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THE PROBLEM OF INFREQUENT COMMUNION IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD

A Thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Herbert Michael Kern

Concordia Seminary,
April 15, 1941

as corrected
Approved by

His Excellency
Richard B. Jones

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INTRODUCTION

Our Church regards the Sacrament of Holy Communion as a most sacred and precious treasure. "Das heilige Abendmahl ist die eigentliche Krone aller Gnadenmittel, welche Christus seiner lieben Christenheit verliehen hat."¹ The pure doctrine of the Lord's Supper is highly honored in our circles. The Missouri Synod loyally defends the doctrine of the Real Presence against "the hyper-sacramentalism of one branch of Christianity and the a-sacramentalism of another." Nevertheless, a widespread neglect of the Lord's Supper exists in our Church. A number of years ago an editor of the "Lutheran Witness" wrote: "One of the alarming symptoms in the Church is the neglect of the Sacrament by so many members."² Recent Communion statistics offer positive proof that the Eucharist does not occupy that place in our congregational life which Christ clearly intended for it. The average Communion attendance in the Missouri Synod from 1930 to 1939 is as follows: 1930, 2.10; 1931, 2.11; 1932, 2.07; 1933, 2.09; 1934, 2.16; 1935, 2.18; 1936, 2.21; 1937, 2.26; 1938, 2.32; 1939, 2.43.³

A consideration of these statistics provokes the question: "Which is the greater wonder, that God in this Sacrament offers us sinners such exquisite blessings and riches or that we are so ungrateful for, and so unappreciative of, His unspeakable gift?"⁴ It is most saddening to contemplate the incalculable

1 Walther, C.F.W., "Evangelien Postille," p. 151.

2 Sommer, M.S., "Your First Communion," Lutheran Witness, Vol. LV, No. 7, p. 116.

3 Statistics received from Rev. S. Michael, Synod Statistician.

4 Sommer, M. S., "Confessional Addresses," p. iii.

losses sustained by the individual, the congregation and the Church at large as a result of infrequent Communion. Are we disturbed that Christ is crowded out of so many lives, that there is so little evidence of brotherly love, that the Lord's work is so widely disregarded? May there not be a direct connection between the lukewarmness of a large section of the laity and the neglect of Holy Communion? "Can they expect to have strength to work who do not eat, strength to work for the Savior without eating of the sacramental food?"¹ In this connection the statement of a Lutheran theologian of a former day is also pertinent:

"Wenn es in einer Gemeinde mit dem rechten und fleissigen Gebrauch dieses Sacraments schlecht bestellt ist, so raubt sie sich damit selbst eines grossen Segens, den Gott ihr zugeachtet hat, das innere Wachsthum der Gemeinde wird nicht mehr froehlich fortschreiten, sondern faengt an stille zu stehen und zurueckzugehen, auch wenn vielleicht aeusserlich die Gemeinde noch waechst und zunimmt." 2

1 Jesse, R., "Ye Shall Be Witnesses unto Me," Proceedings of the Eighteenth Convention of the English District, Volume 1939, No. 2, p. 23

2 Metzger, G., "Magazin fuer ev.-luth. Homiletik," Vol. 21, No. 1, p. 30.

PART ONE : Reasons for Infrequent CommunionA. History

The problem of infrequent Communion is not co-existent with the formation of our Church. Our Confessions indicate that a weekly celebration of the Sacrament was customary at the time of the Reformation. The Augsburg Confession declares: "We hold one communion every holy-day, and, if any desire the Sacrament, also on other days, when it is given to such as ask for it."¹ Likewise, the Apology states: "Among us masses are celebrated every Lord's Day and on the other festivals."² Luther's "Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes," published in 1526, provided that the sermon be followed by a public paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer and an admonition to those who intended to partake of Holy Communion. Luther writes:

"Zum andern, vermahne ich euch in Christo, dass ihr mit rechtem Glauben des Testaments Christi wahrnehmt und allermeist die Worte, darin uns Christus seinen Leib und Blut zur Vergebung schenket, im Herzen fasset. Dass ihr gedenkt und dankt der grundlosen Liebe, die er uns bewiesen hat, da er uns durch sein Blut von Gottes Zorn, Suende, Tod und Hoelle erloeset hat, und darauf aeußerlich das Brot und Wein, das ist, seinen Leib und Blut zur Sicherung und Pfand zu euch nehmet. Demnach wollen wir in seinem Namen und aus seinem Befehl durch seine eigenen Worte das Testament also handeln und brauchen."³

However, even during the infancy of the Reformation certain small, yet important changes in the liturgy indicated a vacillating attitude toward the Lord's Supper. Thus the "Nieder-Saechsische Kirchenordnung" of Bugenhagen omitted

1 Concordia Triglotta, p. 67.

2 Ibid., p. 383.

3 Luther, M., Saemmtliche Schriften, St. L. Ed., Vol. X, p. 247.

the words of distribution.¹ It is a heart-rending chapter in Lutheran Church History that the beauty and glory of the 16th century Church vanished after a century to be replaced by ruin and destruction with but a few oases remaining in the vast desert. The doctrinal and liturgical deterioration that ensued may have been partly due to the pressure that was exerted on certain Lutheran communities by the two Interims, the Augustanum and the Lipsiense and to the poison of Reformed influences. Another possible explanation is that the first love had waxed cold after a century of brightest burning. The main reason, however, for the liturgical decay, which extended from the second half of the 17th century to well into the 19th century, is the Period of Restoration which followed the Thirty Years' War and continued until the first decades of the 18th century.²

One of the worst results of the Thirty Years' War was the godless living and the desecration of everything holy that followed. When the Treaty of Westphalia finally ended hostilities, the leaders of the Evangelical Church in Germany were faced with the tremendous problem, not of reformation and renovation, but of restoration. Theirs was not the task of purifying the Church's faith and practice, but the much more difficult one of restoring the purified faith and practice into the consciousness and life of a people, demoralized by war, having no real hunger and thirst for the Gospel, and therefore not responsive to it as the masses of the pre-

1 Rudelbach, A. G., Die Sakrament-Worte, p. 10.

2 Kretzmann, P. E., Christian Art, p. 282f.

ceding century had been. The leaders of the Church lost no time in re-issuing the old church orders, many of which had been destroyed during the course of the war, and none of which were any longer in use. But the conceptions underlying many parts of the revised church orders were legalistic and often dogmatically unsound. The resulting doctrinal deterioration entered the Church gradually, almost imperceptibly. This decay was undoubtedly favored by the unionistic tendencies of the rulers of Prussia, who were indifferent¹ to dogmatical and liturgical questions.

By the end of the 17th century the Church had degenerated into a state of dead orthodoxy. The reaction to this condition of orthodoxy and formalism took the form of Pietism which reached its fullest development in the first part of the 18th century. But Pietism, which sought a revival of spiritual life, traveled all the way from a detached, uninterested objectivity to an excessive subjectivity. The idea of secret communion with God was one of the foremost principles of the Pietists. Purity of doctrine was underestimated. Indifference with regard to the truth was promoted. Men came to look upon their prayers as a means of grace. Prayer assumed ever greater importance. An indifference with regard to the preaching of truth arose, and the celebration of Holy Communion became less and less frequent.²

Pietism, by either destroying much of the Lutheran liturgy or robbing it of its meaning, unfortunately paved the way

1 Kretzmann, P. E., op. cit., p. 284f.

2 Webber, F. R., Studies in the Liturgy, p. 196.

for the destructive activity of Rationalism. During its reign of almost a hundred years reason was enthroned as a tyrant. The rationalists rejected both the form and the content of the traditional church service. Its theology was based not on the great historic facts of redemption but on its own speculations. One instance of the liturgical aberration of rationalistic churches are the following sentences from the Exhortation: "At this table, consecrated to the Lord, let all eat and drink with profoundest emotion! Let this bread and wine typify to you the death of Jesus on the cross; and let the eating of this bread and the drinking of this wine symbolize the participation in all the blessings of His death! May you be deeply moved by the surpassing greatness and beauty of soul of which this Divine One gave evidence when for your salvation He permitted His body to be broken and His blood to be shed, and died upon the cross! Come to Him, then, as it is natural for good people to do, with ardent gratitude..." A form of distribution reads: "Use this bread in remembrance of Jesus Christ; he that hungereth after pure and noble virtue shall be filled. Drink a little wine; he that thirsteth after pure and noble virtue shall not long for it in vain."¹

At the worst stage of Rationalism the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Christmas, Easter, Ascensiontide, and either on Whitsunday or Trinity Sunday was regarded as sufficient.

¹ Kretzmann, P. E., op. cit., p. 289f.

The sectarians celebrated only an Easter Communion, a "Fall" Communion, and sometimes a Christmas Communion. After a century or two this deplorable practice of infrequent Communion assumed an air of respectability. Leaders in our day who take aggressive steps to remedy the problem are exposed to the stigma of being called "pro-Romanists," and enemies of the liberty granted by the Gospel.¹

¹ Webber, F. R., op. cit., p. 205f.

B. The Clergy

"Even though we admit that heedlessness, worldly ambition, love of pleasures, lack of humility, lack of deep conviction of sin, forgetfulness, worldly optimism, and worldly pessimism, and many other conceits keep people from the Sacrament, yet it cannot be denied that, in part at least, the negligence of some pastors is also to blame." ¹

One of the chief charges against pastors with regard to the matter of Holy Communion is their failure to describe the Sacrament as the sweet, comforting, and glorious thing that it really is. Preachers stress the doctrine of the Real Presence over against transubstantiation and the memorial theory. They assure the communicants that forgiveness is conveyed in the Sacrament. (But since the communicants are instructed that the spoken Word also offers remission of sins, their eagerness for forgiveness is often cooled even before they kneel at the Lord's Table. ^{At times} Too often) the clergy fail to mention the all-important fact that while in the Gospel forgiveness is granted to all, in Holy Communion Jesus singles out each individual and offers to him the entire treasure which He has brought down from heaven.

"There is justification for the statement that in a large measure our people have been led to look only for forgiveness to the practical exclusion of all other fruits." ²
 Forgiveness is, of course, the chief benefit of Holy Communion, and its importance must not be minimized. But pastors should

¹ Sommer, M.S., Confessional Addresses, p. iii.
² Lindemann, F., In Remembrance of Me, p. xi.

not on that account slight the many other priceless fruits which presuppose forgiveness. When people have learned to expect only forgiveness, and when this forgiveness is constantly proclaimed to them in the Word, the fact that forgiveness is imparted personally in the Eucharist is not likely to induce frequent participation. Many a poor Communion record is no doubt partly a result of the neglect of preachers to speak and teach enough of "life and salvation," which the Small Catechism also mentions as benefits of the Lord's Supper. It is inconceivable that Christian life would be as feeble as it is if greater stress were laid on all the sacramental benefits that the Lord intended for His children.

"Because we do not stop to reflect on the practical importance of the Eucharist in the worship of the Church, in its influence upon the faith and life of the Church, its bearing on the faith and life of the individual Christian, in its patent and undeniable implications of confession, both of sin and grace, in its acknowledgment of Christ's Lordship, and of our Christian fellowship, we are in danger of not assigning to the Sacrament the truly amazing spiritual value which inheres in it." 1

Pastors also neglect their duty by not exhorting their members often and earnestly enough to make frequent use of the spiritual tonic of the Eucharist. The mistake is often committed of preaching concerning the Lord's Supper only in the confessional address. Thus reference to Holy Communion is made only when people expect to hear something about it, and not when they do not care to hear anything concerning it.

Surely there is good reason to doubt that many of our

1 Wismar, A., "The Importance of the Sacrament," Pro Ecclesia Lutherana, Vol. VI, No. 1, p. 7.

pastors are doing all in their power to train their congregations to use the visible means of grace frequently. Are they exhorting, beseeching, encouraging individual souls with such warmth and vigor that they become hungry with all their spirit for the love they do not merit? May we not apply some of the statements to our clergy which Luther directed at the pastors of his day:

"Ich besorge aber und halt's dafuer, dass solches alles sei ein grosser Teil auch unsere Schuld, die wir Prediger, Pfarrherra, Bischoefe, und Seelsorger sind, als die wir die Leute so lassen hingehen in ihrem eigenen Sode; vermahnen nicht, treiben nicht, halten nicht an, wie doch unser Amt fordert; sondern schnarchen und schlafen ja so sicher, als sie than; denken nicht weiter, denn, wer da kommt, der kommt, wer aber nicht kommt, der bleibt draussen, und fahren so zu beiden Theilen, dass wohl besser taugte? Soll es daher in diesem Stueck unter uns besser werden, so muessen vor allen Dingen wir Pastoren, die wir von Gott als Waechter auf Zions Mauern gestellt sind, eifrig werden, und unsere Gemeinden zu fleissigem Gebrauch des Sakraments bitten, locken, und reizen."

Church members are often discouraged from frequent Communion because attendance upon the Lord's Table is perverted into a harrowing experience. Undue emphasis is placed on the danger of unworthiness. Pastors ply the communicants with questions such as: "'Are you worthy? Are you truly sorrowful for your sins? Are you sure you will not partake the Lord's Supper to your damnation?'" Little wonder that so many feel no desire to have their conscience stretched upon the rack at frequent intervals and put off a similar experience as long as possible.²

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 2172f.

2 Lindemann, F.H., "Young People and Holy Communion," American Lutheran, Vol. XX, No. 12, p. 10.

Some pastors also permit their members to develop an attitude of indifference toward the Lord's Supper by the manner in which the entire Communion service is conducted. In smaller congregations Holy Communion is celebrated from four to twelve times a year. Although there are more frequent celebrations in larger congregations, the impression is received that the purpose is to reduce the time consumed and the number of communicants. In certain churches the majority of the worshippers withdraw before the Gospel truths and promises are sealed to the individual in Holy Communion. In some churches the minister even dismisses them with a blessing. Thereupon the minority celebrates the Sacrament. During the main service only minor or perhaps no reference is made to the Sacrament, and the majority are not even aware of the fact that they are taking part in a Communion service.¹

The failure of pastors to emphasize Holy Communion sufficiently is unquestionably due, in part, to the fact that many pastors neglect Holy Communion themselves. To be able properly to encourage the laity to pray the pastors must themselves have frequent heart-to-heart talks with their heavenly Father. Likewise "pastors will never be able to speak convincingly of the need of frequent Communion until they have experienced its blessings personally and practice what they preach." The assertion is made that the pastor has an opportunity to commune at pastoral conferences and synodical conventions. But even if a pastor communes at all synodical conven-

¹ Lindemann, F.H., In Remembrance of Me, p. vii.

tions and pastoral conferences, he still will receive the Sacrament perhaps only three or four times a year. A pastor, it is said, may also receive the Sacrament privately from a fellow-pastor. Though there are some pastors who receive the Lord's Supper frequently from a neighboring pastor, it is doubtful whether this practice is general. The Communion record of our pastors, of course, is unknown. Nevertheless "years of investigation and inquiry have not obliterated the impression that generally the pastors' record is about the same as the average record of Synod."¹

¹ Lindemann, F.H., "The Pastor and the Sacrament," American Lutheran, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, p. 9.

C. The Laity

Luther declares that unbelief is the basic reason for the neglect of Holy Communion on the part of the laity.

Also siehest du und musst bekennen, dass alle Luegen, falsches Leben, Verachtung goettlicher Ordnung, Traegheit, Faulheit und Lassheit zum Sacrament, dazu Undankbarkeit und Vergessung solcher unaussprechlicher Liebe Christi zu uns fliesst und komat alles und alles aus dem Unglauben, dass ein Herz nicht glaubt, dies Sacrament sei Christi Liebe und herzliche Ordnung. Denn was ein Herz nicht glaubt, das kann's auch nicht achten, ehren, lieben noch loben. Und was man verachtet, laesst oder vergisst, da ist ein gewiss Zeichen, dass man nichts davon haelt, glaubt auch nichts davon, nimmt sich's auch nicht an. Wiederum, was man glaubt und fuer gewiss haelt, das kann man nicht verachten, es sei gut oder boese." 1

Indifference is an additional cause of infrequent Communion. Life-long familiarity with the pure Word and Sacrament as administered in our Lutheran Church has engendered contempt for these precious treasures among many church members. Years of external routine and a faith of the head and mouth only have made havoc of their faith. They are spiritually sated. Their flesh loathes heavenly manna. They no longer hunger and thirst for forgiveness, righteousness, and godliness. Their souls are starving in the midst of plenty.

Some people feel no particular need for Holy Communion. Though they daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment, they cannot bring themselves to sorrow over their transgressions of God's law. They are unable to weep over their sin because their hearts are like stone. They cover up their own failings by excuses, denial, forgetfulness, carelessness, comparison with others, or by accusing others. Since they have voluntarily

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 2176.

submitted to Satan's tyranny and have given up the fight against sin, they do not crave strength and courage to wage the war of the spirit against the forces of evil. When people no longer desire personal assurance of forgiveness, they no longer have any strong incentive to urge them to receive the Sacrament.

