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## Miscellanea

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## Miscellanea

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### The Doctrinal Affirmation

Ever since it was announced that representatives of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church had agreed on a unified statement of doctrine, publication of this "single document" has been eagerly awaited by all who have been following the movement toward Lutheran union. This "Doctrinal Affirmation" was published early in October and has recently been sent to all pastors of our Wisconsin Synod.

According to the foreword the procedure followed in drawing up this Affirmation consisted "chiefly in inserting into the framework of the Brief Statement the additional truths and clarifications contained in the other documents," viz., the Minneapolis Theses of 1930, the Declaration and Resolutions of the A. L. C. of 1938, and the Resolutions of the Missouri Synod of 1938. It will therefore be interesting to note to what extent the Brief Statement has been modified by these insertions, and what the implications of these modifications may be.

Here it is indeed gratifying to observe that many articles of the original Brief Statement have been left unchanged, and that applies not only to points on which there was little or no difference in the past (the articles of God, of Creation, of Man and of Sin, of Redemption, of Faith in Christ, of Good Works, of Church and State, of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church), but also to matters which were in controversy (the articles of the Public Ministry, of Sunday, of Open Questions). But of greater importance is the fact that in a matter where there was so much controversy—the Doctrine of Conversion—the presentation of the Brief Statement is accepted with but one minor addition, a specific rejection of the Calvinistic error of irresistible grace, an antithesis to which no Synodical Conference Lutheran will take exception. We are also happy to record that the article on Justification has been retained verbatim, and that in the section on Election the Brief Statement's rejection of *intuitu fidei* stands, together with Acts 13:48 as proof passage.

All of these gratifying achievements to which we wish to give ungrudging recognition do not relieve us of the necessity of subjecting the changes which do appear to closest scrutiny. Before one can arrive at a final verdict, it must even be asked whether, in view of later developments, articles written in 1932 still cover all issues adequately. The simultaneous negotiations which the A. L. C. is carrying on with the United Lutheran Church on the question of inspiration make it necessary to weigh this article in the Affirmation with special care. The future relations of the A. L. C. to its sister synods will also, in the event of its acceptance of the Affirmation, have greater bearing than ever upon our evaluation of its position. But in all this it should be far easier than before to retain an objective attitude in the studies which must now be undertaken.

E. R. in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, January, 1945



**A Reply to Dr. Gohdes' Article on the Lord's Supper by  
George W. Forell in the "Lutheran Church Quarterly"  
of January, 1945 \***

"In his article in the October issue of the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, 'A Review of the Traditional Lutheran Position on the Lord's Supper,' Dr. C. B. Gohdes attempted to clarify the Lutheran position and to eliminate 'irrelevant processes of reasoning' and their objectionable results in the present formulation of the doctrine. He came to the conclusion that the doctrine of the essential and substantial presence of Christ in the Sacrament is unreasonable and untenable.

"Since a discussion of the Lord's Supper and a re-thinking of the doctrine of the Real Presence are always helpful, this article is to be welcomed. But in order that such a discussion may be fruitful, it is necessary to go somewhat deeper into all the facts that were involved in the formulation of this peculiarly Lutheran doctrine. This doctrine has been material in defining and limiting Lutheranism in relation to Romanism. And it was again this doctrine that defined and limited the Lutheran Church in relation to the various groups in the Reformed tradition. In other words, this doctrine is not the result of careless reasoning and phrasing on the part of the framers of our Lutheran Confessions. On the contrary, it has been more carefully studied, discussed, and expounded than almost any other doctrine of the church. It is therefore not possible to shrug it off as the result of the use of some 'inapplicable prooftexts' and of 'irrelevant processes of reasoning.' When we speak of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper, we speak of a focal point in Evangelical Lutheran faith. Although this fact should not awe us into silence, it must constantly be kept in mind. At the same time this doctrine is so important that it must frequently be reviewed.

