This ministry of the congregation in turn is inseparably connected with the activity of loving service to the world."⁶⁹ Other references

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 52.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 130.

to the fruits of love resulting from the sacrament as men witness to others include this one from the lecture on the church service: "The Sacrament of the Altar saves indeed, but only on the condition that it be received in faith, and faith includes love and is active in love."⁷⁰ Another says:

In the sacrament of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper, however, men are drawn by the gift of Christ's true body and blood into the sphere of Christ's sacrificial love, where the spell of self-centeredness is broken and men are made free to praise and to love.

It is the responsibility of the Church gratefully to witness to the world, in word and deed, of this gift of God's love.⁷¹

A final thought added here--even though it does not exactly fit under the heading of being a reason or purpose of Holy Communion but does show the result of being one with Christ and with the members of His body who exercise faith in loving service--is that where there is forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation there is also a longing hope for eternity. Christians experience NOW being one with Christ in the sacrament and look forward to being with Him at the Heavenly Feast as well.

Thus the Lord's Supper is a meaningful anticipation of Christ's royal marriage supper. While we celebrate the Lord's Supper here below, we are close to that other supper that will be celebrated when the great multitude in heaven cries aloud, "The marriage of the Lamb is come!" We celebrate the Lord's Supper at the very threshold of this other supper. In the Lord's Supper the presence of that other supper is only thinly veiled; it is so near that we almost hear the Lord say, "Behold, I come quickly," and the response of the Spirit and the bride, "Come. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." There, where

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 56.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 129.

bride and Bridegroom are near the threshold, waiting for one another, there is the place where the church of Jesus Christ celebrates the Supper of the Lord.⁷²

For Whom

We have shown above, somewhat in detail, what was said at Hannover with regard to Holy Communion as far as its authority, benefits, purposes, and the real presence are concerned. It follows now to show what was said with regard to those for whom the sacrament is intended. Divergent opinions were expressed. No definitive answer was given other than mutual agreement on the existence of a problem and concern for intensive future study. In the opening remarks of the section on theology the question: "Is unanimity in doctrine the indispensable condition for Altar fellowship (Intercommunion)?"⁷³ was given as one of the points on which it was said:

It was quite evident during the sessions of our Section that on a number of subjects there is among us neither perfect unanimity nor sufficient clarity, even though we all recognize the authority of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.⁷⁴

Or as Gustav Stählin says in the third thesis of his lecture:
 "Lutheran missionary practice recognizes differences of opinion concerning questions of altar fellowship."⁷⁵

⁷²Ibid., p. 55.

⁷³Ibid., p. 116.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 66.

There does seem to be agreement on this that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament to be received solely by those who are one in the Church--the Body of Christ, through Baptism. Peter Brunner says:

The Gospel is preached to all men, the unbaptized as well as the baptized. The preaching service is a public service open to everybody. The Lord's Supper, however, is a service where only the baptized members of the church participate and the doors to the outside world are closed. The Lord's Supper is a special gift of Jesus for those who have entered through the door of Baptism; it is the specific means of grace for the organized congregation of His followers. The Lord's Supper is the most distinctive part of the worship service of the church.⁷⁶

And Gustav Stühlin says:

I am not thinking here of the practice of the great evangelist Stanley Jones of allowing unbaptized "friends" of Jesus to commune; this is quite unthinkable for us; in fact, there is no church having a definite confession, that would invite or admit to communion those persons who have not been baptized or such as are not willing to be baptized. The Lord's Supper, the Body of the Lord, can be worthily received only by those who in Baptism have been placed into the Body of Christ; and only in their case will the bread that we break become the communion of the Body of Christ, i.e., the constantly renewed and ever newly bestowed fellowship with Himself and with His Body, the church.⁷⁷

The Lord's Supper was therefore viewed as being reserved for those who are in the Church. It is for those who have been brought into the eschatological crisis and have made the decision to accept Christ.

