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Fellowship with God

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Fellowship with God

(The following paper was read before the Pastoral Conference of the South Wisconsin District and offered to the **CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY** upon request. It represents the first part of the subject "The Scriptural Content of *Koinonia*, Its Manifestations and the Restrictions upon Such Manifestations.")

By way of introduction let me say a few words about the reasons for submitting a paper on *Koinonia*. It is well known that the word "fellowship" has been very much in the foreground in recent years, especially in connection with the efforts of Lutheran bodies to establish church fellowship. We, too, have had committees at work discussing doctrinal differences with a view to bringing about Scriptural unity as a basis of church and altar fellowship. Some in our midst have looked upon these negotiations with doubts and apprehensions; others, however, feel that we have not even gone far enough in extending the hand of fellowship. In view of such divergent opinions, it was thought necessary to restudy the term *koinonia* and inquire: What is the Scriptural content of that word? In what way should *koinonia* manifest itself? Are there any restrictions upon such manifestations?

There are other reasons for this paper on *Koinonia*. If we study the spiritual life in our Church, we find a deplorable lack of willingness to *manifest* fellowship by serving the brethren, both among pastors and laymen. We sing with religious fervor, "Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love," but we sometimes act as though that tie were most unblest. Too frequently pastors and members isolate themselves and seem satisfied to work in their own sphere, without sufficient regard for the common good; there is too much particularism, selfishness, and aloofness. We notice absenteeism also on the home front of our Church. Many stay away from congregational meetings, conferences, synod-

ical conventions, without a valid excuse; when they do attend, they appear rather uninterested and do not meet their brethren with warmth and cordiality. For some the Church seems to be little more than a labor union in which they pay their dues, not a communion in which they share life's greatest blessings.

On the other hand, we practice fellowship where it should be denied. It has been said that church discipline is not exercised as conscientiously as it should be according to God's Word, that policies and decisions are often based on expediency rather than principle. We are not in a position to say with finality to what extent this is true; but so much is certain: all is not as it should be.

If we love our Lutheran Church, and we do,¹⁾ we want to do all in our power to correct what is defective. "The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God."²⁾ Our ascended Lord has made us "pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."³⁾ This paper is a small contribution toward that end.

The word *koinonia* takes us into the very heart of the Christian religion and can well serve as a basis of our consideration when we have to decide certain doctrinal and practical questions. It is used in Scripture chiefly to denote the fellowship of the Christian with Christ, and the fellowship of the Christian with fellow Christians. Originally only the second part was to be treated. Since, however, Christian fellowship is rooted in and dependent on Christ-fellowship, it seemed most logical and profitable to study both aspects of *koinonia*. For the present we shall present a paper on our fellowship with God.

1) "For my brethren and companions' sakes I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord, our God, I will seek thy good." Ps. 122:8, 9. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Ps. 137:5, 6.

2) Luke 3:5, 6.

3) Eph. 4:11-16.

To ascertain the Scriptural content of *koinonia*, we must, of course, study in their context those passages in which this word, so pregnant with meaning, is used. Before doing that, however, it may not be amiss to set forth the etymology of the term and its *usus loquendi*.

I

Etymology and Meanings of *Koinonia*

Κοινωνία occurs nineteen times in the New Testament. It is an abstract noun, derived, with its cognates *κοινωνός* and *κοινωνέω*, from *κοινός*, the stem of which, *κοιν-*, is related to *σύν*. The adjective *κοινός* means *common*, that is, belonging to several, *communis*; it is the opposite of *ἴδιος*, which means one's own, private.

It is so used in the well-known passage Acts 2:44: "And all that believed were together, and had all things *common* (*κοινά*)," and Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the *common* salvation (*κοινῆς σωτηρίας*), it was needful for me to write unto you."⁴ In the papyri *τὸ κοινόν* is used as a name for a guild of artisans, corresponding to our modern *union*.⁵

Κοινωνός as adjective expresses fellowship, communion, association, etc. As a noun it designates a sharer, a partner, a comrade. In this sense we meet it in 1 Cor. 10:18: "Behold Israel after the flesh; are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar (*κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου*)?" The translation "partakers of the altar" is a literal translation of the Greek; but to bring out the meaning Paul intends to convey in this connection, we should prefer to translate: "have *communion*, or *fellowship*, with the altar." It is so translated in verse 20: "I would not that ye should *have fellowship with devils*." Matt. 23:30 Jesus quotes the scribes as saying: "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been *partakers with them* (*αὐτῶν κοινωνοί*) in the blood of the prophets." The meaning, of course, is: We would not have had a share in the murder of the prophets. In Luke 5:10 *κοινωνός* means partner. "They beckoned unto their *partners*."

Κοινωνέω, the verb, denotes a communion, or association, between two or more, based on a *κοινόν*, a thing that two or more have in *common*. It means: to *have* a share in something together with someone else. Anteil *nehmen*; less frequently: to *give* a share of something to someone, communicate, Anteil *geben*. For the former meaning we may cite Heb. 2:14: "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers (*κεκοινώνηκεν*) of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." For the latter we

4) Cp. also Acts 4:32.

5) Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources*, p. 350.

have no example in the New Testament. But the meaning is well established through classical usage; e. g., *μη πυρός, μη λύχνου, μη βροτοῦ μηδενός . . . τούτων κοινωνεῖν.*⁶⁾

The abstract noun *κοινωνία* denotes joint participation, the fellowship of persons with persons in one and the same object, always common to all, and sometimes whole to each. "It is worthy of note that *κοινωνία*, like the verb, *κοινωνέω*, is used specially of the closest of all human relationships, e. g., the marriage contract."⁷⁾ Kittel supports this view and says aptly: "In *κοινωνός* liegt besonders das Moment der Gemeinschaft; das Wort ist deshalb faehig, vor allem auch innige Verbundenheit auszudruecken."⁸⁾ This is apparent from passages like Acts 2:42: "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship (*κοινωνία*)," where the word is obviously employed to describe that common life of close brotherhood in which all that they did they did in common, so that there seemed to be but "one heart and one soul among them all."⁹⁾ We may compare also Galatians 2:9: "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me the right hand of fellowship (*δεξιῶς . . . κοινωνίας*)." ¹⁰⁾

Finally, *κοινωνία*, like *κοινωνέω*, may also connote a fellowship which manifests itself by giving a share to another with whom we are associated. It is clearly so used in Hebrews 13:16: "To do good and to communicate (*κοινωνίας*) forget not." This meaning is contested by Cremel-Koegel, but defended, rightly I believe, in the monumental work of Kittel;¹⁰⁾ the context and use bear that out, and the Authorized Version translators were right in rendering Romans 15:26 as they did: "It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution (*κοινωνίαν τινὰ ποιήσασθαι*) for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."¹¹⁾

To sum up, then, *κοινωνία*, with its cognates, means:

First: The share which one has or receives in something, joint participation, *das Anteilnehmen*;

Secondly: The share which one gives, benefaction, communication, *das Anteilgeben*.

