



"Meditate  
upon these things;  
give thyself  
wholly to them;  
that thy profiting  
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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## —ESSAYS AND ARTICLES—

### GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE UNWORTHY USE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER 1)

I Cor. 11; 10:14-22

The following does not purpose to treat particularly of the essence of the Lord's Supper, but of its use.

It must strike the careful Bible reader that, while three Evangelists and the Apostle Paul record the institution of the Lord's Supper, only Paul treats of its practical use, and indeed ex professo only in I Cor. 11, after the subject matter had occasioned a reference to it in chapter 10: 14-22.

However, the earnestness of this one passage compensates richly for the lack of more frequent repetition. The "unworthy partaking," the being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," the "eating and drinking a judgment to himself," the "coming together unto judgment," and the earnest admonition to all participants to examine and judge themselves beforehand ought to permeate the bone and marrow of every partaker of the Lord's Supper and every pastor who administers it, and induce them to deal with the

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1) The original of this article by the sainted Prof. Aug. Pieper appeared in the April 1931 issue of the "Quartalschrift" of the Wisconsin Synod. It is here reproduced for the light it sheds on an important subject. The difficult task of translating Prof. Pieper's vigorous and often idiomatic German into our language was undertaken by Pastor L. Grams of Faulkton, South Dakota. His work appears here with certain revisions by the editor who, of course, accepts responsibility for any inadequacies.

Sacrament with the utmost prudence.

Complete unity regarding close communion still does not prevail in the true Lutheran Church of our land with respect to people who according to the Scriptures are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord in receiving the Sacrament and thus draw the judgment of God upon themselves and those who are guilty with them--the preachers who administer it to them. If we take note of the many visitations which God has sent even upon our own church body in these times, the question is impressed upon us whether these visitations do not have their cause in the very same sin to which the Apostle traces the rod of God which overtook the Corinthians. The undersigned has undertaken to treat thoroughly the chief points of Paul's admonition in the hope of being to some extent helpful to his brethren in the pastoral ministry for a sensible, faithful and blessed communion practice.

When one looks at the whole context in which our passage stands, it is not superfluous to point out that everything the Apostle says in Chapters 11-14 of I Corinthians is put there for one purpose: the edification of the Church. In chapter 12 he urges faithful administration of the special spiritual gifts conferred by the Holy Ghost for the common good of the Church, v. 7; in chapter 13 he speaks of the one gift excelling all others--love, and in 14 of the superiority of the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongues as a means for edifying the Church. To that gift the Corinthians should devote themselves and in its use do everything decently and in order.

But the Apostle already has this goal in mind in chapter 11:17 (at the introduction of the point about a proper Lord's Supper celebration) when he says, "Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse." (Luther: Ich kann's nicht loben, dasz ihr nicht auf bessere Weise, sondern auf aergere Weise zusammenkommt.") Luther's translation is not too sharp and would have been more understandable had he translated, "I cannot praise it that you do not come to-

gether in a manner for bettering but for making worse (verschlechternde Weise.)" The Apostle means to say that the method and manner, the way in which the Corinthians conducted divine worship tended to worsen the congregation rather than better it, tended to pervert it more than to build it up. This includes the disorderliness of the Corinthians which had been reproached before, permitting women to pray and prophecy in public services with uncovered heads. For Christians converted from paganism that was at that time just as shameful a revealing of the female body as if today a woman among us with a plunging neckline, too short a skirt, bare arms and bobbed hair wanted to preach a sermon right out in front of the chancel. At the same time a Christian woman would thus deny her natural relation toward the man as appointed by God. The fashion adhered to by those women, who thus became unChristian, which they had dragged along from the shameless heathen world and which they practised in public worship services because they had killed off their natural sense of modesty, was so abominable a matter for the delicate sense of morality of Paul that he with these sharp words censures every "enlightened" Corinthian Christian who was ready to defend this or any heathen immorality: "But if any one among you has a mind to argue about this, may he know that we (as authoritative Apostles of Christ) have no such custom, nor do the churches of God." They ruined more in the congregation through their shamelessness and abolition of divine family order than the public praying and prophesying of such women could benefit.

Then the Apostle changes the subject with the words which he has just cited against their gatherings in general; "Now in this that I declare unto you (what has just been said) I praise you not, that ye come together not for better but for worse." In their assemblies were many educated and "wise" people (cf. the first four chapters of the I Cor., esp. 4:10; 8:1, 2; and II Cor. 11:19ff), and the consequence was eternal brawling, strife, cliques and divisions of which Paul had so bitterly complained before. If everything is in order, the gatherings will edify and benefit the gathered.

They display the oneness of the Church and strengthen the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace when they place their special spiritual gifts in the service of all the others in humility and love. (cf. Eph. 4) In Corinth the gatherings always seemed to produce splits, cliques, and divisions in the congregation because of the arrogance of so many who, forgetting humility and love, sought their own honor and fashioned their own faction if things did not go their way. Paul adds: God permits this so "that they which are approved may be manifest among you." While dealing with the abuses in these assemblies the Apostle finds opportunity to speak of the celebration of the Lord's Supper among the Corinthians.

To comprehend fully what he says about it, one must have a picture of the external form of contemporary Christian gatherings. At that time there was no banding together into local congregations such as we have today. For a long time, too, there were no assembly rooms like our churches. The first Christian congregation was the one in Jerusalem. It numbered about 5,000 men. Therefore there were perhaps over 12,500, with the women and children. Outside of the Court of the Gentiles these could not all come together at one time and place even to hear a sermon. According to Luke 24:53, the first disciples came and went "continually in the Temple" from Ascension to Pentecost day. And according to Acts 2:46 (cf. v. 42), after the first sermon the 3,000 were "continuing daily with one accord in the Temple (i. e. in the outer court)." Here Peter preached his second sermon in Solomon's Porch according to Acts 3. He preached there oftener later on (Acts 5:42), until the Temple Court was closed to the Christians. But these gatherings in the Temple were entirely public gatherings for preaching to which everyone had access, even unbelieving Jews and the heathen--they were mission gatherings. In addition to these, and after they became impossible, the Christians in Jerusalem held close and private rendezvous among themselves. Naturally those were divine services with Apostolic preaching, common prayers, and the so-called "breaking of bread." Acts

2:42; 4:24ff. But these were not divine services in today's sense. They were not held at one appointed place for all the thousands, but the congregation gathered itself in groups "from house to house," Acts 2:46. And these services had absolutely no appointed form, no formalized liturgy or ritual. They were held in a natural sociable way, similar to, and yet in many respects entirely different from, what we do here and there when a congregation or several congregations together arrange for a Mission Festival out in the woods accompanied with social eating and drinking and other social intercourse.

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(The following is a footnote in the original paper.)