Holy Communion is neglected by some because it requires a certain degree of spiritual exertion. At times people allow a half-year or more to pass before considering attendance at the Lord's Table. In the meantime they live a drowsy spiritual life, paying little heed to their Savior's command to remember Him often. They receive the Sacrament so rarely that they experience little blessing from it. Finally their faith grows so weak that they become discouraged, and that which ought to be a most precious treasure seems contemptible to them. Luther himself learned that it is extremely difficult to arouse oneself to attend the Lord's Table after a long absence. He relates his experiences thus:

Davon weiss ich wohl zu sagen, was es thut wenn man sich eine Zeitlang vom Sakrament abhaelt; bin in solchem Feuer des Teufels auch gewesen, dass mir das hochwuerdige Sakrament so fremd ward, dass ich je laenger, je ungerner dazu ging. Davor huetet euch ja, und gewoehnet euch, dass ihr oft dazu geht, sonderlich wenn ihr geschickt dazu seid, das ist, wenn ihr befindet, dass euch das Herz um der Suenden willen schwer und bloede wird; auf dass ihr unseres Herrn und Erloesers Jesu Christi nicht vergesset, und an sein Opfer und Tod gedenket, denn er begehrt anders nicht von uns. 1

Certain people remain away from Holy Communion over a long period of time because they harbor a grudge or are at enmity with their neighbor. They realize they would partake of the Sacrament to their damnation while in such a frame of

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. XIII, p. 315

mind. Yet they stubbornly persist in their sin and refuse to be reconciled with their brother. They would rather forego the Sacrament than their pet sins. When such people are admonished, they object: "Yes, I ought to go to Holy Communion, but I cannot rid myself of anger against my brother, regardless of how hard I try!"

A misunderstanding among our laity of the need, the nature, and the power of Holy Communion is largely responsible for the low Communion record throughout our Synod. Many do not realize that Christ ordained the Sacrament of Holy Communion, not because He needs it, but because it is necessary and profitable for His disciples to remember Him. Either they have never learned properly or they have long forgotten that the Eucharist is a powerful pledge of full reconciliation with the Father. They do not fully understand the power of the Lord's Supper to keep alive brotherly love and to promote sanctification. They are not cognizant of the "fact that our attendance upon the Lord's Supper is intimately connected with our soul's salvation," and that the communicant "is sinning grievously and is making a serious mistake when he is allowing this question of his approaching the Lord's Table to be forgotten and neglected."

There are only too many who think that the Lord's Supper is mainly a pious practice, a debt that they owe to God, a holy ceremony through which they make themselves acceptable to God. By going to Holy Communion they think they are performing God's

1 Tract: This ~~is~~ How Often? (American Lutheran Publicity Bureau)
 2 Sommer, M.S., "How Often Should a Christian Receive Holy Communion," (Tract) p. 6.

will, and that if they go to the Lord's Supper once or perhaps twice a year, they are doing their duty toward God, toward man, and toward the Church. They may express themselves thus: "I have not been to Holy Communion for some time now. Because of what the pastor and the people might think, I ought to go again. It would do no harm at all events." Others may think that since they have sinned, attendance at the Lord's Supper will make up for their sins, and that it is a kind of good work, which will take the place of other virtues which they lack.

An expression resulting from incorrect knowledge of the nature of the Lord's Supper is couched in the following words: "I have forgiveness of sins; why then, should I go to the Lord's Supper to receive what I already have?" The Sacrament has no attraction for people with such sentiments, because it offers nothing different from what is conveyed in the spoken Word. Their eyes, however, have not been opened to the truth that Holy Communion is a personalized Gospel, and that by giving His broken body and shed blood Christ is granting men the most glorious surety of personal forgiveness.

Some church members fail to commune frequently since they entertain the notion that only grievous sins require the Sacrament.¹ Because they are not conscious of any serious sin of omission or commission, they believe that it is possible to dispense with frequent Communion attendance without any detriment to their faith or spiritual life. Their outward life is fairly respectable, and their spiritual condition causes them

1 Sommer, M.S., op. cit., p. 3.

no alarm. Failure to examine themselves critically has made them self-righteous and self-satisfied. Their false security has blinded them to their inherent sinfulness. Since Satan has deceived them into believing the pernicious error that a gross sinner is in need of repentance, but that a regular churchgoer is not so much in need of it, they totally are lacking in any desire to receive the Sacrament often.

The devil keeps certain people away from the Lord's Table by haunting them with the thought that they are unworthy. These miserable individuals are driven and tormented by their sins. They fear God's anger and judgment of death and hell. A deep sense of guilt makes them mortally afraid of eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ to their damnation. They decide not to commune until they are worthy, that is, free from sin. And if, and when, they finally force themselves to commune, they approach the Lord's Table with a trembling heart. The sacrament is so abundantly rich and their sin is so abysmally grievous that they are terrified.¹

There are those who neglect Holy Communion since they apparently derive no benefit from it. They say: "I feel no different when I return from the Lord's Table." They no doubt expect to be emotionally stirred. Probably they want to feel a sublime ecstasy. They place feeling above the really important point, believing. They do not realize that it is impossible for a true believer to receive the Sacrament without benefit.

Another reason for the neglect of Holy Communion is the attitude that infrequent attendance is sufficient. Many misinformed Christians labor under the delusion that Holy Communion is so lofty and so noble that it should be received only on special occasions. The habit of frequent Communion, in their opinion, leads to a lack of sincere devotion and to the desecration of the Sacrament. Therefore they do not avail themselves of every opportunity to commune.

The abuse of the liberty that belongs to Christians under the Gospel is also responsible in some cases for the neglect of Holy Communion. Our attention is pointed to the fact that Christ never prescribed the number of times He wants His followers to receive the Sacrament. The illogical conclusion is then drawn that the Savior did not desire His disciples to make frequent use of the Sacrament, which He in love gave to the Church of His love. Although the statements of Christ, the evangelists, and St. Paul peremptorily forbid any and all restrictions and limitations on frequent presence at the Lord's Table, it is held that Christians need not often experience "the communion of the bread which we break and the cup of blessing which we bless."

Formalism is another reason for the neglect of Communion. In his introduction to the Small Catechism Luther expresses the opinion: "Whosoever does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is no Christian."¹ At a time when the people were emerging from the darkness of Popery and were only

1 Concordia Triglotta, p. 537.

beginning to understand the precious treasure of the Sacrament, Luther looked upon four Communion a year as the irreducible minimum at which Christianity ceased and utter indifference began. We of the 20th century enjoy many advantages over the people of four centuries ago. The influence of Roman abuses is negligible in our day. Yet Luther's minimum for Communion attendance appears to be the generally accepted rule. Dr. Walther declares that "many Lutherans determine by the almanac¹ whether it is time for them to go to Communion again." Luther's reference to "four times a year" has made such a deep impression upon the minds of our people that many, falsely assuming that four Communion a year is the maximum, never consider attending the Lord's Table more frequently. Communion attendance thus degenerates into a mere form.

¹ Law and Gospel, p. 354.

D. Official Church Publications

The scarcity of material on the Lord's Supper in our official Church publications is probably another factor contributing to the neglect of Holy Communion by our people. Surely the laity cannot be impressed with the value and importance of the Sacrament when discussion of the subject in our Church papers is extremely meager. In the last twenty years (1921-1941) only twenty-six and two-thirds columns or thirteen and one-third pages of the "Lutheran Witness" have been devoted to articles on the Lord's Supper. The total number of articles appearing during this period is only thirty. The space used for the treatment of Holy Communion is almost the same for each of the last two decades - approximately six and one-third pages during the 1921-1930 period and about seven pages during the 1931-1940 period.

A comparison of the consideration given Holy Communion and that given a number of other topics is revealing. While the "Lutheran Witness" in 1936 contained only one article on the Lord's Supper, it contained six articles on evolution, six on giving, and four on the lodge. In 1937 one article (one-half column) dealt with Holy Communion; but there were five articles on evolution, three on giving, and two on lodges. During 1938 not a single "Lutheran Witness" article treated the subject of Holy Communion specifically; but there five articles on giving and two on evolution. Again in 1939 no article dealt primarily with Holy Communion; but during the same year almost a score of articles appeared on giving

and finances. In 1940 only one article was written on Holy Communion compared with thirteen on the subject of giving.

The treatment of Holy Communion in the "Lutheran Witness" during the last twenty years is principally of a dogmatical and negative character. The chief topic is the condemnation of false doctrines among the sects. A frequently mentioned subject is the prevalent contempt for the Sacrament in our midst. The main benefit of the Lord's Supper, the forgiveness of sins, receives sufficient attention, but the subordinate benefits flowing from forgiveness are usually slighted. In general, there are few warm appeals inviting, beseeching, and urging the laity to partake of the Sacrament frequently.

The "Lutheraner" during the ten years from 1930 to 1939 devoted slightly more space to Holy Communion than the "Lutheran Witness." During this period twenty-five articles occupying eleven and one-half pages appeared. There is, however, justification for the charge that the "Lutheraner" is also giving insufficient attention to the all-important topic of the Lord's Supper.

Of the twenty-five articles written between 1930 and 1939 the denunciation of sectarian errors represents the major part of thirteen articles. A few examples may be cited to substantiate this assertion. In 1936 there were two articles on the Lord's Supper: (1) "Einmal oder vier" (two columns) - the chief aim is to prove that Luther's expression is correctly translated "at least four times." (2) "Ein Saeugling empfaengt das heilige Abendmahl" (one column) - mainly a criticism of a Greek Catholic priest who gave Holy Communion to a little child. There was

one article in 1937: "Die Episkopalen bleiben bei der alten Weise der Abendmahlsfeier" (four-fifths of a column) - a commendation of the Episcopalians who at a conference decided to retain the common cup; in addition, a condemnation of the same Episcopalians for spending time on the lynching problem to the neglect of the more important subject of the true doctrine of Holy Communion. Two articles appeared in 1938: (1) "Warum muessen wir an der lutherischen Abendmahlslehre festhalten?" - danger threatens on three fronts, from the Reformed, Modernists, and Romanists; the Real Presence, sacramental eating, worthy participation, and the benefits of forgiveness, life and salvation are also mentioned. This article took up one column. (2) "Gebet am Abendmahlstag (one-third column)- a prayer taken from the "Gebete der Kirche" by Otto Dietz. The one article written in 1939 dealt with the topic, "Die Suedlichen Baptisten und die Sakramente" (five-sixth column) - mainly a condemnation of Dr. Truett who called the sacraments externals and outward ceremonies.

Purity of doctrine is sufficiently stressed in the "Lutheraner," but material of a devotional nature is conspicuous by its absence. Though the forgiveness of sins is emphasized greatly, only minor consideration is given the many important subordinate benefits. Warm exhortations to hungry souls to obtain the rich blessings of the Sacrament are few.

The number of sermons, sermon outlines, and confessional addresses on Holy Communion in the "Concordia Pulpit" also indicate a lack of emphasis on the subject. The twelve volumes of the "Concordia Pulpit" from 1930 to 1941 contain

nine sermons or sermon studies and thirty-six preparatory addresses (either complete or in outline form) on the Lord's Supper. During the six-year period from 1930 to 1935 there was over twice as much material (six sermons and twenty-five confessional addresses) as during the six-year period from 1936 to 1941 (three sermons and eleven confessional addresses). It is evident that but little preaching on the Lord's Supper is intended for the main service when the entire congregation is present.

A preponderance of the subject matter deals with the discussion of the true doctrine of Holy Communion. The Real Presence receives particular attention. The dominant thought is the forgiveness of sins. Only cursory mention is generally made of the large number of additional fruits. Too little stress is laid on the Sacrament as a heavenly feast of joy. Invitations to appear frequently at the Lord's Table are few and far between.

While the "Walther League Messenger" pays considerable attention to such subjects as the home, family altar, marriage, courtship, morality, personality development, education, and the like, a perusal of five recent volumes of this excellent youth magazine reveals that references to the topic of Holy Communion are exceedingly small in number. Vol. XXXIX and Vol. XL contain nothing on the subject. But one mention of the Sacrament - a few sentences in No. 11 - occurs in Vol. XLIV. Frequent, regular, and reverent reception of the Lord's Supper is recommended as a means of gaining spiritual power. Holy Communion is discussed only once in Vol. XLVI. No. 12 of this volume

includes a discussion topic on "You and Your Congregation: Your Liturgy." The liturgy of the main service, The Communion, is explained and questions concerning the liturgy are offered. In Vol. XLVII but one article (No. 3) on Holy Communion is to be found. The Rev. A. R. Kretzmann elaborates on the "heaven-sent power" conveyed in the Sacrament. He stresses the point that "the significant remembrance of the real presence calls for holiness of living."

PART TWO : Remedy for Infrequent Communion

A. More Frequent Celebration of the Sacrament

The first means of remedying the problem of infrequent Communion that suggests itself is a more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. If the total number of Communions made by two hundred communicants is twelve hundred, and if Holy Communion is celebrated twelve times a year and is attended by half of the communicant membership each time, this means a total of one hundred communicants for each celebration. A semi-monthly celebration of the Eucharist would mean fifty communicants each time. Actually, however, there would be more than fifty communicants at each celebration, for most congregations find that their communicant record is improved decidedly when a more frequent celebration of Holy Communion is observed. "There is little danger that the people will get a quantitative attitude and look upon the outward performance of this privilege as a meritorious work."¹

It need not be feared that the efficacy of the Sacrament will be reduced by frequency of celebration. If the Word of God were preached but twelve times a year we would perhaps have crowded churches, but the efficacy of the Word would not be increased in the least because of its infrequency. The same condition is applicable to the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Efforts to increase the celebration of Holy Communion are not a matter of ceremonial or liturgies. "Essentially it is a

¹ Webber, F.R., op. cit., p. 206.

question of restoring the Sacrament to that place in church life which was intended for it by our Lord, which was given it in the Early Church, and which it occupied long after the Reformation."

When the Savior instituted the Sacrament, He implied a frequent celebration of the Eucharist was to be the rule by saying: "This do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me." (1 Cor. 11, 25)² The early Christian Church prized this gift of the Savior's grace most highly. The believers at Jerusalem continued daily with one accord in the Temple, in the public services of the Word, and broke bread from house to house, in the closed meeting of the Eucharist. (Acts 2, 46) In the congregations outside of Jerusalem, where the majority of the members were perhaps of Gentile origin, the disciples gathered upon the first day of the week to break bread. (Acts 20, 7) The celebration of the Eucharist was connected with the celebration of the common meal of fellowship, known as the Agape. The Agape symbolized both the union and the communion of the believers. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11, 19. 20.; Jude 12) This meal of fellowship evidently intended to carry out the former significance of the Passover. Concerning the Agape Chrysostom writes:

The first Christians had all things in common, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles; and when that ceased, as it did in the apostles' time, this came in its room as an efflux or imitation of it. For though the rich did not make all their substance common, yet upon certain days appointed they made a common table; and when their service was ended,

1 Lindemann, F.H., "The Sacrament A Means of Grace," American Lutheran, Vol. XXI, No. 2, p. 9.
2 Kretzmann, P.E., The New Testament, Vol. II, p. 142f.

and they had all communicated in the holy mysteries, they all met at a common feast, the rich bringing provisions; and the poor and those who had nothing, being invited, they all feasted in common together. 1

The Agape soon was abused. Paul directed the charge against the Christians at Corinth that "every one taketh before other his own supper." (1 Cor. 11, 21) There was no longer a division of the store among the entire assembly. Instead the poor had little or nothing and therefore went hungry, while the rich had more than they needed and became intoxicated. As a result of these conditions the Corinthians were in danger of forgetting the deep significance of the Sacrament. To avoid abuses, Paul teaches the Corinthians to eat at home and to meet in the Church for the divine service and Sacrament. The Agape continued to degenerate with the increasing worldliness of the Church so that its celebration was forbidden by Ambrose of Milan and by several
2
Councils.

