

**THE LORD'S SUPPER:
AN ANTHOLOGY**

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM.....	3
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.....	3
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION	5
2. LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM	7
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.....	7
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION	23
3. THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION X	25
4. THE APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION X	27
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION	28
5. THE SMALCALD ARTICLES VI.....	1
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION	2
6. OUTLINES OF DOCTRINAL THEOLOGY BY A.L. GRAEBNER 31	
THE LORD'S SUPPER.....	31
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION	37
7. COMPEND OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY BY LEONARD HUTTER, HENRY EYSTER JACOBS, AND GEORGE FREDERICK SPIEKER. ARTICLE XXI OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.....	39
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION	56
8. SACRED MEDITATIONS BY JOHANN GERHARD MEDITATIONS XIX AND XX.....	57
THE MYSTERY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER	57
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION	60
MEDITATION XX.....	61

Luther's Small Catechism

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION..... 64

9. MARTIN LUTHER'S SERMONS ON THE HOLY SUPPER..... 65

FIRST SERMON FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER..... 65

THE HOLY SACRAMENT..... 65

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION..... 79

SECOND SERMON FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER ... 79

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION..... 86

10. LORD'S SUPPER HYMNS 89

1. INTRODUCTION

With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say: If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics, should rush forward, crying, How can bread and wine be the body and blood of Christ? etc. I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as the Divine Majesty in His little finger. Now here stands the Word of Christ: Take, eat; this is My body; Drink it, all of you; this is the new testament in My blood, etc. Here we abide, and would like to see those who will constitute themselves His masters, and make it different from what He has spoken. It is true, indeed, that if you take away the Word or regard it without the words, you have nothing but mere bread and wine. 14 But if the words remain with them, as they shall and must, then, in virtue of the same, it is truly the body and blood of Christ. For as the lips of Christ say and speak, so it is, as He can never lie or deceive. – Martin Luther, The Large Catechism

These words of Luther are my favorite of his on the Lord's Supper. These words get right to the heart of why this anthology was put together. There are a hundred thousand devils and others trying to get Christians to doubt that in the Holy Supper Christ gives us His very body and blood to eat and to drink.

How can we be so confident that what we believe is actually true? It's because we cling to our Lord's clear words: "This is my body. This is my blood." We believe that Jesus said what He meant and meant what He said. We take Him at His Word. All the arguments, doubts, and debates over this heavenly feast fade into the background when we cling to the words Jesus spoke on the night in which He was betrayed.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

This book is intended to give you a good overview of what many of our fathers in the faith taught on the Lord's Supper. Other texts could have been selected, but offerings here are presented in the hope that you would grow and be strengthened in your understanding of the Lord's Supper, and delight more and more in the magnificent treasure that it truly is for you.

All of the selections were taken from works that are no longer under copyright. This means that many selections often had outdated English. We have tried to lightly edit all of the works to smooth out all of the English to make it an enjoyable read while not straying too far from the editions we were working with.

Each section will give you a brief introduction about the work. You can read straight through or jump to various sections as you desire.

Before diving in, let us pray:

O blessed Savior Jesus Christ, You have given Yourself to me in this holy Sacrament. Keep me in Your faith and favor; as You live in me, let me also live in You. May Your body and blood preserve me in the true faith unto everlasting life. Amen.

May God grant us joy and confidence in His great gift of the Lord's Supper.

Pastors Andrew Packer and Bryan Wolfmueller

Luther's Small Catechism

1. LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

Luther finished the Small Catechism in May of 1529. For nearly 500 years it has remained a beautiful summary of the Christian faith. Luther's questions and answers on the Lord's Supper are something that every Christian should seek to know by heart. Everything else you read in this anthology is summarized here.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

- Answer: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself.

Where is this written?

- Answer: The holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul, write thus: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Take, drink of it all of you. This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?

- Answer: That is shown us in these words: “Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins”; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

- Answer: It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: “Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.” Which words are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?

- Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: “Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.” But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words “For you” require altogether believing hearts.

Luther's Small Catechism

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. What does Martin Luther identify as the key elements of the Lord's Supper in the Small Catechism, and why are they significant?
2. What is the importance of faith in receiving the benefits of the Lord's Supper, according to Luther's Small Catechism?
3. How does Luther interpret the phrase "This is my body... This is my blood" in the context of the Lord's Supper?
4. What criteria does Luther propose for someone to be properly prepared to receive the Lord's Supper?
5. In what ways does Luther's teaching on the Lord's Supper challenge contemporary Christian practice?

2. LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM

Luther's Large Catechism was finished in March of 1529, so it came first. Sadly, this rich treasure has largely been buried and forgotten among modern Lutherans. In this Catechism you get a glimpse of how much Luther has summarized in the Small Catechism and how much more there still is to know and understand. The opening lines summarize how Luther will tackle this topic: What is it? What are its benefits? and, Who is to receive it? And all these are established by the words by which Christ has instituted it, and which every one who desires to be a Christian and go to the Sacrament should know. For it is not our intention to admit to it and to administer it to those who know not what they seek, or why they come.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

1 In the same manner as we have heard regarding Holy Baptism, we must speak also concerning the other Sacrament, namely, these three points: What is it? What are its benefits? and, Who is to receive it? And all these are established by the words by which Christ has instituted it, 2 and which every one who desires to be a Christian and go to the Sacrament should know. For it is not our intention to admit to it and to administer it to those who know not what they seek, or why they come. The words, however, are these:

3 Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

given for you: This do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Take, drink of it all of you. This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

4 Here also we do not wish to enter into controversy and contend with the slanderers and blasphemers of this Sacrament, but to learn first (as we did regarding Baptism) what is of the greatest importance, namely, that the chief point is the Word and ordinance or command of God. For it has not been invented nor introduced by any man, but without any one's counsel and deliberation it has been instituted by Christ. 5 Therefore, just as the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed retain their nature and worth, although you never keep, pray, or believe them, so also does this venerable Sacrament remain undisturbed, so that nothing is detracted or taken from it, even though we employ and dispense it unworthily. 6 What do you think God cares about what we do or believe, so that on that account He should suffer His ordinance to be changed? Why, in all worldly matters everything remains as God has created and ordered it, no matter how we employ or use it. 7 This must always be urged, for thereby the prating of nearly all the fanatical spirits can be repelled. For they regard the Sacraments, aside from the Word of God, as something that we do.

8 Now, what is the Sacrament of the Altar?

- Answer: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in and under the bread and wine which we Christians are commanded by the Word of Christ to eat and to drink. 9 And

Luther's Large Catechism

as we have said of Baptism that it is not simple water, so here also we say the Sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread and wine, such as are ordinarily served at the table, but bread and wine comprehended in, and connected with, the Word of God.

10 It is the Word (I say) which makes and distinguishes this Sacrament, so that it is not mere bread and wine, but is, and is called, the body and blood of Christ. For it is said: *Accedat verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*. That is, If the Word is joined to the element, it becomes a Sacrament. This saying of St. Augustine is so properly and so well put that he has scarcely said anything better. The Word must make a Sacrament of the element, else it remains a mere element. 11 Now, it is not the word or ordinance of a prince or emperor, but of the sublime Majesty, at whose feet all creatures should fall, and affirm it is as He says, and accept it with all reverence, fear, and humility.

12 With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say: If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics, should rush forward, crying, How can bread and wine be the body and blood of Christ? etc., I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as the Divine Majesty in His little finger. 13 Now here stands the Word of Christ: Take, eat; this is My body; Drink it, all of you; this is the new testament in My blood, etc. Here we abide, and would like to see those who will constitute themselves His masters, and make it different from what He has spoken. It is true, indeed, that if you take away the Word or regard it without the words, you have nothing but mere bread and wine. 14 But if the words remain with them, as they shall and must, then, in virtue of

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

the same, it is truly the body and blood of Christ. For as the lips of Christ say and speak, so it is, as He can never lie or deceive.

15 Hence it is easy to reply to all manner of questions about which men are troubled at the present time, such as this one: Whether even a wicked priest can minister at, and dispense, the Sacrament, and whatever other questions like this there may be. 16 For here we conclude and say: Even though a knave takes or distributes the Sacrament, he receives the true Sacrament, that is, the true body and blood of Christ, just as truly as he who [receives or] administers it in the most worthy manner. For it is not founded upon the holiness of men, but upon the Word of God. And as no saint upon earth, yea, no angel in heaven, can make bread and wine to be the body and blood of Christ, so also can no one change or alter it, even though it be misused. 17 For the Word by which it became a Sacrament and was instituted does not become false because of the person or his unbelief. For He does not say: If you believe or are worthy, you receive My body and blood, but: Take, eat and drink; this is My body and blood. Likewise: Do this (namely, what I now do, institute, give, and bid you take). 18 That is as much as to say, No matter whether you are worthy or unworthy, you have here His body and blood by virtue of these words which are added to the bread and wine. 19 Only note and remember this well; for upon these words rest all our foundation, protection, and defense against all errors and deception that have ever come or may yet come.

20 Thus we have briefly the first point which relates to the essence of this Sacrament. Now examine further the efficacy and benefits on account of which really the Sacrament was instituted; which is also its most necessary part, that we may know what we should seek and obtain there. 21 Now this is plain and clear from the words

Luther's Large Catechism

just mentioned: This is My body and blood, given and shed for you, for the remission of sins. 22 Briefly that is as much as to say: For this reason we go to the Sacrament because there we receive such a treasure by and in which we obtain forgiveness of sins. Why so? Because the words stand here and give us this; for on this account He bids me eat and drink, that it may be my own and may benefit me, as a sure pledge and token, yea, the very same treasure that is appointed for me against my sins, death, and every calamity.

23 On this account it is indeed called a food of souls, which nourishes and strengthens the new man. For by Baptism we are first born anew; but (as we said before) there still remains, besides, the old vicious nature of flesh and blood in man, and there are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and of the world that we often become weary and faint, and sometimes also stumble.

24 Therefore it is given for a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so as not to fall back in such a battle, but become ever stronger and stronger. 25 For the new life must be so regulated that it continually increases and progresses; 26 but it must suffer much opposition. For the devil is such a furious enemy that when he sees that we oppose him and attack the old man, and that he cannot topple us over by force, he prowls and moves about on all sides, tries all devices, and does not desist, until he finally wearies us, so that we either renounce our faith or yield hands and feet and become listless or impatient. 27 Now to this end the consolation is here given when the heart feels that the burden is becoming too heavy, that it may here obtain new power and refreshment.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

28 But here our wise spirits contort themselves with their great art and wisdom, crying out and bawling: How can bread and wine forgive sins or strengthen faith? Although they hear and know that we do not say this of bread and wine, because in itself bread is bread, but of such bread and wine as is the body and blood of Christ, and has the words attached to it. That, we say, is verily the treasure, and nothing else, through which such forgiveness is obtained. 29 Now the only way in which it is conveyed and appropriated to us is in the words (Given and shed for you). For herein you have both truths, that it is the body and blood of Christ, and that it is yours as a treasure and gift. 30 Now the body of Christ can never be an unfruitful, vain thing that effects or profits nothing. Yet, however great is the treasure in itself, it must be comprehended in the Word and administered to us, else we should never be able to know or seek it.

31 Therefore also it is vain talk when they say that the body and blood of Christ are not given and shed for us in the Lord's Supper, hence we could not have forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament. For although the work is accomplished and the forgiveness of sins acquired on the cross, yet it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. For what would we otherwise know about it, that such a thing was accomplished or was to be given us if it were not presented by preaching or the oral Word? Whence do they know of it, or how can they apprehend and appropriate to themselves the forgiveness, except they lay hold of and believe the Scriptures and the Gospel? 32 But now the entire Gospel and the article of the Creed: I believe a holy Christian Church, the forgiveness of sin, etc., are by the Word embodied in this Sacrament and presented to us. Why, then, should we allow this treasure to be torn from the Sacrament when they must confess

Luther's Large Catechism

that these are the very words which we hear every where in the Gospel, and they cannot say that these words in the Sacrament are of no use, as little as they dare say that the entire Gospel or Word of God, apart from the Sacrament, is of no use?