That was partially brought about by the social condition in the first congregation in Jerusalem. The huge majority were indigent, even poverty-stricken people who didn't know today what they would live on tomorrow. Others could live adequately but didn't have much; and there were a few who were really well-off. The poor were in need of daily help in the form of food and drink.

On the other hand the new Gospel worked so great a willingness in the hearts of those who were well-off (and better situated) for generosity and love toward their brethren in Christ who suffered need that we read in Acts 2:44, "And all that believed were together and had all things common, and sold their possession and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need." (cf 4:34) How great the throng of the poor, and how great the love of the others for sharing, we see in the conclusion of chapter 4 and from the necessary establishment of the almoners in the first verses of 6.

Now let us look at 2:42 where it says, "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and prayers." The question has long been debated whether the expression is used of the celebration of the Lord's Supper or of the above-mentioned distribution of food to the poor Christians.

This expression had a very general meaning in Israel (cf. Is. 58:7). Later the expression became the terminus technicus for the breaking of the customary sweet bread used at the Passover, the mazzoth, which the Lord also employed in the institution of the Lord's Supper. And from then on--so a few exegetes assert--the breaking of the bread became a special term for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. They point to I Cor. 10:16 "the bread which we break" and to the use of the expression by a few of the apostolic fathers. No further proof from the Scriptures can be offered.

The breaking of bread and the giving of thanks for it was not only a custom of the Lord Jesus, but also of his disciples and of all the God-fearing Jews at every meal just as table prayers are used by us Christians. cp. Mt. 14:19; 15:36; Mk. 6:41; 8:6; Lk. 9:16; Mk. 8:19f; Lk. 24:30, 35; Acts 20:11; and 27:35. Surely these cannot be said to refer to the Lord's Supper. Now take Acts 2:42 together with Acts 2:44-47 (cf. also 4:34ff where the distribution of those things gathered for the poor is spoken of), and not much ground remains for the assumption that "breaking of bread" here means the Lord's Supper.

This is especially true in view of the fact that after the distribution of the gifts of love, as described in v. 45, the breaking of the bread in 46 is separated from the Apostle's preaching in the Temple, both as to time and place, and relegated to "from house to house" where according to v. 47 the believers received food-- τροφή --Speise-- "with praise and joy and singleness of heart." Thus the reference in v. 42 is not to the Lord's Supper but to the continuing gatherings for learning the new doctrines which were taught by the Apostles, and for fostering brotherly fellowship through mutual meals and prayers.

It is, moreover, quite unlikely that the Apostles would have immediately given the Lord's Supper, which the Lord had instituted only such a short time before in greatest solemnity amid that select circle of disciples as the mysterious "New Testament in my blood," to those crowds who were still not fully instructed in the teachings of the

New Testament. Where and when the Lord's Supper was first introduced is not reported to us in the Scriptures, neither in Acts nor in the Epistles, while we first read of the breaking of bread, i. e. of the celebration of the brotherly meal,<sup>2)</sup> already in Acts 20:7-11. That was in Troas where Paul, on the return trip from his third missionary journey, preached an extended sermon to just such a gathering of the congregation there. Besides, it is entirely self-evident from Acts 20:27 that Paul delivered the same instructions concerning the power of love and the Lord's Supper to all the congregations established by him that he offered to the Corinthians. The same is true of the other Apostles.

When the Agape was first combined with the celebration of the Lord's Supper is not perceptible from the Scriptures. The first we hear of it is written in I Cor. 11 to correct a grave deterioration of both celebrations--a proof that the combination of the two could not have been of recent date even in the European churches. Self-evidently the custom stemmed from the example of the congregation in Jerusalem; but it is asserting too much if one deduces that they practiced it already in Acts 2:42-47. The combination of the two meals maintained its position in several regions of the Church for centuries, while in others, already in the second century, it was discontinued on account of the resultant degradation of the Sacrament. And so finally the Agape was completely abolished.

(This is the end of the footnote.)

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In these gatherings the Christians observed what is also called Agape or Love Feast in Jude 12. Rich and poor ate their food at the same table as one family. The food had been brought by the former especially for the latter to testify to them of their brotherhood in Christ and for its mutual expression. To these common love-and-brotherhood

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2) The exact meaning of the author at this point is difficult to determine. (Ed.)



meals was soon added the celebration of Holy Communion, which Paul at this point calls "Herrenmahl;" we do not know how soon this was done, but we do know that the one was so closely identified with the other that Paul can speak of both in one breath.

At the time that Paul wrote the letter to the Corinthians, their divine services were already deteriorating through internal divisions so that he could see cliques, heresies and external separations (*αἰρέσεις*) developing among them. Among the unproven, conceited pride had choked out brotherly love more and more. And still they came together time and again for the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the Agape which preceded it. Hence the Apostle says to them, "When you now come together, one cannot celebrate the Lord's Supper," (thus the concluding sentence *οὐκ ἔστιν* is to be translated with the following infinitive instead of Luther's "so haelt man da nicht.")

And why that was impossible follows immediately, "For in eating," i. e. at the occasion of celebrating the Lord's Supper, "everyone taketh before the other his own supper" (which he brought along for the celebration of the Agape) "and one is hungry and another is drunken," i. e., the poor were not satisfied and the rich were glutted with food and drink. Here Paul seems to be speaking of the Agape only. But the immediate connection of v. 23, which speaks of the Lord's Supper, almost sounds as though the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper and the Agape with one and the same material which they had brought with them, and in one act. In any case, what Paul has just said in v. 21, and added in v. 22, applies to that which was brought: If the eating and drinking of a meal was of importance, --they could do that much better at home. Their manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper and Agape together he earnestly censures, and in v. 23 begins to speak of the Lord's Supper.

If one should ask why he says it is impossible to celebrate the Lord's Supper in connection with such an Agape, it is not adequate to reply that it was because of the apparent physical difficulty of celebrating the Lord's Supper with common bread and wine after each one had preempted

for himself that which He brought. The oneness of the bread and wine for all, of course, belonged to the established external form of the Sacrament, as 10:17 shows ("for we being many are one bread"). But even if that which was individually brought along was entirely and separately consumed in the Agape, they could still have provided fresh elements for the celebration of the Lord's Supper without any trouble--if the hearts of the celebrants had been disposed properly towards one another. But there lay the lack. Why didn't they wait for one another at the Agape so that they could eat and drink together? The Apostle admonishes them to do that at the very end of the entire discussion in 11:33. Why did they eat their own so greedily? Behind the external separation lay the internal separation of hearts. They were torn asunder and faction-minded, as Paul complained in v. 18,19. But here he has in mind the well-to-do as those especially guilty. They were the ones who separated themselves from the poor while eating the Agape, consuming their own things first of all and not sharing them with the poor--surely these did not voluntarily remain hungry. They were the ones who put the poor to shame in that they treated them as inferiors because of their poverty, yes as though they were not equal in Christ. In them they actually despised the "Congregation of God." As God's Congregation, as the Church of God they all stood together, also with the poor, even in an external group. As God's Congregation they celebrated the Agape and Lord's Supper with them. That was external recognition of the poor as members of the Congregation, of the Church of God, as equal brethren and members of the Body of Christ.