In the early Christian Church Holy Communion was celebrated every day according to apostolic precedent. One of the sentences of Hippolytus reads: "Come, ye hierarchs, who did Me sacred service blamelessly day and night, and made oblation of My honorable body and blood daily." 3 According to Augustine the frequency of Communion attendance was to be determined by the needs of every believer, but he says: "The
4
Eucharist is our daily bread." Basil writes:

1 Quoted in: Bingham, J., "Antiquitates," Book XV, Ch. VI, Section 6.

2 Kretzmann, P.E., Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. I, No. 3, p. 176.

3 The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V, p. 252.

4 The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VI, p. 282.

It is good and beneficial to communicate every day, and to partake of the holy body and blood of Christ. For He distinctly says, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life." And who doubts that to share frequently in life, is the same thing as to have manifold life. I, indeed, communicate four times a week, on the Lord's day, on Wednesday, on Friday, and on the Sabbath, and on the other days if there is a commemoration of any Saint. 1

Article XXIV of the Apology reports the following:

Epiphanius writes that in Asia the Communion was celebrated three times a week, and that there were no daily Masses. And indeed he says that this custom was handed down from the apostles. For he speaks thus: Assemblies for Communion were appointed by the apostles to be held on the fourth day, on Sabbath eve, and the Lord's Day. 2

Chrysostom complains of the small number of communicants at the daily sacrifice. 3 Gennadius of Massilia commended at least weekly Communion. 4 Justin Martyr, who offers the oldest description of the Lord's Supper, writes:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those, who through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a

1 The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol VIII, p. 179.

2 Concordia Triglotta, p. 385.

3 Schaff, P., History of the Christian Church, Vol. II, p. 237.

4 Schaff, P., History of the Christian Church, Vol. III, p. 516.

word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. 1

Chapter XIV of the Didache gives the following instructions:

But every Lord's Day do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. 2

In the Early Church it was taken for granted that the faithful should attend the Lord's Table regularly, which clearly meant every Sunday, for the Apostolic Canons declared: "If any of the faithful come to church to hear the Scriptures read and stay not to join in the prayers and receive the Communion, let them be excommunicated as the authors of disorder in the Church." 3 The Council of Antioch issued the decree:

Let all those be cast out of the Church who come to hear the Scriptures read in the Church but do not communicate with the people in prayer or disorderly, turn away from the participation of the Eucharist. 4

As early as the fifth century the custom arose in the churches of the Orient to celebrate the Sacrament infrequently, as, for instance, only on the high festivals of the Church Year. Light is thrown on the changing conditions by the decrees of Fabian, taken from the Decretal of Gratian, VIII, 640:

Everyone of the faithful should communicate three times a

1 The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p. 186.

2 The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII, p. 381.

3 Quoted in: Kretzmann, P.B., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 329.

4 Quoted in: Bingham, J. op. cit., Book V: p. 355f.

year...Although they may do it more frequently, yet at least three times in the year should the laity communicate, unless one happen to be hindered by any more serious offense, to wit, at Easter, at Pentecost, and the Lord's nativity. 1

The order of three Communion a year paved the way for still greater modifications. When the idea of a Christian priesthood, so earnestly advocated by Cyprian, came into vogue, the Church gradually came to regard the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Gregory the Great (590 A.D.) saw the sacrificial victim in the bread on the altar. Masses were offered for the dead, who could thus be delivered from purgatory. The Eucharist was divided. The congregational Communion became overshadowed by the sacrificial mass. The 13th century brought radical changes. Transubstantiation was fixed as the doctrine of the Church by the Lateran Council of 1215. At this Council the minimum Communion attendance was fixed at once per year, namely, the Easter Communion.²

By the grace of God Luther restored the Sacrament of Holy Communion to its pristine purity and original beauty. He rejected the whole sacrificial conception of the Mass. In opposition to the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation Luther defended the Scriptural dogma of the Real Presence.³ In the first months of the year 1526 Luther's "Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes" was published. Luther's order of service appointed a weekly celebration of the Sacrament. It reads in

1 Kretzmann, P.E., "The Eucharist between 30 and 325 A.D.," Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. I, No. 3, p. 178.

2 Seaman, G.S., "The Administration of the Lord's Supper in Different Ages of the Church," Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association, Vol. III, p. 5.

3 Bring, R., "The Lord's Supper, Its Origin and Significance," Augustana Quarterly, Vol. XIX, No. 4, p. 299.

part: "Nach der Predigt soll folgen eine oeffentliche Paraphrasis des Vater-¹Unsers und Vermahnung an die, so zum Sakrament gehen wollen."

According to the Lutheran Confessions a weekly Communion was general during the time of the Reformation. The Apology, Article XV, states: "With us many use the Lord's Supper (willingly and without constraint) every Lord's Day." ² The German version uses the term "Volk" for multi, many.

In the Lutheran services published from 1540 to 1594 the weekly Communion was still prescribed for the main services. A place, however, was given for the formal or extemporaneous admonition when no communicants came forward. The absence of communicants and the lack of desire for the Eucharist were deplored, and the people were urged and encouraged to commune frequently. In the course of time, however, the celebration was dropped from the main service, and the liturgy was adapted ³ to a service without Holy Communion.

In recent years theologians have been attempting to reunite the two means of grace in the main service. F.R. Webber writes:

Our rubrics might well be reworded in such a way that a weekly celebration is regarded as the normal, rather than the exceptional procedure. It can be made clear that a service which ends abruptly with a prayer and a hymn after the sermon is an incomplete service. The opinion now seems to be that this is the normal thing, and everything from the Prefatory Sentences onward is something added. The laity too often speaks of the first half of the service as the "regular service," and

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 246.

2 Concordia Triglotta, p. 325.

3 Lindemann, F.H., op. cit., p. 10.

the second half as "the Communion service." This is highly incorrect. The regular, normal service is the Holy Communion, from the Introit to the end of the Post Communion. If it be broken off with a prayer and hymn after the sermon, it is a truncated service. 1

Many pastors today are alive to the disgrace of the neglect of Holy Communion, but they seem to be nonplussed as to a remedy for the problem. Whenever the will is strong enough, however, a solution can usually be found. Instead of yielding to a defeatist attitude, pastors should set themselves to correct the congregation's notions. Persistent and patient instruction is bound to have an effect upon Christians. Every concession made to indifference ought gradually to be eliminated. In larger churches the solution to extremely long celebrations is a greater number of services. Two or three celebrations on a Sunday morning appear a physical impossibility for a pastor, but the chief question is: "How earnestly do we want the Holy Sacrament to occupy its intended place? How earnestly do we desire for our people the blessings derived from frequent Communion?"²

That frequent celebrations of Holy Communion make for frequent attendance is the experience of numerous pastors. The 1938 record of Trinity Lutheran Church, Astoria, Long Island (Pastor Fred H. Lindemann) is an excellent example. During that year the Sacrament was celebrated approximately fifty times. The total number of communicants was 699. The Church bulletin reports:

1 Webber, F.R., op. cit., p. 206.

2 Lindemann, F., In Remembrance of Me, p. viii.

The Communion total reached 7,003, an average of ten Communion per member. We still have a few who appear at the Lord's Table in April only. Others appear twice. But the number of those who receive the Lord's body and blood for the strengthening of their faith at every opportunity is increasing. Many of us communed more than forty times. 1

B. Proper Instruction by the Clergy

1. Concerning the Nature of the Sacrament

To induce their members to receive the Sacrament eagerly and frequently pastors should instruct them thoroughly regarding the nature and significance of Holy Communion. In the final analysis the basis of all admonition must be doctrine. The laity should be taught that the Lord's Supper is the visible Word. God offers the same grace in Holy Communion as He does in the spoken Word. J. Gerhard writes:

Die Sacramente sind das sichtbare Wort, gleichsam ein kurzer Auszug des Evangeliums (epitome quaedam evangelii), und haben alle ihre Wuerde, Wirksamkeit und Kraft aus Gottes Wort, was mit dem aeußerlichen Element in den Sacramenten aus goettlicher Ordnung verbunden ist. 1

The whole Gospel is contained and comprehended in the Eucharist.

Denn wenn es heisst: Nehmet, esset, das ist mein Leib, der fuer euch gegeben wird; nehmet, trinket, dieser Kelche ist das neue Testament in meinem Blut, das fuer euch vergossen wird zur Vergebung der Suenden; so wird hiermit nichts anderes gesagt, als dies, dass uns der Leib Christi als derjenige gegeben werde und von uns genossen werden solle, welcher fuer uns, um uns zu erloesen, dahingegeben ist, und dass uns sein Blut als dasjenige gegeben werde und von uns getrunken werden solle, das vergossen ist zur Vergebung unserer Suenden. Was ist das aber anderes, als der Kern und Stern des ganzen Evangeliums, mit Christi eigenem Leibe und Blute verpfaendet?! 2

Luther states: But now the entire Gospel and the article of the Creed: I believe a holy Christian Church, the forgive-

1 Loc. de Sacramentis, Par. 55; quoted in: Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts, 1875, p. 49.

2 Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts, 1875, p. 48.

ness of sin, etc., are by the Word embodied in this Sacrament and presented to us." 1

Whereas the spoken Word appeals to the sense of hearing, the visible Word in the Sacrament is an appeal to the senses of sight and taste as well, as the Apology, Article XIII, points out:

But just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike the heart, so the rite itself strikes the eye in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and the rite is the same, as it has been well said by Augustine that the Sacrament is a visible word, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore the effect of both is the same. 2

Luther states emphatically that the Word, not the elements, renders the Sacrament efficacious:

Das ist unsere Lehre, dass Brod und Wein nichts helfe, ja auch der Leib und Blut in Brod und Wein nichts helfe; ich will noch weiter reden: Christus am Kreuze mit allen seinen Leiden und Tod hilft nichts, wens auch aufs bruenstigste, hitzigste, herzlichste erkannt und bedacht wird, es muss alles noch ein anderes da sein. Was denn? Das Wort, das Wort, das Wort (hoerest du Luegegeist auch?), das Wort thuts. Denn ob Christus tausendmal fuer uns gegeben und gekreuzigt wuerde, wae-re es alles umsonst, wenn nicht das Wort Gottes kaeme, und theilts aus und schenkte mirs, und spraeche: das soll dein sein, nimm hin und habe dirs. 3

The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast. In the Sacrament the Lord, as it were, says to the communicant:

Take bread, and together with it receive My body, which was broken for you on the Cross. Take wine, and together with it receive My blood, by which the new covenant of forgiveness was made. And whenever you do this, do it in remembrance of Me. Let it remind you to remember Me, to think of Me, of My love

1 The Large Catechism, Concordia Triglotta, p. 759.

2 Ibid., p. 309.

3 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. XX, p. 362.

for you which prompted Me to have My body broken and My blood shed for you on the Cross. Let it remind you of My work and My person, all about Me. 1

When he communes, the Christian is to remember that Christ is true God, one in essence and equal in majesty with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Jesus is the Creator of the universe, by whom all things were made. Holy Communion should further bring to the communicant's remembrance that Christ is the God-man, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He is as fully true man as He is true God. The only difference between Christ and the ordinary human man is Christ's sinlessness. He was tempted as we are but did not sin. The communing Christian should also recall that Christ is the Savior of all men. Jesus, as priest, fulfilled the Law for us, sacrificed Himself for us, ransomed our souls, and now at the throne of God He continually intercedes for us. As a prophet, Christ proclaimed Himself to be the Son of God and the world's Savior, foretold future events, and even today He preaches the Gospel through the medium of all faithful ministers of the Word. In His office of King Christ rules the universe with power, His Church with grace, and heaven with glory.

The communicant, of course, thinks of many more matters when he remembers Jesus. He sees Him as a helpless infant, born in great poverty. He sees Christ leading a perfect life, performing wonderful works of love. He sees big drops of blood trickling down Jesus' brow in Gethsemane. He beholds Christ

1 Lindemann, P.H., op. cit., p. 67.

suspended from the cross, cruel spikes piercing His hands and feet, crying: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27, 46) He sees Jesus laid in the sepulcher, rising triumphantly from the grave on the third day, ascending into heaven forty days later, forever to rule in majesty, power, and grace.

But to remember Christ means more than merely to think of Him. It means to believe in Him, to accept Him with the hand of faith, to receive His salvation, His help, His comfort, and all that He has to offer for time and eternity. "The true remembrance of Christ consists in the believing reflection of the communicant: 'This ^{body} blood was given for me; this blood was shed for the remission of my sins.'" 1

To remember Christ is not the idle celebration of a show or one instituted for the sake of example, as the memory of Hercules or Ulysses is celebrated in tragedies, but it is to remember the benefits of Christ and receive them by faith, so as to be quickened by them. 2

"To commune in remembrance of Jesus means to consecrate oneself anew every time to be His own and to live under Him in His kingdom and to serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." 3

"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." (1 Cor. 11, 26) Thus the Sacrament in a most telling manner proclaims the most

1 Walther, C.F.W., Law and Gospel, p. 353.

2 Concordia Triglotta, p. 409.

3 Spitz, C.T., "This Do in Remembrance of Me," Lutheran Witness, Vol. XLV, No. 5, p. 67.

amazing truth in the universe, namely, that Christ, the Lord, obeying His Father's will, sacrificed Himself for the death of sinners.

Mean Approach!
 (It is to be observed that in the bread Christ does not give His blood together with His body, nor yet does He impart His body together with His blood in the wine. How marvelously that sets forth the manner in which our loving Lord achieved the sacrifice of His love, for on the cross His precious blood was separated from His sacred body. His death on the cross was really and truly a sacrificial death, for in His death His blood was separated from His body. It is exactly and precisely this truth that is most tellingly brought to our memories by the Sacrament in which the Lord gives us, in the bread, His body, in the wine, His blood. 1)

Christians at the Lord's Table declare two things concerning the death of Christ, namely, that they regard it as a historical fact, and that they look upon it as a most beneficial act, as the source of their salvation. ² The Lord's Supper proclaims the death of Christ as the fearful death for man's sin. Therefore every worthy communicant will answer the question, "Who is responsible for the death of Jesus Christ?", with "I am." The body and the blood offered to atone for the sin of man are the body and the blood received in the Sacrament.

The Sacrament also has the character of a thanksgiving.

Besides these, expressions are also found concerning thanksgiving, such as that most beautifully said by Cyprian concerning those communing in a godly way. Piety, says he, in thanking the Bestower of such abundant blessing, makes a distinction between what has been given and what has been forgiven, i.e., piety regards both what has been given and what has been forgiven.

1 Wismar, A., op. cit., p. 37.

2 Arndt, W., "The Lord's Supper" (Sermon), Concordia Pulpit, Vol. III, p. 287.

i. e., it compares the greatness of our evils, sin and death, with each other, and gives thanks, etc. And hence the term eucharist arose in the Church. 1

Glowing descriptions of the Sacrament as a sacrifice of thanksgiving are found in the writings of Thomas à Kempis.

Behold, from when doth this love proceed! what a gracious condescension of thine appeareth herein! how great thanks and praises are due unto thee for these benefits! 2

But it is out of mere grace and favor that thou art permitted to come to my table, as if a beggar were invited to a rich man's dinner; and he hath no other return to make to him for his benefits, but to humble himself and give thanks. 3

In receiving the Eucharist the believer declares that he too belongs to those who want to thank and praise God. He thereby confesses and thanks God that he is redeemed and made holy and saved solely by the grace of God in Christ. Thus the Sacrament affords Christian a God-given opportunity to bring the sacrifice of a contrite and believing heart, sacrifices with which God is well pleased.

Our Lord Jesus clearly intimated the spirit and atmosphere in which He intended His followers to eat His Body and drink His blood in remembrance of Him. When He instituted the Sacrament, Christ "took bread and gave thanks." (Luke 22, 19) Christ made the first celebration, in the very shadow of Golgatha, an occasion for thanksgiving. 4

The Church recognized the celebration of the Sacrament as an occasion for joyful thanksgiving, not for fear and

1 Concordia Triglotta, p. 411.

2 Imitation of Christ, p. 200.

3 Ibid., p. 287.

4 Lindemann, F.H., op.cit., p. 15.

trembling, for torture of conscience, for unhappy affliction of soul. The Church endeavored to express this joyousness in the forms designed for the observance of the Holy Supper, the order of Morning Service or the Communion. The service of the Communion is ushered in with the Preface. Next come the Prefatory sentences which direct the congregation in view of the exalted nature of the acts of worship that follow to lift up their hearts unto the Lord full of joy and gratitude.¹ The Eucharistic Prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving in imitation of our Lord when He gave thanks in the night of institution. In earlier times this general thanksgiving was much longer, the thought beginning with creation and rehearsing all the kindness of God to mankind in general, and His Church in particular.² The Common Preface is followed by the Proper Preface. The latter is a special thanksgiving to the Father for the great blessing of redemption through Jesus Christ. Thereupon the Church Militant joins the Church Triumphant in the great hymn of the Communion, the Sanctus. The saints on earth unite with the angels and the archangels and all the glorious company of saints in heaven in an exalted strain of praise. (Is. 6. 2.3.; Matt. 21, 9; Ps. 118)

The Words of Institution and the Distribution are followed by the Post Communion liturgy, which has the purpose of expressing grateful joy for the heavenly food received.

1 An Explanation of the Common Service, p. 51.

2 Lindemann, P.H., *op. cit.*, p. 18.

It begins with the *Nunc Dimittis*, a joyful thanksgiving for the salvation manifested and bestowed in Christ Jesus. This closing hymn of the Communion accords with the practice of our Lord, for Matt. 26, 30 states: "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

That for which the believer has come into the sanctuary has been received in all its fullness, and he now feels himself at peace with God and declares his readiness to depart. Once more the minister bids the people unite in the Prayer of Thanksgiving, and as we offer thanks after meat, we here express gratitude for the refreshment we have experienced by partaking of heavenly food. 1

The Benediction ends the joyful service of the Communion. Thus throughout the entire liturgy of Communion the believer is invited to sing unto the Lord out of the fulness of a joyous heart and come rejoicing to the God of his salvation.

The Sacrament is also a public testimony or confession of the unity of faith. Luther remarks:

Denn vor Gott haetten wir genug daran, dass wir glauben an das Evangelium; nun will er uns aber auf Erden dazu haben, dass wir den Leuten dienen, und den Glauben, den wir im Herzen haben, mit etlichen Zeichen vor der Welt bekennen; das sind die Taufe und dies Sacrament. Mit dem Munde muessen wir das Evangelium bekennen und darauf das Sacrament zu einem Zeichen nehmen, dass die Welt wisse, dass wir Christen sind. Und also bin ich denn fuer meine Person gewiss, dass ich einen gnaedigen Gott habe, dazu habe ich auch vor der Welt genug gethan. 2

When the Christian confesses his belief in the death of our Lord, by receiving Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament,

1 Lindemann, F.H., op. cit., p. 22.

2 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 612.

he thereby expresses his acceptance of all that Christ has given to maintain and sustain the Church.

