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### An Examination of the Practice of Personal Announcement for Communion on the Basis of its Pastoral Concerns

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AS DRAFTED SHORT TITLE PRACTICE  
OF PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENT FOR COMMUNION  
**PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENT FOR COMMUNION**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Teachers Education, The Johns  
Hopkins Department of Education, in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

by  
Harvard E. Durbach

June 1958

Approved by Harvey J. ...  
Advisor

Robert ...  
Member

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRACTICE  
OF PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENT FOR COMMUNION  
ON THE BASIS OF ITS PASTORAL CONCERNS**

---

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

---

by

**Herbert E. Borchelt**

**June 1958**

Approved by:

Harry J. Coines  
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Robert Press  
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We have eliminated personal announcements, we have eliminated  
 the traditional service, and now even our system of church rolls  
 is showing signs of breaking down. It happens continually  
 that when members commute that have registered, sometimes the  
 attendance records are checked, and we never know just who and how  
 many we have. Again we say with the Apostle, "My brethren,  
 these things ought not so to be."  
  
 W. H. Bennett, "Announcement for Communion," The Lutheran  
 Evangelist of the Lutheran Church of the Netherlands, 182 N.  
 10th St., St. Paul, Minn., November 17, 1917, p. 6.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Lutheran practice of personal announcement and registration for Holy Communion on the basis of the pastoral concerns connected with this practice. Since the church I served on vicarage in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, changed its practice from personal announcement to simple registration for Communion, and since this writer learned of other churches which had made or were in the process of making similar changes, an examination of these Lutheran practices on the basis of the pastoral concerns connected with them posed a highly profitable study. Many people in the Lutheran Church are becoming concerned about this change. A Lutheran pastor could write in his bulletin that the mode and manner of registration is not essential to Holy Communion and just a few paragraphs later show his disturbance over this change:

We have eliminated personal announcement, we have eliminated the confessional service, and now even our system of simple registration is showing signs of breaking down. It happens continually that more members commune than have registered; sometimes the difference is quite marked, and we never know just who and how many will commune. Again we say with the Apostle, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R. W. Langhans, "Registration for Communion," The Redeemer Record, newsletter of The Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 285 N. Dale St., St. Paul 3, Minn., November 17, 1957, p. 4.



In view of the changes which are taking place and in view of the concern which has been expressed about them, this paper attempts to ascertain the pastoral concerns for this practice and on this basis evaluate the practice.

Evaluating any statement made with regard to the practice of announcement or registration is complicated by the frequent interchangeable use of these terms. For present purposes the term announcement shall mean the act whereby an individual presents himself in person to his pastor to announce his intention to commune at a designated time and place.<sup>2</sup> The term registration shall mean any indirect announcement of intention to commune where no personal meeting between the pastor and the registrant takes place. A person may register by mailing a card or depositing a card in a receptacle at the church door, by telephone,<sup>3</sup> by recording his name on a pad strategically placed.<sup>4</sup> Also for present purposes both announcement and registration are to take place prior to the worship service. It should also be noted that although private confession and absolution may take place during announcement, it is not an integral, but an optional part of announcement.

The scope of this study treats especially the practice of registration and announcement in the Lutheran church in its relationship to the

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<sup>2</sup>John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (2nd edition, revised; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), p. 111.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 111.



pastoral concerns connected with it. It is assumed that the reader is acquainted with the theology of Holy Communion, as only those aspects of the Sacrament will be treated which are necessary to shed light on the problem.

The study will attempt to outline the pastoral concern involved in the practice of Communion announcement and registration on the basis of the nature of Holy Communion and the nature of the pastor's office. On this basis, then, the practice of announcement will be evaluated. Some have commended the practice as an effective method for the pastor to employ in carrying out his concerns. Others are doubtful as to its practicality and validity. The conclusion will attempt to show how different congregational factors will influence the practice in different localities.

The Lutheran practice of Communion announcement has not been seriously questioned until recent times. It has been given only passing treatment in dogmatics books, if mentioned at all. Frits' Pastoral Theology seems to be based on Walther's practice, and it was written before the practice became involved in heated discussions. Catechisms mention the practice and give reasons for it. The main sources for treatment of this subject are the Lutheran periodicals of recent date. The source materials for this study have been restricted to Lutheran writers and Lutheran writings in America. Most materials come from the pen of Missouri Synod writers, since some other Lutheran Churches are not

interested in practicing close Communion, and, hence, have no announcement practice.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BASIS FOR COMMENDING THE PRACTICE

#### The Nature of Holy Communion

Since the purpose of Communion, as sacrament is not expressly connected in Scripture, but is an ecclesiastical custom, the basis for commending the practice must be sought on other grounds than Scripture. Lutherans generally agree that the Sacrament by its very nature should suggest several pastoral concerns.

Holy Communion has the primary purpose of being a means of grace.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is a means of grace not so much in the sense of inviting and calling forth faith in persons who do not as yet have faith, but in a sense of strengthening those who have already been brought to faith by the Gospel. It is not primarily a means to bring to faith.<sup>2</sup> It is a means whereby God actually conveys forgiveness of sins to the participant. Hence, Holy Communion is private absolution.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Walter Dillinger and Paul E. Kretzmann, Toward Lutherans (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>The Validity of Communion of Who Receives the Sacrament Worthily? (Compiled by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North and West America of Ohio, Tract No. 2, 2nd edition, Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Synodical Printing House, 1886), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>John Piper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), III, 197.



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<sup>1</sup>Theodore Graebner and Paul E. Kretzmann, Toward Lutheran Union (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 189.

<sup>2</sup>The Worthy Communicant or Who Receives the Sacrament Worthily? (Published by the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Conference of Stark and other counties of Ohio. Tract No. 2, 2nd edition; Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Synodical Printing House, 1880), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1953), III, 197f.



The nature of the Sacrament has several implications for the communicant. The communicant who has trouble believing that he personally has part in the general salvation announced in the Gospel, who does not find his name in the Bible, who does not always feel God's grace, but who does find the Law and who does feel the working of sin in his life,<sup>4</sup> this communicant needs the assurance of the private absolution contained in the visible means of the Sacrament. Moreover, the private absolution which the Sacrament gives is not based on any work or quality in man, not even on man's true contrition or confession of sins before men, but absolution is based solely on the proclamation and forgiveness for Christ's sake.<sup>5</sup> Yet the Sacrament requires confession before God as a conditio sine qua non for a worthy reception of the Sacrament.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible for an individual to eat and drink Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament in an unworthy manner. St. Paul writes:

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord . . . For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>F. R. Zucker, "The Lord's Supper," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1947), II, 437.

<sup>5</sup>Pieper, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>6</sup>John H. C. Frits, Pastoral Theology, (2nd edition, revised; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), p. 117.

71 Cor. II: 27, 29.



Since Paul was writing to the Christians at Corinth, he suggests the possibility of an unworthy eating and drinking on the part of persons in outward communion or fellowship with the church. A person who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and eats and drinks judgment to himself. A person's unworthy manner of eating and drinking consists in unbelief and not discerning the Lord's body.<sup>8</sup> Many have tended to equate these terms, although the term discerning the body is a more comprehensive, and hence better, term, since it also embraces the idea of unbelief, as will be brought out later.