6) Demosthenes 25, 61, cited in Kittel, *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, III, p. 798.

7) Moulton and Milligan, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

8) "Dem Wortstamm *κοινός* nach ist das Teilhaben bei *κοινωνός* anders orientiert als z. B. bei *φίλος* (Verbundenheit in Verwandtschaft, bzw. Liebe), *ἐταῖρος* (Gefahrte an einem gemeinschaftlichen Unternehmen), *συνεργός* (Mitarbeiter an einem Werk) oder dem blossen *μέτοχος* (Teilhaber)." Kittel, III, 798.

9) Acts 4:32.

10) Kittel, III, pp. 798, 809.

11) Cp. also 2 Cor. 9:13 and 2 Cor. 8:4.

Thirdly: Communion, fellowship, intimacy, *Gemeinschaft*.

Let us bear in mind that it is always used to describe a close and intimate relation existing between two or more persons. It is certainly not a matter of chance that this word is used by the sacred writers to denote the unique, sublime intimate communion which exists between the Triune God and the sanctified believer and, resulting from that, the intimate fellowship that unites one believer with another. For the present we are treating only the fellowship of the believer with Christ.

II

Perfect Fellowship Before the Fall

In his state of pristine holiness man lived in a most intimate communion with his Maker, a communion that was unmarred by any sin or imperfection, in a word, a communion that was perfect, a communion which is *now*, for fallen man, beyond all human comprehension. Before the Fall, man did not run away from God, but constantly sought communion with Him, lived in His holy presence, walking before Him and being perfect.

Fellowship Destroyed by Sin

That *κοινωνία* was tragically broken through the entrance of sin into the world. By his first disobedience man forfeited the great privilege of communing with his Maker. He no longer sought the face of God, but fled away from Him. He was driven out of the Garden from the presence of God, excluded from that intimate association which once was his. Sin created a barrier between the Creator and His creature. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God."¹²⁾ These words of Isaiah adequately describe our condition after the Fall.

Fellowship Restored by Christ

That barrier, thank God, has been removed by the mediating work of our Sin-Bearer. Fellowship with God is again made possible for Jew and Gentile by the cleansing power of the blood of God's own Son. "He is our Peace, who hath . . . broken down the middle wall of partition . . . having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments . . . that *He might reconcile both unto God* in one body by the Cross."¹³⁾ "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he recon-

12) Is. 59:2.

13) Eph. 2:14-16.

ciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in His sight."¹⁴ *Koinonia* with God is based on the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah in the words "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."¹⁵ "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."¹⁶ Jesus therefore is most fittingly called Immanuel, because through Him, through the Incarnation, God, once against us, is now with us, for us, on our side.¹⁷

Fellowship Entered into by Faith

We, who were alienated from the life in and with God, can now enter into fellowship with God through a living faith in the Redeemer. Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.¹⁸ "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."¹⁹ "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."²⁰ Christ Himself tells us, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him."²¹ We know that these words, spoken by Jesus at Capernaum after His miraculous feeding of the five thousand, refer not to our eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood in the blessed Sacrament, but to the spiritual eating and drinking, that is, the soul's trusting acceptance of the fruits of Christ's redemption. To all those who by eating and drinking in faith have entered into fellowship with God, the words apply "Ye are come unto Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."²² "Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, we may draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with

14) Col. 1:19-22.

15) Jer. 31:33, 34.

16) 2 Cor. 5:19.

17) Matt. 1:23.

18) Eph. 2:18.

19) John 14:6.

20) Heb. 11:6.

21) John 6:56.

22) Heb. 12:22, 23.

pure water." 23) Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." 24)

Summing up, then, we may say: *objectively*, fellowship with God is made possible through the blood of Christ; *subjectively*, by our faith in that blood. In Christ Jesus, our Lord, and in Him alone,²⁵⁾ "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith in Him." 26)

Fellowship Through the Word

Since the Quakers and other enthusiasts (Schwaermer) have persistently but erroneously asserted that by an "inner light" *apart* from the *written Word* or vocal ministry "we are enabled to live in conformity to the will of our heavenly Father," 27) or, to quote an exponent of the *Erlebnistheologie*, that "the Christian lives not by the means of grace, but *through personal fellowship* with God which he *experiences* in Christ," 28) it should not seem out of place in this connection to remind ourselves of the fact that we owe our fellowship with God to the faith-engendering and faith-preserving *Word*,²⁹⁾ since faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit *through the Word*. Only so long as we abide by and in the Word through faith, and the Word in us, can we hope to retain and enjoy blessed fellowship with our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. John writes in his First Letter: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life . . . that which we have seen and heard *declare we unto you* that ye also may have fellowship with us; and, truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." 30)

By telling his readers of the eternal Logos made flesh the Apostle wants to lead them into Christian fellowship and Christ-fellowship; and by this Evangel he wants to keep them in that blessed relationship. Therefore he urges them: "Let that abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning: *if that which ye heard* from the beginning shall *remain in you*, ye also shall *continue* in the Son and in the Father." 31) With such statements

23) Heb. 10:19-22.

24) Rom. 5:1,2; cp. also 8:15.

25) "There is only one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. 2:5.

26) Eph. 3:12.

27) *Popular Symbolics*, p. 381.

28) Ad. Harnack quoted in J. T. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 454.

29) John 6:63: "The Words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life."