And now they scorn these very same ones because they were not equal to them in money, culture and social position. This was a very grave sin against God and their brethren. The Church is the greatest, noblest, most precious and glorious work of God. On its account God created and preserves all other creatures. For the sake of the Church He became man and shed His blood. The Holy Ghost cleansed it and adorned it more gloriously than the angels of heaven. For its consummation the Triune God

unceasingly labors from the beginning of the world to its end. It is the one great object of His thoughts from all eternity and will be for all eternity.

Every member of this Congregation, even the malefactor on the Cross, is nobler before God than all nobles, intellectuals, leaders, and upright of this world. Such are God's elect, holy and beloved. To demean them by a flaunting of one's possession of vain, earthly things such as money, education, social status--or even of carnal enjoyment--that is a grave sin indeed! That was the sin of the opulent in the Corinthian congregation. And the poor members who were shunned became embittered against their proud brethren. On the one side there was scorning, on the other side bitterness. Thus they celebrated their "love" feast and thus they wanted to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. That is what the Apostle calls the impossible in v. 20. He speaks of a spiritual impossibility.

The Apostle continues (according to the Greek): "For I received from the Lord what I delivered to you," and relates the institution of the Lord's Supper in order to treat of its worthy and unworthy use.

Here we shall abstain from a complete discussion of the words of institution because we may assume that our readers have a proper understanding of them. We touch upon only a few points. Over against the purely human arrangement of the Agape the Apostle stresses the divine institution of the Lord's Supper with the words, "I received from the Lord, etc" (cf. also the κυριακὸν δεῖπνον in v. 20) This Lord's Supper is a thousand times holier and more important than that human institution of Agape. Both are brotherly meals for fostering brotherly love. The Agape is a human means for it--the Lord's Supper a divine means. The one confesses brotherly love only, the other confesses, strengthens and works spiritual brotherliness. I Cor. 10:16,17. The one imparts earthly food, the other, heavenly. The former can lead to grave sins against the brethren and the Congregation of God if observed in a false spirit; the misuse of the Sacrament causes an offense against the body and blood of Christ and results in a judg-

ment from God.

Another point: The words of the Apostles and Evangelists, "in the same night in which he was betrayed," present not only a naked and cold chronology; they refer to the meaning of this night for "Him" and "for us." For Him it was the most dreadful, for us the most blessed by virtue of His faithfulness. In this night of nights, through the greatest human unfaithfulness, He was given over into the power of the devil and hell and worked out our redemption, sealed and bequeathed it to us in the new Testament of His blood.

Finally: While the Lord appends to this Testament the words "this do in remembrance of Me," He does not enjoin a memorial celebration for His person, but establishes a special celebration for the glorification of His work, the giving of His body and blood into death on the cross for us and in our stead, a preachment which the Apostle sums up in these words, "For as often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come." The eating and drinking is in itself an announcement of His death. It unites all participants of this Supper with the host of confessors and preachers of that God-given Gospel of His body and blood which was given for us, namely, that there is no other Name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.

Now we proceed to the admonitions and warnings of the Apostle regarding the use of the Holy Lord's Supper. There is a series of assertions which in the German version may easily distort the proper meaning because Luther did not reproduce the sense of the Greek exactly.

V. 27, "whosoever eateth and drinketh this bread and cup unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" is often misunderstood as though the first part of the sentence read: "who eats as an unworthy one, etc." Just so in v. 29. Perhaps for that reason the Catechism answers the question, "Who, then, receives the Sacrament worthily?" with: "He is worthy and well-prepared who has faith. But he who does not have faith... he is unworthy and unprepared." Here the worthiness and unworthiness apparently are conceived of as attributes of the recipient. So

also Luther writes in the Large Catechism pp. 760; 769-770; also 768:69. And in this the F.C. follows him: 810f; 816:39; 996:68ff; 1008:105; 1014:125. Yet in 816:39; 1014:125 the Confession repudiates the opinion that the "true believers can receive this Sacrament unto judgment for this reason that they are still imperfect in external manner of life."<sup>3</sup>)

After all, Paul does not say here "who eats and drinks as an unworthy one," but "whoever unworthily" that is, in an unworthy manner "eats and drinks" (notice the deliberative indefinite subjunctive with εάν: ὅσ ἄν ἀνάξιος ἐσθίῃ καὶ πίνῃ, not ἀνάξιος). Therefore the subject here is not the worthy person but the unworthy eating and drinking. A person who as such would be worthy of the Sacrament or of eating and drinking of it does not exist. A distinguishing of worthy and unworthy communicants would therefore, strictly speaking, be false. However, we know that Luther and our fathers meant nothing else than unworthy eating and drinking with their words about persons. There is an unworthy eating and drinking of the Sacrament, one which regards as common and degrades, dishonors, the body and blood of Christ, that occurs when the participant does not "discern" (Luther: unterscheidet) the Lord's body; v. 29. The Greek for that is διακρίνειν, and Luther's translation is entirely right; but it does not say enough, as the use of the same word in v. 31 shows. There Luther translates it with "richten" (judge) and there it is also right because there it stands in contrast to the "judging" of the Lord. Judging is a farther-reaching and narrower concept than discerning (or distinguishing). One cannot judge without first having discerned. But one can very well discern without judging; and to judge means first of all to form an opinion of a person or thing in contradistinction to others, recognizing what each is in its essential being.

And when it is said in v. 29 that, by the eating and drinking of the bread and cup in the Sacrament as one who is μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα, one is inviting a κρῖμα upon one-

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3) References in the Confessions are to the Triglott edition.

self, --that can in the context refer only to a failure in distinguishing the body of the Lord from the bread which is eaten, in properly evaluating and discerning it in its true essence.

Luther's translation would be more lucid and precise had he said, "judge rightly" (richtig beurteilen) or "understand" (erkennen) instead of "discern" (unterscheiden). The unworthy eating and drinking of the Sacrament, with all of its deplorable consequences, arises out of this, that one does not rightly judge the body of the Lord (naturally also the blood) nor understand what it really is and what it should be doing in the Sacrament.

The Apostle is not speaking of the naturalistic-intellectual understanding of Christ's body like a philosopher. There is no such thing in this life, not even in the life of a believer. But he is speaking as a preacher of salvation about the spiritual understanding which in every instance comes from the Word of God, and in conformity with its Truth must be accepted through faith. And this Word of God is "in concreto" that spoken by the Lord in connection with the institution of the Lord's Supper: "Take and eat; this is my body which is broken for you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood...this do in remembrance of me." The necessary understanding for a worthy participation in the Lord's Supper must come from these linguistically clear words. These words contain three essential elements in addition to the eating and drinking--this is my body, --which is broken for you (given into death), --this is the New Testament. In their spiritual force these words are so clear and simple that every normal adult understands them without further explanation. Those who do not already understand them do not belong at the Lord's Table. He who cannot say Amen to them in faith--who simply does not believe them or, because of pure intellectualism, cannot believe that the body and blood of Christ is offered him in this meal by the Lord Himself for eating and drinking; or who does not believe the "given into death for you;" or who does not believe that this meal is for every communicant the essential communication and sealing of the new covenant

of grace made by God with sinners in the blood of Christ-- that person does not "discern" the Lord's body.