33 Thus we have the entire Sacrament, both as to what it is in itself and as to what it brings and profits. Now we must also see who is the person that receives this power and benefit. That is answered briefly, as we said above of Baptism and often elsewhere: Whoever believes it has what the words declare and bring. For they are not spoken or proclaimed to stone and wood, but to those who hear them, to whom He says: 34 Take and eat, etc. And because He offers and promises forgiveness of sin, it cannot be received otherwise than by faith. This faith He Himself demands in the Word when He says: Given and shed for you. As if He said: For this reason I give it, and bid you eat and drink, that you may claim it as yours and enjoy it. 35 Whoever now accepts these words, and believes that what they declare is true, has it. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, as he allows it to be offered to him in vain, and refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure, indeed, is opened and placed at every one's door, yea, upon his table, but it is necessary that you also claim it, and confidently view it as the words suggest to you 36 This, now, is the entire Christian preparation for receiving this Sacrament worthily. For since this treasure is entirely presented in the words, it cannot be apprehended and appropriated in any other way than with the heart. For such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized with the fist. 37 Fasting and prayer, etc., may indeed be an external preparation and discipline for children, that the body may keep and bear itself modestly and reverently towards the body and blood of Christ; yet what is given in and with it the body cannot seize

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

and appropriate. But this is done by the faith of the heart, which discerns this treasure and desires it. 38 This may suffice for what is necessary as a general instruction respecting this Sacrament; for what is further to be said of it belongs to another time.

39 In conclusion, since we have now the true understanding and doctrine of the Sacrament, there is indeed need of some admonition and exhortation, that men may not let so great a treasure which is daily administered and distributed among Christians pass by unheeded, that is, that those who would be Christians make ready to receive this venerable Sacrament often. 40 For we see that men seem weary and lazy with respect to it; and there is a great multitude of such as hear the Gospel, and, because the nonsense of the Pope has been abolished, and we are freed from his laws and coercion, go one, two, three years, or even longer without the Sacrament, as though they were such strong Christians that they have no need of it; 41 and some allow themselves to be prevented and deterred by the pretense that we have taught that no one should approach it except those who feel hunger and thirst, which urge them to it. Some pretend that it is a matter of liberty and not necessary, and that it is sufficient to believe without it; and thus for the most part they go so far that they become quite brutish, and finally despise both the Sacrament and the Word of God.

42 Now, it is true, as we have said, that no one should by any means be coerced or compelled, lest we institute a new murdering of souls. Nevertheless, it must be known that such people who deprive themselves of, and withdraw from, the Sacrament so long a time are not to be considered Christians. For Christ has not instituted it to be treated as a show, but has commanded His Christians to eat and drink it, and thereby remember Him.

Luther's Large Catechism

43 And, indeed, those who are true Christians and esteem the Sacrament precious and holy will urge and impel themselves unto it. Yet that the simple-minded and the weak who also would like to be Christians be the more incited to consider the cause and need which ought to impel them, we will treat somewhat of this point. 44 For as in other matters pertaining to faith, love, and patience, it is not enough to teach and instruct only, but there is need also of daily exhortation, so here also there is need of continuing to preach that men may not become weary and disgusted, since we know and feel how the devil always opposes this and every Christian exercise, and drives and deters therefrom as much as he can.

45 And we have, in the first place, the clear text in the very words of Christ: Do this in remembrance of Me. These are bidding and commanding words by which all who would be Christians are enjoined to partake of this Sacrament. Therefore, whoever would be a disciple of Christ, with whom He here speaks, must also consider and observe this, not from compulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please Him. 46 However, if you say: But the words are added, As often as you do it; there He compels no one, but leaves it to our free choice, answer: 47 That is true, yet it is not written that we should never do so. Yea, just because He speaks the words, As often as you do it, it is nevertheless implied that we should do it often; and it is added for the reason that He wishes to have the Sacrament free, not limited to special times, like the Passover of the Jews, which they were obliged to eat only once a year, and that just upon the fourteenth day of the first full moon in the evening, and which they must not vary a day. As if He would say by these words: I institute a Passover or Supper for you which you shall enjoy not only once

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

a year, just upon this evening, but often, when and where you will, according to every one's opportunity and necessity, bound to no place or appointed time; 48 although the Pope afterwards perverted it, and again made a Jewish feast of it.

49 Thus, you perceive, it is not left free in the sense that we may despise it. For that I call despising it if one allows so long a time to elapse and with nothing to hinder him yet never feels a desire for it. If you wish such liberty, you may just as well have the liberty to be no Christian, and neither have to believe nor pray; for the one is just as much the command of Christ as the other. But if you wish to be a Christian, you must from time to time render satisfaction and obedience to this commandment. 50 For this commandment ought ever to move you to examine yourself and to think: See, what sort of a Christian I am! If I were one, I would certainly have some little longing for that which my Lord has commanded [me] to do.

51 And, indeed, since we act such strangers to it, it is easily seen what sort of Christians we were under the Papacy, namely, that we went from mere compulsion and fear of human commandments, without inclination and love, and never regarded the commandment of Christ. 52 But we neither force nor compel any one; nor need any one do it to serve or please us. But this should induce and constrain you by itself, that He desires it and that it is pleasing to Him. You must not suffer men to coerce you unto faith or any good work. We are doing no more than to say and exhort you as to what you ought to do, not for our sake, but for your own sake. He invites and allures you; if you despise it, you must answer for it yourself.

Luther's Large Catechism

53 Now, this is to be the first point, especially for those who are cold and indifferent, that they may reflect upon and rouse themselves. For this is certainly true, as I have found in my own experience, and as every one will find in his own case, that if a person thus withdraws from this Sacrament, he will daily become more and more callous and cold, and will at last disregard it altogether. 54 To avoid this, we must, indeed, examine heart and conscience, and act like a person who desires to be right with God. Now, the more this is done, the more will the heart be warmed and enkindled, that it may not become entirely cold.

55 But if you say: How do I, if I feel that I am not prepared? Answer: That is also my scruple, especially from the old way under the Pope, in which a person tortured himself to be so perfectly pure that God could not find the least blemish in us. On this account we became so timid that everyone was instantly thrown into consternation and said to himself: Alas! you are unworthy! 56 For then, nature and reason begin to reckon our unworthiness in comparison with the great and precious good; and then it appears like a dark lantern in contrast with the bright sun, or as filth in comparison with precious stones. Because nature and reason see this, they refuse to approach and tarry until they are prepared, so long that one week trails another, and one half year the other. 57 But if you are to regard how good and pure you are, and labor to have no compunctions, you must never approach.

58 We must, therefore, make a distinction here among men. For those who are wanton and dissolute must be told to stay away; for they are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. 59 But the others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and desire to be godly,

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

must not absent themselves, even though otherwise they be feeble and full of infirmities, as St. Hilary also has said: If any one have not committed sin for which he can rightly be put out of the congregation and esteemed as no Christian, he ought not stay away from the Sacrament, lest he may deprive himself of life. 60 For no one will make such progress that he will not retain many daily infirmities in flesh and blood.

61 Therefore such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our Sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we go to confession because we are pure and without sin, but the contrary, because we are poor miserable men, and just because we are unworthy; unless it be some one who desires no grace and absolution nor intends to reform.

62 But whoever would gladly obtain grace and consolation should impel himself, and allow no one to frighten him away, but say: I, indeed, would like to be worthy; but I come, not upon any worthiness, but upon Your Word, because You have commanded it, as one who would gladly be Your disciple, no matter what becomes of my worthiness. 63 But this is difficult; for we always have this obstacle and hindrance to encounter, that we look more upon ourselves than upon the Word and lips of Christ. For nature desires so to act that it can stand and rest firmly on itself, otherwise it refuses to make the approach. Let this suffice concerning the first point.

64 In the second place, there is besides this command also a promise, as we heard above, which ought most strongly to incite and encourage us. For here stand the kind and precious words:

Luther's Large Catechism

This is My body, given for you. This is My blood, shed for you, for the remission of sins. 65 These words, I have said, are not preached to wood and stone, but to me and you; else He might just as well be silent and not institute a Sacrament. Therefore consider, and put yourself into this “you”, that He may not speak to you in vain.

66 For here He offers to us the entire treasure which He has brought for us from heaven, and to which He invites us also in other places with the greatest kindness, as when He says in St. Matthew 11:28: Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 67 Now it is surely a sin and a shame that He so cordially and faithfully summons and exhorts us to our highest and greatest good, and we act so distantly with regard to it, and permit so long a time to pass [without partaking of the Sacrament] that we grow quite cold and hardened, so that we have no inclination or love for it. 68 We must never regard the Sacrament as something injurious from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved. Why, then, is it that we act as if it were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?

69 To be sure, it is true that those who despise it and live in an unchristian manner receive it to their hurt and damnation; for nothing shall be good or wholesome to them, just as with a sick person who from caprice eats and drinks what is forbidden him by the physician. 70 But those who are sensible of their weakness, desire to be rid of it and long for help, should regard and use it only as a precious antidote against the poison which they have in

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

them. For here in the Sacrament you are to receive from the lips of Christ forgiveness of sin, which contains and brings with it the grace of God and the Spirit with all His gifts, protection, shelter, and power against death and the devil and all misfortune.

71 Thus you have, on the part of God, both the command and the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides this, on your part, your own distress which is about your neck, and because of which this command, invitation, and promise are given, ought to impel you. For He Himself says: They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that be sick; that is, those who are weary and heavy-laden with their sins, with the fear of death, temptations of the flesh and of the devil. 72 If, therefore, you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, then go joyfully to this Sacrament and obtain refreshment, consolation, and strength. 73 For if you would wait until you are rid of such burdens, that you might come to the Sacrament pure and worthy, you must forever stay away. For in that case He pronounces sentence and says: 74 If you are pure and godly, you have no need of Me, and I, in turn, none of you. Therefore those alone are called unworthy who neither feel their infirmities nor wish to be considered sinners.

75 But if you say: What, then, shall I do if I cannot feel such distress or experience hunger and thirst for the Sacrament? Answer: For those who are so minded that they do not realize their condition I know no better counsel than that they put their hand into their bosom to ascertain whether they also have flesh and blood. And if you find that to be the case, then go, for your good, to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, and hear what sort of a fruit your flesh is: Now the works of the flesh (he says [Gal. 5:19ff]) are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness,

Luther's Large Catechism

lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.

76 Therefore, if you cannot feel it, at least believe the Scriptures; they will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself. Yea, St. Paul further concludes in Rom. 7:18: I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. If St. Paul may speak thus of his flesh, we do not propose to be better nor more holy. 77 But that we do not feel it is so much the worse; for it is a sign that there is a leprous flesh which feels nothing, and yet [the leprosy] rages and keeps spreading. 78 Yet, as we have said, if you are quite dead to all sensibility, still believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you. And, in short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason you have to go to the Sacrament to seek help and a remedy.

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

80 Besides this, you will also have the devil about you, whom you will not entirely tread under foot, because our Lord Christ Himself could not entirely avoid him. Now, what is the devil? 81 Nothing else than what the Scriptures call him, a liar and murderer. A liar,

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

to lead the heart astray from the Word of God, and to blind it, that you cannot feel your distress or come to Christ. A murderer, who cannot bear to see you live one single hour. 82 If you could see how many knives, darts, and arrows are every moment aimed at you, you would be glad to come to the Sacrament as often as possible. But there is no reason why we walk so securely and heedlessly, except that we neither think nor believe that we are in the flesh, and in this wicked world or in the kingdom of the devil.

83 Therefore, try this and practice it well, and do but examine yourself, or look about you a little, and only keep to the Scriptures. If even then you still feel nothing, you have so much more misery to lament both to God and to your brother. Then take advice and have others pray for you, and do not desist until the stone be removed from your heart. 84 Then, indeed, the distress will not fail to become manifest, and you will find that you have sunk twice as deep as any other poor sinner, and are much more in need of the Sacrament against the misery which unfortunately you do not see, so that, with the grace of God, you may feel it more and become the more hungry for the Sacrament, especially since the devil plies his force against you, and lies in wait for you without ceasing to seize and destroy you, soul and body, so that you are not safe from him one hour. How soon can he have brought you suddenly into misery and distress when you least expect it!