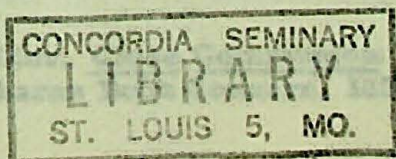
As a means of grace, Holy Communion works in the same way as does the Gospel. Just as "the Gospel is a savor of life unto life to the believer, and the same Gospel is a savor of death unto death to the unbeliever, "so the believer receives the Lord's supper for salvation,<sup>9</sup> and the unbeliever receives it as a seal of damnation.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur E. Noitzel, The Sacraments (Essay read at the regular convention of the Central Illinois District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, October 6-10, 1946, n. p.), p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> William Dallmann, The Real Presence or Why Do I Believe the Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper? (Pittsburg: American Lutheran Publication Board, 1900), p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Zucker, op. cit., p. 441.





The Sacrament, therefore, requires faith for a salutary eating and drinking. The words "for you" in the Words of Institution require all hearts to believe.<sup>11</sup> Especially since the Lutheran Church does not regard the Sacrament as a magic formula which works irrespective of the attitude of the communicant, faith is considered indispensable for a salutary use of the Sacrament. The faith which the Sacrament requires is not only or mainly doctrinal assent to the Real Presence, but faith in the forgiveness of sins. This faith gives assent to the absolution given in the Sacrament. This faith insures communing in a worthy manner.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Lutheran Church has traditionally used the Words of Institution as her basis for establishing the meaning of "worthily," rather than those of St. Paul.

The Gospel made visible in the Sacrament differs from the Gospel heard in the sermon in one important feature. Whereas listening to a sermon involves no particular confession, this is not the case with going to Communion. The Lord's Supper is one of the distinguishing features of the Church. "Since the various denominations have several different doctrines of the Sacrament, he who communes in a particular church thereby confesses the doctrine of that church."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1943), p. 203. Hereafter referred to as Synodical Catechism.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> G. T. Cooperrider, Close Communion: A Tract for the Times (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1887), p. 10.



The church is concerned with making a true public confession on her part and is also concerned that the individual makes a true confession as he communes. The Sacrament by its nature involves a public confession of belief.

Although Lutherans hold that it is damnably dangerous to reject and despise the Sacraments, they maintain that Holy Communion is not necessary for salvation. Many Lutherans quote Augustine, "Not the privation, but the contempt of the Sacrament damns."<sup>14</sup> Lutherans want their people to commune often, yet they want them to commune worthily in faith. Yet Lutherans give the impression that this faith must exist before the communicant comes to partake of the Sacrament. The Sacrament, although not denied the power to initiate faith, is reserved for those who have given evidence of their faith. Thus Lutherans realize very keenly that Holy Communion by its nature requires that the communicant participate in a worthy manner.

#### Individual Responsibility

Scripture fixes the main responsibility for a worthy manner of eating and drinking on the individual himself. The admonition of Scripture is not "Let the pastor examine you," but "Let a man examine himself, and so

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<sup>14</sup>Neitzel, op. cit., p. 50.



eat of the bread and drink of the cup."<sup>15</sup> Paul says again, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves."<sup>16</sup>

This self-examination is a work and preaching of the Law.<sup>17</sup> It demands reflection on a person's faith and the fruits of his faith. Its purpose is to arouse a person from security and self-deception. Examination, by revealing to a person his sin, will point up his need for grace. Kretzmann describes the extent to which self-examination should be carried:

While we are by no means to make this a morbid experience or to torture ourselves in determining just how frequently and how seriously we have failed in living up to God's holy will, we are nevertheless to make our own self-examination searching and thorough.<sup>18</sup>

Within the framework of his own faith, a person should examine himself not to pinpoint specific sins as an end in itself, but by going through this process, to arrive at the point where he recognizes his own unworthiness to come of himself to the Lord's Table and looks to Christ as the object of his faith. Self-examination will lead a person to confess his sinfulness to God and may lead him to desire private confession and absolution.

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<sup>15</sup>1 Cor. 11:28.

<sup>16</sup>2 Cor. 13:5.

<sup>17</sup>Pieper, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>18</sup>Paul E. Kretzmann, This Do Ye Often (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, c.1952), p. 12.



Within the context of faith, a person who uncovers his unworthiness will not be led to despair or be driven away from the Sacrament, but he will be prompted to cling more firmly to Christ, who is his Worthiness and who desires to make us worthy by faith in His promises.<sup>19</sup> Many writers state Luther's position that the feeling of unworthiness is the highest degree of worthiness. Self-examination will lead a person to come to the Lord's Table worthily, "not in the sense of deserving, but of earnestly desiring the benefits offered in the Sacrament."<sup>20</sup> Since the Christian is to practice self-examination daily, that self-examination which takes place preparatory to partaking of the Lord's Supper will be intensified and deepened.<sup>21</sup> The Catechism in general use throughout The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod for the last fifteen years suggests that the communicant ask himself whether he repents of his sin, believes in Christ as his Savior, and intends to amend his sinful life. It also suggests that the Christian Questions and Answers be used as an aid in this process of self-examination.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John Theodore Mueller, The Lord's Supper and our Christian Life (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n. d.) p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Stump, An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism (Revised edition; Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c.1935), p. 161.

<sup>21</sup> Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Synodical Catechism, p. 204.



Besides the communicant's examining himself, Scripture is also concerned that he discerns the body.<sup>23</sup> Krauth defines discern:

"To discern" (diakrinein), elsewhere translated to "make or put differences between," involves a correct mental and moral judgment; it means to distinguish between two things which there is a liability of confounding, to mark the distinction between one thing and another.<sup>24</sup>

The communicant must be able, therefore, to recognize something special about the ordinary bread and wine, namely, the real presence of the sacrificed body of the Lord. Among Lutheran circles this view is unquestioned. An interpretation, however, of this passage which is often overlooked is this, that the communicant in addition to the discernment of the sacrificed body of His Lord in the elements discerns the living body of the Lord in the loving fellowship of the church. Worthy participation, then, must be based on both of these principles which are equally important.<sup>25</sup>

For the communicant who discerns the body there is no room for thoughtlessness or frivolity when he distinguishes the Christ who thought

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<sup>23</sup> 1 Cor. 11:29.

<sup>24</sup> Charles F. [Erterfield] Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, c.1899), p. 643.

<sup>25</sup> Ralph C. Kruger, Discerning the Body, unpublished Bachelor's Thesis (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1957), p. 33.



so much of him that he went about the serious business of dying for his sin. The Christian who discerns the body will not make the mistake of thinking that the Lord's Supper is comparable to refreshments being served at a social gathering, as the Corinthians were doing. The communicant who discerns the body will remember that the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the death of Christ and will participate in a way corresponding to this fact.<sup>26</sup> But mainly he will remember that the Christ is really present for him, for the forgiveness of his sins, for his salvation.

The Christian who discerns the body will also recognize the loving fellowship of the communion of saints. As a member of the body of Christ he unites with his fellow members under the Head in a most intimate and unique way. His burdens are shared as he shares the burdens of the other communicants. There is a unity and a bond which gives strength and encouragement for life which is experienced only in the communion of saints.<sup>27</sup>

#### Pastor Shares Responsibility

Although, as we have seen, Scripture fixes the main responsibility for a worthy manner of participation on the individual, the pastor by the

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<sup>26</sup> M. Reu, Can We Still Hold to the Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper? (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1941), p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> Herman Amberg Preus, The Communion of Saints (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1948), pp. 110-127.



nature of his office shares a measure of responsibility. The pastor is the steward of the mysteries of God.<sup>28</sup> As a steward of the means of grace, the pastor has the right of administering the Sacrament to "worthy" communicants as one of the highest and holiest privileges of the Gospel ministry.<sup>29</sup> The pastor who is faithful to his Lord will administer the Sacrament according to His institution. Therefore, the pastor is personally and directly responsible to God and also to the congregation whom he represents for the way in which he administers the Sacrament. This means that the pastor is responsible with regard to the persons he admits to the Lord's Supper. "Therefore, the pastor has both the right and the duty to suspend those whose admission to the Sacrament would be contrary to God's will and ordinance."<sup>30</sup>

Although the "examine yourself" of St. Paul is primarily directed to the communicant, even these words "place a measure of responsibility also upon the congregation and its pastor, lest by the neglect of watchful care they contribute to the delinquency of unworthy guests and become partakers of their sine."<sup>31</sup> The pastor can become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord as an accomplice to the fact. Thus the

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<sup>28</sup> 1 Cor. 4:1.