But to grasp the full import of the διακρίνειν, we must add to the "judging rightly and recognizing the essence and purpose" also this, that it be kept holy and esteemed by the heart as a means of grace in conformity with the description just given. For what is there among all the external gifts and blessings of God that is greater, more precious and glorious than the external means through which he seals and communicates His saving grace to us: His Word, Baptism and Sacrament of the Altar! And of these three, which indeed all communicate the same grace, the Lord's Supper is the one in which the especial, the intimate Savior-love of the Lord for His own most warmly (herzandringend) finds expression, so that we might ever believe on Him with more confidence, love Him more intimately, strive against sin more energetically, love one another more faithfully, learn to overcome more fully every anxiety and fear of death, so that His peace may keep our hearts until we see Him there bodily in great joy and possess Him as we here orally eat and drink in Sacramental manner His body which was offered for us and His blood which was shed for us.

Thus to discern the Lord's body in the Lord's Supper and treasure it as the most precious blessing above all earthly things, --that is to value it properly and receive it worthily. And not to discern it from common food, not to keep it holy or understand it as heavenly manna for our souls--that means, in partaking, to despise and shame it. To this point really belongs the twice spoken reminder, "this do in remembrance of me," which is attached to the words of institution. The Apostle has just explained them by adding: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come." Luther's "ought to show forth the death of the Lord" does not alter the significance of the words for esteeming the Sacrament as the Lord intended. There lies in them primarily the implied reminder to repeat the celebration until His visible reappearance, just as in the words, "as often as." The use of the bread and cup as the body and blood of

Christ given for us is the most impressive sermon commanded by God and preached by the communicant concerning the sacrificial death of our Savior, both to us and to the world which sees our celebration.

It is a repetition of Peter's first Pentecost sermon, a review of the entire Gospel of the Lord's death, resurrection and ascension for our salvation. And this should be echoed by all participants, especially at the Lord's Table, as indeed it is through sermon, song and prayer. But who is there who will or can partake in such spreading of the Gospel if at the eating and drinking of the bread and the cup he does not recognize the body and blood of the Lord as valuable for salvation? Thus by not proclaiming and confessing the sacrificial death of Christ he becomes manifest as one who in his external use neither perceives nor holds sacred the body of the Lord, but despises it.

And thus he becomes "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." That does not mean, as some explain it, that God looks upon him as a murderer of Christ like the Sanhedrin, Pilate, or the Roman soldiers. The ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος κτλ , to be very clear, one ought to translate into the German with: "er ist eines Verbrechens am Leib und Blut des Herrn schuldig" (he is guilty of a crime against the body and blood of Christ.)" For ἔνοχος = ἐνεχόμενος and really means to be held fast, grabbed and chained or, in the language of the court, "to be taken into custody" for the purpose of being sentenced by a judge for a crime. But here it is too widely separated from any such connection to be applied to the bodily killing of Christ.

The phrase here is about sinning against the body and blood of the Lord through eating and drinking in the Sacrament. It is about a sin against the body and blood of the Lord as the essential gift in the Sacrament, the gift of salvation, the sealing of grace which was obtained for us through the death of our Passover Lamb offered for us. So the words here are about a grave sin against the grace which is given to us in the Sacrament and through His words concerning it, --a sin before which everyone ought to shudder.



The Apostle warns the wanton Corinthians against this sin and admonishes them with these words, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." To examine means to probe into its genuiness (cf. II Cor. 13:5), that is, one's own heart, his own innermost judgment of the food of the Sacrament, and how he esteems it, whether his estimate of it corresponds to the essence, majesty, and purpose of the great gift, whether he properly honors it with his eating and drinking or dishonors, desecrates and profanes it. Only the former is the true attitude of the heart; the other is counterfeit, false, and impure. Only the first receives the blessing of the Sacrament which the Lord intended: the appropriation and sealing of grace and that which is included. The other brings with it apprehension by God for judgment, as a grave sin against the body and blood of the Lord. "For whosoever eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh to himself--a judgment." We intentionally omit the article of Luther's translation, for it is not in the original text. It does not read τὸ κρέμα but, ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, κρέμα... Now the anarthrous substantive can individualize, under certain circumstances, just as well as the article, even as the latter can be used generically in certain circumstances. But it cannot individualize κατ' ἐξοχήν, and in this case designate the great, the final judgment of God determining eternal damnation, as is so frequently understood. Luther himself seems to understand it like that, for he says in the Large Catechism, "To be sure, it is true that those who despise it and live in an unChristian manner receive it to their hurt and damnation." pp. 768:69. But it only seems that way. Luther is not speaking of the individual unworthy use. He is speaking, like the Small Catechism does, of the worthy and unworthy persons who not only receive the Sacrament unworthily once in a while, but as continual and ultimate unbelievers despise the Sacrament generally and lead un-Christian lives. For this appears from the subsequent words, "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." Moreover, Luther often

uses the word "damnation" in the sense of condemnation (Verurteilung) without always having condemnation to eternal damnation in mind. In like manner the Formula of Concord speaks (996:68) concerning unworthy persons, concerning "the unworthy guests who go to this Sacrament without faith and by oral eating of the body of Christ load themselves with damnation, that is, with temporal and eternal punishments, and become guilty of the body and blood of Christ." The King James version renders the κρίμα of this verse sharply and rashly with "damnation" which doesn't help toward a proper understanding among us, while newer translations like the Standard R. V., Good-speed's, the 20th Century and Farrar Fenton's, properly render it with "a judgment" or "condemnation."

From the text itself it is clear that here κρίμα (without the article) does not mean the final judgment of damnation, not the judgment, but is to be understood in a generic and abstract sense of judgment in general and is to be translated with "judgment" because the concept itself, as to its content, is not further defined or specified here. The specification comes immediately in the following words and absolutely excludes the sense of judgment to eternal damnation, or this understanding: "whoever eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks to himself eternal damnation." The kind of judgment the Apostle has in mind we see plainly in the next verse: "for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep," that is, have fallen asleep, have died. Why that? Because they have fallen into God's judgment through their unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper. They did not discern the Lord's body, received it in a completely degrading manner, and thus made themselves guilty of a crime against it as a bearer of grace, scorning the most solemn seal of their atonement, redemption, and forgiveness of sins, and so thwarting the loftiest work of the Holy Ghost which the Lord promotes in his very own Person and Word in the celebration of the Sacrament to comfort and strengthen them.