30) 1 John 1:1-3.

31) 1 John 2:24.

he is in good company. Christ concluded His sacerdotal prayer with these significant words: "I have declared unto them *Thy name*, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them."³²) Everywhere the greatest emphasis is put on the *Word* as the *condicio sine qua non est communio inter Deum et nos*. This is true to such an extent that Scripture identifies "fellowship with Christ" with "His *Word* abiding in us." "If ye abide in Me and *My words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."³³)

What is said of the *Word* applies with equal force to the Sacraments. On the basis of passages such as 1 Pet. 3:21: "Baptism doth now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh), but the *answer of a good conscience toward God*," and 1 Cor. 10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" we believe that the Sacraments are not mere empty rites, but means by which we are made accepted to God in the Beloved.

What a lesson all too easily forgotten in church work lies in these words! The *one and only* purpose of all our work, whether done in the pulpit or pew, in schools or colleges, on the far-flung mission fields or on synodical boards, in young people's work or in the Army and Navy, is to lead men into fellowship with the Father and the Son and preserve them in His grace. Whatever else we do as servants of our Lord must directly or indirectly contribute to the attainment of that aim. However, this can be achieved by but *one* means, *the written and spoken testimony of Him* "who now once in the end of the world has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,"³⁴) "who is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."³⁵) Faith which unites us with Christ comes by hearing the *Word of God*.³⁶) Peter declares: "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that *by these* ye might be partakers of the divine nature."³⁷)

We know that to be true; we assert it; we believe it—*theoretically* at least. But in practice we sometimes deny what we believe. When the results of our preaching and teaching are too meager; when outward growth of a struggling mission or parish is anything but encouraging; when a hard saying of Jesus, though spoken in love, will cause some to turn their back upon the Church and walk no more with Jesus; when there is but scant

32) John 17:26. Cp. also John 15:3: "Now ye are clean through the *Word* which I have spoken unto you."

33) John 15:7. Cp. also 1 John 2:14.

34) Heb. 9:26. 36) Rom. 10:17.

35) Heb. 7:25. 37) 2 Pet. 1:4.

evidence among our parishioners of true fellowship with Christ and they do not walk in the light and love of the brethren—we easily become discouraged; we think we labor and toil in vain. Under the cloud of setbacks we sometimes wonder whether the Gospel is *really* the “power of God unto salvation,”³⁸⁾ and though we may not be so despondent as Jonah or Elijah, we are strongly tempted to try other means of drawing men into fellowship with God. We may think that if we introduce a more elaborate order of service, create a more religious atmosphere by robed choirs or other innovations, bring more social activities into the church, we may achieve what seems unattainable by plain Gospel preaching.³⁹⁾ We assemble in conventions also for the express purpose of deepening our own fellowship with the Lord and rededicating ourselves to the supreme task of leading others into that blessed communion; but before we begin our deliberations, we feel called upon to invite the (probably Masonic) mayor or some (probably Catholic) ward politician to deliver a speech of welcome, which, even though it may not openly compromise our position or contradict our teaching (as has happened), is intended in some way, however vaguely conceived, to advance our cause, if only by adding prestige to the Lutheran name.

This may be done with the best of intentions, but let us make sure that it is not a case of misdirected zeal. Remember the words of Paul “I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”⁴⁰⁾ Such practice may induce some men to affiliate *outwardly* with our Church, but that does not mean that they are brought into the fellowship of the Gospel. Such practice is a virtual denial of the fundamental Scriptural doctrine that we can lead men into communion with God only by the preaching of the Cross, which will always be, as it has always been, no matter how popular the Lutheran name may become, “unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness,”⁴¹⁾ but which has *always* been, *is now*, and *always will be* “unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, *the power of God and the wisdom of God*; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”⁴²⁾ The deeper our understanding of the Scriptural import of *koinonia*, the firmer our resolve must be, in every phase of our church work, to adhere to the principles laid down by our great exemplar

38) Rom. 1:16.

39) By plain Gospel preaching we do not mean repeating religious platitudes which recur in almost every sermon, but the simple well-prepared proclamation of the Bible truth, the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible, which has Christ Crucified as its center.

40) Rom. 10:2.

41) 1 Cor. 1:23.

42) 1 Cor. 1:24, 25.

for all ages in 1 Cor. 2:1-6: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught."

Let us now proceed to examine a bit more closely some of the passages where the word *koinonia* is used and thus try to determine its Scriptural content. This will automatically lead us to consider also such passages as do not contain the word *koinonia*, but the thing denoted by that term. John, for example, who has written more fully on fellowship than any other Apostle, does not use the word *koinonia* at all in his Gospel, but he has a good deal to say on the mystical union and its blessings.

III

Fellowship in Cardinal Passages

1 Cor. 1:9 Paul writes: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son (εις κοινωνίαν του υιου αυτου) Jesus Christ, our Lord." This *koinonia* is a fellowship in which we share the fruits of Christ's redemptive work; a fellowship in which we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,⁴³⁾ who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption;⁴⁴⁾ a fellowship in which we lack nothing, waiting only for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;⁴⁵⁾ a fellowship in which we are complete in Him.⁴⁶⁾ In this fellowship Christ does all the giving, we are wholly the recipients. That lies in the nature of the fellowship and is emphasized also by the fact that we have been called into it by God "not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."⁴⁷⁾

Having fellowship with Christ, we have fellowship with the Father. John writes in his First Letter, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."⁴⁸⁾ There is a fullness of expression even more striking in the original than in the English. Both the preposition and the definite article are repeated,

43) Eph. 1:3.

44) 1 Cor. 1:30.

45) 1 Cor. 1:7.

46) Col. 2:10.

47) 2 Tim. 1:9.