<sup>29</sup> C. Thomas Spitz, "Thoughts on Close Communion," The Lutheran Witness (August 4, 1953), p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Pieper, op. cit. p. 389.

<sup>31</sup> O[tto] E. S[ohn], "What's the Answer," The Lutheran Witness (January 5, 1954), p. 9.



pastor naturally would be concerned with regard to the communicant's participating in a worthy manner.

Moreover, many feel on the basis of Scripture passages such as "Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine,"<sup>32</sup> that it is the duty of the church and the pastor to guard the Sacrament against abuse. The pastor must guard against exposing that which is holy to profanation.

The pastor should make it his business "to acquaint himself, as thoroughly as possible, with the spiritual standing of his people."<sup>33</sup> He will not admit to communion those whom God's Word pronounces unworthy and unprepared, but will be happy and willing to administer the Sacrament to everybody for whom it is intended. The pastor, as the administrator of the Sacrament, will remember,

If, through the indifference of the pastor, the Sacrament is received unworthily, the pastor himself is also guilty of profaning the Sacrament, and he grossly sins against the communicant by thus encouraging him in his sin, and by affording him an opportunity to eat and drink judgment to himself.<sup>34</sup>

Yet the dangers to the pastor and congregation dare not be over-emphasized at the expense of the pastoral concern at the opposite end of the pole, namely, the danger to him who might eat and drink unworthily. The pastor shares a measure of responsibility not only or

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<sup>32</sup> Matt. 7:6

<sup>33</sup> Cooperrider, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 12.



mainly as administrator of the Sacrament, but also and equally as shepherd and bishop of souls.<sup>35</sup> The pastor has a flock which he is to care for by overseeing their spiritual life. Since the pastor is concerned that his flock experience growth in their spiritual life, he is concerned that they make use of the means of grace. He makes the means of grace available. To his flock he administers the Sacrament.

Lutherans have always felt that the pastor is primarily obligated to his own flock. Although an outsider may have a right to his services in other matters, they have no claim to the administering of the Sacrament. This is expressed by the well-known Akron rule of 1872 which was affirmed at Galesburg in 1875: "I. Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only. II. The exceptions to the rule belong to the sphere of privilege, not of right." As the various pastoral concerns connected with the administration of the Sacrament begin to unfold, and as the pastoral concerns already mentioned are kept in mind, it will become clear that "Administration of the Lord's Supper presupposes pastoral care."<sup>36</sup> Lutheran pastors have always been concerned that they have had pastoral dealings with the people to whom they administer the Sacrament.

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<sup>35</sup><sub>1</sub> Pet. 5:1, 2. Heb. 13:17.

<sup>36</sup>Zucker, op. cit., p. 442.



\* The pastor is a shepherd who loves his flock. He wants his flock to commune worthily. Yet the pastor is aware that "Many a Lutheran comforts himself with the mere physical reception of the Sacrament, without inquiring into his heart to see if he have faith."<sup>37</sup> He realizes that there may be some in his flock who attend the Sacrament merely in order to maintain church membership to fulfill one of its requirements; or may commune because they hope to "feel better" or may benefit in some indefinite way.<sup>38</sup> For this reason every faithful pastor will warn against an unworthy manner of receiving the Sacrament.

Guided by the principle of Christian and pastoral love, the pastor will do everything in his power to safeguard an erring soul against an unworthy communion.<sup>39</sup> The pastor will withhold the Sacrament from those who are unworthy and will take steps to prevent the unworthy from taking the Lord's body and blood to his own hurt. At the same time and guided by the same principle of love, the pastor will want to administer the Sacrament to everyone who is "worthy."

Lutherans generally agree that those are "worthy" to receive the Sacrament who are 1. Baptised, 2. Able to examine themselves,

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur E. Neitsel, "The Sacraments," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c. 1947), II, 383.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Sohn, op. cit., p. 9.



3. Believers (in the Real Presence for the forgiveness of sins), and
4. Free from public offense.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the bare minimum of "worthiness" is presented in the regulations for chaplains adopted by the Army and Navy Commission of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod:

In exceptional cases synodical fellowship is not a necessary precondition for admission to the Lord's Supper. . . . The chaplain or pastor may commune such men in the armed forces as are conscious of the need of repentance and hold the essence of faith, including doctrines of the Real Presence and of the Lord's Supper as a means of grace, and profess acceptance thereof.<sup>41</sup>

Some Lutheran churches practice Close Communion and insist on admitting only those to Communion who have received sufficient instruction and have given an account of their faith. Nevertheless this need not always be formal instruction nor a formal, public confession of the faith of the church body, for "while the Lord's Supper is indeed a meal of fellowship, we have never so stressed this feature as to exclude from its consolations anyone in every sense "worthy" of the Sacrament."<sup>42</sup> The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, which practices Close Communion, communes people in hospitals and other public institutions without formal instruction in the Catechism and without demanding a formal profession of Christian doctrine.<sup>43</sup> Not only in emergencies, but also

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<sup>40</sup>Pieper, op. cit., p. 383.

<sup>41</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Holy Communion and Synodical Membership," The Lutheran Witness (June 22, 1943), p. 210.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.



at other times it may be permissible for the pastor to commune people who are not members of his denomination. The pastor in many cases should not refuse admission to "other Lutherans" who are soldiers or who become temporary residents and who can be considered "worthy."<sup>44</sup> The pastor will gladly administer the Sacrament to all those who qualify as being "worthy."

In love the pastor must deny the Sacrament to him who comes unworthily. A person who comes in an unworthy manner is a person who will not examine himself. This includes the ungodly and impenitent because they refuse to examine themselves. The heterodox fail to examine themselves as they should because of their inadequate doctrinal beliefs upon which an examination must be based. Those who refuse to amend their sinful life refuse to make a sincere examination. Also included are children, the unconscious, and all those others who cannot examine themselves.<sup>45</sup>

This imposes several obligations upon the pastor. The pastor must be certain that a person is ungodly or impenitent before he can deny him the Sacrament. For Pieper, quoting Walther, says,

To keep a pastor from unjustly refusing Communion, and at the same time to save the pastor unnecessary scruples of conscience,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> D. H. Steffens, "Safeguarding the Lord's Table," Proceedings of the Fifty-Second Convention of the Eastern District, June 24-30, 1925 (The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod) [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1925], p. 49.



the reminder is in place "that a pastor need not be sure of a living faith in those desiring Communion from him--for who but God could be? --; he must merely be certain that if they are not Christians, this is not manifest or provable."<sup>46</sup>

While the pastor will avoid tyrannizing consciences,<sup>47</sup> he will deny the Sacrament to the manifest, open, impenitent sinner.