The very God of grace cannot let that continue; he takes them into custody in order to judge them. And how

does he carry out this judgment? He does not immediately throw them into hell-fire; but He chastises them, in the case of these disorderly Corinthians chiefly with bodily plagues, bodily weaknesses, sickness, and the dying of a goodly number of them. It is no judgment of damnation that God carries out on them, but a judgment of chastisement.

They were in need of this very thing. This is shown in the method and manner in which they celebrated the Agape: their social pride, their lack of love for their brethren in Christ, whom they did not hesitate to shame, their despising of the congregation of God defiled the Temple of God which they should have bettered and edified in their assemblies.

They did not reflect, did not become watchful, did not prove themselves whether they were upon evil and false ways or not, but grew secure, and thus in their fleshly-mindedness went to the Lord's Table without examination and so became guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. With this they had advanced a goodly piece along the road to eternal destruction and were hastening directly toward their damnation.

Then the faithful God intervened with His judgment. Had they judged themselves, they would not have been judged by God. But they did not do it; so God had to intervene between them and their damnation with His judgment. That is why God visited them with weaknesses, sicknesses, and bodily death. That was his judgment. It was no judgment to damnation, but: "but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord"-- παιδευόμεθα --"that we should not be condemned with the world"-- κατακριθῶμεν --. Therefore, the judgment that God carries out upon those guests who eat and drink the Lord's Supper unworthily is a gracious chastening and training judgment, sent out of fatherly love and faithfulness upon his children who have become secure, to protect them from being damned with the godless world.

Note also that the Apostle expressly calls his readers "my brethren" (ἀδελφοὶ μου) in connection with this sentence, that he still treats them as Christians, and warns them again at the close against coming together εἰς κρῖμα,

unto judgment, (once again without the article) whereby again in this connection the meaning of the word as final judgment is excluded.

It is obvious that the proper understanding of these words of Paul about the judgment of God must be of far-reaching importance for a proper Communion practice. There is a difference whether I as a pastor say to a communicant, "you are unworthy of the Sacrament," or: "you celebrate the Sacrament in an unworthy manner." "You celebrate the Sacrament to your damnation," or: "you celebrate it to your chastisement." For the conscientious pastor the great and troublesome question in the administration of the Lord's Supper in our often carelessly, incautiously and hastily gathered congregations (one need only think of the lodge-brother "brothers!") is whether or not one can admit this one or that to the Sacrament.

Assuming that we are all faithful stewards of the mysteries of God, how can we account for this difference in practice among us, that the one admits to the Table of the Lord such whom the other refuses to admit? The explanation can only be that the first feels justified in barring from the Sacrament only manifest unbelievers, only non-Christians, and considers it his duty to admit all those whom love obliges him to regard as Christians, while the second feels obliged to refuse the Sacrament, at least temporarily, also to some whose personal faith he is not in a position to discount, but who are living in manifest sins and by persisting in them could, by partaking of the Holy Supper, only become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and thus invite the disciplinary judgment of God upon themselves.

We are not now speaking of the admittance of unbelievers or the godless as something which may be debated. Certainly on the basis of their unbelief they are already under the judgment of damnation (Mk. 16:16; John 3:18) and through their participation in the Lord's Supper can only render this judgment all the more severe. We are concerned only with the admittance or refusal of people whom we, in conformity with love, may still regard as Christians.

The question is not settled by the indignant retort:

"How can one deny a Christian the Lord's Supper?" We certainly do refuse it to the immature, unconscious, imbeciles and insane. The question at issue here is whether the one who announces his intentions of partaking of the Lord's Supper will partake of it unto the intended blessing of the Lord or the chastisement threatened here. This decides admittance or denial. Partaking unto judgment is possible also for a Christian, a believer. Luther, indeed, says: "He is worthy and well-prepared who has faith;" but he is not speaking of faith in the general sense, but continues, "in these words, given and shed for you, etc.,"-- therefore of this specific faith in the words of the Sacrament.

This particular faith includes all the requirements which the Apostle lists in our text for a truly blessed participation. And when the Formula of Concord rejects as an error this, "that even true believers who have and keep a right, true, living faith could, just as unworthy guests, receive this Sacrament to condemnation for this reason that they are not yet perfected in outward way of life" ("and yet lack the said sufficient preparation of their own" Sol. Decl.), it is clear from these words that they are speaking of the sincere but weak, not of disorderly Christians as the Apostle does in our passage.

That he, in conformity with love, still considers them Christians and believers is evident in the fact that throughout the chapter and especially at the end he calls them "my brethren." It is unthinkable also for Paul to have manifest unbelievers as guests at the Lord's Table. The people with whom he deals in this discussion of the Agape and Lord's Supper want to be Christians, are members of the congregation, confess Christ, and celebrate Agape and Lord's Supper together. Whether they are faithful inwardly, he does not know. God knows that. To him they are by no means manifest non-Christians, unbelievers, such as have fallen from grace or irrevocably damned; but they are surely on the way that leads to eternal damnation. The chastisement-judgment of God has already reached in among them. The faithful Shepherd did this through bodily

and temporal chastisements, since they did not heed His Word, so that they might learn to heed the Word and not be finally condemned with the world. Thus we, if we would be found faithful stewards of God's mysteries, will therefore exclude from the Lord's Table at least temporarily one or the other whom we in love must still regard as Christians.

What sort of Christians, brethren, are such? First of all, all those that act like the Corinthians who are described here. We cannot know their hearts, so we must judge them according to their manner of life. So grossly do they sin against their brethren. They permit the poor to hunger while they live on the fat of the land; they shame them, and regard it not that they are the congregation of God; they embitter them. Through their intellectual conceit and arrogant self-righteousness they evoke divisions, even factions and sects, and defile the Temple of God. I Cor. 3:16f.

Who thus sins against his brethren should not, cannot with blessing go to the Sacrament. The Lord Himself speaks of a similar sin in Mt. 5:23ff. Whoever knowingly wrongs his brother and does not right the matter cannot seek grace. Just so the Apostle affirms to these Corinthians in 10:15f that they cannot attend the Lord's Table as partakers of the idol celebrations of the heathen. There the issue involved a direct sin against God.

But it serves no useful purpose to enumerate these sins separately, or to classify them according to the Law for the purpose of determining which ones make a man unfit for a blessed participation of the Lord's Supper and which do not. The Gospel alone is the criterion for that. The general rule here is I Cor. 10:21; "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and the table of devils." The Apostle repeats the same rule in our chapter, v. 21: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." He means: "If you assemble as you are accustomed to assemble in a meeting for the celebration of your Agape, this is not to eat..." There factions, pride, arrogance, animosity, bitterness of heart, and sins against

the Church of God hold sway among you; and at the same time, in such a frame of mind, you want to celebrate the Lord's Supper--that is impossible! You eat and drink a judgment unto yourselves.