Thus the Sacrament of our Lord's body and blood invites and urges us to confess His glorious person and work, His divine and only Lordship, by receiving that Sacrament which He gave to His Church as a unique means of publicly owning and proclaiming Him who at once is the Savior of the world, the Lord of all, and the Head of the Church." 1

1 Wismar, A., op. cit., p. 52.

2. Concerning the Reasons for Frequent Communion Attendance

If the clergy are to instruct their communicants thoroughly, they must also point out the reasons for frequent Communion. Attendance at the Lord's Table is, first of all, an undeniable Christian duty. "Do this in remembrance of Me" is the unmistakable command of the Savior. Lutheran theologians stress this particular aspect of Communion repeatedly. Mentzer says: "In the Eucharist we give proof that we obey the command of God concerning this Sacrament which He desires to have piously used." ¹ Calov writes:

They continued also breaking bread from house to house. They prayed in the Temple, but since they were not permitted to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the Temple, they took it in private houses, and that frequently. For the Sacrament was much more frequently used in the primitive Church than it is today, and God will one day punish this loathing of the Sacrament with a horrible famine of the Word. Amos 8. 2

Luther writes in this connection:

Und wenn es gleich ein solch schlecht Sacrament waere, dass uns weder nuetze noch noth, als dass uns weder Gnade noch Huelfe gaebe, sondern allein ein bloss ledig Gebot und Gesetz Gottes waere, der es von uns fordert zu gebrauchen aus seiner goettlichen Macht, der wir unterthan und Gehorsam schuldig sind; so sollte es doch desselbigen Gebots halben allein uns genugsam treiben und reizen, dass wir's nicht verachten, noch unnoethig oder gering hielten, sondern mit allem Ernst und treuem Gehorsam fleissig uebten und hoch ehrten; sintemal nichts Groesseres und Herrlicheres sein kann, denn was Gott gebeut und durch sein Wort befiehlt. Nun aber ist's nicht ein solch schlecht Sacrament, dass es ein ledig, bloss Gebot sei, dass wir ohne Nutz und Noth, allein zur Last und Pflicht halten mussten, damit sie gezwungen und gefangen waren, wie die Leibeigenen oder Frohnleute sind im weltlichen Regiment; sondern es ist ein Gnadenreich Sacrament, voll Nutzens und Heils, dazu unzaehliger und unaussprechlicher Gueter. Darum es

1 Quoted in: Wismar, A., "Importance of the Sacrament," Pro Ecclesia Lutherana, Vol. VI, No. 1, p. 30.

2 Quoted in: Wismar, A., op. cit., p. 30.

nicht allein unverachtet und unvergessen, sondern auf's
hoochste geehrt und auf's fleissigste soll gebraucht
werden. 1

Luther shows clearly that the Christian has no choice
but to obey Christ's command to receive the Sacrament. The
disciple of Jesus should observe this command, not by com-
pulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to Jesus
Christ. Every Christian who really loves his Master will
frequently yearn after the Sacrament, in which Christ de-
sires to enrich him with all the treasures of His grace.

To those who defend infrequent Communion with the ar-
gument that Christ did not lay down any regulation regarding
the frequency of Communion Luther states:

Spricht du aber: Stehet doch dabei: "So oft ihr's
thut;" Da zwinget er niemand, sondern laasset's in
freier Willkuer. Antwort: Ist wahr; es stehet aber
nicht, dass man's nimmermehr thun solle; ja weil
er eben die Worte spricht: "So oft als ihr's thut,"
ist dennoch mit eingebunden, dass man's oft thun
soll, und ist darua hingesezt, dass er will das
Sacrament frei haben, angebunden an besondere Zeit,
wie der Juden Osterlamm, welches sie alle Jahr nur
einmal und eben gerade auf den vierzehnten Tag des
ersten Vollmonds des Abends mussten essen, und kei-
nen Tag ueberschreiten, 4 Mose 9, 5. Also siehest
du, dass nicht also Freiheit gelassen ist, als moe-
ge man's verachten. Denn das heisse ich verachten,
wenn man so lange Zeit hingehet und sonst kein Hin-
derniss hat und doch sein nimmer begehret. Willst
du solche Freiheit haben, so habe eben so mehr Frei-
heit, dass du kein Christ seiest und nicht glauben
noch beten duerfest; denn das ist eben sowohl Chris-
ti Gebot, als jenes. 2

When the Christian ponders the boundless love that
prompted the institution of the Eucharist, when he consi-
ders the priceless gifts the Sacrament offers, and when

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 2177.

2 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 141f.

he reflects his Master's desire to enrich him often with all the treasures of His grace, the true disciple of Jesus cannot but help experiencing a strong yearning to frequent the Lord's Table. He cannot possibly treat the Sacrament with indifference, neglect, and contempt. He will gladly avail himself of every opportunity to attend the Lord's Table. It will not be necessary to drive him by legal enactments.

Furthermore, the Christian ought to receive the Sacrament frequently in order to honor God. When Christ directed the disciples to continue to celebrate the Holy Supper in remembrance of Him, He thereby indicated that the honor and service of God are connected with the Sacrament. To "remember" Christ means to know, preach, praise, extol, honor, and give thanks for His great mercy. In Christ alone God is served and honored. God repudiates all worship that looks away from Christ. In Christ alone He will be our God.

Dr. Luther points out that whenever men commemorate Christ's passion in the Holy Supper, they honor God in two ways:

Wer aber obangezeiger Meinung Christi Gedächtniss haelt und sein Leiden ehrt, der ist sicher und frei vor allem Irrthum und vor aller Teufel Betrug, darf auch keine Kosten noch Muehe daran wagen und schafft unzähligen Nutzen dazu. Denn er thut Gott zwei grosse Gottesdienste, zwei grosse Ehren. Die erste, dass er seine Stiftung und Ordnung nicht verachtet, sondern unterthaeniglich und gern gebraucht, welche Ehre ohne Zweifel Gott wohlgefällt, als der solch Sacrament nicht vergeblich, sondern zu gebrauchen hat eingesetzt; und kein Gefallen daran haben kann wenn man's so ledig stehen laesst und nicht gebraucht. Denn damit stellt man sich fest, als hielte man Gott fuer einen Narren, der unnoethige Stiftungen uns verordnet und nicht wuesste, was er uns stiften sollte; oder als waere er ein Knapsack (Mausirer) der faule, untuechtige Waare umhertraege und uns anbete. Und

wer kann es ausrechnen, was Unehre Gott und unserem Herrn Christo allein mit demselben Stueck geschieht, dass man sein Sacrament so verachtet, ungeuebt, und ungebraucht laesst; und wollen dennoch nicht papistisch, sondern evangelisch sein? Welche Unehre aufhebt und hilft abthun, wer sich zu dem lieben Sacrament haelt und solche Gottes Stiftung ehrt und gebraucht, dafuer wird ihn Gott wiederum ehren, wie geschrieben steht, 1 Sam. 2, 30: "Wer mich ehrt, den will ich wieder ehren; wer mich aber verachtet, soll wieder verachtet werden.

Die andere Ehre ist, dass er Christi Gedaechniss haelt und hilft erhalten, das ist, das Predigen, Loben, und danken fuer die Gnade Christi, uns armen Suendern durch sein Leiden erzeigt; um welches Gedaechnisses willen vornehmlich Gott dieses Sacrament gestiftet hat und auch solche Ehre drinnen sucht und fordert, auf dass er in Christo als unser Gott erkannt und gehalten werde. Wie eine grosse Ehre und herrlicher Gottesdienst das sei, ist oben gesagt, dass damit goettliche Ehre erhalten und Gott zum rechten Gott gemacht wird. Dafuer wird er ohne Zweifel wiederum denselbigen zur goettlichen Ehre bringen und auch einen Gott und Gottes Kind daraus machen. Und wer kann auch hier ausrechnen was Gutes solche Ehre und Gottesdienst schaffen? Denn damit danket und lobt er nicht allein Gott in Christo, welches dieser goettlichen Stiftung eigentlich Thun ist, sondern bekennt auch damit oeffentlich vor der Welt seinen Herrn Christum, und dass er ein Christ sei und sein will, und richtet also zugleich auf einmal aus eines rechten Priesters beiderlei hoechstes Amt.¹

In addition, the sinner's great need for the assurance, comfort, and strength conveyed in the Sacrament should move him to partake of the Eucharist frequently. Through the visible Word Christ desires to quiet the troubled conscience and to grant power to overcome temptations. Therefore, He commands us to celebrate the Sacrament in which He offers us forgiveness. Christ knows our great need and through the Sacrament He invites us with the words: "Come unto Me, all ye

¹ Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 2183f.

that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

(Matt. 11, 28)

Luther remarks:

Also hast du von Gottes wegen beide, des Herrn Christi Gebot und Verheissung; zudem soll dich deinethalben treiben deine eigene Noth, so dir auf dem Halse lieget, um welcher willen solch Gebieten, Locken, und Verheissen geschieht. Denn er spricht selbst, Matt. 9, 12: "Die Starken beduerfen des Arztes nicht, sondern die Kranken," das ist, die muehselig und beschweret sind mit Suende, Furcht des Todes, Anfechtung des Fleisches und Teufels. Bist du nun beladen und fuehlest deine Schwachheit, so gehe froehlich hin und lasse dich erquicken, troesten, und staerken. Denn willst du harrn bis du solches los werdest, dass du rein und wuerdig zum Sacrament kommest, so musst du ewig davon bleiben; denn da faellet er das Urtheil und spricht: Bist du rein und fromm, so bedarfst du meiner nichts, und ich deiner wieder nichts. Darum heissen die allein unwuerdig, die ihre Gebrechen nicht fuehlen, noch wollen Suender sein. 1

As a weary wanderer in the desert longs for the refreshing waters in the springs of the oasis, the Christian, knowing the power of the Holy Supper, will crave the opportunity to quench the burning thirst of his soul at the Lord's Table. The command of his Lord will remove his natural reluctance and spiritual indolence, and the promise of the Savior will create in him the desire to receive the full measure of God's grace and the assurance of his forgiveness. The Christian who is thoroughly enlightened as to his own great need and to the Sacrament's remedy for all his needs, will be a frequent guest at the Lord's Table.

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 145.

The attainment of the greatest measure of faith and widest growth of the Church's life is a further reason for frequent Communion. This truth is evident from the fact that Christ instituted the Sacrament. Jesus well knew on Maundy Thursday how much His disciples needed to be reminded to remember Him. He well knew how necessary a constant remembrance of Him was in order to keep the flame of love burning in the hearts of His followers. Therefore, to help His disciples attain the highest possible strength and fullness of Christian life Christ instituted the Eucharist.

That attendance at the Lord's Table bears a definite relationship to the individual's spiritual health is further demonstrated by the rich benefits Christ conveys in Holy Communion. The Lord's Table is decked with God's greatest gifts... forgiveness, righteousness, life, and salvation. Brenz describes the blessings of the Holy Supper thus:

Die Erben, das ist die Kirche selbst...die Gueter, nicht Gold,...nicht Koenigreiche und Fuerstenthuemmer,...nicht kostbar Hausgeraeth,...nicht Ehre in der Welt und grosse Weisheit, sondern das Hoechste und Beste: sein Leib und Blut...und damit Vergebung der Saenden und ewiges Leben. In diesen beiden sind alle himmlischen Gueter begriffen. 1

In view of the fact that all the immeasurable benefits our Lord secured for us poor, miserable, lost sinners are imparted and sealed by and in the Sacrament, how can anyone justly maintain that it is not vitally important for the Christian's faith and life?

1 Homilia L. in Ev. Luc. pp. 1133-37. Edit. Franc. 1557; quoted in: Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts, A.D. 1875.

3. Concerning the Benefits of Holy Communion

The conscientious pastor should at frequent intervals call attention to the many rich blessings that attend worthy reception of Holy Communion. "Here (in Holy Communion) He offers to us the entire treasure which He has brought for us from heaven."¹

All the benefits, then, which Christ procured for us by His death are communicated to us in the Holy Supper, but yet in such a manner that faith is presupposed as already existing in those who partake of the Holy Supper; and therefore the effect of the Holy Supper does not exist in the production so much as in the more thorough establishment and confirmation and more cordial appropriation of those benefits.²

In instituting the Sacrament Christ declared: "This cup is the New Testament in My blood." (Luke 22, 20) The significance of this testament or covenant is clear from Jer. 31, 31-34:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

These words of the prophet Jeremiah are quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. 8, 10, 12.:

1 Concordia Triglotta, p. 769.

2 Schmid, Doctrinal Theology, p. 557.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts...For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

St. Paul writes, Rom. 11, 27: "For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

The forgoing passages indicate that the covenant of which the Lord spoke at the institution of Holy Communion was that of the forgiveness of sins. This New Testament was made and entered into through the medium of Christ's blood, shed for the remission of man's sins. Everyone who drinks of the Communion cup in a worthy manner receives forgiveness. That the forgiveness of sins is the chief benefit of Holy Communion is taught in the Confessions:

Now this is plain and clear from the words just mentioned: This is My body and blood, given and shed for you for the remission of sins. Briefly that is as much as to say: for this reason we go to the Sacrament because there we receive such a treasure by and in which we obtain forgiveness of sins. Why so? Because the words stand here and give us this; for on this account He bids me eat and drink, that it may be my own and may benefit me, as sure pledge and token, yea the very same treasure that is appointed for me against my sins, death, and every calamity. 1

Though the Sacrament conveys no other treasures than those offered in the spoken Word, diligent use of the visible means of grace is very important. Whereas the sermon applies forgiveness to the whole congregation in a general way, the Gospel is personalized and individualized in the Sacrament. In Holy Communion the gracious Lord separates the individual from the

1 Concordia Triglotto, p. 757.

great family of brothers and sisters and deals with him personally, as Luther explains:

Es ist aber ein Unterschied da: wenn ich seinen Tod predige, das ist eine oeffentliche Predigt in der Gemeine, darin ich niemand sonderlich gebe, wer es fasst, der fasst's; aber wenn ich das Sacrament reiche, so eigene ich solches dem sonderlich zu, der es nimmt, schenke ihm Christi Leib und Blut, dass er habe Vergebung der Suenden, durch seinen Tod erworben, und in der Gemeine gepredigt. Das ist etwas mehr denn die gemeine Predigt. 1

At the Lord's Table the Savior, as it were, tells each believer personally:

Take, eat and drink; I have broken My body on the Cross for thy sins. For thee I have shed My blood. Be of good cheer. God is no longer angry with thee. For My sake God is thy heavenly Father, who will save thee in spite of all your sins.

The Sacrament in applying separately to each communicant the glorious conquest of Christ's victorious life and death confirms the gracious promise of forgiveness in a peculiar, wonderful, and most convincing manner. It is the most certain pledge of forgiveness in heaven and on earth. Luther describes the Lord's Supper as a seal thus:

Was ist denn nun dies Testament oder was wird uns darinnen beschieden von Christo? Fuerwahr ein grosser, ewiger, unaussprechlicher Schatz, naemlich Vergebung aller Suenden, wie die Worte klar lauten: Dies ist der Kelch eines neuen, ewigen Testaments in meinem Blut, das fuer euch und fuer alle vergossen wird zur Vergebung der Suende. Also sollte er sagen: Siehe, da, Mensch, ich sage dir zu, und bescheide dir mit diesen Worten Vergebung aller deiner Suende und das ewige Leben. Und dass du gewiss seiest und wissest dass solch Geluebbe dir unwiderrufflich bleibe, so will ich darauf sterben und mein Leib und Blut dafuer geben, und beides dir zum Zeichen und Siegel hinter mir lassen, dabei du meiner gedenken sollst, wie er

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. XX, p. 750.

sagt (Luc. 22, 19): "So oft ihr das tut, so gedenkt an mich. 1

How can the sinner any longer worry about the payment of his debt when Christ places the very sum required into his hands? How can the Christian any longer be anxious about the forgiveness of his sins, when Christ not only atones for his sins but also places the very ransom-price paid on the cross into his mouth? How can a person any longer be concerned whether Christ also died for him on Golgatha, when the very sacrifice Christ offered is laid upon his doubting, trembling heart?

Forgiveness is the foundation of all other fruits of the Sacrament.