On the other hand, when the pastor is dealing with the heterodox or the stranger, he must make certain that he can examine himself. The pastor is aware of the possibility that the stranger doesn't realize that he is actually committing a sin by going to the Lord's Supper without repentance for his sins and without faith. "The stranger may feel that Holy Communion is just another custom of a Christian Church, like singing hymns, kneeling, or contributing to an offering."<sup>48</sup> Therefore, in dealing with the stranger and the heterodox the pastor will deny them the Sacrament, unless he is convinced of their ability to examine themselves. This would require a statement of belief on their part.

The pastor must deny the Sacrament to those who refuse to amend their sinful life, because they refuse to make a sincere examination. Here the pastor treads on very dangerous ground. He must distinguish between those who are combatting sin and those who have completely

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<sup>46</sup>Pieper, op. cit., p. 388.

<sup>47</sup>Pieper, op. cit., quoting Walther, p. 388.

<sup>48</sup>Don Deffner, Why Close Communion (2nd revised edition; c. 1955; obtainable from the author, 2913 Forest Avenue, Berkeley 5, California), p. 4.



given up the fight. The pastor may deny the Sacrament only to those who he is certain have given up the fight.<sup>49</sup>

The pastor must also deny Communion to those who he is sure cannot examine themselves. The pastor will, therefore, give the Sacrament to no one who has not been previously instructed. Neither will he give it to one who does not know what the Sacrament is and for what purpose it was instituted.<sup>50</sup> Neither will he give it to a person who does not have a basic understanding of the Christian faith, who does not understand law and gospel, sin and grace.<sup>51</sup> The pastor will, then, deny communion to those who are uninformed or are otherwise incapable of making the judgments required in a self-examination.

The pastor is the loving leader of a flock of individuals. These individuals have their own peculiar problems and their own peculiar attitudes as they come for Communion. Czamanske classifies five general types of communicants:

1. Calendar communicants
2. Conceited communicants
3. Careless communicants
4. Care-full communicants
5. Conscientious communicants<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Steffens, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>50</sup>F. Kuegele, Why Must Lutherans Practice Close Communion? (Revised No. 8 in a series of Lutheran Witness Tracts; Pittsburg: American Lutheran Publication Board, n. d.), p. 10.

<sup>51</sup>The Worthy Communicant, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup>W. M. Czamanske, Communicants Classified (Tract; Sheboygan, Wisconsin: n. p., n. d.).



The pastor in loving concern will treat each type differently. He will use Paul's warning that the Sacrament may be eaten and drunk to a person's judgment and to his guilt of the body and blood of the Lord only with people who are exceedingly careless with regard to spiritual matters. All others he will remind that the Lord's Supper is sweet and blessed Gospel. <sup>53</sup>

In addition to the pastor's natural concern for individuals, new problems have entered the picture which make it mandatory that a person's "worthiness" be determined on an individual basis. With the present mass movements of population, new problems confront the pastor. Gone are the days of the hard and fast rule. As a result, the pastor must determine individual "worthiness" in the case of each person coming to him for admission. <sup>54</sup>

Indeed, the pastor has the responsibility to distinguish the penitent from the heathen man and publican and to safeguard against an undiscerning or hard-hearted eating and drinking leading to judgment. <sup>55</sup> However, it should be recalled that the pastor has this responsibility not solely or primarily, but as something shared with the communicant. Yet the pastor has the responsibility. Recognizing this, the pastor will do everything he can to insure a communicant's worthy

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<sup>53</sup>Mueller, op. cit., pp. 4f.

<sup>54</sup>Graebner, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>55</sup>Deffner, op. cit., p. 11.



participation in the Sacrament, to safeguard the communicant against an unworthy participation, and to safeguard the Sacrament from profanation. The pastor needs a method of carrying out this responsibility.

#### Summary Given

Although the pastor has no Scripturally stated method of practicing his responsibility, personal announcement has been recommended as a sure method of aiding the communicants in their preparation and for keeping the unprepared from an unworthy participation.

Surveys have not adequately examined a pastor's practice of the practice of personal announcement. Some, however, claim that the practice is dependent of the pastor on good Scriptural bases. Since the minister is a shepherd, bishop, watchman, and steward, and because of the sacramental character of the Lord's Supper, it is the solemn duty of the minister to insure that those who would receive the Sacrament of the Altar properly register their names with him and give him an opportunity to speak to them.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this Scriptural basis Wallace said that, since the Lutheran Confessions state that the Sacrament is for those who have previously been examined and absolved, it would be

<sup>1</sup>John H. C. Feltz, *Pastoral Theology* (3rd edition, revised St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), p. 157.



## CHAPTER III

### THE PRACTICE COMMENDED

#### Salutary Custom

Although the pastor has no Scripturally stated method of practicing this responsibility, personal announcement has been commended as a fine method for aiding the communicants in their preparation and for keeping the unprepared from an unworthy participation.

Scripture does not expressly command a pastor to follow the practice of communion announcement. Some, however, claim that the practice is demanded of the pastor on good Scriptural bases. Since the minister is a shepherd, bishop, watchman, and steward, and because of the confessional character of the Lord's Supper, it is the solemn duty of the minister "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."<sup>1</sup> In addition to this Scriptural basis Walther said that, since the Lutheran Confessions state that the Sacrament is for those who have previously been examined and absolved, it would be

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<sup>1</sup>John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (2nd edition, revised; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), p. 109.



against a pastor's conscience to accept a call to a congregation which refused to agree to announce themselves personally for Communion.<sup>2</sup>

Fritz says,

Occasionally we find that some of our Christian people are not convinced of the necessity of Communion registration and insist that the pastor has no right to demand it. . . . This, however, dare not dissuade a faithful pastor from doing what the Lord and the pastor's own conscience demand of him.<sup>3</sup>

Note that by registration Fritz means personal announcement.

Although many do not claim that personal announcement is demanded of the pastor, many do sanction it as an old church custom which should be retained. The evidence at the author's disposal did not reveal the exact time when the custom was begun. It is generally felt that all the Christians in good standing in the early church were expected to and did attend Holy Communion every worship service, at least every Lord's Day. All who were not members in good standing were asked to leave, so no personal announcement was necessary. It is thought that with the rise of Christianity as a state religion, with the resultant rise of the number of hypocrites and the decrease in personal Communion attendance, the custom was begun. At any rate it was practiced in the Roman Church at the time of the Reformation, and Luther maintained the

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<sup>2</sup>D. H. Steffens, "Safeguarding the Lord's Table," Proceedings of the Fifty-Second Convention of the Eastern District, June 24-30, 1925 (The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod) [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1925], p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Fritz, op. cit., p. 110.



practice, especially to combat the ignorance of the people and the errors of Rome. This custom was carried over into many Lutheran Kirchenordnungen, as Herrmann's Consultations reveal:

We will that the pastors admit no man to the Lord's Supper which hath not at first offered himself to them; and after he hath first made a confession of his sins, being catechised, he receive absolution according to the Lord's word . . . and for this purpose let the people be called together at eventide the day before.<sup>4</sup>

Personal announcement of intention to commune is as old as the Lutheran Church and has been practiced to the present day.

Personal announcement of the desire to commune is still commended as a salutary custom. It is commended as an arrangement which enables the pastor as the steward of the mysteries of God to exercise the necessary supervision over those to whom he administers the Sacrament.<sup>5</sup> Announcement is glorified as a custom which through the ages has brought great blessings to countless souls.<sup>6</sup> It is commended as a method which will aid the spiritual condition of the pastor's flock, which is a method the pastor can use "to prevent the great harm that unworthy and unprepared communicants would bring upon themselves, and to

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Steffens, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>5</sup>Theodore Graebner and Paul E. Kretsmann, Toward Lutheran Union (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 187.