The relationship between preaching and the sacraments with respect to those who are in the Church is stated to be such that:

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 66f.

Preaching invites men to baptism and to the Lord's Supper by its proclamation of hope. It calls those who have been baptized to return to baptismal grace and to come to the Table of the Lord, and calls those who have not been baptized to baptism.⁷⁸

With the exception of these few comments just cited, most of the remarks on the subject of altar fellowship were made by Gustav Stählin in his lecture on "Lutheran Ethics and Missionary Practice." These are taken up below as a summary report, with quotations, from those pages which dealt with the Lord's Supper.

He begins by posing these questions: (a) Is there a Lutheran Ethic?; (b) Is there a Lutheran missionary practice?; (c) Is it necessary to have the same?⁷⁹ Often answers are given by turning to the experience of the past rather than to Scripture. He says:

An important question in this field is, e.g., the extent to which--alongside the directions and examples found in Holy Scripture--Christian experience may be allowed to have a voice in determining our course of action. As a matter of fact, many of the characteristic traits of missionary work have grown out of the compulsions of experience, and this is true of all denominational missions, including the Lutheran missions; many times "scriptural" methods were modified by subsequent experience. We shall meet this problem when we discuss the relation of baptismal fellowship and communion.⁸⁰

After stating that it is unthinkable to allow those who are not baptized to commune, he raises two questions. First, "May all baptized adults be admitted to communion immediately after baptism?"⁸¹ In actual practice this has been answered both in

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 58f.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 67.

the affirmative and in the negative. The conclusion is reached that the missionaries should not be faulted because at times they insert a probationary period between baptism and administering first communion, but rather that this practice should be allowed, depending on the circumstances. Instead of saying this is a departure from biblical standards he says:

Inserting a period of probation between Baptism and first communion would only be an instance of the adaptability of flexibility of our Lutheran missions⁸²

Secondly, "Is it permissible, and if so, under what conditions is it permissible, to admit members of other confessions to the Lord's Supper of the Lutheran Church?"⁸³ The discussion of this question revolves about a correct understanding of the word "unworthily" in I Corinthians 11:27. It is held by those who say "No" to the question that, "out of love for the other person . . . they owe a testimony concerning the wondrous gift of the Lord's Supper which he as yet knows only in part, and whom they want to preserve from receiving the Sacrament unworthily."⁸⁴

Against this Stählin offers for consideration this comment, which he holds--on the basis of New Testament Theology--to be just as correct as the former:

The man who knows that he is going to a Lutheran celebration of the Lord's Supper and desires to come, ought not to be cast out by men. The One Who gives Himself is the Lord Jesus;

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

we may safely leave it to Him whether or not to deny His gracious gift to those whose understanding of His mysterious gift is inadequate.⁸⁵

He is concerned to know whether

the refusal to commune members of other denominations should not much rather be denoted as "unworthily" than the reception of the Sacrament by someone whose dogmatical conceptions are not quite adequate.⁸⁶

He thinks that in the past little or nothing has been gained by rigorous refusal in this matter.

The conclusion then is a directive for rethinking the problem as is seen from these words:

The Lord's Supper is the gift of the most incomprehensible Love in the world; should we want to turn it into a celebration which hurts and divides and destroys, instead of building up? If nothing else, then the consequences of this rigorous practice which are so painfully and embarrassingly evident in our age of increasing ecumenicity, ought to lead every theologian who is willing to do metanoia also with respect to his theology, to see clearly that here something is not just right.⁸⁷

It is furthermore suggested that the starting point for remedying some of the things which are not just right is to look at what it is that should determine altar fellowship. He says:

The proton pseudos of the so-called orthodox practice is the claim that the establishment of altar fellowship is determined by the doctrine of the Lord's Supper (e.g., in the Lutheran church) or by the official charisma bestowed by priestly orders (e.g., in the Anglican church). Here is the point where the attack upon this particular disease of our church life (German: Abendmahlsnot) should begin.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