We have the same truth in places like Mt. 6:24, "No man can serve two masters...ye cannot serve God and at the same time Mammon." "At the same time,"--that is the point, rather than the kind of sin. Desiring to go to the Lord's Table and sinning at the same time--the one makes the other psychically and spiritually impossible--no honest, genuine Christian (v. 19, *δὲκλιμὸς*) can perpetrate such a thing. Every malefactor, every sinner, no matter how great, can, dare and should come to the Lord's Table when he has forsaken and abandoned his sin, repented and cried with the malefactor, "Lord, remember me," or with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But no man, no matter how honorable, charitable, devout, righteous and holy a Pharisee he may be, can partake of the Sacrament but to his judgment, not even one whom we human beings must still consider a Christian--as long as he partakes of the table of devils, serves Mammon, still clings to any sin and continues to sin against his brethren and the Church of God, be it from lack of spiritual knowledge, fleshly indifference, or deliberate malice.

This, after all, is exactly what the Apostle "cannot praise" the Corinthians for in our text, that is, must severely rebuke in them v. 22c. This is what he calls unworthy participation of the Sacrament which makes one guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, v. 27. That is why he enjoins self-examination (v. 31) before they go to the Lord's Table. By not judging themselves but coming to the Sacrament indifferent towards their culpable manner of life, they made themselves guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and incurred the chastisement-judgment of God.

The impossibility of this undertaking (i. e., seeking a blessing from such partaking) is most glaringly manifest in that it no longer involves a sin against the Law of God, but against the Gospel, against grace, against the means of grace that brings forgiveness and the spiritual power to

carry us on toward eternal life.

Every sin against the Law is indeed damning in itself, for it is guilt against the holiness of God. Yet such guilt lies buried on Golgotha and is not imputed to the world. But whoever crucifies anew the Son of God as manifested in the Means of Grace, tramples underfoot and ridicules Him, despises as unclean (despicable, common) the blood of the Testament through which he is sanctified (or should be sanctified) and bids defiance to the Spirit of grace (Heb. 6:6; 10:29); he brings to naught and frustrates every saving activity of God for him and first of all falls into God's chastisement-judgment. Where that measure fails, he comes under judgment of damnation. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (ibid. v. 31)

Here the author of Hebrews speaks of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost (Cf. Mt. 12:31; Mk. 3:28; Lk. 12:10ff). But that is no special kind of sin apart from the one which is against the Law or that which is against the Gospel, but is the latter in its consummation: despising the Gospel; continued, wanton, self-hardening resistance against the operation of the Holy Ghost which offers and conveys sanctifying grace; evoking God's hardening and revealing itself in ridicule, blasphemy and mad ragings against the Gospel. (Mk. 3:30) Despising the Gospel is unforgivable in itself because such a sin turns grace away and thwarts every converting and sanctifying operation of the Holy Ghost in Word and Sacrament. It is the curse of unbelief that in the actual battle against the Gospel it achieves strength with every moment and thus falls into the hands of God who avenges the final despising of grace.

When God tires of this struggle in a given case and permits his judgment to descend is His own affair entirely. Our business as shepherds of His Flock it is to be vigilant and warn the Flock, that they might not receive the grace of God in vain and that those who receive it do not wretchedly despise it, nor grow in wantonness and thus provoke God to judgment.

In effect the question as it relates to the Lord's Supper concerns the means and ability of discerning the



scorners of grace who might register for communing. Here no one must dare to operate with the probable attitude in the heart of the applicant in order to make a determination either way. The pastor with sensitive conscience dare not say, "I must exclude this man because he does not go to the Lord's Supper with the proper intentions." And the "broad-minded" pastor dare not say, "I accept this one because it is quite possible that he comes with pious and Christian intentions to the Lord's Table." Both commit the error that they act upon an assumed attitude of the heart of him who comes. They pass judgment on his heart. But surely that is exclusively God's business. We see only what lies before our eyes and might do exactly the wrong thing in following our opinions. *De occultis non judicat ecclesia!*

Nay, we must be sure of our ground in both cases. That is only possible if we judge by the outward evidence of inner attitude, according to external works and deeds, the external manner of life of the applicant. That we should have to admit everyone to the Sacrament whom we in love still consider a Christian renders our text null and void. We have already shown this, that the Apostle does not call the Christianity or faith of these Corinthians into question here, but calls them "my brethren." And yet he tells them that they are partaking of the Sacrament unto a judgment, and that God's judgment is already in progress among them. We repeat: not every Christian is to be admitted to the Sacrament, but only those who examine themselves (not merely: are able to examine) and judge themselves, really judge themselves, put away the unbrotherly and ungodly conduct of their Agape and discern the body of the Lord, i. e. recognize and believe it as being the divine pledge for our state of grace (Gnadenstand) before God which was obtained through the death of the eternal Son of God and, as such, offered to us in the Sacrament for eating and drinking.

The externally manifest putting off of hitherto existing sins against their brethren in the Church of God, of their indifference towards the Church, of their previous scorning of the means of grace, that is, of the Gospel and Sacraments, especially of the oft-celebrated Sacrament of the

body and blood of Christ, --these are for our human perception the essential proofs of the seriousness of the Christianity of those who would come to the Sacrament, evidences which constrain us to admit them; and the manifest failure in laying aside any manifest sin, regardless of what kind it may be, sin against the neighbor, a despising of the Church of God, public offense, lightly esteeming the preaching, the Holy Scriptures, Baptism, the blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, or any other sin, --for our human judgment this is the sign and proof that such people cannot come to the Lord's Table without inviting God's judgment.

No one may desire to receive the highest grace proffered in the Sacrament in order to continue in his hitherto existing sin. That we cannot condone as stewards of the mysteries of God (I Cor. 4:1,) and watchmen over the House of Israel (Ezek. 3:33.) Should we nevertheless accede to it, we would be equally guilty of the misdeeds of these "brethren" and with them fall into the same judgment; yes, we would confirm and strengthen them in their unrecognized sins of indifference and self-assurance.

Now, to speak concretely, that immediately excludes from the Sacrament all manifest unbelievers and enemies of the Gospel, also the members of all churches who falsely call themselves Christians, all Universalists, Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Swedenborgians, and their ilk, all who deny or despise the fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, His vicarious Atonement, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, Ascension and return to Judgment.

It also excludes the members of so-called lodges, as such who really teach another god and a way to salvation other than the Sacramental words and the rest of Scripture teach, whether the individual believes rightly or not. The lodge religion is essentially idolatry, anti-Christian. It is written, "Flee from idolatry," ... "ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and the table of devils," if you do not want to provoke the Lord. I Cor. 10:14-22. Every lodge brother, though he may still be a Christian personally, is

a partaker of the idolatry of the lodge by his mere membership in the lodge. He who denies that speaks unreasonably.