<sup>6</sup>Herm. Bartels, "Registration for Holy Communion," The Lutheran Witness (January 14, 1957), p. 10.



help all communicants to become worthy and well-prepared" to receive the blessings of Communion.<sup>7</sup> The main purpose of announcement, then, is two-fold: to prevent the harm which the "unworthy" communicant would bring upon himself, and to help the communicant toward a worthy manner of reception.

#### Announcement Prevents Harm

The pastor is strongly urged to practice the method of personal announcement for Communion as a good way of carrying out his concern to safeguard the communicant against an unworthy reception and by so doing also to safeguard the pastor and congregation as those who must administer the Sacrament.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the common courtesy of letting the pastor know who is going to attend as in Baptism,<sup>9</sup> and thus permitting him to prepare enough materia, announcement enables the pastor to practice close communion by limiting attendance at the Lord's Table to those eligible. Some writers give the impression that personal announcement is the only method the pastor can use. "Obviously only through" personal announcement "can the pastor limit

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<sup>7</sup>F. R. Zucker, "The Lord's Supper," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1947), II, 443.

<sup>8</sup>P. E. Kretzmann, "Admission to and Registration for, the Lord's Supper," Quartalschrift (April, 1952), pp. 32f.

<sup>9</sup>Zucker, quotes Luther, op. cit., p. 443.



Communion attendance to those eligible.<sup>10</sup> In addition to personal announcement Deffner would add the public announcement of the practice of close communion,<sup>11</sup> needed to keep out the "stranger."

Because the "stranger" for obvious reasons will not present himself for personal announcement, the practice seems to be geared for church members. Since the pastor knows that there will be hypocrites in his flock, he uses the practice of personal announcement for Communion to weed out the impenitent and those who maliciously cling to false doctrine; by this practice the pastor catches the open sinner who is a church member.<sup>12</sup> The practice of personal announcement thus becomes a "check" on the flock's penitence,<sup>13</sup> helping the pastor safeguard against an unworthy reception on the part of one of his flock. If, as is generally agreed, the frequency of a person's attendance at the Lord's Table is an adequate barometer of the vitality of his spiritual life, personal announcement, as well as simple registration, could also serve the pastor as a means for keeping tab on this concern.

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<sup>10</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1953), III, 386.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Don Deffner, Why Close Communion (2nd revised edition; c.1955; obtainable from the author, 2918 Forest Ave., Berkeley 5, California).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 15f.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 15.



Personal announcement gives the pastor a chance to explore a person's faith and life. The pastor explores not by divine command, but on the basis of the soul's need. The pastor is to explore only those persons with whose faith and life he is unfamiliar. To explore in cases where the pastor is dealing with Christians well known to him would be a needless burdening both of the pastor and of the registrant.<sup>14</sup> Pieper explains the pastor's role during exploration:

The person registering should not be subjected to a "rigorous examination," but be induced by way of a friendly interview to reveal the state of his Christianity and to tell what the Lord's Supper is and why he desires to partake.<sup>15</sup>

Thus the exploration which the pastor employs during personal announcement is not an inquisition; it is not a time to search out secret sins or family affairs; but it is a friendly conversation by which the pastor can skillfully find out all he needs to know without letting the person know he is being examined.<sup>16</sup> The exploration, then, would seem to be mainly for people whom the pastor does not know. Since the pastor should know the members of his flock, it would seem that this part of personal announcement is for the stranger who is approaching the Lord's Table for the first time in that particular place. However, it is not mentioned how many times a person is to announce himself personally

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<sup>14</sup>Pieper, op. cit., p. 386.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. 387.

<sup>16</sup>Fritz, op. cit., p. 112.



for Communion; whether he must announce each time he plans to attend, or just the first time. This might well be a process which the pastor is urged to use on each person who announces. At any rate, the exploration of the announcement session is said to help the pastor safeguard a person against an unworthy reception by discovering the spiritual state, as far as is humanly possible, of the person who announces, giving the pastor a chance to warn against sin when necessary, according to Ezekiel 3.

#### Announcement Helps the Communicant

Personal announcement is commended as a practice which helps the communicant become prepared to participate in the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. It may offer the chance for Private Confession and Absolution, which is always spiritually beneficial. Although Private Confession and Absolution is not mandatory, it should be offered for the sake of those who feel the need for it. Private confession should be retained, because

1. It may serve as an outlet for pent-up emotional forces;
2. It gives the pastor an opportunity to give reassurance of Christ's forgiveness;
3. It gives the pastor an opportunity for counsel;
4. The confessee can be sure that his sins are forgiven as certainly as if God Himself had spoken it.<sup>17</sup>

"Since private confession is no longer a common practice in our Church, it is necessary that the pastor take occasion to speak to his parishioners

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<sup>17</sup>H. G. C [oiner], editor, "Class Comments on Holy Communion Thesis" (Mimeographed comments on the fourth year Pastoral Theology Class of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, dated November 12, 1956), p. 3.



when they register for Communion."<sup>18</sup> Personal announcement is thus commended as a practice which affords the pastor an opportunity for counsel. In the Catechism in common use in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod for the last fifteen years that Church asks that all those who wish to commune make their intention known to the pastor "so that he may have an opportunity to speak to them in the interest of their spiritual welfare."<sup>19</sup> Since the pastor is, however, not to pry into secret sins or coax a private confession out of a person, from the viewpoint of the pastor taking the initiative in speaking, the pastor has very little room to operate. The communicant is given an opportunity by announcement to speak to his pastor about anything that is burdening his heart. In this sense, then, that the pastor is able to speak directly to a person's problem in a counseling situation, personal announcement provides the pastor with "a blessed opportunity for the cure of souls" and "an unparalleled opportunity to . . . solve the problems of the troubled soul."<sup>20</sup>

Personal announcement is recommended as a practice because it serves as a help to a person's own self-examination. It is the pastor's

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<sup>18</sup>Fritz, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>19</sup>A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1943), p. 205.

<sup>20</sup>A. H. Grumm, "Making the Most of the Communion Announcement," American Lutheran (June, 1940), p. 12.



aim during the announcement session to "help the communicant receive the maximum of divine blessings attainable."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the pastor will help a person examine himself by asking leading questions which will open up opportunities for counseling.<sup>22</sup> Many suggest using the Christian Questions and Answers. Some suggest questions on the order of: What progress are you making in your spiritual life? What rule do you follow with regard to how often and when you attend the Sacrament?<sup>23</sup> Others suggest a short meditation based on a text from Scripture determined according to the person's need as the pastor sees it.<sup>24</sup>

Even if the above process does not occur, personal announcement is still considered a good practice in that it is "the first step toward a worthy reception"<sup>25</sup> by serving as a reminder to the communicant to prepare himself to commune worthily.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 12f.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Albert Brauer, "Materials for Communion Counsel," translated by F. E. Schumann (Mimeographed by authorization of the Central Circuit of the Colorado District, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod).

<sup>25</sup>Johannes Becker, Holy Communion: A Handbook for Lutheran Communicants (2nd edition revised by John H. Becker; Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, c.1949), p. 61.



It is also commended as a salve to the pastor's conscience insofar as he may assume that those who have registered in advance are worthy communicants.<sup>26</sup> This could be true of simple registration as well as personal announcement. Announcement would thus serve as a pledge to the pastor on the part of the communicant that he will examine himself and will be prepared to commune in a worthy manner.

Notice, in summary, that announcement is generally thought of as occurring prior to the date of celebration of the Sacrament, it is personal, and can truly be said to be a fine method for preventing the harm which would come from an unworthy participation and for aiding the communicants in their preparation. Yet, since it is not a Scripturally commanded method, but is merely a church custom, it is subject to scrutiny as to whether it is the best method available to the pastor.