Alle andern Wirkungen des Abendmahls sind der Darbietung der Vergebung der Sunden nicht koordiniert, sondern subordiniert. Als Wirkungen des Abendmahls werden mit recht genannt: die Staerkung des Glaubens, Die Vereinigung mit Christo, die Vereinigung mit dem geistlichen Leibe Christi, der Kirche, die Foerderung der Heiligung, die Entzuendung der Liebe zu Gott und dem Nachsten, die Mehrung der Geduld und der Hoffnung des ewigen Lebens. Aber alle diese Wirkungen beruhen nicht blos teilweise, sondern ganz auf der Tatsache, dass das Abendmahl Mittel der Sundenvergebung ist. Der christliche Glaube ist ja seinem Wesen nach der Glaube an die durch Christi stellvertretende Genugtuung vorhandene Vergebung der Sunden. Daher kann auch der christliche Glaube nur in der Weise gestaerkt werden, dass sein Objekt, durch das er entsteht und besteht, naemlich die Zusage der Vergebung der Sunden, durch die von Gott geordneten Gnadenmittel ihm gegenuebertritt. Es gibt auch keine andere Gemeinschaft mit Christo als die, welche durch den Glauben an die von ihm erworbene Vergebung der Sunden vermittelt wird. 2

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. XIX, p. 1043.
2 Pieper, F., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 442.

Since Holy Communion is a vehicle by which forgiveness is carried to the worthy communicant, it is also a powerful means of strengthening his faith. When the Christian really receives the very ransom-price by which he was bought from the tyranny of sin, he is bound to believe more firmly that Christ died for his sins out of great love. That the Sacrament has the very purpose of strengthening the faith of those who are weak is pointed out by Luther:

Fuehlt du im Herzen, dass du es nicht dafuer haeltst noch glaubst, und doch gerne wolltest, dass du glauben koenntest, so musst du dennoch nicht verzagen und vor dem Sacrament fliehen, sondern eben daselbst Huelfe suchen, dass sich dein Glaube anzuende und zunehme. Denn obgleich etliche greulich gestraft sind worden, darum dass sie das Sacrament unwuerdig und ohne Glauben empfangen haben, so sind es doch allein diese, welche wir oben erzehlt haben, die verstockten und ruchlosen Herzen. Also sollst du aber tun und denken: Herr, siehe, da ist das Wort, hier ist mein Gebrechen und Krankheit; so hast du selbst gesagt: "Kommt her zu mir alle, die ihr muedselig und beladen seid, ich will euch erquicken," Matth. 11, 28. Meinst du, dass er solches denen habe gesagt, so da schon brennen und stark sind im Glauben? Sein Reich ist nicht dahin gestellt, dass er die Gerechten foerdere, sondern dass er den Suendern helfe und dieselbigen auch fromm mache; darum wer gebrechlich ist und fuehlt es, der gehe hinzu und lasse sich helfen. 1

The forgiveness received in the Sacrament not only encourages but also empowers the communicant to live a sanctified life. As he kneels at the Lord's Table, the believing communicant will say to himself: "God has for Jesus' sake forgiven all my sin. I am taken from prison and judgment. I am restored to the adoption of children." Such an experience fills a man's heart with deep gratitude. He will want to repay

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 653f.

God's infinite love, the Savior's glorious goodness toward him. The Sacrament produces in him the resolve to shun sin, which caused his Lord such unspeakable suffering. He will desire nothing more strongly than to obey God's will.

Moreover, a return to the service of sin is contrary to the very nature of forgiveness. Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5, 15) Luther's explanation to the Second Article declares that we are redeemed with the blood of Christ "that we may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness."

The Lord's Supper is an arsenal providing the Christian with weapons to fight against the enemies of his soul. In exchange for his sins the Holy Supper gives the communicant forgiveness, pardon and peace in place of guilt, a garment of perfect purity in place of unrighteousness, strength in place of weakness, a new life pleasing to God in place of his former vain conversation. Holy Communion gives strength and courage so that the believer may face every trial and temptation of life victoriously. It affords the motive and constraint to practice every Christian virtue in imitation of his Lord and Master.

The Sacrament teaches the everlasting glory of service. When Christ instituted the Sacrament, He wanted, among other reasons, to be remembered because He wanted to instill in the disciples the unselfish, self-denying service which had characterized His life. He desired His followers to remember how

He had loved the loveless, sought the despised and forsaken, and had been patient with the unappreciative. Holy Communion was to impress them with the truth that greatness consists in serving, not in being served. They were to reproduce His pattern in their own lives.

The Sacrament reminds the communicant that he belongs to Christ. Jesus bought him with the price of His body and blood. He is Christ's blood-bought property. Christ said to His disciples: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." (John 20, 21) He insists that His work on earth is as much the work of His adherents as the Father's work was His. Therefore, He expects of His servants the same devotion to His Father's work as characterized His whole life.

Christ gave Himself completely and fully to His work. He said: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4, 34) The very purpose of His existence was to carry out the will of God. As He gave His life, so His disciples down through the centuries are to dedicate their time, strength, and abilities to the promotion of God's kingdom.

Our Savior was greatest in His sacrifice, and His sacrifice was greatest in His death. The Christian, realizing that Christ has redeemed him by His sacrifice, in turn brings to Him the sacrifice of himself. Partaking of the body given and the blood shed, he publicly signifies his readiness to sacrifice himself for the Church, for which Christ sacrificed Himself. Christ's complete dedication of Himself to His Father's business, even at the tremendous price of His passion and death, this abso-

lute devotion to the will of the Father Who sent Him is to be an example to the communicant. The spirit of self-sacrifice in the cause of Christ is to be the spirit of each and every Christian. This spirit is to fill and govern every Christian heart and to find constant expression in word and deed. Christians are to sacrifice themselves to God by fulfilling His will in their mutual relationships, constantly animated and ruled by the mind of Christ as exhibited in His sacrifice. The sacrifice that the Lord brought is to show them the measure of their sacrifice to the Lord.

"Thus the Sacrament is a public pledge and promise that the communicants, one in the fellowship of the Sacrament proclaiming the love of our Lord as manifested in His sacrificial death, will imitate the example of His obedience to the will of God, that they will follow in the footsteps of His sacrifice, gladly bearing their cross after their Lord in the service of the Church, hearing and forbearing one another in love, giving and forgiving, enduring even pain and death in fulfilling the law of Christ for the welfare of the Church." ¹

The Lord's Supper requires a thorough self-examination since "this supper is not a banqueting feast thrown open to the wide world without consideration of penitence or impenitence, but a Sacrament, especially prepared for those who are truly sorry for their sins." ² Since an unworthy communicant is guilty of the body and blood of Christ, Paul admonishes Christians: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat

¹ Wismar, A., op. cit., p. 34ff.

² Oberschulte, F.L., "Godly Sorrow over Sin," (Sermon), Confessional Addresses, p. 79.

of that bread, and drink of that cup." (1 Cor. 11, 28) A proper self-examination, which is always a valuable spiritual exercise, requires that the sinner judge his conduct on the basis of God's holy law.

As he beholds himself in the mirror of God's law, the humiliating conviction grows upon the sinner that he does not and cannot love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. In fact, in his flesh dwelleth no good thing. His heart is polluted with the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. He has not trusted in God above all things. His love is often cold. He is lacking in proper veneration for the preaching of the Word. He wants charity. He distrusts, dislikes, and even hates some of his fellow-men. He is impure and unclean in thought, word, and conduct. He slanders his neighbor. He is envious, covetous, and greedy. A sincere self-examination will show the sinner that he has failed in many things: fervent prayer, consecration, stewardship, courageous confession, fruits of living faith, caring for his brother's spiritual welfare, and whole-hearted devotion to the one thing needful.

Conviction of sin must be attended by hearty sorrow for sin. The sinner should realize that he has offended the Almighty, and that he has wounded the loving heart of the Savior. He is to understand that he is totally unable of himself to escape the well-deserved damnation resulting from sin. Humbly he must realize his need of a Savior and flee for salvation to the blood of Christ.

Repentance is pure hypocrisy if it is not accompanied by the sincere intention of amending one's life. If a communicant truly confesses that he has rebelled against the will of the Most High, and if he trusts completely in Christ for his soul's salvation, the God-pleasing resolve to forsake the sins that have besmirched his past life must necessarily follow. Christ attaches no conditions to His cure of the sores of sin. His redemption is free and without price. But after He heals in the Sacrament, He rightfully expects improvement in conduct. Since He has bought man from the humiliating slavery of sin, His will is that he who accepts His ransom should no longer return to disgraceful spiritual bondage. Reformation of life is an act of appreciation for the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Although it is impossible to attain perfection in this life, the forgiven sinner ought to do all in his power to fulfill the requirements of God's law. If he is overtaken by faults, it is only by reason of his weakness, not because he desires to continue to serve sin.

Christ instructed His disciples: "This do in remembrance of Me." (1 Cor. 11, 24) Remembering Christ, the Christian cannot help but think of Christ's intense suffering. It was sin that nailed Christ to the cross. How fearful, therefore, sin must be in the sight of God if His own Son had to bleed and die to atone it.

The Lord's Supper cries out against sin. It demonstrates that sin is deadly, that it destroys, mutilates, crucifies. The Lord's Supper pleads with us to set our face against sin.

The proclamation of Christ's death in the Eucharist calls the communicant away from sin; it summons him to lead a holy life.

Our Lord's purpose and intention in instituting Holy Communion was to impress the fact and memory of His atoning death for man's sins so vividly and constantly that we could never forget for a moment. The Christian who ever has in mind the Lord's death for him will hate sin in every form and see it in its true light. 1

When in the night before His death the Son of God fixed upon the thing which would meet every emergency in which His followers might find themselves in the centuries to come and in His great concern instituted the Sacrament, He evidently felt that what the disciples most needed was to live under the spell of the cross. 2

The disciples were to dedicate themselves solely to the service of the kingdom. The memory of the cross was to haunt them down through the years. The sight of the cross was to stir them and drive them. The cross was to move their life and control their conduct. It was to arouse in them fires of a new emotion, the sacred passion of a new consecration to their blessed Lord.

Never was Christ more like Himself than on Calvary. Nothing expresses more perfectly the love of God than God. No characteristic of Christ is more predominant than His self-surrender in obedience to His Father's will, and nowhere is this quality more strikingly exemplified than on the cross.

1 Lindemann, F. H., In Remembrance of Me, p. xii.

2 Ibid., p. 98.

The early disciples caught this vision of their Lord. They never tired of thinking and talking and writing about the Crucifixion. In the verse that follows our text, (1 Cor. 1, 17) Paul declares that the preaching of the Cross is the power of God unto salvation. The Cross was at the heart of every sermon he preached, the motive of all his sacrifice, the reason to suffer all gladly, until at last he came himself to the Cross as a personal experience and cried, "I am crucified with Christ." (Gal. 2, 20) He knew that from the arms of the Cross comes the power to tame and transform and control men. There they are cured of sin. There Christian character is acquired. To know Jesus men must meet Him at Calvary. To follow Jesus men must walk with the shadow of the Cross falling over their path. And when at last the day wears to a close and twilight draws its veil across life's sunset, the Christian's prayer is for a hilltop and a skyline marked by a crucifixion: "Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes." 1

In the Lord's Supper the Christian enters into a most intimate communion with His divine Redeemer. In this connection Chemnitz writes:

Die eigentliche, einfache und urspruengliche Bedeutung der Worte der Einsetzung aber lehrt, dass Christus in der Handlung des Abendmahls sowohl nach seiner Gottheit, als auch nach seinem Fleische, unter uns zugegen sei und zu uns komme, dass er uns ergreife, Phil. 3, 12, und mit sich auf das festeste vereinige. Das ist ein ueberaus suesser Trost. Denn die Ergreifung Christi, des Gottmenschen, ist nothwendig, dass die Vereinigung zwischen Christo und uns eine gegenseitige sei. Aber wir, mit der Last der Suende beschwert, und von der Groesse unserer Schwachheit gedrueckt, koennen noch nicht das Verborgene des Himmels betreten, Col. 2, 18, und zu ihm in die Herrlichkeit durchdringen. Daher kommt er selbst zu uns, indem er uns nach der Natur ergreift, nach welcher er unser Bruder ist. Und weil unsere Gebrechlichkeit die Glorie seiner Majestaet in diesem Leben nicht tragen kann, Matt. 17, 6, Act. 9, 4, so istdaher sein Leib und Blut unter Brod und Wein gegenwaertig, wird dargeboten und genommen. Und er will nicht, dass wir um den Mittelpunkt des

1. Lindemann, F.H., op. cit., p. 99.

Himmels herumirren, ungewiss, in welcher Himmels-
 gegend wir Christum in seiner menschlichen Natur
 entweder suchen sollen, oder finden koennen, son-
 dern im Abendmahl bezeichnet er selbst durch eine
 auesserliche Handlung und sichtbar Zeichen, wo er
 mit seinem Leibe und Blute gegenwaertig sein wolle.
 Und da suchen wir ihn sicher und finden ihn gewiss,
 denn da reicht er selbst durch das Amt den Communi-
 canten seinen Leib und sein Blut dar. Dieser ueber-
 aus suesse und nothwendige Trost wird uns gaenzlich
 entrissen, wenn die wesentliche Gegenwart, Darreich-
 ung und Empfang des Leibes und Blutes Christi im
 Abendmahle hinweggenommen wird. 1

Gerhard states:

Dem Sohn Gottes ist nichts naeher und inniger ver-
 bunden, als seine angenommene menschliche Natur,
 die er mit sich persoendlich vereinigt hat; wiederum
 wird mit uns nichts naeher vereinigt, als was wir
 essen und trinken, indem es in das Wesen unseres
 Fleisches verwandelt wird. Christus hat daher, in-
 dem er sich mit uns und uns mit sich auf das innig-
 ste vereinigen wollte, dieses Sacrament eingesetzt,
 in welchem wir vermittelst des gesegneten Weines
 sein Blut trinken. Doch ist zu erinnern, dass
 zwischen der natuerlichen Speise des Leibes und
 zwischen der geistlichen Speise des inwendigen Men-
 schen ein Unterschied ist. Die natuerliche Speise
 wird durch eine Veraenderung und Verwandlung in die
 Substanz des Leibes verwandelt, aber diese geist-
 liche Speise wird nicht in uns verwandelt und ver-
 aendert, sondern vielmehr verwandelt und veraendert
 sie uns, dass wir der goettlichen Natur theilhaftig
 und Glieder des geistlichen Leibes werden, dessen
 Haupt Christus ist. 2

This Sacrament, which is able to cement and augment the
 mystical union with Christ, is truly the zenith of happiness
 and glory. To be united with Christ is the answer to our high-
 est and holiest desires. The reunion of a lost child with its
 mother changes in the twinkling of an eye its abject terror

1 Chemnitz, M., Ex. Conc. Trid. de SS. Coena, Cap. XI, quoted
 in: Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts, p. 63.

2 Quoted in : Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts, p. 64.

into inexpressible joy.

By means of the mystical union manifested and confirmed in the Sacrament the Christian shares all of Christ's glory with Him. Christ's holy life and righteousness become his. His death, the all-sufficient sacrifice for human sin, becomes his. Jesus' resurrection, the unmistakable divine stamp of approval on Christ's atoning death, is his.

Through the Sacrament the believer partakes of Christ's Sonship. By bringing the communicant into fellowship with Himself, Christ gives him the power to become a son of God, a beloved child of the heavenly Father. As a son of God the Christian is a co-heir with Christ. As the Christ ascended into heaven, so His follower shall receive the inheritance preserved for him in the heavenly mansions. The believer shall also reign with his heavenly Brother over an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

The Sacrament by strengthening the faith and intensifying the mystical union is a fountain of spiritual power. It enables the Christian to imitate the pattern of Jesus Christ and to reproduce in his life the love which lays down its life for the brethren. As the branches obtain their life sap and the power to bear fruit from the vine, so the Spirit of life descends upon the believer from the life-giving flesh of Christ. All of the grace of Christ is in the Sacrament, and it annunciates the soul of the communicant with a flood of sanctifying power.

The Lord Jesus employs the Sacrament to strengthen the

bond of faith which incorporates the individual believer in His mystical body, the Church. St. Paul teaches the close fellowship wrought by the Sacrament in 1 Cor. 10, 17; "For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." As the unity of Israel was realized in its sacrifices, so the Sacrament is the means by which the saints in Christ are nourished and strengthened in their corporate unity. Communion fellowship is not one which is still to be established; it is rather the renewed exercise of the fellowship that already exists, and is constantly growing toward the ideal reality of fellowship in the invisible Church. By Baptism we receive the investiture of Christians; by the use of the Sacrament we appear before the Lord as righteous possessors of place and title in the Church of God. Finally, since the Church is the whole family not only on earth but also in heaven, the Sacrament is ^{not} the means of uniting the members of the Church that is on earth with its Head, and is the means of uniting the Church militant with the Church triumphant, for the latter is also joined with Christ, the head of the Church.¹

The ancient Church produced a number of beautiful expressions of the thought that the Sacrament nurtures the spiritual union of all believers. The Didache declares: "Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom, for Thine is

¹ Wisnar, A., op. cit., p. 27.

the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever." ¹ Cyprian sets forth the communion established by the Lord's Supper thus:

Besides, even the Lord's sacrifices themselves declare that Christian unanimity is linked together with itself by a firm and inseparable charity. For when the Lord calls bread, which is combined by the union of many grains, His body, He indicates our people, whom He bore as being united; and when He calls the wine, which is pressed from many grapes and clusters and collected together, His blood, He also signifies our flock linked together by the mingling of a united multitude. ²

(An effect of the fellowship renewed in the Sacrament is the preservation of unity in doctrine and life.) The Lord's Supper serves to keep the Christians united with the Head of the Church, keeps them in the Church, and therefore in living communion with the fellow-members of Christ. In the Sacrament each Christian publicly professes what he believes. The Lord's Supper is the trysting place where the believers who cherish the same hope in their hearts toward the Lord meet. All become partakers of one bread; all express one and the same faith, confession, love, and hope.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is also a source and bond of the warmest love among Christ's followers. With respect to this point Chemnitz states:

Endlich, das heilige Abendmahl ist nicht nur eine bildliche Offenbarung der gegenseitigen bruederlichen Vereinigung und Liebe, wie Brod aus vielen Koernlein und Wein aus vielen Beeren hergestellt wird, wie Augustinus sagt in Tract. 26. in Johan., sondern weil Christus im heiligen Abendmahl, nach der Natur, welche

¹ Quoted in: An Explanation of the Common Service, p. 60.