That a lodge member may not recognize nor wish to admit this doesn't change the reality of the situation one bit. If he nevertheless wants to go to the Sacrament with us, let him first recognize the damnableness of the lodge religion and of his partaking of it, renounce the godless system and comply with II Cor. 6, "Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord (not the pastor, not the congregation, not the Synod or anyone else) and touch not the unclean thing." We pastors cannot, nor do we desire to, despise or change the Word of God for the sake of such an one.

Nor can we admit to our Sacrament any member of any church that, though still essentially Christian, teaches falsely in this or that point, as long as he is and still desires to be a member there. Through his membership he is in fact a co-confessor of the false doctrine of his church affiliation and a partaker of the same doctrine. Let him renounce this first, and confess Jesus Christ with us aright, and then come. It is written, Dt. 4:2, "Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." "Touch not the unclean thing," "Who ever confesses me, etc." If it were time to be indifferent, liberal, or "pious" in our policy of admission to the Lord's Supper, we could admit a sectarian Christian or a dyed-in-the-wool papist to the Lutheran Lord's Supper much sooner than a lodge brother. For they are guilty only of despising part of the Gospel while the lodge brother is guilty of being the outspoken denier of the entire Gospel; but to both, of course, I Tim. 5:22 applies, also to the pastor as party of the third part: "neither be partakers of other men's sins." And finally, we must deal with such organizations which indeed do not include avowed anti- or unChristian principles in their program, but foster them as such in their practice, like the American Legion which as such commends and uses Masonic prayers and parlance. Every member is answerable for it even if he does not recognize it.

I Tim. 5:22 and II Cor. 6:14-18 applies to such also, and they should be excluded from the Sacrament as long as they do not put off their sins, be they Christians or non-Christians personally. The Sacrament is not given by the Lord to assure a Christian of the forgiveness of sins in which, despite all admonition and instruction, they want to continue. Then Christ would have been a servant of sin.

But who cares to name all sins the continuation of which excludes from the Sacrament! Each one, even the most insignificant sin which a man does not desire to put off, if it is a manifest sin, excludes from the Sacrament. We rightfully say that sins of weakness do not exclude one from the Sacrament. But sins of weakness are only the kind which overtake a Christian despite the fact that he acknowledges them, rejects and confesses them, and each day anew intends to put them off before God and his Savior with all seriousness. Whoever reserves the intention to continue in just one sin is not truly penitent. The Sacrament is not given to us to afford us liberty to continue in our pet sins, which seem small to us. Even our smallest sins cost the Lord His life.

The serious desire, proceeding from the Holy Ghost, of putting off all sins is the indispensable preliminary condition for a blessed partaking of the Lord's Supper. "For as many as are led of the Spirit are the Sons of God." Rom. 8:12. Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Whoever belongs to Christ crucifies his flesh together with its affections and evil lusts.

August Pieper



## ===== PANORAMA =====

NO  
SUBSTITUTE

There is no substitute for following and obeying the Word of God. This is such a simple and self-evident fact to the Bible-reading Christian that it may appear to be a superfluous and unnecessary statement to make. It certainly does not require any great theological acumen. And yet there are "theologians" all over the world today who by word and deed are leading people to believe that even though the Lord has called for a certain thing to be done or not done, there is an alternate course that must be explored and followed before action is taken. It is argued that love requires it, that evangelical concern calls for it, that the work of the Church demands it. But this is human reason setting itself up as the judge. The Ego and the theologizing "self-consciousness" become the arbiters, and the standard and rule of Scripture is pushed to the side. It seems right because it is so close to the flesh of every man. But plainly and simply it is nothing other than proposing a substitute for following and obeying the Word of God with child-like faith.

These are thoughts that come to the fore in connection with events which have been taking place as a result of the debacle at Denver last summer. Enough time has now elapsed to attempt a sober evaluation and to study the pattern that has been emerging. After the election of their hand-picked and much publicized candidate for president, so-called conservatives in Missouri found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. They had indeed been successful at the ballot box, as became apparent when the votes for the presidency were counted; yet when the vote on fellowship with the ALC was taken, that which they (and their candidate for president) had opposed on Scriptural grounds and with strong protestations of conviction was officially adopted and enacted. The newly elected president stated that he had no choice but to activate the synodical resolution of fellowship. At this point Dr. J.A.O. Preus missed a glorious hour of testimony that could have been his. He could have

declined the presidency under these conditions; and at the same time, for reasons he himself had previously given in opposing fellowship with the ALC, he could have withdrawn from the body which long before had forfeited its orthodox character. What results such an action would have had one can only conjecture. But certain it is that this would have provided a leadership which might have caused many a troubled soul in Missouri to consider a similar course of scriptural separation. Instead, the new president embarked upon a course that led him to O'Hare airport to sign the fellowship agreement with the ALC officials and from there to do whatever is incumbent upon a president who must carry out the resolutions of the body he represents. This is one of the saddest spectacles of modern church history.

The aftermath has brought charges and counter charges, moves and counter moves. On the one hand, many of those who promoted his candidacy felt betrayed when the president joined the council of presidents in warning the Missouri constituency against the disunifying influence of Christian News, a paper that had pushed for his candidacy. On the other hand, liberals saw the beginning of a gradual liquidation of known "progressives" as one of their number suffered defeat as Executive Secretary of the CTCR and as another is reported to have been shelved and then reinstated as Executive Secretary of the Board of Directors, but with limited powers. Presidential appointments of members to important committees were carefully scrutinized to detect any trend of supplanting liberals with conservatives. Religious News Service reports one liberal as saying that "four prominent clergymen, two of them prominent professors, had been eliminated from important committees." This the liberals no doubt considered a betrayal, in view of the assurance they had received from the president that there would be no "head-rolling." The same News Service reports that a group of men who wish to maintain a so-called progressive-conservative balance in the synod has planned a series of letters to be sent at the instructions of a central committee headed by Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer, former president of Concordial Seminary. Meanwhile Chris-

tian News continues to be published with a spate of protesting and angry letters, and concerned members are organizing to bring about the rescinding of the Denver fellowship resolution. Some have thought that resort to a constitutional provision might stop this proliferation of protesting organizations within the body. A long report from the Constitution Committee in the Lutheran Witness Reporter sets forth the argument in answer to the question: "Is it permissible under the Constitution of the Synod, without the consent of the Synod, to call into being organizations whose purposes are to express dissent to the resolutions of the Synod or whose purposes might ostensibly be in keeping with the purposes and functions of the Synod but might in reality arrogate responsibilities which the Synod has reserved to itself? By the same token, is it permissible for existing organizations to engage in such activities?" In the course of its argument the Commission issues the following warning: "All members of the Synod and of its congregations are to beware of the danger of groups and activities which divide and splinter the Synod. Synodical and District officers and board and commission members have a special responsibility to identify divisive and subversive movements and to avoid them. By their example and advice they are to conserve and promote the unity of the true faith and the oneness of the Synod."