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<sup>26</sup> [to] E. S [ohn], "What's the Answer," The Lutheran Witness (May 10, 1955), p. 9.



## CHAPTER IV

### VALIDITY AND PRACTICALITY OF ANNOUNCEMENT PRACTICE DOUBTED

#### Stems from Background of Poor Theory

Some authorities have doubted the validity of the practice of personal announcement for communion with regard to its theoretic basis. Some writers have attempted to link the origin of the practice of announcement with the period of Pietism,<sup>1</sup> although the validity of this may be questioned. Others doubt the validity of the practice on the grounds that it tends to give rise to legalistic attitudes and practices. For if there is a danger of an inherent opinio legis asserting itself in the communicants, this danger exists for the pastor also. Because of his own personality inadequacies the pastor may feel the need of and look for a special degree of sanctity and strong faith in the communicant.<sup>2</sup> All pastors like to see their work bring results. While there is no way to measure in how many pastors this has become an inordinate drive, nor during which particular period of a pastor's ministry this may happen,

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<sup>1</sup>E. W. Wendland, "Present Day Pietism," Quartalschrift, XLIX (January, 1952), 34f.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1953), III, 387.



and while the abuse of a practice does not condemn the practice, legalism is still a danger which must be taken into consideration.

Since the practice of announcement is used to guard against an unworthy manner of reception, the question must be raised as to whether or not "unworthily" has been or can be over-emphasized. This has especially been questioned since the majority of writers use the adverb of Scripture as an adjective and apply it to the communicant<sup>3</sup> rather than to his manner of eating and drinking. Thus many writers do not distinguish between "an unworthy manner" of eating and drinking and the "unworthy" person. Using "unworthy" in this way certainly adds to pietistic and legalistic thinking, especially since the feeling of unworthiness is sometimes given as an excuse for not coming to Communion.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, when a writer gives the impression that a man must have reached a certain level of piety before he can hope to be a worthy guest, as Lankenau does,

Surely we must have faith in the Lord for the little things before we shall be able to rely upon Him for heavenly and eternal

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. The Worthy Communicant or Who Receives the Sacrament Worthily? (Published by the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Conference of Stark and other counties of Ohio. Tract No. 2, Second edition; Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Synodical Printing House, 1880).

<sup>4</sup> Alex J. D. Haupt, The Golden Ladder (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, c.1932), p. 151.



blessings. . . . Fears . . . deprive us of the sweet blessings intended for us in Holy Communion.<sup>5</sup>

The danger of legalistic thinking influencing the term "worthily" becomes apparent.

By the same token there is also the danger that legalism will influence an approach to the means of grace. Wendland asks,

Is our approach to the means of grace soundly objective, or over-emotionalized to such an extent that the power of God is secondary in importance to the religious experience of the individual?<sup>6</sup>

If the pastor by practicing personal announcement for communion gives the impression that a state of grace is something to be achieved by constant prayer and inward struggle, then he has lost a sound objective approach to the means of grace. Pieper says that if a pastor emphasizes a reliance on faith as a good quality dwelling in people, then,

In spite of our theoretical orthodoxy we . . . do not conceive of the Gospel as an absolution that is pronounced upon all sinful mankind and that presents itself to our faith as its proper correlative, but we imagine it to be a proclamation of conditions, "A general amnesty on certain terms," which we must first fulfill if God is to be fully gracious toward us.<sup>7</sup>

If by over-emphasizing and wrongly emphasizing faith the pastor can change the Gospel into the Law, he must be careful that in nothing that he says or

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<sup>5</sup>F. J. Lankeau, Communion Counsel and Prayers (St. Louis: Concor-  
dia Publishing House, c.1935), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup>Wendland, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>7</sup>Pieper, op. cit., p. 206.



does he gives the impression that a man's faith, piety, works, or words of themselves can make the Lord's Supper<sup>8</sup> or him a "worthy" guest.

Moreover, the method the pastor employs in carrying out his concerns must not obscure the Sacrament as a means of grace in which Christ is offering forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to the believer. The purpose of the Sacrament is not to increase a person's devotion and piety, but to meet God at work in Christ, who does something a person cannot do for himself.<sup>9</sup> Whereas the preparation inherent in announcement may give a person the impression that the Sacrament is intended primarily to increase his devotion and piety, the practice itself may give a person the impression that the Sacrament is merely "an insignificant appendage to the preaching of the Gospel"<sup>10</sup> which can safely be despised or neglected.<sup>11</sup> If these impressions result from the practice of personal announcement, there is a danger that announcement may obscure the Sacrament as a means of grace.

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<sup>8</sup>F. R. Zucker, "The Lord's Supper," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1947), II, 435.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Ragnar Bring, "The Lord's Supper: Its Origin and Significance," Augustana Quarterly, XIX (October, 1940).

<sup>10</sup>A. Wismar, "The Importance of the Sacraments," Pro Ecclesia Lutherana, VI (April, 1938) 4.

<sup>11</sup>Infra, p. 40.



Combining private confession and absolution with personal announcement for Communion is a laudable church custom, but it is not a divine ordinance. Private Confession before Communion dare not become mandatory, therefore, but "should and must remain a free act."<sup>12</sup> Although private confession and absolution is desirable on many other grounds, it is not necessary before Communion, since all that is required is confession before God. Thus, private confession cannot substantiate the practice of personal announcement.

The pastor is guilty of inconsistency as well as neglect of duty if he waits until Communion announcement to warn a person of sin. The pastor will not wait until the time of Communion announcement to weed out the unbelieving and impenitent. The pastor should be concerned about these persons as soon as he knows about their condition. Furthermore, the pastor should realize that the person who would partake of the Sacrament unworthily is also not able to receive the absolution at the beginning of the service and in the sermon and that his situation is serious while he is in the pew in unbelief and impenitence.<sup>13</sup> The pastor presupposes the Christianity of the people who confess their sins in the General Confession during the Communion service. He announces

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<sup>12</sup>Pieper, op. cit., pp. 390f.

<sup>13</sup>Fred H. Lindemann, "Infrequent Communion and its Causes," American Lutheran, XXVII (June, 1944) 9f.



the Absolution to all of the people who have confessed their sins.<sup>14</sup> Restricting the discussion now to his own church members, who have confessed their sins without a previous process of examination, why can he not administer the Sacrament to them? As people who have just received God's forgiveness, aren't they prepared to participate in a worthy manner? If The Lutheran Church-- Missouri Synod is right when it says that general confession involves a personal confession and a personal appropriation and that to speak slightly of general confession is dangerous,<sup>15</sup> the practice of Communion announcement dare not give the impression that something else is needed for a worthy manner of reception besides confession of sin before God, as many feel it does tend to do.

The pastor must beware that what he practices does not enhance the danger of a communicant's "overdiscerning" one aspect of the body or another. By overemphasizing the Real Presence the pastor may condemn lack of faith and frighten a person away from what strengthens faith, thus promoting selfishness and lovelessness toward the body of the church. By overemphasizing the fellowship the pastor may give the impression that the Sacrament is merely a memorial without the Foundation, thus promoting participation in unbelief.<sup>16</sup> On this basis, "Must

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<sup>14</sup>The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1941), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>Fleper, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>16</sup>Ralph C. Kruger, Discerning the Body, unpublished Bachelor's Thesis (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1957), p. 33.



one consider those members who attend a service but who do not participate in Holy Communion as guilty of not discerning the body?"<sup>17</sup> Since our Lord said, "Drink of it, all of you,"<sup>18</sup> every person should attend, just as all the Israelites were commanded to participate in the Passover. Announcement, therefore, must stand the test as to whether it is taking this Scriptural basis seriously, or whether it does not rather intimate that it is not necessary for all to attend. If all are expected to attend, why should all have to announce every time Holy Communion is celebrated? Why should not those have to announce who, as the exceptions to the rule, do not plan to attend? If "receiving the Sacrament is the very highest privilege that the church member enjoys,"<sup>19</sup> then can it be concluded that the person who does not receive the Sacrament is not taking his church membership seriously?