² Quoted in: Kretzmann, P.E., Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 181.

unser Haupt ist, naemlich mit seinem Leib und Blute, sich auf das innigste mit uns vereinigt, so wird er auch zugleich durch jene seine angenommene und uns verwandte Natur maechtig und kraeftig in dem Glaebigen wirken, dass, wie das Haupt selbst in uns ist, wir auch gegenseitig einer des andern Glied sind. Denn ein Leib sind wir viele, weil alle jenes einen Brodes, welches der Leib Christi ist, theilhaftig sind, 1 Cor. 10,17. Und wir werden alle zu einem Geiste getraenket, 1 Cor. 12, 13. 1

Luther declares:

Der andere Nutzen ist, wo solcher Glaube immerdar erfrischt und erneuert wird, da wird auch mit zu das Herz immer von neuem erfrischt zur Liebe des Naechsten, und zu allen guten Werken stark und geruestet, der Suende und aller Anfechtung des Teufels zu widerstehen. Sintemal der Glaube nicht kann muessig sein, er muss Frucht der Liebe ueben mit Gutes thun und Boeses meiden; der Heilige Geist ist dabei, der uns nicht feiern laesst, sondern willig und geneigt macht zu allem Guten und ernst und fleissig wider alles Boese. Dass also ein Christ durch solchen rechten Gebrauch des Sacraments immerdar je mehr und mehr, von Tag zu Tage, sich erneuert und zunimmt in Christo, wie uns St. Paulus auch lehret, dass wir uns immerdar sollen erneuern und zunehmen. Wiederum, wo man sich enthaelt vom Sacrament, und braucht sein nicht, da muss der Schade folgen und kann nicht fehlen, dass sein Glaube je mehr und mehr schwach und kalt wird, daraus dann weiter muss folgen, dass er faul und kalt wird in der Liebe gegen den Naechsten, lass und unlustig zu guten Werken, ungeschickt, unwillig, dem Boesen zu widerstehen, und gewinnet also je laenger, je weniger Lust zum Sacrament, bis dass er ganz ueberdruessig wird, an seinen lieben Heiland zu denken, und verachtet und verdirbt also in sich selbst von Tag zu Tage, und wird geneigt und lustig zu allem Uebel. 2

The fact that each Christian receives the same body and the same blood of Christ ought to be a powerful agent in removing petty differences among God's children and fusing them all into a unit. Dr. Walther writes:

Ist also das heilige nicht wirklich ein Liebes-

1 Quoted in: Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Distrikts, p. 68.
2 Luthers Volksbibl. I, 110. 111.; quoted in: Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Distrikts, p. 70.

mahl? Ohne Zweifel. So wenig es moeglich ist, dass sich ein Mensch nicht selbst lieben sollte, so wenig ist es moeglich, dass ein Communicant, der an das Geheimniss des heiligen Abendmahls von Herzen glaubt, nicht seine Mitcommunicanten lieben sollte, von denen er weiss, dass derselbe Leib und dasselbe Blut Christi in ihnen ist, das in ihm selbst ist. Daher lesen wir denn auch von den ersten Christen, dass sie, indem sie im "Brodbrechen" blieben, wirklich "Ein Herz und Eine Seele" waren. 1

If an Arab regards himself one with him with whom he has broken ordinary bread, shall not Christians feel themselves much more closely united with those with whom they break the Communion bread? (A deaf man who regularly attended church was asked why he came although it was impossible for him to hear the sermon and the music. "It is the communion of saints," he explained. On that account Holy Communion should also be a cherished experience.) At the Lord's Table the believing king and the beggar, the great and the small are one in true brotherly love. Their blessed fellowship at this heavenly banquet fills them with a happy anticipation of the everlasting perfect communion of the saints above.²

Sincere Christians will desire and seek the fellowship of Holy Communion spontaneously and without urging. They will approach the Lord's Table often in order to give as well as to receive the joys and benefits of Christian unity.

The Sacrament reminds the Christian to remember the great love that moved Jesus to die for His salvation. As he comes to the gracious Lord in the Sacrament and is fed with

1 Evangelien Postille, p. 146.

2 Bertermann, B.H., "A Pearl of Great Price," Concordia Pulpit, Vol. XII, p. 123.

His body and blood, he finds God not a consuming fire but rather a God, Who is ever and only and altogether Love. "O unspeakable grace! O admirable condescension! O immeasurable love specially bestowed on man!"¹

Through the Eucharist the Lord keeps His disciples' love for Him fresh and living, for in it they taste the love which prompted the sacrifice. "Wenn Gott in uns koemmt, wer kann da noch zweifeln, dass uns das zu bruenstiger Liebe gegen Gott erwecken muesse? denn dann ist ja das Feuer der ewigen Liebe selbst in uns, das uns nicht kalt bleiben lassen kann."² As the Lord offers Himself in the Sacrament, He says to the believer: "Eat My body; drink My blood. As you do this, remember that I gave My body for you and shed My blood for the remission of your sins. Let this fact keep alive in you a deep affection for Me." And as the Christian kneels at the Table of Him Who loved him to the death on the cross; as the story of Christ's love fills his heart with blessed peace, he prays that he may comprehend with all the saints what is the length and the breadth, the height and the depth of God's love, which passeth all human understanding.

Holy Communion is also a means of counteracting indifference. Because the Christian's evil flesh is always present, there is a tendency to crowd Christ out of his life and to disregard the work of the Lord. The memory of Christ often grows faint, and love to God and man grows cold. (Christ's face is veiled, and Golgatha grows dim.)

1 Thomas & Kempis, op. cit., p. 290.

2 Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts, A.D. 1875, p. 69.

Then the Sacrament speaks. It preaches Christ and only Him, who shed His blood for us on the cross. It brings us face to face with Him who is alone to be the object of our affection and the center of life. As he stands face to face with the spotless Lord Jesus Christ, the penitent communicant sees his sin all its naked ugliness. Can a person who has placed his feet on Golgatha remain indifferent to sin, un-¹ touched by Christ's love?

When Christ in that hour of sweet companionship gathered with His disciples in the Upper Room, He looked to the future when He would no longer be among them. Days of sorrow and sadness lay in the immediate future; and beyond stretched years of trials and persecutions. It was the Lord's desire that His disciples dedicate themselves completely to the work of the kingdom and yield themselves wholly to the continuation of the Father's business. Jesus, therefore, felt the need of a powerful application of His grace to keep the Twelve and His disciples in the centuries to come loyal and true. Through the Sacrament the Lord's disciples were spiritually united with Him. This union implied that they must share in what He had to suffer in order that the kingdom of which He spoke might come. They were bound in the fellowship of the cross. Jesus' disciples were to assimilate His spiritual life and become like Him and receive His power. They were to be wholly His and faithful unto death. This loyalty had to be absolute, not only to the end of life, but under the risk of

¹ Lindemann, F. H., op. cit., p. 87.

martyrdom. It had to be faithfulness with total renunciation of self.

It is through the Sacrament that Christ's disciples also in our day receive the strength that fits them for the battle of life. (~~The elevating experience at~~) The Table of the Lord strengthens their faith in Christ and their loyalty to Him. Undeserving as those who commune are, God never turns them away. He receives them as His sons and daughters. Christians, who humbly and penitently go up to the Lord's Table, will come down again more faithful and loyal, with a deepened spirit of consecration to the cause of Christ. A stirring appeal to greater devotion and fidelity as a result of the reception of the Sacrament is conveyed in the following:

What about the future? As you leave His altar this day, will you not sincerely and earnestly purpose that hereafter there will be no more wandering, no more indifference to the filial duties and obligations which you owe your great God and forgiving Father? As you go forth from His house today to mingle again with the children of men, may you do so with a profound sense of the debt of gratitude that you owe your Father in heaven. Having come back to the Father, stay close to Him. There is no happiness apart from God; no joy and contentment in shirking one's Christian duty; no peace in trying to throw off the restraining hand of a loving Father. Resolve therefore to live a life of greater devotion and loyalty to Him, as it becometh a child of God. 1

Holy Communion establishes a sacred partnership between Christ and the communicant. With the removal of sin through the application of the sacramental grace, the floodgates are open for all of God's rich blessings to flow down into the

1 Rasmeyer, R.S., "I Will Arise and Go to My Father," (Sermon), Confessional Addresses, p. 95.

~~stream of Christian life.~~ Christ and His people become one. ¹

As Christ's partner the Christian shares in all that His Savior is and has, in all that He has done and will do. But there is another side to the partnership with Christ. The reverse side of privilege is always responsibility. If a true partnership is to be established, it is not enough that the believer share in all that Christ has; Christ must also share in all that the believer has and is. If the Christian has anything, it is as much Christ's as his. This condition is clearly implied by the Christian's reception of Holy Communion. His acceptance of the assets of the divine partner in the Sacrament is a declaration of his agreement to the terms of the fellowship. The very eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ are a proclamation that Jesus has bought the Christian body and soul. What a strange creature that person would be, who, declaring himself a partner with Christ and accepting his Lord's contribution to that partnership, would withhold his contribution to the partnership or would invest only sparingly and grudgingly! The implied acceptance of the terms of the partnership at the Lord's Table can therefore only be a joyful declaration that the Christian cheerfully and willingly places at the disposal of His heavenly Partner what is already His by right of purchase. What is more natural than for the communicant to say to the Lord: "I joyfully contribute to our union all that You have already purchased by your blood and death. By every rule of equity,

by every right of contract, by everything that is fair and honest, I am Yours. All I am and have is as much Yours as mine." ¹

The Eucharist is a deep source of comfort to the individual Christian as well as to the Church at large. The Apology declares:

And let him receive this (Sacrament) by faith, and let him comfort his alarmed conscience, and know that these testimonies are not fallacious, but as sure as though (and still surer than if) God by a new miracle would declare from heaven that it was His will to grant forgiveness. ²

The sinner at times is distressed by sin or terrified by death. He may have a seemingly intolerable load of sin on his heart, which he earnestly desires to have removed. At such times it may be difficult for him because of his human weakness to believe that God is reconciled also to him. Let such a one joyfully approach the Table of the Lord. There his Savior will quell his fears and raise his drooping spirit. When the personalized Gospel of the Sacrament is proclaimed to the sinner, all doubts must vanish into thin air.

Is anything more comforting than that God not only justifies the ungodly, but also His own sons and daughters who so disgracefully reward His love with their waywardness; that Jesus laid down His life not only for His enemies, but also for those who through faith in Him have become His friends, who, so often, however, grieve Him with their sinning? ³

Furthermore, the wonderful mystical union established in

1 Tract: Partnership in Holy Communion (American Lutheran Publicity Bureau)

2 Concordia Triglotta, p. 313.

3 Kretzschmar, K., "A Model Self-Preparation for the Sacrament," Confessional Addresses, p. 61.

the Sacrament serves to comfort the Christian in his every-day trials and contacts with the world. If his soul and his body, his present and future, his abilities and possibilities, his failures and successes are as much Christ's as his, why should he be alarmed as he gazes out into the vast rushing world amid which he seems adrift like a mote afloat in a vast ocean? He is part of Christ, and all is well.

of use!
 (A distinguishing feature of the Christian Church is the fact that her Founder is continually in her midst. Christ, not only as the holy Son of God, but also as the friendly Brother, is truly everywhere present with His Church as her Protector and Guide. It is the same Jesus, who lay in the manger, who lived, suffered, and died on the cross, who was raised from the dead for man's justification, and ascended into heaven to intercede for His Father's children and to reign with Him until the day of judgment. In the Sacrament Christ visibly impresses His people with His Real Presence. It is at the Lord's Table that the words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," offer special comfort to the Church in her trials and battles.)

"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come," says the apostle Paul. (1 Cor. 11, 26) Each single celebration of the Sacrament reminds Christians of the resurrection unto glory and the life everlasting, since it is to be observed until He comes again. As Christ instituted the Eucharist in the night before His death, He looked forward to the marriage of the Lamb prophecied in Rev. 19, 7: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to

him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." The Sacrament points forward to the time when the glorified Christ, as the King of kings, shall return to earth to take His Bride home to Himself in glory. In the heavenly mansions the Lord will drink of the cup of gladness with His beloved. He will rejoice in their salvation, and they in His most precious love.

As Christians gather about the Table of the Lord to celebrate His death, the Savior says to them:

You weary men and women, I shall drink it with you again in My Father's kingdom. Now you drink the cup in weakness, but some day you shall drink it with all frailty gone completely; now you drink in sorrow, but some day with all tears wiped away; now with Satan dogging your steps, but some day with Satan in chains forever; now with the sound of battle in your ears, but some day with the cheers of triumph and the songs of everlasting peace. Let your thoughts go forward confidently and joyously to that hour. As surely as I meet you here invisibly in the Sacrament, so surely I shall remember you visibly on that day. 1

Physical death can never rob the believer of eternal life, prepared for him from the foundation of the world. Death is but gain for him whose life is in Christ. He who believes in Christ, the Heir of all things, will share in the inheritance which is His. Chemnitz writes:

Die menschliche Natur Christi, nachdem sie alle Schwachheiten abgelegt hat, ist allem Elend und Jammer dieses Lebens entnommen, und sitzt nun auf dem Throne der Herrlichkeit des Vaters. Unsere Natur aber, obgleich wir nach der Verheissung die Hoffnung der Herrlichkeit haben, ist jetzt noch mit Schmutz befleckt, vom Elend bedrueckt und allen Geschossen des Satans, der Welt und des Fleisches ausgesetzt, und daher wird im Kreuz und durch Anfechtungen der Glaube noch gefaehrlich beunruhigt. Deshalb gibt uns denn Christus seinen Leib und sein Blut, welche

1 Lindemann, F. H., op. cit., p. 32.

aus allem Elend in die Herrlichkeit des Vaters er-
 hoeht sind, so, dass er durch jene sich vereinigt
 mit dieser unserer elenden Natur, damit er uns durch
 dieses vortreffliche und gewisseste Unterpfand und
 Angeld gewiss mache, dass er uns nicht ewig in die-
 sem Elende lassen wolle, sondern einst wuerden wir
 aehnlich werden seinem verklaerten Leibe, welchen
 er daher als Angeld unserer kuenftigen Herrlichkeit
 im heiligen Abendmahl uns gibt, wie die Alten die
 Auferstehung, die Seligkeit und die Verklaerung uns-
 eres Fleisches auf das suesteste aus dieser Lehre
 bekraeftigten, wie oben gesagt ist. Und das nicae-
 nische Glaubensbekenntniss nennt den Leib und das
 Blut Christi, welche wir im Abendmahl empfangen, mit
 dem schoensten Namen, naemlich οὐρανός unserer Auf-
 erstehung. Σύναδος aber nannten die Alten die Mar-
 ken, welche den Gastfreunden gegeben wurden, dass,
 wer sie hatte, hervorbringen und aufzeigen konnte,
 der wurde als Gast anerkannt und nach dem Recht der
 aufgerichteten Freundschaft und Gastfreundschaft
 freundschaftlich und gastlich aufgenommen und be-
 handelt. Es wollte daher der Sohn Gottes uns im
 heiligen Abendmahl mit gewissen Merkmalen versehen,
 wodurch wir anerkannt wuerden als solche, die das
 Recht der Verwandtschaft und Gastfreundschaft im
 himmlischen Vaterlande haben, dass wir daselbst
 freundschaftlich und gastlich aufgenommen und trak-
 tirt wurden. Jenes Symbol aber ist nicht bloss
 Brod und Wein, welche, wie die Alten sagen, ver-
 zehrt und wieder ausgeworfen werden, sondern der
 Leib und das Blut Christi, womit er als der Herr
 das himmlische Vaterland schon inne hat und regiert;
 sie sind die gewissesten Symbole unserer Aufersteh-
 ung und Verherrlichung. Denn die gibt er uns im
 Abendmahle so, dass wir sie zu uns nehmen und in
 uns haben, wie Chrysostomus sagt. Wo wird aber die-
 ser herrlichste Trost bleiben, wenn wir uns einbil-
 den, dass unsere Leiber im Abendmahle des Herrn nur
 die Elemente des Brodes und Weines empfangen; Chris-
 ti Leib und Blut aber hienieden von uns getrennt
 sei? 1

That the heavenly sacramental banquet that Christians eat
 on earth is the assurance of eternal life is well expressed
 also by Gerhard:

Unser Leib ist wegen der innwohnenden Suende dem
 Tod unterworfen, Roem. 8, 10, und weil diese Suende
 durch die fleischliche Geburt von den ersten Eltern

1 Quoted in : Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts .
 A.D. 1875, p. 65f.

auf uns fortgepflanzt wird, darum heisst es, dass wir in Adam alle sterben, 1 Cor. 15, 22. Damit wir nun der Auferstehung unseres Leibes zum ewigen Leben vergewissert werden, darum speis't uns Christus im heiligen Abendmahle mit seinem lebendig machenden Leibe, unseren Glauben und unsere Hoffnung kraeftig staerkend, dass eben dieser unser Leib, in welchem in diesem Leben Suede und Tod wohnen, aus dem Staube der Erde zum ewigen Leben auferweckt werden muesse, weil er mit dem lebendigen Leib Christi genahrt worden ist. 1

When the exalted Lord at His triumphant return raises the bodies of the righteous and makes them like unto His glorious body, the ransomed of the Lord will joy in the perfect fullness of life forevermore. Those who have been worthy guests at the banquet of Christ's love here on earth will "sit at His heavenly Table where He feeds them with the eternal manna and gives them to drink of the river of His pleasure forevermore." That hope, too deep for human thought, too grand for human tongue is abundantly nurtured in the Sacrament. It is this very hope which Christ bids us to make our own when He declares: "Take, eat; this is My body, given for you; take, eat; this cup is the New Testament in My blood, shed for the remission of your sins," for "where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."²

1 De Coena S. Para. 213; quoted in: Erster Synodal-Bericht des Illinois-Districts, A. D., 1875, p. 66f.

2 Concordia Triglotta, p. 557.

4. Proper Instruction in General

In general, the topic of Holy Communion ought to be mentioned more frequently and in greater detail by our pastors than at present. It is inadvisable to limit mention of the Sacrament almost entirely to the confessional service. The pastor should urge frequent Communion attendance also in the main service whenever opportunity is offered. That forgiveness is sealed and that faith is strengthened by the Sacrament must always receive sufficient stress. But, in addition, communicants should be taught to look beyond the remission of sins to the rich blessings held out to the child of God as a result of forgiveness.