48) 1 John 1:3.

making emphatic the distinction and the equality between the Son and the Father. Through Christ, through whom alone we come to God, we have fellowship also with the Father; as children born of God, we possess God and the riches of His grace. All that the Father has is ours.⁴⁹⁾ The Father freely gives us all things. As sons and daughters of the Most High, we bask in the sunshine of our Father's love, and no power in heaven or earth or hell can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.⁵⁰⁾ This fellowship is the fulfillment of the precious Pentecostal promise "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him."⁵¹⁾ "On that day ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in Me and I in you."⁵²⁾

It goes without saying that fellowship with the Father and the Son embraces fellowship with the Holy Spirit, for these three are one. Paul concludes his Second Letter to the Corinthians with the benediction which has rightly become so popular with us that it is used virtually every Sunday, but which because of its rich meaning should not degenerate into a stereotyped phrase. We refer to the words "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the *fellowship of the Holy Spirit* be with you all."⁵³⁾

Kittel in his *Woerterbuch* contends that "*of the Holy Spirit*" here is not a subjective, but an objective genitive. "In der triadischen Formel 2 K 13, 13 'Die Gnade, etc. —' ist jedoch das dritte Glied den beiden ersten nicht ganz parallel, indem der Geist nicht als eine voellig gleichartige Groesse neben Gott und Christus steht; vielmehr kommt im Geiste Christus in die Glaeubigen. In κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος wird nicht wie in den beiden ersten Gliedern von einer Person und ihrer Gabe geredet, sondern es liegt offenbar Gen. obj. der Sache vor: Teilnahme *am Geist*."⁵⁴⁾ We readily admit that it does make good sense to translate the expression that way; it is entirely Scriptural to say that we have a share in the Holy Ghost, just as it is Scriptural to say that we have a share in Christ.⁵⁵⁾ But we must object most strenuously to the reasons which Kittel adduces for his interpretation. Why, we ask, should not the third member of the triad be parallel to the first two?

49) 1 Cor. 3:21. Rom. 8:32.

50) Rom. 8:38, 39. Cp. also John 16:26, 27: "I do not say unto you that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me and have believed that I came out from God."

51) John 14:23.

53) 2 Cor. 13:14.

52) John 14:20.

54) Kittel, III, 807.

55) Cp. 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 3:14: "We are made partakers of Christ"; Heb. 6:4: "Those who were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." In the last two passages μέτοχοι is used. But μετέχω, μέτοχος, μετοχή, and κοινωνέω, κοινωνός, κοινωνία, respectively, are virtually synonymous. Cp. 2 Cor. 6:14; Heb. 2:14.

There is perfect parallelism. Again, why should the Spirit not be equal to the Father and the Son? Doubtless, because his theological bias would not have it so. We could argue the same for Matt. 28:19: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father," etc. In both passages, however, the co-ordinating "and" cogently establishes equality and rules out every idea of subordination.

Moreover, while "communion of the Holy Ghost" *per se* could well be understood as being objective genitive in the sense "fellowship in or with the Holy Spirit," it cannot be denied that in the first two members of the triad, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God," Christ is the Author of grace as the Father is the Fount of love. Here the genitives are definitely subjective. Paul's wish is that the grace coming from Christ and the love emanating from the Father be with his readers; grace and love are the gifts bestowed by the Father and the Son. It seems natural, therefore, to understand the last member in this triad in precisely the same manner: the fellowship wrought and granted by the Holy Spirit. In ancient liturgies this apostolic blessing is quoted in this way: "The grace of . . . and the gift of the Holy Spirit be with you all," which is an indication of the meaning which was given to "fellowship" and of the force which was assigned to the genitive. The writers of these liturgies were closer to New Testament Greek than we. This fellowship is the Spirit's gift, even as grace and love are gifts of the Father and the Son.

However, we must bear in mind that the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts is not a distinguished visitor on vacation, who takes his ease; on the contrary, He is very active. He is the "Breath of His mouth,"⁵⁶⁾ He moves, He is astir in our hearts. As the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge He enlightens the eyes of our understanding that we may know what is the hope of His calling in the riches of the glory of His inheritance;⁵⁷⁾ as the Spirit of adoption He bears witness to our spirit that we are the children of God;⁵⁸⁾ as the Spirit of prayer He helps our infirmities and makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered;⁵⁹⁾ as the Spirit of power and strength He works in us the fruits of the spirit (love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance);⁶⁰⁾ and, last, but not least, He is the earnest of our inheritance,⁶¹⁾ that is, God's pledge that no man shall pluck us out of His hands. If we have the Spirit's

56) Ps. 33:6. 57) Eph. 1:18.

58) Rom. 8:16: συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν.

59) Rom. 8:26. 60) Gal. 5:18, 22, 23.

61) Eph. 1:13, 14. The earnest (ἀρραβόν) is the money which is given as a pledge that the full amount will subsequently be paid, a down payment of Him who is faithful.

fellowship, we have everything. We have the Father's love and the grace of His Son. "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." 62) "The anointing (τὸ χρίσμα, the Spirit) which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." 63)

Fellowship with God is elsewhere described by John as "knowing Him," 64) "being in Him," 65) "abiding in Him," 66) "keeping His Word," 67) "being born of God," 68) "being of God," 69) "having seen God," 70) "being in the light," 71) "abiding in the light," 72) "being called the sons of God," 73) "having this hope in Him," 74) "having an unction from the Holy One," 75) "dwelling in Him and He in us." 76)

The Apostle who never forgot the first hour which he spent in the company of Jesus, who leaned on His bosom at the last Passover, and who was with Him during the crucifixion never tires of speaking of that sublime fellowship which believers enjoy with God. His very language is reminiscent of the words in which his beloved Master sets forth the vital communion existing between Himself and the Christians. 77)

Speaking figuratively Jesus says, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." 78) Without using a metaphor, He says, "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you; continue ye in My love." 79) The expression "abide" or "continue in Me" occurs no fewer than ten times in John 15. Again He says, "Ye are My friends. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, and all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." 80) Those that do the will of His Father He calls

62) 1 John 3:24.

69) 1 John 3:10; 4:4.

63) 1 John 2:27.

70) 1 John 3:6.

64) 1 John 2:3, 4, 14.

71) 1 John 2:9.

65) 1 John 2:5; 5:20.

72) 1 John 2:10.

66) 1 John 2:6; 3:6.

73) 1 John 3:1.

67) 1 John 2:5.

74) 1 John 3:2.

68) 1 John 3:9; 5:11.

75) 1 John 2:20; cp. 1 John 2:27. *Ἐπίχρισμα* is the translation of *χρίσμα*, a designation of the Holy Spirit.