Announcement tends to shift the main responsibility for a worthy manner of participation from the communicant to the pastor. No man, minister or layman, can determine who is "worthy" and who is not, since only Christ can search a man's heart. Neither is the pastor in office to ferret out secret sins. The pastor should not wait until announcement to

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>18</sup>Matt. 26:27.

<sup>19</sup>G. T. Cooperrider, Close Communion: A Tract for the Times (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1887), p. 14.



warn the open sinner. Moreover, the pastor who is faithful to his office is going to be warning against sin constantly and building his people up to the point where they are in continual "preparedness" to receive the Sacrament worthily. The pastor does not need the artificial framework of Communion announcement to do his tasks, neither does the communicant "need" announcement to carry out his responsibility to examine himself.

### Thwarts Frequent Communion Attendance

The practice of personal announcement tends to discourage, rather than encourage frequent communion attendance.<sup>20</sup> This is especially true where the practice has come to rule the pastor and congregation, rather than aid them in carrying out their concerns. A case in point is a series of questions asked in the "What's the Answer" column of The Lutheran Witness,

Must one have a written statement from one's home pastor in order to partake of the Lord's Supper in a sister church? Will not a minister who refuses to accept a person without such a statement be accountable to God for his refusal, since our Lord tells us to commune often? It is no wonder that our people go to other churches when they are insulted and treated indifferently.<sup>21</sup>

Discounting the "sour grapes" which may be involved in these questions, one may assume that they reveal three possibilities: 1. The pastor perhaps had rigidly tied himself to a practice which permitted no deviation; 2. The pastor may not have known how to "explore" or may have been unconcerned and could not be bothered; and 3. The person felt the practice

<sup>20</sup>Wendland, op. cit., pp. 34f.

<sup>21</sup>O. E. S [ohn], "What's the Answer," The Lutheran Witness (August 16, 1955), p. 9.



of personal announcement had become "a barricade that denies worthy communicants access to the blessings our Savior wishes to bestow at His Table."<sup>22</sup>

The present practice of personal announcement in certain cases restricts or limits a Christian's privilege of attending Communion. It may place the minister between the individual believer and his Lord really present in the Sacrament.<sup>23</sup> The custom disregards the "worthy" visitor and the member who gets the desire to participate in Holy Communion during the service itself. Anderson says,

How many, during the four and a half centuries that the Lutheran Church has existed have not, during the service itself suddenly felt the desire to partake of the Lord's Supper but could not because they had no intention of going to Communion this time before they came to church.<sup>24</sup>

In this connection of limiting Christian privileges, Graebner and Kretzmann say,

The burden of proof rests upon him who wishes in any way to restrict or limit my exercise of those privileges which I have as a child of God. This proposition is valid in every conceivable relation of the Christian.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Herman Bartels, "Registration for Holy Communion," The Lutheran Witness (January 14, 1957), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>Einar Anderson, "Was Grundtvig's View on the Church and the Sacraments Anything to Teach us Today?" (Unpublished manuscript in the Historical Institute, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Theodore Graebner and Paul E. Kretzmann, Toward Lutheran Union (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 173.



Since, therefore, Holy Communion is one of those privileges, the burden of proof that they have incontestable reasons for practicing personal announcement rests upon those who would restrict the Christian's privilege.

Announcement is intended to prevent the harm which would come from an unworthy manner of reception and to help the communicant toward a worthy manner of reception. However, it would seem that announcement is set up to help those who do not need help. According to Stump,

Where the spiritual state of the Christian is what it ought to be, the Christian will be glad to come to the Lord's Supper whenever it is administered, in order that he may have the comfort which it brings with its individual promise of grace and forgiveness to him.<sup>26</sup>

If it is true that the people who come to Communion have a satisfactory spiritual state, they do not need the help or protection of announcement. In addition, the pastor usually is well enough acquainted with the spiritual life of his members from daily pastoral contacts that he does not need this method for an "exploration" to guard against an unworthy reception. Furthermore, the very reasons which are given in favor of the practice of announcement are given as reasons why people do not attend communion. These are: worldly-mindedness, lack of a live knowledge of sin, lack of

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<sup>26</sup>Quoted by J. T. Mueller, "The Means of Grace," What Lutherans Are Thinking: A Symposium on Lutheran Faith and Life, edited by E. C. Fendt (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, c.1947), p. 286.



understanding of the true purpose of the Sacrament, and fear of receiving the Sacrament unworthily.<sup>27</sup> The people whom the practice of announcement intends to safeguard will not be coming to announcement, because they will not be coming to Communion. If the pastor uses announcement to "explore" and examine every time he may increase a person's fear of receiving the Sacrament unworthily. Thus he may run the risk of robbing anxious, sensitive souls of the joy in the Sacrament and perhaps do more harm than good.

If the pastor makes the time of announcement a day of inquisition, the person who needs admonition will either stay away or have someone else announce for him where this is permitted.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, announcement would seem to fail with regard to the concern of the pastor for safeguarding against an unworthy reception while at the same time desiring frequent participation. If a member needs reproof, the pastor is obligated to warn him; but he should not wait until the next day of announcement for Communion. He should attend to this matter before announcement,<sup>29</sup> as promptly as he can.

Since announcement for Communion places an obstacle in the way of the communicant who desires the Sacrament, and since a person is coming

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<sup>27</sup>E. W. A. Koehler, What Should Admonish and Incite a Christian to Receive the Sacrament Frequently? (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 6-12.

<sup>28</sup>Fred H. Lindemann, "About Personal Announcement," American Lutheran, XXVIII (February, 1945), 10.

<sup>29</sup>Pieper, op. cit., p. 386.



worthily in faith, who earnestly desires to receive the benefits of the Sacrament,<sup>30</sup> the practice of announcement is an unnecessary inconvenience imposed upon the communicant who is disposed to receive the Sacrament in a worthy manner. It serves to discourage frequent Communion attendance.

### Is Impractical

Announcement has been commended on the basis of the opportunity for Private Confession connected with it. It is conceivable that the pastor could handle personal announcement in such a way that it could become an opportunity for private confession and absolution, if the individual so desired. It could be used as a time for very effective personal counseling. It could be used as a time for the pastor to have a heart-to-heart talk with the communicant regarding the state of his soul. "But no absolution is pronounced in the hurried meeting with the pastor."<sup>31</sup> If the practice of personal announcement is to be followed strictly, there can be very little opportunity for real counseling, because there just would not be enough time, not to mention the possibility of interruptions. Even if the system could be set up to run smoothly, since neither counseling nor private confession is necessary before receiving the Sacrament,

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph Stump, An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism (Revised edition; Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c.1935), p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> Lindemann, "About Personal Announcement," p. 9.



it has been suggested that a better time and a better way can be found to fill the need for counseling by setting up counseling hours.<sup>32</sup> This would answer the need for "the kind of time" modern methods of nondirective counseling require, and which the practice of personal announcement does not provide.