To carry these thoughts to their ultimate conclusion may mean unrestricted intercommunion. Stählin, however, does not advocate this. Rather, he makes the application to Lutherans at Lutheran altars; and this for very practical reasons. A more thorough-going study of the problem with Scripture-founded-conclusions is hoped for as a guide to the pastors whose consciences are troubled in this matter. These thoughts are given in the words:

Of course, I am not in favor of a limitless intercommunion: the other denominations need to be told as plainly as hitherto where they are in error, and the truth that has been entrusted to the Lutheran church needs to be clearly set forth; but I do favor open communion at Lutheran altars, as practiced in our day almost everywhere even in pronouncedly Lutheran territorial churches of Germany (as a result of the thorough confessional mixture of the population because of the influx of millions of refugees). The sad feature is that many pastors who follow this practice have a bad conscience, theologically and ecclesiastically; it is important to provide our pastors, both at home and in the young churches, with a good conscience with reference to the administration of the Sacraments, the heart and center of their ministry.⁸⁹

A directive for the Lutheran church to be open minded on the problem is finally given in the words:

The Lutheran church, of all the churches, should be especially ready to listen to its theological teachers when they ask whether its practice--even though it be hallowed by centuries of "orthodox" approval--really does conform to the New Testament and to the intentions of our Lord Jesus, and it should be willing to revise such practice if necessary.⁹⁰

In summary, therefore, let it be said that there was agreement at Hannover that a problem exists in the agreement and disagreement among Lutherans on altar fellowship. Close communion is advocated

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

for those who are in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Since by definition this should include all Lutherans, the desire was expressed for open communion for Lutherans at Lutheran altars. New Testament Theology, and not past practice, is called on to direct the future thinking on this matter. Suggestions for future thinking on this and other theological matters are anxiously awaited to be forthcoming from the newly established Department of Theology. An answer to the specific question of altar fellowship among Lutherans is called for to clear the consciences of clergymen who in actual practice find it advisable to compromise occasionally.

The views presented in the foregoing pages have lifted out the central issues in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In general it can be said that in their discussions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper a sound Lutheran theology is evident. Baptism was viewed as an initial sacrament, also for infants, by which an unregenerate soul is brought to faith. Faith may be lost if it is not nourished by the Word and by the Holy Supper. The Holy Supper was instituted by Christ for His followers. So in truth present in, with, and under the earthly elements giving the blessings of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to the believers and judgment to the unbelievers. Questions were raised but not answered with regard to the present view on altar fellowship.

For a review of the details treated, the reader is directed to the "Summary of Findings" as well as to the several summaries.

CHAPTER V

A SUMMARY AND A CONCERN FOR FUTURE THEOLOGICAL STUDY

The significance of the Lutheran World Federation convention at Hannover can be said to revolve about the marked degree of interest shown in giving the work of the Federation a theological foundation. It was recognized, especially by the section dealing with theology, that perfect unanimity on various subjects is lacking among Lutherans today. These are to be studied by the new Department of Theology.

The study presented in the foregoing pages has lifted out the comments made on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In general it can be said that in their discussions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper a sound Lutheran theology is evident. Baptism was viewed as an initial sacrament, also for infants, by which an unregenerate soul is brought to faith. Faith may be lost if it is not nourished by the Word and by the Holy Supper. The Holy Supper was instituted by Christ for His followers. He is truly present in, with, and under the earthly elements giving the blessings of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to the believers and judgment to the unbelievers. Questions were raised but not answered with regard to the present views on altar fellowship.

For a review of the details treated, the reader is directed to the "Summary of Findings"¹ as well as to the several summaries

¹Supra, p. 6.

concluding the various sections of this study.²

At the beginning of this study attention was called to the fact that the source material used was limited to include only the reports and lectures made to the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation as printed in the book of proceedings of that convention.