85 Let this, then, be said for exhortation, not only for those of us who are old and grown, but also for the young people, who ought to be brought up in the Christian doctrine and understanding. For thereby the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer might be more easily inculcated to our youth, so that they would receive them with pleasure and earnestness, and thus would

Luther's Large Catechism

practice them from their youth and accustom themselves to them. 86 For the old are now well-nigh done for, so that these and other things cannot be attained, unless we train the people who are to come after us and succeed us in our office and work, in order that they also may bring up their children successfully, that the Word of God and the Christian Church may be preserved. 87 Therefore let every father of a family know that it is his duty, by the injunction and command of God, to teach these things to his children, or have them learn what they ought to know. For since they are baptized and received into the Christian Church, they should also enjoy this communion of the Sacrament, in order that they may serve us and be useful to us; for they must all indeed help us to believe, love, pray, and fight against the devil.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Luther emphasizes that Christ is truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar. How does Luther explain this doctrine, and what scriptural basis does he use to support it? How does this understanding differentiate from other interpretations of the Lord's Supper?
2. According to Luther, what makes a person worthy to receive the Sacrament of the Altar? How does he link faith and worthiness, and what does he suggest as the proper disposition one should have when approaching the sacrament?
3. Luther outlines several benefits and purposes of the Sacrament of the Altar. What are these benefits, and how does Luther argue that they impact the believer's life? How does he believe the sacrament contributes to the community of believers?
4. What significance does Luther place on the Words of Institution ("This is my body... This is my blood...") in the

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

consecration of the elements? How does he argue against those who see these words merely as symbolic or commemorative?

5. How does Luther view the communal aspect of the Sacrament of the Altar? What does he say about the relationship between the individual believer's reception of the sacrament and the unity of the Church? How does this sacrament foster a sense of community and mutual support among believers?

3. THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION X

The Augsburg Confession was presented before the emperor on June 25th, 1530. It was written by Philip Melancthon. It is this Confession that set Lutherans apart from the corruptions of doctrine of the church of its day and gave them their own identity.

¹ Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed ² to those who eat the Supper of the Lord; and they reject those that teach otherwise.

4. THE APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION X

Melanchthon finished The Apology of the Augsburg Confession in April of 1531. It is the Lutheran response to the Pope's attempt to show why the Augsburg Confession should be rejected.

⁵⁴ The Tenth Article has been approved, in which we confess that we believe that *in the Lord's Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present, and are truly tendered, with those things which are seen, bread and wine, to those who receive the Sacrament.* This belief we constantly defend, as the subject has been carefully examined and considered. For since Paul says, 1 Cor. 10:16, *that the bread is the communion of the Lord's body,* etc., it would follow, if the Lord's body were not truly present, that the bread is not a communion of the body, but only of the spirit of Christ. ⁵⁵ And we have ascertained that not only the Roman Church affirms the bodily presence of Christ, but the Greek Church also both now believes, and formerly believed, the same. For the canon of the Mass among them testifies to this, in which the priest clearly prays that the bread may be changed and become the very body of Christ. And Vulgarius, who seems to us to be not a silly writer, says distinctly that *bread is not a mere figure, but* ⁵⁶ *is truly changed into flesh.* And there is a long exposition of Cyril on John 15, in which he teaches that Christ is corporeally offered us in the Supper. For he says thus: *Nevertheless, we do not deny that we are joined spiritually to Christ by true faith and sincere love. But that we have no mode of connection with Him, according to the flesh, this indeed we entirely deny. And this, we say, is altogether foreign to the divine Scriptures. For who has doubted that Christ is in this manner*

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

a vine, and we the branches, deriving thence life for ourselves? Hear Paul saying 1 Cor. 10:17; Rom. 12:5; Gal. 3:28: We are all one body in Christ; although we are many, we are, nevertheless, one in Him; for we are, all partakers of that one bread. Does he perhaps think that the virtue of the mystical benediction is unknown to us? Since this is in us, does it not also, by the communication of Christ's flesh, cause Christ to dwell in us bodily? And a little after: Whence we must consider that Christ is in us not only according to the habit, which we call love,⁵⁷ but also by natural participation, etc. We have cited these testimonies, not to undertake a discussion here concerning this subject, for His Imperial Majesty does not disapprove of this article, but in order that all who may read them may the more clearly perceive that we defend the doctrine received in the entire Church, that in the Lord's Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present, and are truly tendered with those things which are seen, bread and wine. And we speak of the presence of the living Christ [living body]; for we know that death hath no more dominion over Him, Rom. 6:9.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. How does Article X of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession articulate the doctrine of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper? What arguments and scriptural references does it use to defend this belief against alternative interpretations, particularly those that view the Lord's Supper symbolically?
2. How does the Lutheran view agree with Cyril's view of the Lord's Supper?
3. Are Lutherans the only church body that confesses that Christ's body and blood are present in the sacrament? Who else confesses this?

5. THE SMALCALD ARTICLES VI

When Luther wrote the Smalcald Articles, finishing them in 1537, he thought he was near death. So, many consider this to be Luther's "last will and testament."

¹ Of the Sacrament of the Altar we hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ, and are given and received not only by the godly, but also by wicked Christians.

² And that not only one form is to be given. [For] we do not need that high art [specious wisdom] which is to teach us that under the one form there is as much as under both, as the sophists and the Council of Constance teach. ³ For even if it were true that there is as much under one as under both, yet the one form only is not the entire ordinance and institution [made] ordained and commanded by Christ. ⁴ And we especially condemn and in God's name execrate those who not only omit both forms but also quite autocratically [tyrannically] prohibit, condemn, and blaspheme them as heresy, and so exalt themselves against and above Christ, our Lord and God [opposing and placing themselves ahead of Christ], etc.

⁵ As regards transubstantiation, we care nothing about the sophistical subtlety by which they teach that bread and wine leave or lose their own natural substance, and that there remain only the appearance and color of bread, and not true bread. For it is in perfect agreement with Holy Scriptures that there is, and remains, bread, as Paul himself calls it, 1 Cor. 10:16: The bread which we break. And 1 Cor. 11:28: Let him so eat of that bread.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Do only the godly receive Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar? Who else receives it?
2. Why is it important that people receive both the body and the blood in this sacrament?
3. How does Luther view transubstantiation?

6. OUTLINES OF DOCTRINAL THEOLOGY BY A.L. GRAEBNER

August Lawrence Graebner (1849-1904) never intended for this work to be put into a book but pastors begged him for it as Concordia seminary students were giving out copies of it without his knowledge. Thanks be to God for those students. Graebner gives a summary of the doctrine and then everything that follows are the proof texts for each part of the summary. (Page 192ff.)

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

§ 137. The sacrament of the Lord's table,¹ or the Lord's supper,² or the eucharist,³ is the divinely instituted act⁴ of consecrating by the word of institution⁵ the divinely prescribed visible elements bread and wine.⁶ of distributing⁷ to the communicants⁸ the consecrated elements, and of orally eating and drinking⁹ in, with, and under the consecrated bread and wine the true body and blood of Christ,¹⁰ who, being present in such act,¹¹ earnestly offers to all communicants¹² forgiveness of sins¹³ and efficaciously operates toward the acceptance of such gift,¹⁴ and toward renewed assurance of its possession, and the effects of such assurance.¹⁵

1.

1 Cor. 10:21: You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

2.

1 Cor. 11:20: When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

3.

Matt. 26:26: And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

1 Cor. 10:16: 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?

4.

Matt. 26:26–28: And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

1 Cor. 11:24–25: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Outlines of Doctrinal Theology

5.

Mark 14:22–24: And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

Luke 22:19-20: And he took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

1 Cor. 11:23–25: For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus in the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

1 Cor. 10:16: 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?

6.

Matt. 26:26, 29: 26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take,

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

eat; this is my body. 29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

1 Cor. 11:20-21: When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one takes before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

7.

Matt. 26:26-27: And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all you.

8.

Matt. 26:26-27: And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you.

1 Cor. 11:28-29: But let a man examine himself, and let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Luke 22:21: But, behold, the hand of him that betrays me is with me on the table.

Matt. 26:26-27. See below.

Outlines of Doctrinal Theology

9.

Matt. 26:26-27: And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you.

1 Cor. 11:28: But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

10.

Matt. 26:26–28: And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

1 Cor. 10:16: 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?

1 Cor. 11:27-29: Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

11.

Matt. 18:20: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

1 Cor. 10:16: 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?

12.

1 Cor. 11:27, 29: 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 29 For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Luke 22:19–21: And he took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But behold, the hand of him that betrays me is with me on the table.

13.

Matt. 26:28: For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

14.

Outlines of Doctrinal Theology

1 Cor. 11:25: After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Luke 22:20: Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

15.

1 Cor. 11:25-26: This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death until he comes.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. What are some of the names that Graebner uses for this sacrament? How do the different names help us more fully understand this gift?
2. Which of the verses that Graebner lists do you find the most compelling? Why?
3. What do Lutherans mean when we say "in, with, and under"?

7. COMPEND OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY BY LEONARD HUTTER, HENRY EYSTER JACOBS, AND GEORGE FREDERICK SPIEKER. ARTICLE XXI OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Dr. Leonard Hutter (professor in Wittenberg from 1596 until his death in 1616) is not well known in English Lutheranism but he taught Johann Gerhard - that alone should cause us to give thanks to God for his ministry. The Compend of Lutheran Theology is quite helpful and concise and we are certain you will give thanks to God for his wonderful summary of the Lord's Supper as well. (pages 177ff.)

1. What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by Christ himself, in which the true body and the true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in and under the bread and wine, are truly communicated to all who eat and drink, and the promise of grace is applied and sealed to every believer. (See the Small Catechism and the Large Catechism.)

2. On what ground does this explanation rest?

The words of institution tell us this: Matt. 26:27, 28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19, 20. And the words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-25. Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me." After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, gave

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

thanks, and gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins; this do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (The Small Catechism.)

3. Are these words to be understood in a real and literal or in a figurative sense?

We believe, teach, and confess, that the words of the Testament of Christ are not otherwise to be understood, than in their literal sense, so that the bread does not signify the absent body, nor the wine the absent blood, but that it is truly, because of the sacramental union, the body and blood of Christ. (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art. vii.)

4. Do not the Calvinists also understand the words of institution in the same sense?

They do not; for they do not understand the words of institution, "Eat, this is my body," really, as they read, according to the letter, but figuratively, so that to eat the body of Christ, means nothing else than to believe in Christ, and the body of Christ, nothing else than a symbol, that is, a sign or figure of the body of Christ, which body is not in the Eucharist on earth, but only in heaven. In like manner they maintain that the word "is" must be understood sacramentally, that is (according to their explanation), as merely signifying, and they directly deny that the thing is so connected with the sign, that the body of Christ is now also present upon earth, although in an invisible and incomprehensible manner. (Formula of Concord, Sol. Dec, Art. vii.)

Compend of Lutheran Theology

5. But how do you prove that the words of institution are to be understood in their real, literal sense?

My first proof I take from this: that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (concerning whom this serious command was given to all men from heaven, Him you shall hear) is not an ordinary man or an angel, nor merely true, wise, and powerful, but that he is Eternal Wisdom and Truth itself and Almighty God. He therefore knew very well what and how to speak, and he can also powerfully carry out and put into effect whatever he speaks and promises; according to his word: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Luke 21:33. (Formula of Concord, Sol. Dec, Art. vii.)

6. Can you not give another proof?

Yes; "for when our true and almighty Lord Jesus Christ, after the Last Supper, when he was about to begin his bitter suffering and death, instituted this highly revered sacrament of the church, very thoughtfully and seriously, he certainly had at heart that which was greatest and of most importance, when he spoke these words of institution. We are therefore bound not to interpret them as metaphorical, figurative, foreign expressions, but to receive the words as they stand, in their proper, manifest sense." (Formula of Concord.)