Many pastors have felt this press of time and have for this reason let the practice of personal announcement become a time of recording the name, giving a handshake, and expressing the pious wish that the Lord would bless the registrant's communion. This type of practice has to answer to the consideration of good stewardship of time both on the part of the pastor and on the part of the communicants, some of whom may have to travel long distances.<sup>33</sup>

Although one of the aims of the practice of personal announcement is to prevent an unworthy reception of the Lord's Supper, announcement cannot guarantee a worthy reception. A pastor cannot search a man's heart. In addition Spitz says,

In spite of anything and everything a faithful and able pastor may do at the time when Communion announcements are being received, to prevent a person from approaching the Lord's Table as an unworthy communicant--this person may do just that.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 9f.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>C. Thomas Spitz, "Thoughts on Close Communion," The Lutheran Witness (August 4, 1953), p. 4.



In order to prevent the "stranger" of another denomination or the casual visitor from communing unworthily, the pastor in addition to announcement must make an announcement of the practice of Close Communion during the service<sup>35</sup> or have one of the members serve as an usher who will be able to prevent these people from communing. In areas where there is a constant movement of population, the latter practice is almost impossible.

Announcement as it is generally practiced at the present time leaves much to be desired. Lindemann says,

If no conference between the pastor and the individual is to take place, if confession and absolution are transferred to a semi-public service, if the preparation is to take place at some other time and postponed to the last moment, why inconvenience so many, theoretically all, by insisting on personal announcement? <sup>36</sup>

With the way personal announcement is presently practiced, "At best little more is gained than that the pastor is informed as to who intends to participate."<sup>37</sup> Simple registration would accomplish this. Insisting on personal announcement is clinging to an old custom which is impractical and has become a nuisance. <sup>38</sup>

Since the practice of announcement is impractical with respect to the time involved and the fact that it does not lend itself well to modern counseling

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<sup>35</sup>Don Deffner, Why Close Communion? (2nd revised edition; c.1955; obtainable from the author, 2918 Forest Ave., Berkeley 5, California), p. 16.

<sup>36</sup>Lindemann, "About Personal Announcement," p. 9.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.



techniques, since it does not guarantee a worthy reception, since it thwarts frequent Communion attendance, and since it does tend to give wrong impressions as to the nature of the Sacrament along with legalistic attitudes, the value of the practice of personal announcement has been questioned.

The agreement was reached at the Synodical Conference in regard to the personal announcement which forms the basis for the practice. The Synodical Conference is to what constitutes the best method a pastor can use to carry out his concerns. The Synodical Conference agrees that the pastor is concerned for his people's spiritual life. They agree that the pastor is concerned that each communicant receives worthily, that he receives himself, and that he receives the Lord's body in the Sacrament. They agree that the pastor should, therefore, take measures which help his people receive worthily and which will safeguard against an unworthy reception. They agree that the pastor is concerned that his people continue when.

The agreement under the practice with regard to the method the pastor employs to carry out his concerns. Some specific arrangements, if not actually demanded on the basis of Scripture and the pastor's conscience, the best method the pastor can employ to fulfill his responsibility toward his concerns. There is considered personal announcement as impractical religious which is perpetuated merely for the sake of clinging to a custom.

Many Lutheran churches have gone on record in their official declarations as being in favor of personal announcement. Yet even among the



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Among Lutherans the practice of personal announcement for Communion is questioned not because of past disagreement with regard to the pastoral concerns which form the bases for the practice, but because of disagreement as to what constitutes the best method a pastor can use to carry out his concerns. Lutherans do agree that the pastor is concerned for his member's spiritual life. They agree that the pastor is concerned that each communicant commune worthily, that he examine himself, and that he discern the Lord's body in the Sacrament. They agree that the pastor should, therefore, take measures which help his people commune worthily and which will safeguard against an unworthy reception. They agree that the pastor is concerned that his people commune often.

Disagreement enters the picture with regard to the method the pastor employs to carry out his concerns. Some consider announcement, if not actually demanded on the basis of Scripture and the pastor's conscience, the best method the pastor can employ to fulfill his responsibility toward his concerns. Others consider personal announcement an impractical nuisance which is perpetuated merely for the sake of clinging to a custom.

Many Lutheran churches have gone on record in their official declarations as being in favor of personal announcement. Yet even among the



proponents of personal announcement the actual practice is admittedly quite different from the ideal, when personal announcement has become merely a registering of names and perfunctory well-wishing and which often serves no better purpose than simple registration. How can the frank acknowledgement of the variation between official declarations and the practices allowed to the local minister or congregation be explained? Does this mean that there is considerable feeling that the official declaration needs modification? Are new attitudes and practices growing up in the local churches which may in time cause redefinition by the official church body? In this connection it would be interesting to note the results of a survey which could be made as to announcement practices in the various Lutheran Churches which use the custom.

In the past many pastors have used personal announcement to good advantage. They have used it as a means for building up the communicant's spiritual life by offering meditations, counsels, or discussions on the Sacrament. They have used it as an opportunity to warn the persons who will not examine themselves (away from an unworthy Communion). They have used it as a reminder to the communicant that he is to prepare himself for a worthy reception by proper self-examination. They have used it as a method of keeping records as to who attends the Sacrament. (The latter two can also be accomplished by simple registration.)

Yet some claim that personal announcement is not the best method the pastor can use. They feel that the insistence on observing a practice



which is in no sense obligatory tends toward an unhealthy legalism. They feel that announcement is an unnecessary obstacle placed in the way of the communicant who would commune worthily anyway, and that thus personal announcement discourages frequent Communion attendance. They feel that announcement does not necessarily prevent or safeguard against an unworthy reception, because those who are "unworthy" would not be announcing. They feel that opportunity for counseling during the personal announcement session is almost nil and is not based on modern conceptions of the counseling procedure. Hence, they feel personal announcement is an impractical method of doubtful value, which is not needed.

The pastor is interested in improving the spiritual state of his members. He is interested in having each member commune often and worthily. If, after analyzing the spiritual state of the congregation, personal announcement seems to him the best possible method of carrying out his concerns, he will certainly use it, especially where it is in use and has been used to advantage in the past. On the other hand, he will not feel conscience-bound to initiate the practice or to replace simple registration with personal announcement if he feels he can carry out his concerns more effectively in some other way. He may feel that he can do a better job of strengthening people and helping them examine themselves through a program of instruction and Communion service sermons. He may feel that he can accomplish more effective counseling and give opportunity for private confession and absolution by establishing counseling hours. He may feel that



he does not need the artificial framework of personal announcement before he can warn a person of his sin. He may feel that he can guard against an unworthy reception on the part of an "outsider" better by an announcement of the Close Communion practice rather than by the practice of personal announcement. He may choose any method or combination of methods which seems best to him and which will help his people the most. He may decide that the only time he need talk to the person before Communion is before the first time the individual communes in his church. He may decide that a system of simple registration suits his purposes, if it is used with the understanding that by registering the communicant assures the pastor that he will examine himself and will be prepared to commune worthily. In short, the pastor is not bound to any one way of carrying out his concerns except to the ministry of the Word.

This writer is of the opinion that a plan with registration serving as the communicant's pledge to the pastor that he will examine himself and will commune worthily; with the mutual understanding on the part of the pastor and the communicant member that if at any time the pastor notices anything amiss in the life of the member, he will speak to him about it; with the pastor conducting a program of education touching his concerns with regard to the Sacrament in teaching situations and sermons; with counseling hours established; and with a communicant talking with the pastor before his first communion in that church--a plan of this sort seems to be the most convenient, effective, and practical for all concerned.



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