"The reviewer of a doctrine, set forth in its present form in the sixteenth century, must also remember, however, that words and concepts which may have been meaningful at one time often change or even lose their meaning. It is therefore necessary to investigate not merely the words as written down in the Confessions, but also to study the motives that led to their formulation. The authors of the Confessions had a burning desire to preserve the truth. They may have used odd words to express this truth, but we must try to look beyond the letter to apprehend the spirit that took form in the letter.

"If we try to study the development of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper from this point of view, we notice that it was formulated against the background of current distortions of this sacrament. In the controversy with Rome, the sacramental magic and the anti-social character of the Mass had to be corrected. In the controversy with Zwingli and the Enthusiasts, humanistic rationalism and mystical subjectivism had to be opposed. However, in both instances the motive behind the Lutheran formulation was identical. In both cases it was

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Lutheran Christology which found its expression in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Against Rome the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ had to be defended. Against those who were not satisfied with Christ's death on the cross and felt the need to repeat Christ's sacrifice every time a priest said a mass, the uniqueness and sufficiency of the sacrifice on Calvary had to be upheld. But against the Enthusiasts and Zwinglians it was necessary to defend the doctrine of Christ's incarnation. Indeed, the Lutheran position in regard to the Lord's Supper is so completely dependent upon Christology that it cannot be understood apart from two scholastic concepts in regard to the person of Christ. The one concept is the so-called *communicatio idiomatum*, the other the 'ubiquity' of Christ. Of course, both words are meaningless in themselves, but they are used to help express and define something that is essential for our faith. It is therefore regrettable that in the review under discussion these concepts, basic for the peculiar phraseology of the Confessions, are not considered at all.

"But what is it that these scholastic terms are intended to convey? The doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* holds that in the person of Christ the divine nature communicates its attributes to the human nature and vice versa. In other words, it was God who died on the Cross just as much as it was God who was born of the Virgin Mary. Everything that Jesus did and suffered, God did and suffered. This doctrine alone gives the full meaning to the life and death of Jesus Christ. Here God is actually speaking to us. Here the infinite becomes finite, so that we as finite beings can behold the glory of God.

"Against this concept of the *communicatio idiomatum* Zwingli claimed that the interchange of attributes in the person of Christ is merely a rhetorical interchange; so that, strictly speaking, Christ died only according to His human nature, and only according to His divine nature is He always with us. According to His human nature He is localized somewhere in heaven.

"For the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Zwingli's view meant that the body of Christ cannot be both in the elements and in heaven. He therefore rejected the Real Presence. Luther's view meant that if Christ is at all present in the sacramental elements, He is also essentially and substantially present, for Christ is always true man and true God. It is not possible to have Christ present according to one nature only. It was this doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* that is responsible for our Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, in order to reject the doctrine of the Real Presence as presented in the Confessions, one must first reject this doctrine of the interchange of attributes in the person of Christ.

"But now a new question arose. *How* could Christ be present in, with, and under the elements of the sacrament? Zwingli had said that Christ cannot be bodily in the sacrament since He is in heaven at the right hand of God. And he concluded that Christ cannot be bodily in two places at the same time. Against this rationalistic and materialistic conception, Luther said that God is in Christ and Christ is in God and God is everywhere. Therefore Jesus Christ, the God-Man, fills heaven



and earth. But let Luther speak for himself: 'It is our faith, as Scripture teaches, that our Lord Jesus Christ is essentially, naturally, and really God. And the fullness of God's nature is embodied in Him, as St. Paul says Col. 2. Outside of Christ there is no God or divinity, as Jesus Himself says in John 16: "Philip, he who sees Me, he sees the Father; don't you believe that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father?" Well, here Christ walks on earth, and the entire Godhead is personally and substantially present in Him on earth. Now tell me, how can it be true that God be at the same time totally present in Christ—on earth, in His mother's womb, in the crib, in the Temple, in the desert, in the towns, in houses, gardens, fields, on the Cross, in the grave, etc.—and yet be in heaven in the bosom of the Father? If this is true—and according to faith it cannot be contradicted—we must conclude that He is simultaneously everywhere and essentially and personally fills the heaven and the earth—in short, everything—with His own nature and majesty' (WA., XXIII:138, 14).