7. Can you mention a third proof?

Yes; and this is furnished by all the circumstances attending the institution of the Lord's Supper. "For since Christ gives this command concerning the eating of his body, and the drinking of

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

his blood, at the table, during the supper, there can be no doubt but that he speaks of true natural bread, and of true natural wine, and of eating and drinking with the mouth.” (Formula of Concord.)

“Then, too, Christ himself takes precaution, that no metonymy, that no change in the meaning of the word body, that no sign or figure, or the power or benefits of the absent body of Christ, should be understood. For he clearly speaks of his true, essential, and substantial body, which he has given into death for our sins, and of his true essential blood, which he has shed for us on the cross.” (Formula of Concord.)

8. Adduce still a fourth proof.

Concerning the consecrated and proffered bread, all the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as also St. Paul, who received it after the ascension of Christ, unanimously repeated, precisely in the same manner and in the same words and syllables, without any figure or hange, these clear, firm, and true words of Christ, “This is my body.” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

9. I recognize the clearness of these reasons, and you may now continue and show wherein the nature of this sacrament consists.

We confess, in the words of Irenaeus, that there are two things in the sacrament, an earthly, namely bread and wine, and a heavenly, namely the body and blood of Christ.

Compend of Lutheran Theology

10. Then you maintain that the body and blood of Christ are truly present with the bread and wine?

Certainly; for not the elements alone, but the elements sacramentally united with the heavenly matter, and essentially present, compose the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on earth. (See Augsburg Confession, Art. x; Formula of Concord, Art. vii.)

11. Does the Augsburg Confession teach this also?

Yes; for we read in the 10th Article: "Concerning the Holy Supper of the Lord, our churches teach that the true body and blood of Christ is truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Eucharist, and is there 'communicated and received. Therefore, the contrary doctrine is rejected." And more plainly the Apology of the above. Art. iv. "We confess that the body and blood of our Lord Christ is truly present in the supper, and is proffered and received with the visible things, bread and wine." (Compare Formula of Concord, Sol. Dec, Art. vii.)

12. I would now like you to prove by clear reasons that the body and blood of Christ are truly present on earth with the bread and wine in this sacrament.

The first and chief reason is given by the words of institution themselves. For Christ says expressly: "Take, eat, this is my body; drink of it, all of you, for this cup is the New Testament in my blood" To this word, we steadfastly and firmly hold, and maintain that Christ does not otherwise than he has promised. (Large Catechism; Formula of Concord, Art. vii.)

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

13. Will you not mention the other reasons?

The second reason is, that when Paul says the bread is the communion of the body, and the wine the communion of the blood of Christ, it would follow that the bread is not the communion of the body of Christ, but only of the spirit of Christ, and the wine not the communion of the blood of Christ, but only of the spirit of Christ, if the body and blood of the Lord were not truly present. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

Then, too, this repetition, corroboration, and explanation of the words of Christ, which is given by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 10, must with all diligence and seriousness be regarded as a special, clear testimony of the true essential presence and distribution of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper. Since he writes thus: "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?" From which we clearly learn that not only the cup which Christ blessed in the first supper, and not only the bread which Christ broke and distributed, but also that which we break and bless, is the communion of the body and blood of Christ, so that all those who eat this bread, and drink of this cup, truly receive and become partakers of the true body and blood of Christ. For if the body and blood of Christ were not truly and essentially present, but only present and partaken of according to their power and efficacy, the bread would have to be called, not a communion of the body, but of the spirit, power, and benefits of Christ. And if Paul were speaking only of the spiritual communion of the body of Christ by faith, as the Sacramentarians pervert this verse; he would not say this bread, but the spirit or faith is the communion of the body of Christ. But he says: "The bread is the

Compend of Lutheran Theology

communion of the body of Christ, that all who partake of the blessed bread also become partakers of the body;” he can therefore not be speaking of a spiritual, but of a sacramental and oral partaking of the body of Christ, common to pious and wicked Christians.

Thirdly, the four reasons with which Luther most clearly manifests and proves the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. (Formula of Concord.)

14. Will you not mention these?

The first is this article of our faith: Jesus Christ is essential, natural, true, perfect God and man in one person, inseparable and undivided.

The second: Because the right hand of God is everywhere.

The third: Because the Word of God is neither false nor fallacious.

The fourth: Because God both possesses and knows the various modes of being at a certain place, and not merely the one of will as the fanatics dream, called the local by philosophers, (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

15. If the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the sacrament, in what way are they distributed and received with the bread and wine?

This certainly does not take place by transubstantiation, as taught by the Papists, according to which the consecrated or blessed bread and wine in the Holy Supper, entirely lose their substance and

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

essence, and are changed into the substance and essence of the body and blood of Christ, so that merely the bare form of bread and wine, or the extra-essential remains, without the essence. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

Moreover, it does not take place by consubstantiation, or a local inclusion of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine; nor by means of a union, which would continue even after the celebration of the sacrament had been finished. On the contrary it takes place by means of the sacramental union, which is effected by the power of Christ's promise, so that when the bread is distributed, the body of Christ is also at the same time truly present and distributed, and that when the wine is distributed, the blood of Christ is also truly present and distributed at the same time. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

16. What then is the sacramental union?

It is an operation of divine power, by which two different things, namely, an earthly, the bread and wine, and a heavenly, the body and blood of Christ, in the true use of the Supper, which consists in eating and drinking, are united to one another sacramentally, that is, in a supernatural and inexpressible manner, and according to the institution of Christ are at the same time communicated and received.

17. But why and in what sense does our church use the words in, with, and under the bread and wine?

In the first place, in order that the Papistical doctrine of transubstantiation may thereby be rejected. In the next place, in

Compend of Lutheran Theology

order to indicate the sacramental union of the sign, with that which is signified, that is, of the earthly with the heavenly. Finally, as a testimony, that the words of Christ, This is my body, must be received and understood simply as the words read. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

18. Can the nature and attributes of the sacramental formula be recognized from this?

Yes; for the sacramental formula are not of this kind; that the name of the object, perceived by the senses, is by them given to the earthly element only by virtue of a certain similarity or figure, so that the one word only stands for the other, as the Calvinists dream ; but they are of this kind, that when by means of the sacramental union of the earthly element with the heavenly, that which is received with the bread, is called the body of Christ, and that which is drunk with the wine, is called the blood of Christ; this is done with the most veritable and essential appellation. Such sacramental formulae are: This is my body, This is my blood; further: The bread is the communion of the body of Christ, The wine is the communion of the blood of Christ. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

19. Do you maintain that the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament is received with the bodily mouth?

I believe and firmly maintain, “that the body and blood of Christ is not only received spiritually by faith, but also orally, yet not in a Capernaïtic, but in a supernatural, heavenly manner, because of the sacramental union with the bread and wine.” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art. vii.)

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

20. Then you acknowledge, so far as I can see, a double eating of the body of Christ?

Yes; for there is one eating of the body of Christ, which is spiritual, whereof Christ treats specially, John 6, which does not take place otherwise than with the spirit and faith, in the preaching and consideration of the Gospel, as well as in the Holy Supper, and which is of itself useful and salutary, and necessary to all Christians, at all times, for their salvation. For such spiritual eating is nothing else than faith in Christ. (Form of Concord, Sol. Dec, Art. vii.)

21. What is the other eating of the body of Christ?

The other eating of the body of Christ is oral or sacramental, when in the Holy Supper the true essential body and blood of Christ are orally received and partaken of by all who eat the blessed bread and drink the blessed wine in the Lord's Supper. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

22. Can this sacramental eating also be called a spiritual eating?

It can be so called, but not in the sense in which the Sacramentarians would have it, namely, as if in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, only the spirit or the power of the absent body of Christ, and his merit, were present, and received by believers; but by the word spiritual, we understand the supernatural, heavenly manner, in which Christ is present in the Lord's Supper. And by this word we reject the Capernaïtic notion of a gross, carnal presence. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

Compend of Lutheran Theology

In explaining this controversy, it must first be remarked that there are two kinds of Sacramentarians. Some are gross Sacramentarians, who express in clear words what they hold in their hearts: that there is nothing more present in the Lord's Supper than bread and wine, distributed and received with the mouth. But the others are crafty and the more injurious, who in part speak most speciously in our words, and pretend that they too believe a real presence of the true, essential, living body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, that this, however, takes place spiritually by faith, and who, under these specious words, retain their first gross opinion, namely, that there is nothing present and received with the mouth in the Lord's Supper but bread and wine. For spiritual with them means nothing but the spirit of Christ, or the power of his absent body, and his merit, which is present; but they believe that the body of Christ is in no manner or way present, but only above in the highest heaven, to which we are to raise ourselves with the thoughts of our faith, and that there but not in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, we are to seek such body and blood. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

23. Are not there two types of eating enjoined in the Lord's Supper?

Yes; as to the pious or believing, but not as to the impious or unbelieving. For believers receive the sacrament not only sacramentally or with the mouth, but also spiritually; that is, they receive its salutary fruit by faith, as a sure pledge and seal that their sins are forgiven. But the wicked are without this spiritual and salutary eating, because of their unbelief, and receive only sacramentally, that is, with the mouth, the same body and blood of Christ, but receive it unto judgment and condemnation. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

24. Prove that the body and blood of Christ are received, with the bodily mouth.

Christ's words of institution expressly teach this. For since he, at the table, and during the supper, extends natural bread and natural wine to his disciples, which he calls his true body and his true blood, saying: "Eat and drink;" such command cannot because of the circumstances be understood otherwise than of oral eating and drinking, not however of a gross, carnal Capernaitic, but of a supernatural, incomprehensible eating. (Form of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii. Compare F. C, Epitome, Art. vii.)

25. Can you furnish yet another proof?

Yes; for St. Paul, 1 Cor. 10:16, says, "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?" whereby he most clearly teaches oral eating. For if Paul were only speaking of a spiritual communion of the body of Christ by faith, as the Sacramentarians pervert this passage, he would not have said the bread, but the spirit or faith is the communion of the body of Christ. But as he says, the bread is the communion of the body of Christ, and that all who partake of the blessed bread, also partake of the body of Christ, he therefore cannot be speaking of a spiritual, but of a sacramental or oral reception of the body of Christ, common to pious and wicked Christians. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

26. Do the unworthy, wicked, and unbelieving, likewise eat and drink the holy body and the holy blood of Christ with the mouth?

Compend of Lutheran Theology

St. Paul expressly teaches that not only godly, pious, and believing Christians, but also the unworthy, wicked hypocrites, receive the true body and blood of Christ orally in the sacrament, and grievously sin against the body and blood of Christ, by their unworthy eating and drinking. 1 Cor. 11:27. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

27. Before you prove this, show who are worthy and who are unworthy.

Those are unworthy who go to the sacrament without true penitence and sorrow, and without true faith, and the good resolve to better their lives. “But believers in Christ are worthy, and not only these, but also those weak in the faith, the timid troubled Christians, who are frightened at heart because of the greatness and multitude of their sins, and think that they, in their great impurity, are unworthy of this noble treasure and of the benefits of Christ, and who feel and lament the weakness of their faith, and have the heartfelt desire to serve God with a stronger, more joyous faith, and in purer obedience.” (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

28. Now prove that all the unworthy receive orally the body of Christ in this sacrament.

This is confirmed by the Apostle, 1 Cor. 11:27, 29, when he says: “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” In these words the Apostle clearly testifies, that those who eat unworthily

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

of this bread (which is the communion of the body of Christ) and drink unworthily of the blessed cup (which is the communion of the blood of Christ), not only sin against bread and wine, not only against signs or symbols and figures of the body and blood, but become guilty of the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they there dishonor, abuse, and put to shame. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

29. What is your opinion of the words of institution? Do they have the power to make the sacrament?

As to the consecration, we believe, teach, and confess, that no work of man, or speaking on the part of the minister, creates such presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, but that this is to be ascribed solely and alone to the Almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose true and omnipotent words, spoken at the first consecration, were powerful not only in the first Supper, but continue, are valid, work and still are powerful, so that Christ himself everywhere, where his institution is observed, and his words repeated over the bread and wine, and the consecrated bread and wine distributed, even to-day is still efficient, when these words are repeated, by virtue of the first institution. (Formula of Concord Epitome Art. vii; Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

30. Then the words of institution may be entirely omitted in the use of this sacrament?

They dare by no means be omitted, but must be spoken publicly, as it is written: "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" and this consecration takes place by the repetition of Christ's words. Besides, we must obey

Compend of Lutheran Theology

the command of Christ, which says: “This do;” what Christ himself did in the Holy Supper dare not therefore be omitted.