Patient admonition, correction, comfort, and instruction are essential. Among other things, the pastor should earnestly warn against indifference. The failure to realize the necessity and value of frequent Communion is a perilous condition.

Luther writes:

Now, whoever does not highly value the Sacrament thereby shows that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell; that is, he does not believe any such things, although he is in them over head and ears and is doubly the devil's own. On the other hand, he needs no grace, life, Paradise, heaven, Christ, God, nor anything good. For if he believed that he had so much that is evil, and needed so much that is good, he would not thus neglect the Sacrament, by which such evil is remedied and so much good is bestowed. ¹

Church members who do not feel any need for the Sacrament should follow the instruction of Dr. Luther:

For those who are so minded that they do not realize their condition I know no better counsel than that they put their hand into their bosom to ascertain whether they also have flesh and blood. And

¹ Concordia Triglotta, p. 538f.

if you find that to be the case, then go, for your good, to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, and hear what sort of a fruit your flesh is: Now the works of the flesh (he says, chap. 5, 19ff.) are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like...

In the second place, look about you and see whether you are also in the world, or if you do not know it, ask your neighbors about it. If you are in the world, do not think that there will be lack of sins and misery. For only begin to act as though you would be godly and adhere to the Gospel, and see whether no one will become your enemy, and moreover, do you harm, wrong, and violence, and likewise give you cause for sin and vice. If you have not experienced it, then let the Scriptures tell you, which everywhere give this praise and testimony to the world.

Besides this, you will also have the devil about you, whom you will not entirely tread under foot, because our Lord Christ Himself could not entirely avoid him. Now, what is the devil? Nothing else than what the Scriptures call him, a liar and murderer. A liar, to lead the heart astray from the Word of God, and to blind it, that you cannot feel your distress or come to Christ. A murderer, who cannot bear to see you live one single hour. If you could see how many knives, darts, and arrows are every moment aimed at you, you would be glad to come to the Sacrament as often as possible. But there is no reason why we walk so securely and heedlessly, except that we neither think nor believe that we are in the flesh, and in this wicked world or in the kingdom of the devil. 1

The pastor in urging frequent use of the Sacrament must avoid legalism. No attempts should be made to bind the communicant to certain regulations. In accordance with Christ's own statements no pastor can give a dogmatical answer to the question: "How often should a Christian receive the Sacrament?" In his preface to the *Small Catechism* Luther writes:

1 Concordia Triglotta, p. 771. 773.

Lastly, since the tyranny of the Pope has been abolished, people are no longer willing to go to the Sacrament and despise it (as something useless and unnecessary). Here again urging is necessary, however, with this understanding: We are to force no one to believe, or to receive the Sacrament, nor fix any law, nor time, nor place for it, but are to preach in such a manner that of their own accord, without our law, they will urge themselves, and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer the Sacrament. This is done by telling them: Whoever does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is no Christian, just as he is no Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel; for Christ did not say, This omit, or, This despise, but This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, etc. Verily, He wants it done and not entirely neglected and despised. This do ye, He says. 1

Although Christ did not legislate when and how often a Christian should commune, it is clear that He desires the believer to make diligent use of the visible Word.

All the statements of Scripture on this Sacrament peremptorily forbid any and all restrictions and limitations on frequent presence at the Lord's Table which grow from the incomprehensible fear that a worthy communicant may too often experience the "communion of the bread which we break, of the cup of blessing which we bless" Consistently following out the culpable attitude cited in the above one may with equal propriety and validity urge that frequent hearing of the Gospel is not at all necessary, since we possess all the benefits of Christ through the heavenly washing in which we have put on Christ. Prosecuting this extravagant notion we might speciously argue that frequent hearing of the Gospel may result in knowing our Lord too well and blessedly. 2

Every faithful pastor will warn against unworthy reception of the Sacrament. To obtain a curse instead of a blessing

1 Concordia Triglotta, p. 537.

2 Wisnar, A., op. cit., p. 46f.

sing, divine wrath and displeasure rather than grace and mercy from the Lord's Supper is truly a serious matter. But the pastor ought not allow these grave considerations to rob the troubled, sensitive, sin-plagued soul of the communicant of the joy that is his in the Sacrament. True worthiness may be ascertained in a simple manner - by honestly answering two questions: (1) Are you sorry for your sins? (2) Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Luther offers fine words of comfort to the soul terrified by the possibility of eating and drinking the Sacrament to his damnation:

Lieber, du musst nicht auf dich sehen wie wuerdig oder unwuerdig du seiest, sondern auf deine Nothdurft, wie du der Gnade Gottes bedardest. Wenn du die Nothdurft siehst und fuehlst, so bist du wuerdig und geschickt genug, denn er hat's uns nicht zu Gift und Ungnade sondern zu Trost und Heil eingesetzt. Vor allen Dingen aber musst du ansehen, dass gleichwohl dein Herr Christus, wie unwuerdig du bist, allzu wuerdig ist, den zu loben, ehren und danken sollst und seine Ordnung und Stiftung, wie droben gesagt, helfen handhaben, wie du ihm schuldig bist und in der Taufe gelobt hast. Dass dein Herz soll also denken: Wohlan! bin ich unwuerdig das Sacrament zu empfangen, so ist mein Herr Christus desto wuerdiger, dass ich ihm damit danke und lobe und seine Stiftung ehre, wie ich schuldig bin und gelobt habe in meiner Taufe; und abermals: bin ich unwuerdig, so bin ich's aber beduerftig. Wer betteln will, der muss sich nicht schaemen; Scham ist ein unnuetz Hauesgesinde in eines armen Bettlers Hause. So lobt auch Christus selbst einen unverschaeinten Geiler, Luc. 11, 5ff. 1

It is the duty of the pastor to instruct the communicant to hold the proper regard for the Sacrament of the Altar. To overestimate the powerful influence exerted by the Sacrament

1 Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 2204.

upon Christian faith and life is extremely difficult. The importance of the Sacrament should be indicated by the entire conduct of the Communion service. It is altogether wrong to allow church members to form the opinion that the Lord's Supper is merely a trifling adjunct to the preaching of the Word. The congregation should be taught to remain during the entire Communion service. It should not be taken for granted that the majority of members refrain from appearing at the Lord's Supper on several occasions before they again obey their Master's command.

? A separate Communion service should be avoided. Holy Communion is part of the main service. Lochner points out that the main service has always been The Communion:

Lochner's influence by Lochner

Auf Grund von Act. 2, 42. und 1 Cor. 11 und nach dem Vorbild der alten Kirche betrachtet jedoch die lutherische Kirche den Communion-Gottesdienst als den herrlichsten und wichtigsten aller öffentlichen Gottesdienste und hat auch denselben am reichsten und sinnigsten liturgisch ausgestattet. Sie scheidet daher zwischen Haupt- und Nebengottesdienst. Nicht durch die Bedeutung des Sonn- oder des Festtags, noch durch die Jahreszeit, noch durch liturgischen Reichthum wird ein Gottesdienst zum Hauptgottesdienst, sondern, wie es das schriftgemäesse Verhaeltniss von Wort und Sacrament gibt, dadurch, dass auf die Verkuendigung des Wortes des Evangeliums die Handlung des Sacraments des Leibes und Blutes Christi unmittelbar folgt und so diese als das Siegel des Wortes das Ziel und den Schlussstein des Gottesdienstes bildet. 1

Furthermore, the communicant should be taught to look upon the Sacrament as a most sacred act of Christian worship. The ancients emphasized the peculiar sacredness of the Holy

1 Der Hauptgottesdienst, p. 6.

Supper. The first part of the service was the teaching service known as the "Mass of the Catechumens." At its conclusion the Catechumens were dismissed with special prayers. The second part of the service, to which none but communicants were allowed entrance, was called the "Mass of the Faithful." The doors were closed and guarded lest a profane^{eye} might behold the sacred Mystery. ¹

The reception of the Lord's true body and blood in the Eucharist is the loftiest and most hallowed experience of life. "In our worship we reach a spiritual height when we partake of the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament." ²

In the Lord's Supper we are upon the mountain; we are with Jesus. It is a special privilege to be singled out above others. The Gospel offers unto all the grace of God. In Holy Communion Jesus leads us apart from others. He addresses Himself to the individual. He gives us glimpses of heavenly things. We instinctively feel that the occasion is sacred. (Just at that moment when we stand at the Lord's Table we could not easily be tempted to dishonor Christ. It is good for us to be here at the Lord's Table.)³

In the Lord's Supper the closest communion between Christ and His disciples takes place. When the believer eats and drinks the body and blood of his Savior, he is as near heaven as he can be in this life. The ^{Lord's Supper} (experience) is so comforting and strengthening that while looking back upon the last celebration with extreme happiness and satisfaction, the communicant will look forward to the next with keenest anticipation.

The Christian should learn to view the entire Communion

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- 1 An Explanation of the Common Service, p. 49.
 - 2 Sommer, M.S., "Partakers of That One Bread," Lutheran Witness, Vol LX, No. 7, p. 115.
 - 3 Gallman, C.E., "Why Jesus Takes Us up into the Mountain in the Lord's Supper," Confessional Addresses, p. 35.

service as one of joy. The celebration of the Sacrament is by no means to be an occasion for fear and trembling.

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The guest at the Lord's Table is not so much the ~~poor~~ ~~publican~~ pleading for mercy, as the justified child of God, who (boldly) draws near to the throne of grace, lifts up his heart unto the Lord, gives thanks to his reconciled God, and praises Him in exalted strains. Filled with this spirit, Christ's brethren are truly ready to sup with Him. 1

"Wenn du hinzutrittst zum Altar, so nahe mit heiliger Furcht, aber nicht wie ein Missetaeter zum Hochgericht. Ja, da deine Seele Jesum liebt, so eile, wie Verlobte pflegen, deinem Brautigam entgegen."²

Any dread experienced in eating and drinking at the Table of the Lord is directly counter to the very nature of the Eucharist. In the Sacrament the Lord manifests Himself as the God of love, not as the God of wrath. It was love ineffable that moved Christ to institute this sacrament for His disciples. St. John in referring to the institution of the Lord's Supper, writes, chapter 13, verse 1: "...having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."³ Though Christ's suffering and death were but a short time away, they could not cause Him to forget His weak disciples. At His departure He instituted the greatest monument of His love. Though His heart fainted at the thought of His approaching pain and agony, Jesus said, Luke 22, 15: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

The Sacrament of the Altar was never meant to be an object

1 An Explanation of the Common Service, p. 56, note.

2 Der Lutheraner, Vol. XC, No. 6, p. 107.

3 Walther, C.F.W., Evangelien Postille, p. 146.

of terror. The Lord does not desire anyone to partake of the Sacrament with a trembling heart, as though he were forced to come by a stern command. The Lord's Supper is rather a marriage-feast, to which the communicant should gladly and eagerly hasten. In this Sacrament he becomes intimately connected with the beloved Bridegroom of his soul and receives heavenly gifts from Him.

Gott gebe allen frommen Christen ein solch Herz, dass wenn sie das Wort "Messe" hoeren, erschrecken und sich segnen, als vor einem Teufelsgreuel; wiederum, wenn sie hoeren das Wort "Sacrament" oder "Abendmahl des Herrn," vor lauter Freuden springen, ja auch, nach rechter geistlicher Freuden Art suessiglich weinen... Denn ich hab's ja von Herzen lieb das liebe, selige Abendmahl meines Herrn Jesu Christi, darin er mir seinen Leib und Blut auch leiblich in meinen Mund zu essen und zu trinken gibt, mit so ueberaus suessen, freundlichen Worten: "Fuer euch gegeben, fuer euch vergossen, usw. 1

The realization that he is to partake of the body and blood of Christ given and shed as a sacrifice and payment for all his sins should make the communicant's heart leap with joy and give way to exultant song. When the Lord, offering the cup, says: "This is My blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins," He means to emphasize particularly the words "for the remission of sins," and "to cause every communicant who believes them to shout inwardly with joy when he goes home from church after communing."²

Is a starving person afraid to eat when he is offered food?
Is a thirsty person hesitant when he is handed a cooling drink?

1 Luther, H., op. cit., Vol. XIX, p. 1292.

2 Walther, C.F.W., Law and Gospel, p. 376.

Does the sweet Christmas message frighten anyone? Does the glorious Easter proclamation scare the hearer? Is not the Sacrament of the Altar likewise a sweet invitation? Ought anyone fear the glorious message which it proclaims? 1

Surely sorrow must fly away from the ransomed of the Lord whose soul He rejoices with the priceless pledge of forgiveness. Surely divine rapture must fill the heart of those whom the Lord so wonderfully supplies with the assurance that Christ died for the unjust. Gerhard writes:

Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat. Let him that thirst come. Come thou also, tortured by the scorching heat of thy sins. Because thou lackest the coin of worthiness, hasten all the more. Devoid of all merit of thine own hasten more eagerly to the merit of Christ. Go at once and buy without money. Here is the secret chamber in which Christ and the soul meet, from which your sins must not deter you, and into which your merits may not enter...Give heed, my soul, and eat that which is good and delight thyself in fatness. 2

1 Bouman, H. J., "Him that Cometh to Me I Will in No Wise Cast Out," (Sermon) Concordia Pulpit, Vol. III, p. 207.

2 Wismar, A., op. cit., p. 21f.

C. Retention or Reintroduction of Beneficial Customs

1. Personal Announcement for Communion

Though God has not commanded registration for Holy Communion, this beneficial practice is practically necessitated by the serious implications of Communion attendance. A conscientious pastor ought to regard it "his solemn duty to insist that those who would receive the Sacrament of the Altar previously register their names with him and give him an opportunity to speak to them."¹

Registration for Communion is incumbent upon the pastor because of the nature of the pastor's office. He is the watchman of the flock. (Heb. 13, 17) Paul writes, 1 Cor. 4, 1: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." The Lord earnestly commands the pastor, Matt. 7, 6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

The nature of the Lord's Supper is another reason for Communion registration. Reception of the Sacrament presupposes faith. It is to be administered only to those Christians who are penitent and orthodox. Holy Communion is also an act of confession. The pastor is, therefore, duty bound to do all in his power to prevent those who deny the Real Presence or who otherwise do not agree with Lutheran doctrine to commune at his altar. The Lord's Supper takes for granted

1 Fritz, J.H.C., "Pastoral Theology," p. 130.

that the individual is able to examine himself. Paul writes, 1 Cor. 11, 28.29.: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

The pastor who allows the communicant to approach the Lord's Table without a thorough self-examination commits a grievous sin. In a sense Holy Communion is entirely different from the preaching of the Word. The purpose of the Gospel is not only to sustain faith, but above all to create faith in the heart of the sinner. Consequently, the pastor cannot prevent the sinner from hearing the Word lest he deprive him of salvation. But the Sacrament of the Altar does not have the purpose of engendering faith, but of strengthening¹ the faith of the regenerate who has been duly examined.