76) 1 John 4:13, 15, 16; cp. also Gal. 4:19.

77) "Es ist mir immer beim Lesen im Johannes, als ob ich ihn beim letzten Abendmahl an der Brust seines Meisters vor mir liegen sehe, als ob sein Engel mir's Licht haelt and mir bei gewissen Stellen um den Hals fallen und etwas ins Ohr sagen wolle." M. Claudius im *Wandsbecker Boten*.

78) John 15:5.

79) John 15:9.

80) John 15:14, 15.

His "brother and sister and mother."⁸¹⁾ In His relation to the believers Christ is "the First-born among many brethren."⁸²⁾ What close spiritual fellowship! A relationship thrice blessed!

Paul speaks of it in passages such as these: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me";⁸³⁾ "We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones";⁸⁴⁾ "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said: I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people";⁸⁵⁾ "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."⁸⁶⁾ All who are baptized into Christ enter into a relation so intimate that it may be described as an actual union. The mystic phrase "in Christ" which Paul uses so often means nothing else than to have fellowship with Him.⁸⁷⁾ The sublime intimacy of our fellowship with God finds forceful expression also in all the utterances which represent Christ as the Bridegroom, or Husband, and the Church as His bride, or wedded wife. To quote only the beautiful prophecy in Hosea: "I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in judgment and in loving-kindness and in mercies. I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord."⁸⁸⁾

Even more remarkable is Peter's declaration: "We have become partakers of His nature."⁸⁹⁾ These words seem very bold, but they do not go beyond other statements of Scripture which say that we are "born of God," that we are "God's children" or "partakers of Christ." Most certainly we cannot understand these words in any pantheistic sense, that we share the divine essence or that we are absorbed into the divine nature so as to lose our individuality. The reference is rather to the moral nature of God; they who are renewed become participants of His holiness. This is clearly borne out by statements such as these "that we might be partakers of His holiness,"⁹⁰⁾ or "be conformed to the image of His Son."⁹¹⁾ In the believer the divine image is partially renewed.

The climax is reached in the solemn words of Jesus where He likens our fellowship with God to the intimate relation existing between Himself and His Father." I pray . . . that they . . . may

81) Matt. 12:50.

84) Eph. 5:30.

82) Rom. 8:29.

85) 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Cor. 3:16.

83) Gal. 2:20.

86) Rom. 6:3, 4.

87) Phil. 1:1; 1:13; Col. 1:2; Rom. 8:1, et al.

88) Hos. 2:19, 20; cp. also John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25; Rev. 19:7.

89) 2 Pet. 1:4.

90) Heb. 12:10.

91) Rom. 8:29; cp. also Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24.

be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." 92) As the Father dwells in the Son and the Son in the Father, so Christ dwells in the believers and they in God. The nature of this union passes all understanding. It is a profound mystery. At this point we must not lose ourselves in vain speculations on the nature of the mystic union. Let us not, like the "wise and prudent," ask skeptically, "How can these things be?" but, like the "babes and simple," believingly acknowledge that they *are*. Let us rejoice that He who is "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" deigns to dwell "with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble"; 93) let us bear in mind that Christ dwells in our heart by faith; 94) and let us learn to speak of this sublime truth with the chaste simplicity of Scripture. Jesus, in His farewell discourses, and John, in his First Letter, can point the way. 95)

Of the Bible interpreters on this subject there is none better than Luther. On John 14:20 Luther has this notable comment: "This is the heart of all Christian conviction, that the believer is assured, first of all, that the Man Jesus Christ is true God and God in Him; secondly, that He, Jesus, in whom God is essentially, also is within us and we in Him. The Son comes from the Father and inheres in us; we inhere in Jesus and through Him come to the Father. Thus an endless chain has been made between Him and us and the Father, and through this union and communion, sin and death have been abolished, life and salvation have become our own"; and again: "Through faith we become one body with Christ and He with us. Through the Word and the Sacraments He unites Himself with us. Thus we have the three great unions: the Father and the Son united in the Deity; the man united in Christ; Christ united, becoming one with the Church." 96)

We find the term *koinonia* used also in Phil. 1:5, the words of the Epistle lesson for the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity: "I thank my God for your fellowship in the Gospel." If we translate the Greek thus: "your participation in the Gospel," there is no need of any further explanation. In that case Paul thanks God for the fact that the Philippians had accepted the Gospel from the

92) John 17:20, 21.

93) Is. 57:15.

94) Eph. 3:17.

95) John 14-16; 1 John 1-5. Here the greatest mysteries of our Christian faith are stated in the simplest language. Monosyllables abound; the sentence structure is strikingly uninvolved.

96) Luther, St. Louis ed., Vol. VIII: 421-429. English translation as quoted in CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, I, p. 20. Anyone who has access to Luther's works should not fail to read all of Luther's matchless exposition of John 14:20 as well as that of Gal. 2:20.

time he came to them and still had a share in its benefits. It should be noted, however, that Paul here does not use the genitive with *koinonia*, but a prepositional phrase, fellowship *for* or *toward* the Gospel," *κοινωνία εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*. This is certainly not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice. The meaning which Paul wishes to convey by this changed expression seems to be that the Philippians possessed a fellowship in the cause of the Gospel which manifested itself toward the furtherance of its saving message. The participation of, or in, the Gospel is presupposed rather than expressed. This is also Luther's interpretation. It is not necessary, however, to restrict this fellowship in the Gospel to the collections which the Philippians had raised for Paul; the sending of gifts was but one aspect of their fellowship and interest.