Thirdly, the words of Christ must also be repeated for this reason, that the faith of those hearing, concerning the essence and fruit of this sacrament, may be awakened, strengthened, and made sure by the words of the Testament of Christ.

And finally, that the elements, bread and wine, may be consecrated or blessed unto this holy use, and separated from other elements of this kind. (Form of Concord, Epitome, Art. vii; Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

31. What do you think of the Romish administration of the sacrament under but one form?

I maintain that a great and fearful robbery and sacrilege is committed where but one form of the sacrament is given to laymen, and where, contrary to the express words of the Testament of Christ, they are forbidden the cup and despoiled of the blood of Christ. (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Art. vii. Compare Augsburg Confession, Art. xxii; Smalcald Articles, Part iii. Art. vi.)

32. Give your reasons for this assertion.

In the first place, “Christ has instituted both forms, not only for a part of the church, but for the whole church. If Christ, then, has instituted the whole sacrament for the whole church, why do they take one form from the church? Why do they change the order established by Christ?” (Apology, Art. x.)

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

Christ, too, has clearly commanded that all shall drink of the cup. Matt. 26:27. And in order that no one might attack these words, and comment on them; as if it belonged solely to the priests, Paul informs us, 1 Cor. 11:24ff., that the entire assembly of the Corinthian church used both forms. (Augsburg Confession, Art. xxii.)

33. Do the Papists cherish other errors concerning this sacrament?

Yes; the first abomination is the figment of transubstantiation or the conversion of the substance of the bread into the substance of the body, and of the substance of the wine into the substance of the blood of Christ.

The second abomination is that they imagine that the body of Christ is truly present in a sacramental manner under the form of bread, even outside of the act of the Holy Supper; whilst nothing can be a sacrament, apart from God's ordained command and instituted use, which consists in eating and drinking.

The third abomination is that the bread (which they imagine has been changed into the body of Christ) is enclosed in the pyx, in order that it may be ostentatiously adored.

The fourth abomination is that they change the sacrament of the altar into a real sacrifice, namely, an atoning sacrifice, for the living and the dead, which they call mass. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. vii.)

34. What is the design and use of the institution of the Lord's Supper?

Compend of Lutheran Theology

It was instituted in order that the faith of those who use the sacrament, might be reminded of the benefits which it receives at the hands of Christ, and that it might encourage and comfort affrighted consciences. For to remember Christ is to think of his benefits, and to believe that they are truly imparted to us. (Augsburg Confession, Art. xxiv.)

35. Should the sacrament be used frequently?

Yes; for in the first place, we have the words of Christ, “This do in remembrance of me;” which words are a command. (Small Catechism; Large Catechism)

Again, the more often you go to the Lord’s Supper, the more your heart is inflamed with the love of God. (Small Catechism; Large Catechism)

In the third place, there is also a promise added to the command, which is to allure and impel us most strongly to the frequent use of this sacrament; for these are the gracious and lovely words: “This is my body, which is given for you; this is my blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins.” (Small Catechism; Large Catechism)

Finally, the feeling of our unworthiness and misery is to enkindle the desire for this sacrament. For in it you bring yourself unto Christ, that he may refresh, comfort, and strengthen you. (Small Catechism; Large Catechism)

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. What is the theological significance of the Lord's Supper according to the given text?
2. How do the scriptural references provided (Matthew 26:27-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, and 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-25) support the explanation of the Lord's Supper?
3. What are the key differences between the Lutheran and Calvinist interpretations of the words of institution in the Lord's Supper?
4. Explain the concept of "sacramental union" as described in the text. How does this differ from transubstantiation and consubstantiation?
5. Discuss the reasons provided in the text for interpreting the words of institution in their literal sense. How does this interpretation affect the practice and understanding of the Lord's Supper?

8. SACRED MEDITATIONS BY JOHANN GERHARD MEDITATIONS XIX AND XX

Johann Gerhard (1582–1637) along with Martin Luther and Martin Chemnitz is one of the finest theologians and pastors of our Lutheran Church Fathers. Both his brilliance and piety can be seen in these meditations on the Lord's Supper.

THE MYSTERY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

To Stand in Wonder Before it, not to Pry into it, is Truest Wisdom.

In the Holy Supper of our Lord we have a mystery placed before us that should cause the deepest awe and excite our profoundest adoration. There is the treasury and store-house of God's grace. We know (Gen. 2:9) that the tree of life was planted by God in Paradise, that its fruit might preserve our first parents and their posterity in the blessedness of an immortality which He had bestowed upon them at their creation. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also placed in Paradise; but that which God gave them for their salvation and eternal life, and to serve as a test of their obedience, became the occasion of their death and eternal condemnation, when they miserably yielded to Satan's enticements and followed their own sinful desires. So in this Holy Supper we have the true tree of life again set before us, that sweet tree (Ez. 47:12), whose leaves are for medicine and whose fruit is for salvation; aye, its sweetness is such as to destroy the bitterness of all afflictions, and even of death itself.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

The Israelites were fed with manna in the wilderness as with bread from heaven (Ex. 16:15); in this Holy Supper we have the true manna which came down from heaven to give life unto the world; here is that bread of heaven, that angels' food, of which if any man eat he shall never hunger (John 6:35, 51). The children of Israel had the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, where they could hear the Lord speaking with them face to face (Ex. 25:21, 22); but here we have the true ark of the covenant, the most holy body of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3); here we have the true mercy seat in the precious blood of Christ (Rom. 3:25), through which God hath made us accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). Nor does Christ simply speak the word of comfort to our souls, He also takes up His abode in us; He feeds our souls not with heavenly manna, but, what is far better, with His own blessed self. Here is the true gate of heaven to our souls, and the ladder reaching from earth to heaven on which the angels of God ascend and descend (Gen. 28:12); for is not He who is in heaven greater than the heavens? Can heaven be as close to God as the flesh and the human nature which He assumed in the incarnation? Heaven is indeed the dwelling-place of God (Is. 66:1), and yet the Holy Spirit rests upon the human nature assumed by Christ (Is. 11:2). God is in heaven, and yet in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

Truly this is a great and infallible pledge of our salvation; He could not possibly have given us a greater, for what is greater than Himself? What can be more intimately united to the Lord than His own human nature, which He hath taken, in His incarnation, into fellowship with the adorable Trinity, and thus made the treasury of all the blessings that heaven has to bestow? What is so intimately

Sacred Meditation

joined to Him as His own body and blood? With this truly heavenly food He refreshes our souls, who are as miserable worms of the dust before Him, and makes us partakers of His own nature; why then shall we not enjoy His gracious favor? Who ever yet hated his own flesh (Eph. 5:29)? How then can the Lord hate us, to whom He giveth His body to eat and His blood to drink? How can He possibly forget those to whom He hath given the pledge of His own body? How can Satan gain the victory over us when we are strengthened and made fit for our spiritual conflicts with this bread of heaven?

Christ holds us dear because He hath bought us at so dear a price; He holds us dear because He feeds our souls with so dear and precious food; He holds us dear because we are members of His body, of His flesh (Eph. 5:30). This is the only sovereign remedy for all the diseases of our souls; here is the only efficacious remedy for mortality; for what sin is so heinous but the sacred flesh of God may expiate it? What sin is so great but it may be healed by the life-giving flesh of the Christ? What sin is so deadly in its effects but it may be atoned for by the death of the Son of God? What darts of the devil so fiery but they may be quenched in this fountain of divine grace? What conscience is so stained with sin but it may be cleansed by the blood of Jesus? The Lord journeyed with the Israelites of old in a pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. 13:21); but here we have present with us not a cloud, but the Sun of Righteousness Himself (Mal. 4:2), the blessed Light of our souls. Here we are sensible not of the fire of the divine wrath, but of the glowing flame of divine love, which does not withdraw afar off from us, but comes and makes its abode with us (John 14:23).

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

Our first parents were placed in Paradise, that most charming and delightful garden, the type of the eternal blessedness of the heavenly paradise, that being mindful of God's goodness to them, they might render due obedience to their Creator.

But behold, in this holy supper, more than a paradise; for here the soul of the creature is spiritually fed with the flesh of his almighty Creator. The conscience is cleansed from all its guilty stains in the blood of the Son of God. The members of Christ, their spiritual head, are nourished with His own body; the believing soul feasts itself at a divine and heavenly banquet. The holy flesh of God, which the angelic hosts adore in the unity of the divine nature, before which archangels bow in lowly reverence, and before which the principalities and powers of heaven tremble and stand in awe, becomes the spiritual nourishment of our souls. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad (Ps. 96:11), but still more let the believing soul exult and sing for joy, to whom God giveth such an unspeakable gift!

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. How does Gerhard draw parallels between the Holy Supper and various biblical symbols such as the tree of life, manna, and the ark of the covenant to underscore the significance of the Lord's Supper in Christian faith?
2. In what ways does Gerhard describe the Holy Supper as surpassing the blessings and symbols given to the Israelites, and what theological implications does this have for understanding the nature of God's grace and presence in the sacrament?

Sacred Meditation

3. The text frequently emphasizes the intimate connection between Christ and believers through the Holy Supper. How does Gerhard use scriptural references to illustrate this union, and what does this suggest about the transformative impact of the sacrament on the believer's spiritual life?

MEDITATION XX

A SERIOUS PREPARATION FOR THE HOLY SUPPER

Be a worthy guest of Christ in His Holy Supper.

This Holy Supper is no common meal, nor is it the banquet of an earthly king; but here we have placed before us the holy mystery of the body and blood of Christ, in which we are to participate. Certainly then a worthy preparation is needful, that we may not, unworthily eating of it, find death instead of life, and receive judgment instead of mercy.

How the holy Patriarch trembles, how he fears, although so remarkable for the strength of his faith, when the Son of God in human form appears to him, and announces the impending destruction of Sodom (Gen. 18:2). But here the Lamb of God is set forth before us, and that not to be curiously gazed upon, but to be tasted and eaten. When Uzziah rashly and inconsiderately drew near to the Ark of the Covenant, the Lord immediately smote him with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16); what wonder that he who eateth of this bread and drinketh of this wine unworthily, should eat and drink to his condemnation? For here is the true ark of the covenant, of which the old was only a type.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

The apostle tells us in one word what constitutes true preparation; "Let a man examine himself," he says, "and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Cor. 11:28). But as every holy examination must be made according to the rule of Holy Scripture, so it is in the case of this which Paul requires. Let us consider then, first of all, our human weakness and imperfection. What is man? Naught but dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27); of the earth we are born, from the earth we derive our sustenance, to the earth we shall return again. What is man? A foul seed, a mass of corruption, and by and by to be the food of worms. Man is born to labor, not to honor; "man that is born of a woman," and on that account with guilt, "is of few days" (Job 14:1); his life is passed in fear, filled as it is with many miseries, and hence with weeping; truly with many miseries, because both his body and his soul are so sorely afflicted. Man is ignorant alike of his origin and of his end. Our life is like a summer plant, soon withered, and yet this brief life is filled with labors and pains that are by no means brief.

Let us consider, in the second place, our unworthiness. Every creature, indeed, compared with the Creator is a shadow, a sleep, a nothing (Ps. 39:7), and no less so is man. But man is unworthy in very many and more grievous ways, for by his sins he has offended his Creator. God is by nature and essence just; hence in His nature and essence He is righteously offended at sin. And what are we but as stubble for this consuming fire? How can our abominable wickedness stand in His sight? How can our iniquities, which Thou hast set before Thee (Ps. 90:8), and our errors, which Thou hast set in the light of Thy countenance, endure the blaze of Thy holiness? God is infinite and always acts consistently with His own character; His justice and His holy wrath against sin are alike

Sacred Meditation

infinite; and if He is great and truly marvelous in all His works, certainly is He also in wrath, in justice, in vengeance. Will He who spared not His own Son, spare the work of His hands? Will He who spared not His most holy Son, spare a worthless and insignificant servant? So utterly hateful is sin to God that He punishes it even in those most dear to Him, as is manifest in the case of Lucifer, the chief of the fallen angels.