The serious feature of Holy Communion lies in the fact that he who communes unworthily is the recipient not of God's grace, but of His wrath, not of divine blessing, but of a divine curse, not of life, but of death. He is guilty of the body and blood of Christ. (1 Cor. 11, 27) The pastor who does not insist on a rigid examination before Communion is, as Paul states, 1 Tim. 5, 22, a "partaker of other men's sins."² Chrysostom declares: "I would rather let my own body

¹ Fritz, J. H. C., op. cit., p. 150f.

² Verhandlungen der 28. sten Jahresversammlung des Michigan-Districts, Anno Domini, 1885, p. 26.

be destroyed than permit that the body of the Lord be given to an unworthy person; I would rather let my own blood be shed than permit that the most holy blood of the Lord be given to an unworthy person."¹

Examination of communicants is in conformity with the custom of the Church of the Reformation. Article XXV of the Augsburg Confession declares: "It is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved."² The Apology, Article XV, adds: "With us many use the Lord's Supper willingly and without constraint every Lord's Day, but after having been first instructed, examined whether they know and understand anything of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, and absolved."³ Luther speaks as follows regarding the examination of communicants:

Man soll auch niemand zum heiligen Sacrament gehen lassen, er sei denn von seinem Pfarrherrn insonderheit verhoert, ob er zum heiligen Abendmahl zu gehen geschickt sei? Denn St. Paulus spricht 1 Cor. 11, 27, dass die schuldig sind an dem Leibe und Blute Christi, die es unwuerdiglich nehmen. Nun uehren das Sacrament nicht allein, die es unwuerdig nehmen, sondern auch, die es mit Unfleiss Unwuerdigen geben.⁴

Personal announcement for Communion offers the pastor an excellent occasion to practice "Seelsorge." The pastor is face to face with the soul that is entrusted to his care at a time when spiritual matters are uppermost in the mind

1 Hom. 83. in Matth.; quoted in: Fritz, J.H.C., Pastoral Theology, p. 130.

2 Congordia Triglotta, p. 69.

3 Ibid. p. 325.

4 Unterricht fuer die Kirchenvisitatoren. W. W. 1943; quoted in: Verhandlungen der 28.sten Jahresversammlung des Michigan-Districts, p. 26f.

and heart. He is enabled to learn more about the spiritual life of the individual, the level of his thinking, and the actual needs of his soul. Communion registration affords the pastor an unparalleled opportunity to help deepen the spiritual life and solve the problems of the troubled soul. The communicant is thus taught to receive the maximum of divine blessings obtainable in the Sacrament.

In order to induce the member who registers for Communion to speak about his spiritual problems the pastor may introduce the discussion with a well-prepared question. Such a question may be formulated thus: "What progress have you made in your spiritual life?" The pastor may then show in a concrete fashion the implications that such progress involves, namely, greater faith, frequent prayer, and joyful service to God and man. If necessary the pastor should explain how the Sacrament as a means of grace can and will make such progress real. Another helpful question that the pastor may ask at the time of registration is: "What rule do you follow about frequency of your Communion attendance?" If the communicant has slavishly followed a certain custom, he may ask himself the question: "Why shouldn't I go to Communion this time?" "Have you ever tried examining yourself according to one or more petitions of the Lord's Prayer?" is another possible query. Other questions that may be asked are the following: "Has the use of the Sacrament helped you in your devotional life? What would it mean to you if you were in a place or in a position where you could not go to the Lord's Supper regularly? Much

or nothing? Have you ever noticed any appreciable difference in the blessings received from the Sacrament when you prepared conscientiously and when you did not prepare so conscientiously? " ¹ No direct answers need be demanded to such questions, though sometimes answers will be offered voluntarily. The member should always be asked to think the questions through carefully and to give the Lord a frank answer. All possibilities for embarrassment should be avoided. Every effort should be made to make the Communion announcement a cherished experience.

Conscientious Communion registration often produces lifelong benefits. A letter in the "Lutheran Witness," Vol. LVI, No. 2, p. 13, substantiates this point. The contributor writes in part:

"Confirmed eighteen years ago, I sometimes think that the personal announcement for Communion has kept me with the Church, as Rev. B. B. would not accept phone calls from the newly confirmed, but "come yourself," until I left my home town eight years later...How many times would I have erred had it not been for the personal Communion announcement!" The writer enclosed a clipping from the "Lutheran Witness," Vol. 53, No. 2, p. 41, with the following sentences heavily underscored: The personal announcement for Communion is also important and should not be neglected. Young people should be induced to make this application for admission to the Sacrament in person. Parents should be advised to urge their sons and daughters themselves to perform this duty. This personal contact offers an opportunity for the pastor to speak words of advice and exhortation rarely offered at any other time. The young people are usually in a serious frame of mind at such times and very receptive. What an opportunity to put them in remembrance of the Lord Jesus, who has bought them and who alone can and will keep them! What sacred moments at the foot of the cross, for the shepherd and the beloved blood-bought soul! Surely that will not remain without blessed results.

¹ Grumm, A.H., "Making the Most of the Communion Announcement," American Lutheran, Vol. XXIII, No. 6, p. 12f.

2. Self-Communion

If the Blessed Sacrament is to regain the place in the lives of our Christians which the Lord clearly intended, our pastors must be able to speak with conviction of the blessings derived from regular and frequent Communion. To speak with conviction it is necessary that a man has experienced and is experiencing what he pictures to his people. 1

Wenn der Pastor will, dass seine Leute fleissig zum Abendmahl gehen, dann muss auch er selber fleissig dazu halten. 2

The pastor is to be a good example to his flock in every phase of Christian living, including Communion attendance. Yet a more important reason for frequent Communion on the part of the minister is the great need which he has for the strength and comfort offered in the Sacrament. If anyone needs to be lifted high above his sordid surroundings and given a foretaste of heaven, it is the man who must constantly deal with the things of God. If any man needs the assurance of union with Christ, it is the pastor, for he must constantly represent his divine Master. The most practical solution to the deplorable Communion record of the majority of our clergy is self-Communion.

The Scriptures nowhere forbid self-communication. The Lutheran confessional writings in no way discourage it. Self-Communion was the practice of the Church since post-apostolic times. The first indication of this practice as an established appointment is in one of the canons of the Apostolic Consti-
³tutions. Luther's "Formula Missae" of 1523 has the following

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- 1 Lindemann, F.H., "The Pastor and the Sacrament," American Lutheran, Vol. XXIII, No. 4., p. 11.
 2 Siebenter Synodal-Bericht des Kansas-Districts, p. 23.
 3 Holman, A.J., Works of Martin Luther, p. 110, note 103.

rubric: "Hernach reiche er das Sacrament beide ihm selbst¹ und dem Volke, indem singe man das Agnus Dei." In the

Smalcaald Articles Luther writes:

But if any one should advance the pretext that as an act of devotion he wishes to administer the Sacrament, or Communion, to himself, he is not in earnest (he would commit a great mistake, and would not be speaking seriously and sincerely). For if he wishes to commune in sincerity, the surest and best way for him is in the Sacrament administered according to Christ's institution. But that one should administer communion to himself is a human notion, uncertain, unnecessary, yea, even prohibited. And he does not know what he is doing, because without the Word of God he obeys a false human opinion and invention. So, too, it is not right (even though the matter were otherwise correct) for one to use the common Sacrament of (belonging to) the Church according to his own private devotion, and without God's Word and apart from the communion of the Church to trifle with.²

In this statement, however, Luther does not refer to self-communication, but to the celebration of the pastor to the exclusion of others, a practice, which Luther rightly condemns.

The German version of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV, reveals that the celebrant was expected to commune: "Dieweil nun die Messe nicht ein Opfer ist fuer andere... sondern soll eine Kommunion sein, da der Priester und andere³ das Sakrament empfangen fuer sich." The Apology adds: "The fact that we hold only Public or Common Mass (at which the people also commune, not Private Mass) is no offense against

¹ Luther, M., op. cit., Vol. X, p. 2760.

² Concordia Triglotta, p. 465.

³ Ibid., p. 66.

the Church Catholic." ¹ Since the Apology here points out that the people "also" communed, the implication is that the pastor, the celebrant, participated with them.

In his "Ordnung der Evangelischen Messe" of 1524 Bugenhagen directs: "Following this prayer the priest feeds himself, thereupon the people." ² In Denmark "the question arose whether the minister should partake of the Communion with his own hands. He was authorized by the Synod of Antvorskov to do so at the public service, and also when administering the Sacrament to the sick. And this practice was, of course, approved by Bugenhagen." ³

The Agenda of Austria contains the admonition: "Die Kirchendiener und Pastores sollen sich auch gewöhnen, wie zu der Apostel Zeit und in der Kirche allerwegen gebräuchlich gewesen, dass sie mit communiciren, und das zu gutem Exempel der Kirchen und der Gemein." ⁴

Dr. Walther writes that, in addition to Carpzov, the following spoke determinately for the right of a preacher to commune himself: Brochmand (Cf. System. Th. loc. de coen. f. 485), Quenstedt (Cf. Theologia didactico-polem. P. IV. c. 3. fol. 1033), and "all our casuists." ⁵

3. Private Confession and Absolution.

A most salutary custom, which has fallen into disuse in

1 Concordia Triglotta, p. 385.

2 Lindemann, F.H., "The Pastor and the Sacrament," American Lutheran, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, p. 10.

3 Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association, Vol. II., p. 71.

4 Lochner, F., Der Hauptgottesdienst, p. 263.

5 Pastorale, p. 200.

our Church, is private confession and absolution. Our confessional writings speak highly of the advantages of this practice. "Confession is of human right only, not commanded by Scripture, but ordained by the Church. Nevertheless on account of the great benefit of absolution and because it is otherwise useful to the conscience, Confession is retained among us." ¹ Luther's high estimate of private confession is evident from a sermon he preached on the subject at Wittenberg in 1522:

Zum Dritten ist auch eine Beichte, da einer dem andern beichtet, und nimmt ihn allein auf einen Ort, und erzahlt ihm, was seine Noth und Anliegen ist, auf dass er von ihm ein troestlich Wort hoere, damit er sein Gewissen stille. Diese Beichte hat der Pabst gestreng geboten und einen Nothstall draus gemacht, dass es zu erbarmen ist. Dies Noethigen und Zwingen hab ich verworfen und hart angegriffen, da ich von der Beichte gepredigt und geschrieben habe. Und eben darum will ich nicht beichten, dass es der Pabst geboten hat und haben will. Denn er soll mir die Beichte frei lassen und keinen Zwang noch Gebot daraus machen; dass er keine Macht noch Gewalt hat zu thun. Aber dennoch will ich mir die heimliche Beichte niemand lassen nehmen, und wollte sie nicht um der ganzen Welt Schatz geben; denn ich weiss, was Staerke und Trost sie mir gegeben hat. Es weiss niemand, was die heimliche Beichte vermag, denn der mit dem Teufel oft fechten und kaempfen muss. Ich waere laengst von dem Teufel ueberwunden und erwuerget worden, wenn mich diese Beichte nicht erhalten haette. Denn es sind viel zweifelhaftige und irrige Sachen, darein sich der Mensch allein nicht wohl schicken kann, noch sie begreifen. Wenn er nun in einem solchen Zweifel stehet und weiss nicht wo hinaus, so nimmt er seinen Bruder auf einen Ort und haelt ihm fuer seine anliegende Noth, klagt ihm seine Gebrechen, seinen Unglauben und seine Sunde, und bittet ihn um Trost und Rath. Denn was schadet's ihm, dass er sich fuer seinem Naechsten ein wenig demuethige und sich zu Schanden mache? Wenn dir denn da ein Trost widerfaehrt von deinem Bruder, den nimm an und glaube ihm, als wenn dir's Gott

¹ Concordia Triglotta, p. 71.

selbst gesagt haette...Wer aber einen festen, starken Glauben hat zu Gott, und ist gewiss, seine Sunden sind ihm vergeben, der mag diese Beichte wohl lassen und allein Gott beichten. Aber wie viel sind ihr, die solchen festen, starken Glauben und Zuversicht zu Gott haben? Es sehe ein jeglicher hie auf sich selbst, dass er sich nicht verfuehre. 1

Though there is no essential difference between private confession and general confession, the former offers a definite advantage. Certain sins may cause a Christian special trouble. He may fear that he has committed an unpardonable sin. His troubled conscience may need particular spiritual comfort. He wants to know positively that God has forgiven him. Such a person may confess his sins privately to the pastor, express his penitence, and be absolved by the pastor. While the pastor is never justified in demanding private confession, as though it were an essential characteristic of a truly Evangelical Lutheran Church, he must nevertheless insist that those who desire private confession be permitted its use. It is the part of the pastor to instruct his congregation concerning this custom and to urge the laity to make use of it whenever they feel the need. No one, of course, should be compelled to enumerate his sins, as the Apology states: "In reference to the enumeration of offenses in confession, we have said above that we hold that it is not necessary by
2
divine right."

1 Erlanger Ausgabe, XXVIII, 249f.; quoted in: Walther, C.F.W., Pastorale, p. 156.

2 Fritz, J.H.C., op. cit., p. 137ff.

CONCLUSION

A heartening feature of Lutheran church life is the present trend toward greater emphasis on the Sacrament in many of our congregations. Dissatisfaction with the flagrant neglect of the visible Word is widespread. Although the steady improvement in Synod's Communion statistics since 1932 is slight, it, nevertheless, is an improvement. There is no doubt that the efforts of conscientious pastors and thoughtful laymen are producing results.

The excellent records of a considerable number of our churches are very encouraging. Reference has already been made to the fact in 1938 the average Communion attendance at Trinity Lutheran Church, Astoria, Long Island (Pastor Fred H. Lindemann) was ten. The statistics of two congregations in the Middle West are cited here as proof that high Communion records exist in widely separated areas of the Lutheran Church.

In 1937 the 222 communicants of St. Andrew's Church in St. Louis communed 955 times for an average of 4.3 per communicant member.¹ The increase during the intervening years has been steady. Statistics for 1940 are as follows: Number of communicants, 285; number of communions, 1309; average Communion attendance, 4.6. In 1940 the number of those who communed more than four times was as follows:

Number of communions	Communicants
5	63
6	23
7	35
8	17
9	2
10	1

¹ Statistics received from the Rev. R.W. Kassebaum.

Of the 339 communicants of Christ Lutheran Church of Superior, Wisconsin (Pastor A.F. Gerhardt) fifty attended the Lord's Supper at least seven times or more during the year 1939.¹ The figures are the following:

Number of communions	Communicants
7	20
8	12
9	3
10	9
11	6

The average Communion attendance of the same church in 1940 was 3.7.² The 356 communicants communed a total of 1318 times. Seventy communicants received the Sacrament seven or more times during the year.

Number of communions	Communicants
7	23
8	11
9	17
10	10
11	8
12	1

The revived emphasis on the Sacrament of Holy Communion is not surprising. The development is but natural, historical, and inevitable. Once the Church had become capable of a fresh, unbiased approach by being freed from the baneful influence of Pietism, Rationalism, and indifference, the restoration of the Sacrament to its proper position of importance in the worship of the Church was but natural. Sooner or later the confessional Lutheran Church would find it necessary by force of circumstan-

¹ Christ Church Annual, 1939.

² Christ Church Annual, 1940.

ces to stress the visible means of grace. Both the Scriptures and Church History demonstrate that the word "means" is not singular but plural. A careful re-examination of the words of Institution has shown that the generally accepted view of Holy Communion, which made the Sacrament an infrequent event in the life of the Christian, is untenable. A re-study of the means of grace in the Early Christian Church and in the Church of the Reformation has led to the rediscovery of the Sacrament as the seal upon the preached Word.

Whenever a new movement comes into prominence, the tendency invariably manifests itself of calling attention to countless dangers and, therefore, of discouraging and sometimes opposing it. Accordingly a negative, passive attitude is characteristic of certain Lutheran clergymen toward the new awakening to the practical inclusion of Holy Communion in the means of grace. That dangers exist cannot be denied. That mistakes and excesses have occurred must be admitted. False enthusiasm has taken place. But the neglect of the visible Word cannot on that account be continued, nor should the priceless blessings of Holy Communion for that reason be withheld from the laity. (It is improper and unfair to rise up and begin to shout "Romanizer" and "Anglophile" at those men who are trying to bring the Sacrament back into its rightful place in church life.) Dangers are present in every area of church activity. There is a danger that our clergy preach justification to the neglect of sanctification. Yet the abuse of a certain doctrine does not rule out its use. Some of the dangers seen in the trend toward greater

stress of Communion are purely fictitious. The wisest attitude toward the renewed interest in the Sacrament is one of enthusiastic helpfulness.

A Sacrament that is undeniably as important as the Eucharist ought to engage the sincerest devotion and choicest efforts of our clergy. A careful re-study of Scripture and historic Lutheranism, of the post-Apostolic age and of our Confessions is in order before any action is taken. God be praised that the Sacrament is more and more being regarded as the seal upon the spoken Word. The chief concern of our leaders must now be to direct this development in the right channel and to keep it along scriptural, apostolic, and historically Lutheran lines.¹

¹ Lindemann, F. H., "The Sacrament A Means of Grace," American Lutheran, Vol. XXI, No. 2, p. 9f.

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