Koinonia is effected and exhibited also in the Sacrament which has received its most popular name from the very word *koinonia*, fellowship, or communion. 1 Cor. 10:16 Paul calls "The cup of blessing which we bless the communion (*κοινωνία*) of the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break the communion of the body of Christ." To understand the full import of these words, we should consider them in their context. After a reference to the idolatry of Israel in verse 7, "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written: The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play," he warns his Corinthian readers in verse 14: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

He enforces this warning with the words "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" There is, then, in the Holy Supper a *koinonia* between the wine and the blood, the bread and the body of Christ. Now, in a *koinonia* each person retains his individuality; there is no mingling or mixing of one with the other. So there is both: bread and body, wine and blood.⁹⁷ Since Paul is warning the Corinthians against idolatry, of which some were guilty by attending idol feasts, he is saying in effect: "Corinthians, by eating the bread and drinking the wine in this sacred meal, you have a share in the body and blood of Christ; you have fellowship with the very body and blood of your Lord. So also by participating in the idol feasts, you establish a fellowship with the idols or, since they do not exist, with demons; but *these two do not mix, they are irreconcilable*. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and, at the same time, the

97) It is a moot question among interpreters whether *koinonia* in 1 Cor. 10:16 means *communio* or *communicatio*. While the second meaning is well established by actual usage (cp. above), the thought conveyed by the passage and the whole context favor the former, that of *communio*.

cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils. I speak as to wise men. Judge ye what I say."

Another phase of our fellowship consists in this, that we share Christ's suffering. Phil. 3:10 Paul states it solemnly as the aim in his life, "that I may know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the *fellowship* of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." To have fellowship with Christ involves participation in His sufferings, according to His own prediction "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. The servant is not greater than his lord; if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."⁹⁸ Therefore we are asked not to think it strange if "fiery trials come upon us, as though some strange thing happened to us," but to rejoice inasmuch as we are *partakers* (*κοινωνεῖτε*) of Christ's sufferings.⁹⁹ Thus we fill up on our part that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Col. 1:24 Paul writes: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind (i. e., lacking) of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake." These afflictions are not for the purpose of supplementing the expiatory work of Christ, but they are the sufferings which He endures in the members of His spiritual body, the Church. Of these each Christian should assume his proportionate share and say with the Apostle: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."¹⁰⁰

However, we should be more than glad to share Christ's sufferings, for we know that "as we are *partakers* of the sufferings, so shall we be also of the consolation,"¹⁰¹ and as joint heirs of Christ, we shall have a share also of the glory which is to come.¹⁰² "For this is a faithful saying: If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer [with Him], we shall also reign with Him."¹⁰³ On that Great Day He will even "change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."¹⁰⁴ What a glorious prospect for the Church under affliction for Christ's sake and the Gospel's!

Here I beseech you, brethren, to suffer a word of exhortation, which is addressed to me more than to you. I take courage to offer it because the first purpose of a conference paper should be our own edification. Ours is a great privilege, brethren, the privilege by the preaching of the Cross to lead men into that blessed Christ-fellowship which begins in time and is consummated in eternity.

98) John 15:19, 20.

99) 1 Pet. 4:12, 13.

100) 2 Tim. 2:10.

101) 2 Cor. 1:7.

102) Rom. 8:17.

103) 2 Tim. 2:11, 12.

104) Phil. 3:21.

The exercise of that high privilege is our life's work, our *profession*. But there, too, lies a great danger; it is this, that our *personal* Christianity becomes wholly *professional*, that we are so busy ministering to the spiritual needs of *others*, that we forget the greater need of our *own* soul. There was a time when ascetics preached *Weltflucht* and sought solitude to spend all their time in communion with God, undisturbed by the duties and distractions among men. That error needs little or no refutation. We must prayerfully guard against the *other* extreme. We easily become so engrossed by our manifold professional duties, all of which may rightfully claim our attention, that we easily neglect the quiet hour when we live in intimate fellowship with our God, when we lean, as it were, on Jesus' bosom and let Him speak to our soul as He spoke to "His own" in the Upper Room. His was an exceedingly busy life, but He frequently withdrew from the multitude to be alone with His heavenly Father and commune with Him. So we, too, must take time to be alone with God and have Him speak to us. The contemplative spirit of listening Mary must ever precede the busy activity of serving Martha also in the life of the Christian minister. Paul told the elders at Miletus: "Take heed unto yourselves — first — then to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers."¹⁰⁵ And his admonition to Timothy was: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save *thyself* and them that hear thee."¹⁰⁶ May God's Spirit keep us ever mindful of this, so that while we preach and teach, admonish and comfort, our "little children" that they "may have fellowship with us," we can also say with John: "Truly *our* fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ;¹⁰⁷ that while we invoke upon our hearers the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we ourselves are enjoying that sweet communion. The closer *we* are to God, the more efficient we will become to beseech *others*: "Walk with God in the path that Enoch trod!"

When our work is done, may we be able to say with Melancthon: *Ego mihi ita conscius sum, nunquam aliam ob causam tractavisse theologiam, nisi ut ME IPSE emendarem*. Our daily prayer should be that of this Praeceptor Germaniae:

*Fac ut possim demonstrare,
Quam sit dulce te amare,
Tecum pati, tecum flere,
Tecum semper congaudere.*

105) Acts 20:28.

106) 1 Tim. 4:16.

107) 1 John 1:3.

While working on this section of the paper, I happened upon a little poem which should strike a responsive chord in the heart of every one of us.

The Parson's Prayer

I do not ask
That crowds may throng the temple,
That standing room be priced;
I only ask that, as I voice the message,
They may seek *Christ!*

I do not ask
For churchly pomp or pageant
Or music such as wealth alone can buy;
I only ask that, as I voice the message,
He may be nigh!

I do not ask
That men may sound my praises
Or headlines spread my name abroad;
I only pray that, as I voice the message,
Hearts may find *God!*

I do not ask
For earthly place or laurel
Or of this world's distinctions any part;
I only ask, when I have voiced the message,
*My Savior's heart!*¹⁰⁸⁾

IV

Manifestations of Our Fellowship

We have fellowship with the Triune God. This fellowship is concealed from the eyes of men. "Our life is hid with Christ in God."¹⁰⁹⁾ "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."¹¹⁰⁾ "It is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."¹¹¹⁾ When the Lord comes to dwell in the heart of the believer, He comes not in a great and strong wind, rending the mountains; nor in an earthquake; nor in the fire; but in a still small voice.¹¹²⁾ "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."¹¹³⁾ Das Christentum ist etwas tief Innerliches.

108) Quoted in *A Pocket Prayer Book and Devotional Guide*, compiled by R. S. Cushman, page 112, and signed R. S. C., presumably the author of the book.