"This is the Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity. From this point of view it is comparatively easy to understand how Christ can be present in, with, and under the sacramental elements. Indeed, He is not only present in these elements but everywhere and in everything. However, here we must make an important distinction between His general presence in everything and His special presence in the sacramental elements. Luther said that Christ is present in every creature, in stone, in fire, and in water, but he added that *for you* He is only present where He has promised His presence in His Word (WA., XIX:492). It is therefore only in the Sacrament of the Altar that we receive Christ bodily, essentially, and substantially. Only in the sacrament has He assured us His presence in His Word. Only here is He bodily present *for us*.

"This is the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This doctrine is deeply rooted in the Lutheran Christology. It is a result of our faith that the same Christ who could not be contained by the universe became an infant in the arms of Mary. It is a result of our faith in the reality of the incarnation and the eternal God-Manhood of Christ.

"If we want to discard this doctrine of the essential and substantial presence of Christ in the sacrament, we will have to change our entire Evangelical Lutheran Christology. Some may consider such a change necessary. It may be more reasonable to believe in a God who in sublime transcendence rules the world. But such a God is not the God of the Bible.

"The Christian Church through the ages has maintained that God is not only sublimely transcendent but that He became man and that He suffered and died for a suffering and dying humanity. And He did this not merely rhetorically, but essentially and substantially. Because this suffering and compassionate God is the God of the Bible, He is also the God of the Lutheran Confessions. Because Luther and the framers of our Confessions knew something about Him, they wrote of the Real Presence in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Not their 'irrelevant reasoning' nor their 'prooftexts' nor even 'Aristotelian logic,'



but the doctrine of Christ is the issue in this discussion. Our doctrine of the essential and substantial presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a result of our doctrine of the incarnation. Only if we are ready to discard both can we discard one. And as long as we are guided by the Bible, we will discard neither."

### Wants Undiluted Lutheranism

Being in the Army for some time has given me plenty of opportunity to observe Lutherans and Lutheran churches away from home.

As to individuals, I find some who are loyal to their Church regardless of where they are. These, I'm sorry to say, are not in the majority. Then there are those who go to church "when they feel like it," or to any church they feel like. They attend Holy Communion at an Army chapel service for Baptists, Methodists, Adventists, etc., even though a Lutheran service is available. They say there's no difference.

Who's to blame? The individuals? The Church at home? Or congregations and pastors in general?

I sincerely believe that the main cause of indifference is that we have, first, not emphasized the Lutheran teaching of our Lord's real presence in the Sacrament enough; and, secondly, have been so insistent that the outward form of worship is unimportant that we have, rather than have a taint of what some might call Catholicism, become just another Protestant denomination.

A harsh accusation, I can hear someone say. Fellow Lutherans, that is not the intent of this writing. This is a constructive criticism. I'm tired of hearing people say, "There's no difference between the Lutheran Church and other churches." Or for the Lutheran name to mean to outsiders only that one is of German extraction. I'm convinced that the Lutheran interpretation of Scripture is correct. And if we have that conviction, we must go forward as Lutherans, neither Catholic nor Protestant.

We must go back to some of the practices which made us distinctive and not give them up because someone questions them. We must teach our people that our Lord is truly present, by faith [?], in the Sacrament. It must be so impressed that a Lutheran wouldn't consider receiving the Sacrament with another denomination. The practice of confession (either general or private) should be adhered to as taught in years past, together with absolution of the pastor by authority of the Office of the Keys. Not an abbreviated confession, practically omitting the absolution, as I have witnessed, and which is a definitely Protestant form.

Let us be Lutherans in faith, in practice, and in deed!

*A Lutheran Lieutenant*

The above article appeared in the *Lutheran Standard* (A. L. C.) of Dec. 30, 1944. We are happy to pass it on as a cheering testimony from a Lutheran layman who deeply loves the teachings of his Church. The statement that Christ is present in the Sacrament "by faith" was probably intended to express the thought that the Real Presence is not a matter of observation but of faith to us.

A.