And in our preparation for this Holy Supper, let us not simply examine ourselves, but let us also consider this blessed bread, which is the communion of the body of Christ, and then will it appear to us as a true fountain of God's grace, and an inexhaustible spring of divine mercy. Truly the Lord could not turn away His face from us, whom He hath graciously made partakers of His own flesh, for who ever yet hated his own flesh (Eph. 5:29)?

Thus this Holy Supper will transform our souls; this most divine sacrament will make us divine men, until finally we shall enter upon the fulness of the blessedness that is to come, filled with all the fullness of God, and wholly like Him. What we have here only by faith and in a mystery, there we shall enjoy in reality and openly. These bodies of ours which are now the temples of the Holy Spirit, and are sanctified and quickened by the body and blood of Christ dwelling in them, shall be crowned with this glory that in them we shall see God face to face (1 Cor 13:12). This holy remedy heals all the gaping wounds that sin hath made; this life-giving body of the Son of God overcomes every deadly sin; this is the sacred seal of the divine promises, which by God's grace we may exhibit at the great judgment; in the sure and sufficient pledge of eternal life thus given to us do we glory. If the body and blood of Christ are thus communicated to us, certainly we shall enjoy all the blessings

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

acquired through that most holy body and that blessed blood. How will He who hath given us the greater blessings deny us the lesser? He that spared not His own Son, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things (Rom. 8:32)?

Rejoice thou, O my soul, you espoused bride of Christ, for the time is fast drawing near that you shall be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7); put on thy precious robes; take the wedding garment provided for you, lest when He come in He find thee unprepared to receive Him. That robe is the righteousness of Your spouse, Jesus Christ, which we put on in holy baptism; our own righteousness is so far from being the wedding garment that it is nothing less than filthy rags before God (Is. 64:6). O let us greatly fear to come to that solemn marriage supper of the Lamb clad in the miserable and filthy garments of our own works; but clothe us, O Lord, lest in that day we be found naked (2 Cor. 5:3).

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. How does Gerhard emphasize the necessity of self-examination and humility before participating in the Holy Supper, and what scriptural references are used to support this emphasis?
2. In what ways does Gerhard contrast human unworthiness and sinfulness with the grace and mercy offered through the Holy Supper, and how does this contrast highlight the significance of the sacrament?
3. Gerhard describes the transformative power of the Holy Supper. How does he illustrate this transformation, and what ultimate spiritual benefits does he suggest are bestowed upon those who worthily partake of the sacrament?

9. MARTIN LUTHER'S SERMONS ON THE HOLY SUPPER

FIRST SERMON FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

1 Corinthians 1:23-26. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes.

According to a time-honored usage, more people come to the Lord's Table at this season than at any other time during the year.

This fact, together with the urgent necessity that on a stated day the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be plainly taught the people from the pulpit, prompts us to consider now the words of St. Paul, which you have heard read in our text.

From these words we learn that this Sacrament was in no wise instituted or introduced by men, but by Christ Himself. In the night in which He was betrayed He instituted it for His disciples,

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

yea for all Christians, that it might be unto them His Testament, His parting gift, full of great comfort and blessing.

We Christians should therefore cherish this Testament as a treasure of the highest value, should love it dearly, and should make use of it cheerfully and frequently, deriving from it much joy and consolation, thus fulfilling the will of our dying Lord and Savior. His command in this regard is plain; He enjoins upon us the use of this Sacrament.

True Christians will never disregard this command, but will readily and often find comfort in its fulfillment, even until that day when the Lord, who Himself gave us such a Testament, shall again come from heaven to judge the living and the dead.

While the Pope yet held us in his sway we were frightened by the words of St. Paul: "He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself;" for no one taught us aright what these words really mean. Hence the Holy Sacrament was dishonored; the people shunned it as death-bringing, and instead of regarding it as food unto life, they thought it dangerous and pernicious. The lying priests brought this about, though we richly deserved it by our own base ingratitude. Christ meant it so well with us, but we were careless and ungrateful; no wonder therefore that our joy was changed into sorrow, our happiness into weeping, and our blessing into a curse. We ourselves were to blame in this; we shamefully neglected the great and sacred treasure.

A similar calamity is now threatened by the Sacramentarians, who bring dangerous controversies into the churches by their false doctrines concerning the Sacrament; for they teach the people that in it we have naught but bread and wine, thus depriving the

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

Christians again of the comfortable assurance of grace, which Christ has connected with this Sacrament and given to His Church. We must therefore avoid these false teachers, else they will drag us once more into the bitter woe which we endured under the Pope, when it had become customary to preach of this Sacrament in such a manner as to produce but fear and trembling, so that people refused to participate in it, and lost all the gladness and grace which this holy food can bring.

We were told that we must first confess all our sins, and do penance for them, ere we could approach the Table of the Lord. To do this was, however, an impossibility. We were conscious of our sinfulness and feared to partake of this food, judging ourselves unworthy of it, so that no one could commune with a cheerful heart. Every one mistrusted this benign institution, fearing it to be a source of death, or a means of "eating damnation to himself," as St. Paul expresses it. Surely that was a most lamentable state of affairs, when the people became averse to the most blessed Sacrament.

But the Pope made the evil worse by inconsiderately compelling the terrified and trembling souls to come to the Lord's Supper at least once a year. He excommunicated everyone who did not annually come to the Sacrament; and yet he only distributed it under one form, as it is called, in direct contradiction to the command of our Lord, who so instituted His Testament that His body and blood should be received not only by eating of the bread, but also by partaking of the cup. This form of the institution of the Sacrament the Pope trampled under foot, and he even yet condemns as a heresy the distribution of the Lord's Supper under a twofold form, even though Christ Himself thus instituted and ordered it.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

What a terrible abomination they made of the Sacrament, causing people to be afraid of it, and then forcing them to receive it; and what was worse than all, changing the form of the institution, in plain opposition to the command of Christ.

Imagine for yourself what pleasure you would have in such a compulsory eating and drinking. You would have as little relish for it as the sick man has for the wine whose very smell he abhors, but which he is forced to swallow. It was a necessary consequence that the Holy Sacrament proved ineffectual with the people in the papacy; for they could but receive it with the conviction of their own impurity and unworthiness, and yet through fear of excommunication they partook of it. No wonder that it was to them void of consolation and happiness.

But the Pope still further abused the Holy Supper and the Testament of our Lord, when by the assistance of his priests he made it a matter of merchandise on behalf of the dead, so that the mass was celebrated without devotion, merely for money and revenue. Methinks this was, beyond all dispute, a most sacrilegious abuse of the Sacrament; and I have not the least doubt, if popery had remained in its glory, if the blessed Gospel had not been brought to light again, the living would finally have been entirely deprived of the Holy Supper, and it would have been applied only to the dead.

Those of us more advanced in years can well recollect the pomp and ostentation with which mass for the departed was everywhere celebrated.

I mention these things in this connection to show how God punished an ungrateful world by permitting the Pope to distribute

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

the Sacrament in a mutilated manner to a benighted people, who went to the Lord's Table as if to perform a work, not to receive a blessing, fearing the wrath and judgment of God.

In addition to this the Pope employed the mass as a soothing remedy for every kind of misfortune and disease. Let such perversions be to us a warning example, that we may not become similar despisers of the Holy Sacrament, but that we may receive it right gladly, according to its institution and true meaning.

Tell me, is it not an exceedingly cheering word, when the Lord tells His disciples so graciously and kindly: "Take and eat, this is my body; take and drink it, all of you; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, this do in remembrance of me," and do it not only once, but repeatedly until the end of time? Our blessed Lord desired, by means of this Sacrament and Testament, to keep alive in us our remembrance of Him and our faith. He therefore instituted His Supper as a constant memorial of His death, through which we are delivered from our sins and eternal misery.

In this we can see naught but condescension and love; there is no anger here nor vengeance; yea, parents could not deal more kindly with their children. Christ's chief desire, as He Himself declares, is that we shall not forget Him. It is His earnest intention that our whole being shall be impressed with the memory of His passion, that we may never forget how He died for us upon the cross and rose again from the dead. It was His purpose that coming generations should know Him as their Lord, that they might be saved by Him; and therefore, also, He earnestly enjoined upon Christians to instruct the young in His word, and to keep His remembrance sacred, that those who come after them may also be induced to worship Him in the congregation of believers, and own

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

Him as their Christ and only consolation. For this reason, the Lord made His Testament, and we ought never to weary in the remembrance of it. Surely, when true friends meet it is no burdensome task for them to sit together in conversation throughout the night, forgetful of sleep and rest; why then should we grow weary of learning and of preaching the precious truth that Christ the Lord is our Redeemer?

But the Sacrament of the Holy Supper was instituted not merely that by its observance Christ might be honored; for He can truthfully say: I need not your praise, I am the Son of God, whether you glorify me or not; but also and especially for the reason that we stand in need of such a Testament and Supper, and that we might be benefited by it. Listen to the words with which He gives the bread: "Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you," and with which, soon after, He gives the cup: "Drink it, all of you; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins."

This declaration is the Christian's most effective consolation; for he who really believes that Christ gave His body for him, and that He shed His blood for the remission of his sins, cannot despair, no matter what sin, the world and the devil may say.

He knows that this treasure wherewith his sins have been canceled is far greater than all his iniquities.

But the consolation contained in this declaration stands not alone; Christ really gives us with the bread His body to eat, and with the wine His blood to drink, as the words plainly state, in spite of the devil. Each one that eats and drinks, receives for himself in this Sacrament the body and the blood of Christ as his own special gift.

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

Yea, this is the very truth which we must firmly hold: Christ suffered and died for me also, and not alone for St. Peter, St. Paul or other saints. To assure us of this truth Christ gave His Testament; for through it each one individually receives the body and the blood of Christ. It is therefore proper to say that through this Sacrament we obtain forgiveness of sins; for where Christ is, there is forgiveness of sin; here we have His body and blood, as the words declare; therefore he who eats and drinks, believing that the body of Christ was given for him, and that His blood was shed for the forgiveness of his sins, must surely have this forgiveness.

Yet, it is not the act of going to the Sacrament, nor the eating and the drinking, whereby we gain this divine grace, as the Papists falsely teach concerning the performance of their mass; but it is the faith in us which believes the words of Christ when He says: I give you my body, given for you into death, and give you my blood, shed for you for the remission of your sins. Thus will our reception of the Sacrament tend to the strengthening of our faith, and the chief and greatest blessing of this Testament will be ours.

Another benign effect of this Sacrament is the union, in faith and doctrine, which it produces among Christians, and which is so very necessary. To bring about true union among Christians it is not sufficient that they come together to hear the same preaching and the same word, but they must also meet around the same altar to receive the same food and drink.

One may, perchance, hear me preach the word and yet be my enemy; but if one partakes of the Lord's Supper he, by that act, makes for himself, individually, a public confession of his faith, although there may be hypocrites now and then; and thus a more reliable union, between the Christians who unite in this Sacrament,

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

is formed than if they merely had the Gospel preached unto them, though this may also cause them to be of one mind. Those of the same faith and the same hope unite at the Table of the Lord, while those of a different faith stand aloof. Agreement in the Church is very desirable, and there should be no divisions in matters of faith. This union was properly called, by a Latin term, *Communio*, a communion, and those who would not agree with other Christians in faith, doctrine and life were called Excommunicated, as being different in their belief and conduct, and hence unworthy to belong to the congregation of those who are of one mind, lest they might produce dissensions and schisms. By means also of the Holy Sacrament Christ establishes this union among the little company of His believers.

Our old teachers entertained beautiful thoughts in regard to this when they said: Christ took bread and wine for His Supper to indicate that, just as many distinct and separate grains of wheat, when ground together, make one loaf of bread, so we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread, though each one is a distinct person and separate individuality, 1 Cor. 10. And again, as many clusters of grapes and many little berries, each distinct and separate, when pressed together form one delicious juice, one wine, thus it is with the Christians who have the same faith, the same confession, the same love and hope of salvation.