109) Col. 3:3.

110) Luke 17:20, 21.

111) Rom. 14:17.

112) 1 Kings 19:11, 12.

113) John 3:8.

Es glänzet der Christen *inwendiges* Leben,
 Obgleich sie von aussen die Sonne verbrannt.
 Was ihnen der Koenig des Himmels gegeben,
 Ist keinem als ihnen *nur selber* bekannt.
 Was niemand *verspue*ret, was niemand *berueh*ret,
 Hat ihre erleuchteten Sinne gezieret
 Und sie zu der *goettlichen* Wuerde gefuehret.

Sie wandeln auf Erden und leben im Himmel,
 Sie bleiben ohnmaechtig und schuetzen die Welt,
 Sie *schmecken den Frieden* bei allem Getuemmel,
 Sie kriegen, die Aermsten, was ihnen gefaellt,
 Sie stehen in Leiden, sie bleiben in Freuden,
 Sie scheinen ertoetet den aeusseren Sinnen
 Und fuehren das Leben des Glaubens von *innen*.¹¹⁴⁾

This fellowship with God is known only to God and the believer himself. But this fellowship with Christ manifests itself. "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."¹¹⁵⁾ We cannot mention all the manifestations of the inner life; we must restrict ourselves to a few important ones.

The first is that we have *God* speak to *us* and that *we* speak to *Him*. It is natural for a man and his wife, living in that intimate union which is symbolic of the union of Christ and His bride, the Church, to speak to each other. If they do not, there is something radically wrong. So it is natural for the believer to commune with God. If it is true that we have fellowship with Him only so long as His Word abides in us, and it is true, then it is just as true that we must permit God to *speak to our heart, and say daily*, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."¹¹⁶⁾

On the other hand, *we must speak to Him in prayer*, "When Thou saidst unto me, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."¹¹⁷⁾ "Behold, he prayeth," was said of Paul after the Lord had appeared to him. The Christian, living in fellowship with God, does not need to be coerced to pray; he *wants* to pray. It is as natural for him to pray as it is for a child to speak freely to its father and mother. If he does not pray at all, there is no communion with his heavenly Father; if he prays seldom, or in a perfunctory manner, there is danger that the fellowship with God is not very intimate. When Luther during the anxious days of Augsburg sojourned on the Koburg, Veit Dietrich was his personal *famulus*. He relates that Luther often interrupted his studies for three hours and then spoke with God as with an intimate friend.

114) This beautiful hymn in our German hymnbook, No. 475, has been translated by Dr. J. T. Mueller, and is found in the Concordia edition of the Bobbs Merrill Eighth Reader, page 1 f.

115) John 15:5; cp. also John 15:16.

116) 1 Sam. 3:9; cp. also Psalm 119:97.

117) Ps. 27:8.

Another manifestation of our fellowship with God is this, that we love God and the brethren. "God is *Love*, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."¹¹⁸ The believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost. That temple is double-gated; faith is the gateway open *Godward*; love is the gateway open *manward*. Through faith the divine life, so to speak, flows into us; through love it flows out to others. Faith is the channel of *communion with God*; love is the channel of *ministry to men*. "Faith worketh by love."¹¹⁹ In what way or ways this love for the brethren may manifest itself is beyond the scope of this paper. I should merely like to mention in passing that the brethren in the ministry are among the first toward whom our fellowship should manifest itself in love.

Conversely, it is true, "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now . . . and walketh in darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth."¹²⁰ "Everyone that loveth not, *knoweth not God*, for God is Love."¹²¹

Again, "God is *Light*, and in Him is no darkness at all."¹²² If we have fellowship with Him, we shall walk in the light, the light of the Gospel. As "light in the Lord" Christians are asked, "Walk as children of light. . . . Have no fellowship (*μη συγκοινωνετε*) with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."¹²³ "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."¹²⁴ "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth."¹²⁵ "Whoever will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God."¹²⁶

We come to another manifestation: God is *Truth*, and everyone that has fellowship with truth can have no fellowship with error. "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ."¹²⁷ Therefore Paul warns the Corinthians, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and the table

118) 1 John 4:16.

119) Gal. 5:6.

120) 1 John 2:9, 11.

121) 1 John 4:8. The original adds point to this passage. The Greek has *εγνω*, the aorist, which is clearly inceptive in force and lends expression to the thought: Everyone that loveth not, has not even begun to know God. He has not yet been introduced to God, as it were, let alone being intimately acquainted with Him.

122) 1 John 1:5.

125) 1 John 1:6.

123) Eph. 5:8, 11.

126) James 4:4.

124) 1 John 2:15.

127) 1 John 5:20.

of devils." 128) And John concludes his first letter with the plea, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 129) It makes little or no difference whether such idols are made with men's *hands* or men's *thoughts*. "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God," 130) he has an idol, a figment of the imagination. Only "he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." "Every spirit (teacher) that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and that is the spirit of Antichrist."

In view of such unequivocal statements we cannot have any fellowship with any Church which adheres not to the Gospel of Christ Incarnate, as little as we can be unequally yoked together with outright unbelievers. John is so outspoken on this question that he says in his Second Letter, verses 10 and 11, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house; neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is *partaker* of his evil deeds." John is not referring to entertaining strangers, giving them shelter, but to receiving the deceiving propagandists who were carrying dissension and danger with them. From 3 John 6-8 we see that a reception is meant whereby Christians acknowledge the purveyors of pernicious error as brethren. The greeting "Godspeed" clearly was an expression of fellowship; otherwise the apostle would not say "such an one makes himself *partaker* (*κοινωνεῖ*) of his evil deeds."

The admonition of John deserves to be heeded in our day more than ever, when the call of the hour is, "Unite!" "Unite!" *regardless of doctrinal differences*; when it is hailed both by the religious and secular press as an achievement that Jews and Christians sit on one platform in a joint service, and when even our own people are greatly impressed. The question of church fellowship with such as do not deny a cardinal doctrine of Scripture, but err in some nonfundamentals, is to be treated with greater detail in the second part of this paper; but even here we should like to say: Since we have fellowship with God through His Word, we cannot rightfully have fellowship with such as deliberately and persistently deviate from His Word in any degree. Any false doctrine is error, darkness; and what communion hath light with darkness? If we have religious fellowship with willful errorists, we definitely have fellowship also with darkness. The inference is inescapable. Those who accuse us of hidebound bigotry and narrowness should study the Scriptural content of *koinonia* and all that it implies. Our fellowship with the God of Truth demands uncompromising, unwavering fidelity to His Word, and separation from error when it is adhered to in willful disobedience to the Word.