Nevertheless, in addition, much has been written in the various publications of the Lutheran World Federation and its member churches since 1952. We direct the reader's attention to publications of the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in its series entitled, "Theologische Berichte über die Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes: Hannover, 1952." In that series the work of Section I (Theology) was carefully analyzed by Dr. Wilhelm Andersen. Sources from the Hannover convention, which he considers important and on which he draws for his material, include: (a) lectures on theology; (b) the discussions of the same; (c) official preparatory work for the sectional meetings; and (d) essays read before the plenary sessions.³

He says that the center of Lutheranism is always Jesus Christ--the Living Word,⁴ and that the aim of the Hannover convention was

¹Supra, p. 6.

²Supra, pp. 27, 34, 41, 48, 54, 63.

³Wilhelm Andersen, Das Wirkende Wort: Theologische Berichte über die Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes, Hannover, 1952, Sektion I: Theologie (München: Evangelischer Presseverband für Bayern, 1953), p. 9.

⁴Ibid., p. 12.

to find new expression, a new approach, and a studied re-evaluation of the one and commonly accepted Gospel.⁵ The work undertaken there was divided into these parts: (a) The Living Word; (b) Life produced by the Living Word; (c) Responsibility of the Church.⁶

How Dr. Andersen organized his comments on this material is shown in this reproduction of his table of contents:

- Teil I: Das lebendige und das geschriebene Wort.
- Teil II: Das lebendige Wort in der Menschwerdung, Kreuzigung und Auferstehung Jesu Christi und die Rechtfertigung des Menschen.
- Teil III: Gesetz und Evangelium.
- Teil IV: Das in der Predigt, in der Taufe und im Heiligen Abendmahl wirksam werdende Wort.
- Teil V: Das lebendige Wort als Ursprung und Weg der Kirche.⁷

In conjunction with our study here, section four of the outline above is of special interest to us because it discusses Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Andersen devotes most of his comments to the contents and resultant discussions of papers by Prof. Eric Wahlstrom from the United States of America and Prof. Reidar Hauge from Norway. Comments by men such as Dr. Werner Elert of Erlangen, President Stolz of Australia, and President Behnken of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod are inserted and analyzed.

From these essays and their discussions it became very evident that not only is there a lack of harmony between Lutheran and Reformed thinking but also a gap exists between the thinking of some

⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁶Ibid., p. 14.

⁷Ibid.

Lutherans on the questions raised.⁸ Discussion on doctrinal issues such as those had at Hannover, both formal and informal, as well as the discussion evoked by publications is one of the contributions the Lutheran World Federation is making to the theological thought of Lutherans today.

In looking to the future, attention is called to the wholesome attitude of those men who dealt with the theological issues at the Second Assembly and to their concern for future study, expressed in the words:

Section I wishes to express its gratitude to the Assembly for resolving to establish a Department of Theology. This action makes it possible to inaugurate the kind of study program which The Lutheran World Federation and all its member churches greatly need.

In recommending the study document and the supplementary material to the churches for careful study, we wish to thank our God once more for our oneness in faith, a oneness which is based on the Scriptures and our Confessions. The living Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and in all eternity; and His Word abides forever. But our life, our human existence is subject to constant change, and each generation must give its own response to the call of God. Our study document would like to serve our present generation as a stimulus, during these perilous and fateful days, to consider the real meaning of our faith and to testify of our Savior Jesus Christ by word and deed.⁹

For those persons interested further in the work of the Lutheran World Federation, attention is called to the fact that in 1950 a publications center, presently connected with the Department

⁸Ibid., p. 80.

⁹The Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, edited by Carl E. Lund-Quist (Gunzenhausen, Bavaria: Buchdruckerei Riedel, 1952), p. 116.

of Theology, was established at the federation headquarters in Geneva, "to stimulate theological study by giving the largest possible dissemination of available theological literature."¹⁰ Inquiries for information are to be addressed to the Executive Secretary, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁰ E. Theodore Bachmann, Epic of Faith: The Background of the Second Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, 1952 (New York: The National Lutheran Council, 1952), p. 35.

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APPENDIX

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