This was the interpretation of our fathers, and they were not mistaken in it. The Holy Sacrament has the effect to firmly join the Christians together in unity of purpose, doctrine and faith, so that no one should stand alone, nor have his own doctrine or belief. The devil is sorely vexed at this, and is busy in endeavoring to destroy such unity and agreement. He knows full well what injury

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

results to him, if we are united in our confession and adhere to one Head; hence he endeavors to tempt us, here and there, with false doctrines, [with doubt, with lying insinuations in regard to the Sacrament and other articles of faith, hoping to cause dissensions in the Church.

It is true, offenses will come, yet it behooves us to guard against them, so that the devil may not entirely separate us. If one or the other insists on differing with us in the doctrine of the Sacrament, or in other parts of our faith, let us, who agree in one confession, be so much the more united in our faith in Christ Jesus; yea, let us be in this as one man. This, however, is only possible where there is unity in doctrine.

This, then, is an additional benefit of the institution of the Holy Supper.

Our Lord gave us this Sacrament to bring about unity of faith, of doctrine and of life. The external differences in the stations of life will, of course, continue; there is no equality there. Each one has his own duties to perform, which differ vastly from each other. A farmer leads another life than a prince; the wife and mistress of the house has other duties to perform than the maid-servant. Such distinctions must ever remain in our everyday life. But in Christ there is neither male nor female, no prince nor tiller of the soil: they are all Christians.

The Gospel, the promise and faith which I have, belongs equally to prince, peasant, woman, servant and child.

Such equality is indicated by the Holy Supper, since in it we all receive the same food and nourishment, whether we be man or

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

wife, matron or maid, father or child, ruler or subject. If we have the same faith, we are heirs of the same heaven, though I may reside here and another in Jerusalem, and we are personally total strangers to each other; for we both have the same Lord, in whom we believe and hope for salvation. This union of faith causes the devil immense displeasure, and he is ever on the alert to sunder our communion; for he knows how his influence is thwarted when Christians firmly agree in faith and doctrine. Against these attempts of Satan, Christ instituted this Holy Sacrament as a means of uniting the believers.

From this it follows that this Sacrament is needed by every individual; and if we disregard it and fail to praise the Lord, and so sever ourselves from the communion of Christians, the loss will be ours, and will become greater the longer we abstain from the Sacrament.

It is true, indeed, that Christ has no need for Himself of our compliance with His ordinance, nor of our remembrance of Him; it is to our own advantage to do so; for if we are not in communion with Christ we are in communion with the devil, and will suffer great injury. Even if Satan cannot harm us externally, we still will carry with us in our bosoms our bitter foe.

We ever have near us an advocate of evil, whether we eat or drink, whether we are asleep or awake, even our own flesh, the old Adam. He accompanies us to bed and arises with us in the morning; he pleads unceasingly and eloquently, with the fixed purpose of estranging us from Christ and His Gospel. This advocate of evil whom we constantly carry about with us, and whose habitation is in our hearts, is ever intent on exciting us to become rich and great in the world, and sways us with the delusion that we have neither

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

occasion nor time to go to the Sacrament. If we heed his lying counsels we will grow colder and colder in our love towards Christ and His gifts; yea, though we might even daily hear His word, this cunning tempter within us will bring it to pass that we do so merely outwardly, while in reality our devotion is a sham, and our thoughts are engaged with the business of this world. Show me the avaricious man who grows weary of his passion! Is it not rather true that the covetous man becomes fonder and fonder of his idols from day to day, cherishing and pursuing with eagerness avarice and usury? The same is true in regard to other sins.

The lewd person delights in his unchastity; he thinks and speaks about it with evident glee, and indulges in his wicked passion more and more. Such are the results of the instructions which the old Adam gives: they lead to destruction.

Christ desires to counteract the sinister influence of the old seducer within us, who would fix our attention alone and chiefly on temporal things.

Christ instead would have us be mindful of eternity, of Himself, our Savior, who died for us upon the cross. He would fain have us see our foolishness, so that we would gladly come unto Him, weary of our depraved life, exclaiming: O Lord, we know how sinful we are, and how unable to resist the allurements of evil, therefore we cry unto You for help; enable us to shun the world and to love You truly. We stand in daily need of such remembrance of Christ in opposition to this pernicious advocate, this old Adam within us, who clamors about our ears day and night, hoping to plunge us, beyond all help, into the cares and pleasures of this world.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

To counteract this wicked purpose, Christ instituted His Holy Supper, that its celebration should remind us of the life to come. He takes the bread and the cup, and tells His disciples to eat and to drink, saying, "This is my body and blood, given for you, and shed for your sins," at the same time exhorting us to remember Him, and not to run merely after the things of this world, as we generally do. In the Holy Supper, He gives us an opportunity to receive Him, to come unto Him, and to remember Him; for in Communion the benefit is ours; He has no need of it.

I doubt not that the people would fairly crowd to the Sacrament if money, or earthly gifts, were distributed there; yea, the blind and the lame would rush thither, regardless of intervening rivers and mountains.

We ought, indeed, to be ashamed of ourselves, when we think what a miserable set we are, always ready to run after money and perishable things, while we are so slow, yea, so averse, to come to the Table of the Lord, where a heavenly gift, even His body and blood, awaits us. Here, in this Testament, a precious treasure, salvation and happiness, is to be conveyed to us; but, alas, we flee from it as from poison or some terrible punishment.

How is it that we prize gold and silver more than this magnificent, precious treasure? The devil is the instigator of this our choice; he influences our old Adam, who is naturally backward and indifferent towards things eternal, and cares more for that which is temporal. This ingratitude and carelessness are very sinful, yea, much more than can be imagined; nevertheless, we are often guilty of it, else we would seek more diligently the kingdom of heaven and its blessings, which are not transitory, like the earthly property,

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

of which we are so much enamored. Let us never forget that we must in due time render an account of our behavior in this regard.

The Lord's Supper admonishes us not to be ungrateful any longer, but to realize, together with other Christians, with whom we confess our faith and share this most Holy Sacrament, what great blessings Christ bestows upon us through it, and how we should therefore serve and praise Him as our Lord, who not only died for us, but also gives us, as nourishment for our souls, His body and blood.

He desires that we should remember Him whilst we receive it to the strengthening of our faith and the preservation of unity among the Christians.

Whosoever refuses to comply with the command of the Lord, deserves to fall into the hands of false teachers, who preach to him that in the Lord's Supper there is naught but bread and wine. In the papacy the doctrine concerning this Sacrament was falsified, for the Lord was not remembered as He had ordered it; and hence it resulted that no one knew what the Lord's Supper was, and why one should receive it. Obedience to the Church was considered the chief concern of all, and the result was idolatry and invocation of the saints.

God grant that we may retain the true faith and have a living interest in this matter. We have the doctrine true and pure again, we understand why we go to the Holy Sacrament, to remember the Lord with praise and thanksgiving for His mercy and kindness, and also to receive therefrom consolation and strengthening of our faith. Let then our hearts be firm and not doubt; let us be assured that God is pleased with us, and will not punish us for our sins,

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

since Christ gave for us His body and for us shed His sacred blood. Thus, will we proclaim the death of our Lord aright and fulfill His command: "Do this in remembrance of me."

In view of this, judge for yourself what kind of Christians those persons are, who stay away from the Lord's Supper one whole year, yea two, three and even more years? Such people are surely possessed of the devil; they either have no knowledge of their sins, and consequently take no thoughts on how to be relieved of them, or else they are so wrapped up in the affairs of this world that they entirely forget the life to come. This is dreadful indeed.

Whosoever professes to be a Christian and desires to live in accordance with his profession, must come repeatedly and often to the Holy Sacrament. Its blessings are very necessary for the Christian, as we have shown above.

This, however, does not apply to those who cannot receive the entire Sacrament as it was instituted by Christ, and hence refrain from participating in it at all. Such people must be satisfied with the word of Christ and the assurances of His Gospel, until God in mercy gives them an opportunity to again enjoy the Holy Supper in its entirety and purity, as Christ instituted it.

May God give us grace, through His Holy Spirit, that we may ever receive this blessed Sacrament to the glory of Christ, and to our souls' salvation.

Amen.

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. In what ways does the sermon contrast the true meaning of the Sacrament with the abuses and misunderstandings propagated by the papacy?
2. What theological significance does the sermon attribute to the institution of the Lord's Supper by Christ Himself?
3. According to the sermon, what are the personal spiritual benefits for a Christian who regularly partakes in the Lord's Supper?
4. How does the sermon describe the communal impact of the Lord's Supper in terms of unity and fellowship among believers?
5. What practical advice does the sermon offer to Christians who may feel unworthy or hesitant to partake in the Lord's Supper?

SECOND SERMON FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 Corinthians 11:27–34. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

This text is of great importance and deserves to be attentively considered by Christians. We have already learned, from the previous sermon, how the people misunderstood these words, so as to deprive themselves of the comfort contained in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, yea, even shunned it as something dangerous.

It is true, Judas did not receive this Sacrament to his consolation or amendment. There were also many among the Corinthians, as St. Paul tells us, who received it unworthily, and thus brought upon themselves bodily and spiritual punishment. There is indeed a difference in the reception of this Sacrament; some partake of it worthily and unto eternal life, but others unworthily unto condemnation, inasmuch as they do not repent and have true faith.

Hence it is of the first importance that we learn to know what is meant by the expression "eating and drinking worthily or unworthily."

The Papists taught that one should not partake of this Sacrament except he be entirely fit and perfectly pure. Such fitness, however, they made dependent upon certain works of penance, much eulogized by the priests; such as auricular confession, castigation of the body, fastings, prayers, giving of alms, and the like. These were accounted sufficient satisfaction for the sins committed. But such worthiness is of no account; for it is impossible by our own deeds to become really pure and worthy before God. Even the disciples were not perfectly pure when Christ gave them His Supper, for He tells them that they have need of washing their feet, by which He meant not the washing with water, but the forgiveness of their sins.

Let us then learn to understand and to remember, in this connection, that they do not receive the Sacrament unworthily

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

who know and mourn their wretchedness; who confess that they are poor, miserable sinners; who experience many a temptation; who are yet affected by anger and impatience, by passion and intemperance.

Such and similar sins adhere to us more or less as long as we live on earth: and if we earnestly repent of them, and do not continue in them against the warning voice of our conscience; if we seek their forgiveness and consolation in the misery which they brought upon us, we ought not to be deterred from coming to the Holy Sacrament. As long as the old Adam is within us, it will surely happen that impatience, wicked thoughts, and the like, will trouble us and cause us to sin. If we then had to remain away from the table of the Lord until we had become entirely free from sin, we would indeed, never be fit to come to this Holy Sacrament.

They, however, receive it unworthily who knowingly and intentionally persist in their sins, such as revengeful wrath, murder, fornication, adultery, and similar manifest sins and crimes. Christ instituted the Holy Sacrament unto the forgiveness of our sins, that we should forsake them and not continue in them. Judas received the Sacrament unto his condemnation and death, because he had determined to destroy the Lord, and did not recede from this his wicked purpose.

Some people are shocked by this example; they know that they are guilty of hatred, malice, and other sins, wherefore they will not come to the Lord's Supper, but postpone it from day to day, and from year to year, simply because they are unwilling to give up their anger and their hatred.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

Such persons commit a twofold wrong; they cling tenaciously to their sins, and also wickedly despise the command of Christ to partake of His Sacrament.

These people should desire to put an end to their wrath and envy, should strive to desist from sin, and should long to obtain, through the reception of the Holy Sacrament, remission of sins and strengthening of their faith. If then there is yet remaining a glimmering of sin and weakness, if now and then evil thoughts and passions make their presence known, we must cry unto God and pray: O Lord, give me a peaceable, kind and loving heart, and cleanse me from my sins, for Christ's sake.