128) 1 Cor. 10:14, 21.

129) 1 John 5:21.

130) 2 John 9.

A final manifestation of our fellowship is this, "*that we cannot sin.*" Strange language, you say; but Scriptural. "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him *sinneth not*; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him."¹³¹⁾ This sweeping statement of John is climaxed by an even stronger assertion in verse 9: "Whosoever is born of God *doth not commit sin*, for his seed¹³²⁾ remaineth in him; and he *cannot sin*, because he is born of God." Sinning is declared to be absolutely incompatible with "being born of God." These words do not support any theory of perfectionism; otherwise John would contradict himself, for he says at another place: "If we say that we have no sin . . . the truth is not in us."¹³³⁾

The meaning becomes quite clear if we pay attention to the tense employed. John uses the present, which denotes linear or durative action. What he means to say, therefore, is simply this: He that is born of God *does not keep on sinning*; does not lead a life of sin; sin is not the *ruling principle of his life*. Christians are led by the Spirit of God, and therefore we may even say, They *cannot sin*. They that are Christ's have crucified, and daily crucify, the flesh with its affections and lusts.¹³⁴⁾ Though the Christian falls by reason of the weakness of his flesh, he does not concur in sin, much rather fights against it.

This is the teaching of our Lutheran confessions. "It is accordingly necessary to know and to teach that when holy men, still having original sin, also daily repenting of and striving with it, happen to fall into manifest sins, as David into adultery, murder, and blasphemy, that then faith and the Holy Ghost have departed from them. For the Holy Ghost does not permit sin to have dominion,¹³⁵⁾ to gain the upper hand so as to be accomplished, but represses and restrains it so that it must not do what it wishes. But if it does what it wishes, the Holy Ghost and faith are certainly not present. For St. John says 'Whosoever is born of God

131) 1 John 3:5, 6.

132) We are inclined to believe that the "seed" is the Spirit, of whom we are born according to John 3:5. It makes little difference, however, whether we accept this interpretation or understand "seed" as referring to the "incorruptible seed, the Word of God," of which we are born again according to 1 Pet. 1:23; for the Spirit is always in and with the Word and through the Word dwells in the heart of the believers.

133) 1 John 1:8.

134) Gal. 5:24; cp. also Rom. 6:6: "Our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin."

135) We do well to pay attention to these words: "does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand," which are a good explanation of 1 John 3:6, 9.

doth not commit sin . . . and he cannot sin,' and yet it is also the truth when the same St. John says, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'¹³⁶⁾

The power not to continue in sin is beautifully set forth in a hymn by Rambach:

Ein neugebornes Gotteskind
Kaempft gegen alle Suenden,
Es kann den Feind, wo es ihn find't,
Durch Christum ueberwinden;
Und greift er es auch heftig an,
Ihm wird stets Widerstand getan,
Der starke Glaube sieget.

Ein neugebornes Gotteskind
Ist voll von dem Verlangen,
Die Milch, die aus dem Worte rinnt,
Zur Nahrung zu empfangen;
Durch dieses suesse Lebenswort
Geht es im Guten freudig fort
Und wird am Geist gestaerket.

Such words make us tremble, examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, and pray with the Psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."¹³⁷⁾ "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."¹³⁸⁾

Of course, no matter how we strive to walk close with God, our fellowship with Him will never even approximate that fellowship which was enjoyed by our first parents before the Fall. While we wander here below, we must always confess: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."¹³⁹⁾ "Sin which doth so easily beset us" and causes us to fall, disturbs and mars that sweet communion all too often. Our faith is characterized by the plaint "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief"; our love is oftentimes cold and shot through with selfishness; our renunciation of things worldly is not as decisive as it should be. *In der Heiligung bleiben wir immer elende Stuemper*. "Oh, wretched man that I am!"¹⁴⁰⁾ we cry with Paul daily.

Our only source of comfort in this regrettable situation is that, if we sin¹⁴¹⁾ and disturb our fellowship with God, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins,"¹⁴²⁾ "and ever liveth to make inter-

136) Smalcald Article, III, 43—45, *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 490.

137) Ps. 51:10.

139) Phil. 3:12.

138) Psalm 139:23, 24.

140) Rom. 7:19, 24.

141) Here the aorist is used, which is punctiliar and refers to the separate acts of sinning, committing a sin, falling into sin, not lying in sin, which would be expressed by the present.

142) 1 John 2:1, 2.

cession for us."¹⁴³) His blood cleanses,¹⁴⁴) and keeps on cleansing, us from all sin, thus making it possible for us to continue in fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. By that faith we live and hope to die. By that faith we look with expectant eyes and longing hearts for the consummation of our fellowship with God at the coming of the Lord, when the vision of the seer on Patmos shall have been fulfilled: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I, John, saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."¹⁴⁵) Then Paradise lost will be Paradise regained, and in that Paradise we shall enjoy blissful, unbroken communion with our God forever and ever. Until that day dawns, may the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the redeeming love of the Father, and the sanctifying fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all.

Milwaukee, Wis.

C. AUGUST HARDT

Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences of 1856—1859

I. Incidents Leading to the First Conference

The minutes of the first session of the Fourth Free Conference contain this sentence:

"The meeting expressed its heartfelt sorrow because Professor Walther, who gave the first impetus towards the calling of free conferences and through whom God Himself caused so many blessings to be added to the conferences, was prevented this time by a severe throat illness from participating in the transactions of the conference."¹)

The immediate cause of the conferences was undoubtedly the attempt made within the General Synod to overthrow the Un-

143) Heb. 7:25.

144) Here we have the durative present, καθαρίζει, 1 John 1:7.

145) Rev. 21:1-4.

1) *Lutheraner*, XVI, 10.