Thus, can we come to the Supper of the Lord in faith and hope, without being terrified by this saying of St. Paul; for this does not pertain to those who long to be liberated from the bondage of sin, but to those who are therein, and do not desire to be freed, but rather find pleasure in their wickedness and defend their evil deeds. The Corinthians were such people; wherefore the apostle tells them: "I praise you not," indicating that they were not penitent, and yet desired to be praised as good Christians.

The custom prevailing at that time in regard to the Lord's Supper was different from the present.

The Christians came together in the evening, and each one ate whatever he had, in the presence of the others. Sometimes it happened that a part ate and drank too much, while others who had nothing suffered want. Such conduct the apostle condemns.

He declares it to be damnable, if persons deliberately sin, and then go to the Sacrament as though nothing had happened. They who

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

act thus, eat and drink the Sacrament unworthily, and God punishes them with sickness and other afflictions.

You observe that such wickedness is far greater than the shortcomings of wavering hearts which, seeing the error of their ways, return to the path of duty and earnestly pray: O God, we have done evil before Thee; forgive us our manifold sins.

Christ will surely pardon them, and invite them to His Supper; He does not invite the self-righteous and saintly, but just these poor sinners, who on account of their guilt are greatly troubled and in sorrow. This He means by the words: "This is my body given for you unto death, this is my blood which is shed for the remission of your sins."

Surely, they must have been great and guilty sinners for whom such a glorious sacrifice and such a great ransom was offered. The great requirement, therefore, is this: we must discover that we are really sinners, and then come to the Table of the Lord for comfort and relief; but he who will not confess his sins nor amend his ways, should by no means come to this Holy Sacrament.

It is often the case, and strangely so, that those who need not fear, unto whom God is truly merciful and whom He would own as His children, are sorely troubled with fear, whilst those who ought to tremble with terror are entirely unconcerned and think not of their sins, but continue straight on upon their wicked course, as would a rifle ball when once discharged. We see this in the example of the Papists. They scorn and persecute the word of God, put to death the faithful Christians, and force people, in violation of their conscience, to commit idolatry; still, they think themselves pious and holy, and are right merry in their delusion.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

On the other hand, the little company who do not sin intentionally are diffident and affrighted; they lament the sins of which they were once guilty, and wish that they had never occurred. Thus, it is, those who might have consolation do not lay hold upon it, whilst they who ought to fear are secure and devoid of every terror.

In reference to this fact the apostle Paul says:

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” To examine one's self means to consider well in what condition we are. If we find that our hearts are hardened, that we are not willing to refrain from sin, and that we do not fear its presence, then we may well conclude that we should not go to the Sacrament; for we are then no Christians.

The best thing we could do, under such circumstances, would be to put a stop to such wickedness, to repent, to trust faithfully in the promises and mercy of God, and to unite again with Christians in the participation of the Holy Sacrament. If, however, we are unwilling to do this, we ought not to approach the Lord's Table; for we would surely eat and drink damnation there. Let us carefully meditate upon what eternity has in store for us, if we thus fall under the judgment of God. If we are mindful of this, we will not be slow to repent, to put aside anger and other kinds of wickedness, and to make our peace with God in His Holy Supper. Again, if our hearts are contrite, if we confess our sins before God and are heartily sorry on account of them, if we believe that God in mercy, for Christ's sake, will pardon us, then we are well prepared and can confidently say unto the Savior: O Lord, we are poor sinners, and therefore come to Thy Table to receive consolation. If we approach the Sacrament in such a spirit, we shall be truly ready and receive the richest blessings.

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

In behalf of such contrite and sorrowing souls the Lord's Table was prepared, so that they might find at that table consolation and joy. Those, however, who are without penitence, and who continue in their haughtiness and sin, will not be relieved of their fear and will surely be damned.

Some of the old teachers in the Church understood this word of the apostle: "Let a man examine himself," as excluding from the Sacrament all persons who are guilty of manifest crimes punished by the civil government, such as murder, adultery, lewdness, and the like. This is a mistake; for, as we have seen above, only those who willfully continue in their sins, and will not amend their lives, are cautioned to refrain from partaking of the Sacrament.

These would only augment their account of wrath; for by coming to the Table of the Lord they make a pretended profession of Christian faith, of which not the least symptoms are discernible in their lives.

Whosoever has been guilty of these great sins, and has repented of them, ought not to be deterred by them from seeking absolution and receiving the Lord's Supper. Let him come and pray unto God to give him strength to avoid such wickedness in the future, and to lead a better life. Likewise, our infirmities, which vex us daily, ought not to keep us away; for of these we shall never get rid entirely while we live in this world. If it were then our determination not to come to the Sacrament until we were perfectly righteous and pure, we would be compelled to stay away from it forever.

I can speak from my own experience in regard to this, and I know the effects of the avoidance of the Lord's Supper. I was under the

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

influence of this devilish delusion, and became more and more a stranger at the Lord's Table. Avoid this error, my hearers, and see to it that you come often and well prepared; if sin and crime rest heavily upon your souls, forget not then your Lord and Savior; think of His death and sacrifice for sinners; repent and trust in Him. This, and no more, He requires of us as worthy guests at His Table.

Our great infirmity and daily transgressions, for which we need support and forgiveness, as well as the unity of faith and confession thereby established in the Church, make it an imperative necessity that we should frequently celebrate and receive the Lord's Supper, thus fulfilling His command: "Do this in remembrance of me."

Therefore, whosoever comes to the Table of the Lord as a poor sinner, is yet worthy and well prepared; nor will he eat and drink damnation to himself; but he will receive the body and the blood of Christ worthily, unto his soul's salvation.

May God grant us this blessing through His Holy Ghost, for the sake of Christ Jesus, His son, our Redeemer.

Amen.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. The sermon emphasizes the importance of self-examination before partaking in the Lord's Supper. What are some specific ways Christians today can effectively examine themselves to ensure they are approaching the Sacrament worthily?
2. According to the sermon, feeling sorrow for one's sins and seeking forgiveness is crucial for a worthy reception of the

Martin Luther's Sermons on the Holy Supper

Sacrament. How can a believer balance the recognition of their sinful nature with the assurance of God's mercy and forgiveness in their spiritual life?

3. The sermon criticizes the early Corinthians for their selfish behavior during communal meals. How can modern congregations foster a sense of community and unity when celebrating the Lord's Supper, ensuring that it is a time of mutual support and shared faith?
4. The sermon differentiates between persistent, willful sin and the everyday weaknesses that all believers face. How can individuals discern whether their struggles with sin are part of human frailty or indicative of a more serious, willful rebellion against God?
5. The sermon encourages frequent participation in the Lord's Supper for spiritual support and unity of faith. What are the benefits and potential challenges of frequent communion for individuals and the church community as a whole? How can these be addressed to maximize the spiritual benefits?

10. LORD'S SUPPER HYMNS

We have included several hymns because one of the greatest ways to take to heart sound teaching is to sing it. Tunes for these hymns can easily be found online.

O Lord, We Praise Thee

by Martin Luther

1. O Lord, we praise Thee, bless Thee, and adore Thee,
In thanksgiving bow before Thee.
Thou with Thy body and Thy blood didst nourish
Our weak souls that they may flourish:
O Lord, have mercy!
May Thy body, Lord, born of Mary,
That our sins and sorrows did carry,
And Thy blood for us plead
In all trial, fear, and need:
O Lord, have mercy!

2. Thy holy body into death was given,
Life to win for us in heaven.
No greater love than this to Thee could bind us;
May this feast thereof remind us!
O Lord, have mercy!
Lord, Thy kindness did so constrain Thee
That Thy blood should bless and sustain me.
All our debt Thou hast paid;
Peace with God once more is made:
O Lord, have mercy.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

3. May God bestow on us His grace and favor
To please Him with our behavior
And live as brethren here in love and union
Nor repent this blest Communion!
O Lord, have mercy!
Let not Thy good Spirit forsake us;
Grant that heavenly-minded He make us;
Give Thy Church, Lord, to see
Days of peace and unity:
O Lord, have mercy!

O Jesus Blessed Lord, to Thee

by Thomas Kingo

1 O Jesu, blessed Lord, to thee
my heartfelt thanks for ever be,
who hast so lovingly bestowed
on me thy body and thy blood.

2 Break forth, my soul, for joy and say,
'What wealth is come to me this day!
My Savior dwells within my heart;
How blessed am I! How good Thou art!'

Soul, Adorn Thyself with Gladness

by Johann Franck

Soul, adorn thyself with gladness,

Lord's Supper Hymns

Leave behind all gloom and sadness;
Come into the daylight's splendor,
There with joy thy praises render
Unto Him whose grace unbounded
Hath this wondrous Supper founded.
High o'er all the heav'ns He reigneth,
Yet to dwell with thee He deigneth.

Hasten as a bride to meet Him
And with loving rev'ence greet Him;
For with words of life immortal
Now He knocketh at thy portal.
Haste to ope the gates before Him,
Saying, while thou dost adore Him,
"Suffer, Lord, that I receive Thee,
And I nevermore will leave Thee."

He who craves a precious treasure
Neither cost nor pain will measure;
But the priceless gifts of heaven
God to us hath freely given.
Though the wealth of earth were proffered,
Naught would buy the gifts here offered:
Christ's true body, for thee riven,
And His blood, for thee once given.

Ah, how hungers all my spirit
For the love I do not merit!
Oft have I, with sighs fast thronging,
Thought upon this food with longing.
In the battle well-night worsted,

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

For this cup of life have thirsted,
For the Friend who here invites us
And to God Himself unites us.

In my heart I find ascending
Holy awe, with rapture blending,
As this mystery I ponder,
Filling all my soul with wonder,
Bearing witness at this hour
Of the greatness of God's power;
Far beyond all human telling
Is the pow'r within Him dwelling.

Human reason, though it ponder,
Cannot fathom this great wonder
That Christ's body e'er remaineth
Though it countless souls sustaineth
And that He His blood is giving
With the wine we are receiving.
These great mysteries unsounded
Are by God alone expounded.

Jesus, Sun of Life, my Splendor,
Jesus, Thou my Friend most tender,
Jesus, Joy of my desiring,
Fount of life, my soul inspiring:
At Thy feet I cry, my Maker,
Let me be a fit partaker
Of this blessed food from heaven,
For our good, Thy glory, given.

Lord's Supper Hymns

Lord, by love and mercy driven
Thou hast left Thy throne in heaven
On the cross for me to languish
And to die in bitter anguish,
To forego all joy and gladness
And to shed Thy blood in sadness.
By this blood redeemed and living,
Lord, I praise Thee with thanksgiving.

Jesus, Bread of Life, I pray Thee,
Let me gladly here obey Thee.
By Thy love I am invited,
Be Thy love with love requited;
From this Supper let me measure,
Lord, how vast and deep love's treasure.
Through the gifts Thou here dost give me
As Thy guest in heav'n receive me.

Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior

by John Hus

Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior,
Turned away God's wrath forever;
By His bitter grief and woe
He saved us from the evil Foe.

As His pledge of love undying
He, this precious food supplying,
Gives His body with the bread
And with the wine the blood He shed.

The Lord's Supper: An Anthology

Whoso to this Board repaireth
May take heed how he prepareth:
For if he does not believe,
Then death for life he shall receive.

Praise the Father, who from heaven
Unto us such food hath given
And, to mend what we have done,
Gave into death His only Son.

Thou shalt hold with faith unshaken
That this food is to be taken
By the sick who are distressed,
By hearts that long for peace and rest.

To such grace and mercy turneth
Ev'ry soul that truly mourneth;
Art thou well? Avoid this Board,
Else shalt thou reap an ill reward.

Christ says: "Come, all ye that labor,
And receive My grace and favor;
They who feel no want or ill
Need no physician's help or skill.

"Useless were for thee My Passion
If thy works thy weal could fashion.
This feast is not spread for thee
If thine own savior thou wilt be.

Lord's Supper Hymns

If thy heart this truth professes
And thy mouth thy sin confesses,
His dear guest thou here shalt be,
And Christ Himself shall banquet thee.

Sweet henceforth shall be thy labor,
Thou shalt truly love thy neighbor;
So shall he both taste and see
What God thy Lord hath done in thee.