Along such lines of pressure of "canon law" one will not find the true course of unity promoted. There is no synodical handbook in the world that can effect a unity which has been destroyed by a departure from the truth. And those who think that the mere election of a conservative-minded president will solve their problems are due for a disappointment. The heterodoxy of a church body is not removed by administrative orders nor indeed by resolutions or by reference to constitutional provisions. There must be repentance and a spiritual revival. And this can be brought about alone by the Spirit working through the Word. For this, too, there can be no substitute.

C. M. Gullerud

BETHANY REFOR-  
MATION LECTURES

For two days, Oct. 30 and 31, at the annual "Reformation Lectures" of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn., Prof. Wm. Oesch, professor emeritus at the Lutheran Free Church Seminary, Oberursel, Germany, spoke in three sessions on the general theme, "The Present State of Confessional Lutheranism in America and the World." I. The Background of the Present Situation; II. An Analysis of the Present Situation; III. A Prophetic Look at the Future. The fourth session was given over to a panel discussion led by Pastor V. Harley, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Fairmont, Minn.; Pastor J. Madson, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Cottonwood, Minn.; Prof. O. Siegler, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, New Ulm, Minn.; Pastor T. Salonen, Lutheran Free Church, Finland.

Dr. Oesch is a well-known Lutheran theologian, especially in those circles once associated with the Synodical Conference. He was born and educated in the United States in schools of the Missouri Synod, but has been in Europe since 1922, serving as pastor both in Germany and England, and since 1947 as professor at the Free Church Seminary. Without question he was well-qualified to speak on the matter before him, and did so with depth, enthusiasm, and humor. His approach from the background of European Lutheranism was of special interest to a state-side observer.

It is obvious that the topic discussed turned on the term confessional Lutheranism, as distinct from a Lutheranism which is not confessional. Both the lecturer and his audience, as far as could be observed, could be identified as confessional, and were interested in remaining so. Dr. Oesch laid his doctrinal background in the proposition that "the ONE CHURCH, in responsible action locally, can only be made sure of by its pure notes, i. e., by the means of grace taught and administered according to Scriptures." (From mimeographed notes prepared by the lecturer) This definition was weighted in the direction indicated, the Means of Grace used "according to Scriptures." It was de-



veloped along the line of thought that Christ cannot be preached apart from the whole of Scripture and that the Gospel cannot be dealt with distinct and apart from all doctrine. It was pointed out that Lutherans both in Europe and America departed from "confessional Lutheranism," when they misinterpreted and misused the statement in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession; "And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." In a very telling way the speaker portrayed how the Church is always busying itself in and with the "pure notes." In these "it lives, moves, and has its being," so to speak. This is its vital concern. In this it is wrapped up completely. It studies, it teaches, it functions, it acts, always in the "pure notes."

Of special interest to those who know something of the differences in understanding of the Doctrine of the Church among the synods of what once was the Synodical Conference was the answer given to a question from the floor as to whether a synod is Church. Dr. Oesch spoke of a "diminished" use of the "notes" in synodical activity because the circumstances and needs didn't call for more; but it was still insisted that a synod was a group of believers functioning in the "pure notes," and thus in essence no different from any other such activity.

After developing historically the decline of confessional Lutheranism, both in Europe and America, since its high-point in the years immediately following the adoption of the Book of Concord, it was stated as an opinion that little hope could be seen for its revival in the state and territorial Lutheran churches in Europe, which were described as "only units of the total secular society," nor in the bulk of organized Lutheranism in America. Hope for the future was seen only in the "remnant of the faithful" confessional Lutherans in the Free Lutheran Churches of Europe, and in the "5%" still so inclined in America.

In speaking of the future Dr. Oesch urged his hearers not to be parochial and self-centered in their outlook, but rather to think "globally." It was his hope that all

confessionally-minded Lutherans the world around would reach out, seek each other out, and on the proper scriptural basis cooperate and fellowship with one another. Here he had in mind not only the afore-mentioned groups in Europe and America, but known confessional Lutherans in Australia, South America and Africa.

The presentation dealing with the present and the future of confessional Lutheranism was for the most part oriented toward the Missouri Synod and its recent Denver convention. Here decisive words as to a procedure for confessional Lutherans still in the Missouri Synod to follow lagged a bit. Although Dr. Oesch has formally placed himself in statu confessionis over against the Missouri Synod, his answer to the somewhat bewildered question from Missourians present, "What do we do now?" was not clear-cut. One gained the impression that here again he was confronted with the current trend in the confessional thinking of most of the "5%", that separation is a process of disengaging accompanied with a by-play of admonition, negotiation and political in-fighting within the organization; and that this is the best we can do because Scripture itself is unclear and says no more.

We do not think it to be a false assumption that all the confessional "5%" agree that Scripture enjoins a separation principle, and that this is one of the "pure notes" which is ever before them and under which they operate. How this principle applies to the one teaching "contrary doctrine," "causing divisions and offenses," and "deceiving the simple," is told us in Romans 16, 17-18. There is reason to wonder whether the connotation of the King James Version's "mark" has served to mislead. Has a foreign, technical meaning been injected into it? After having detected error with the power given the enlightened mind, having verified it and documented it from every angle, is a pause now permitted, as if a formal decision has to be made "to mark or not to mark?" "Mark" is a translation for a word that simply means, "watch out for in a critical manner." Once error is detected and guilt established the directive of Scripture is clear - "avoid!" There need be no

wondering about what to do next. Arguments to stay in and fight to salvage some of the assets, to save the organization, stem from fleshly rationalization and lead to a setting aside of a clear word of Scripture. If "global" realignment is to be sought--and we agree that it is desirable--here confessional Lutheranism will have to reexamine itself. And on this point the Church of the Lutheran Confession has something to say.

G. Sydow

BOOK        "Conflict And Harmony In Science And  
REVIEW      The Bible," by Jack Wood Sears;  
              Baker Book House - Paper - 1.95

Jack Wood Sears has presented us with a book which is the result of several of his lectures in the University Christian Student Center at the University of Mississippi. His was the first in a series entitled: Christian Faith In A Contemporary World. Dr. Sears is a graduate of Harding College and the University of Texas. He has been a tour lecturer for the American Chemical Society and is now head of the Biology Department at Harding College in Arkansas.

In the first chapter of this book Dr. Sears shows us some conflicts and harmonies between science and Scripture. He shows us that the reasons for conflict are twofold. The first is that the scientist has been too dogmatic in his assertions; the second, that the theologians have been too ignorant of some facts and have thus misinterpreted Scripture. It is quite obvious that, if we had the knowledge of today, the "four corners" of Isaiah would not have led men to assert that the earth is flat, square, or rectangular. Dr. Sears leads us through several of these examples to show us how both sides have been at fault. He concludes his first chapter by declaring that there is ultimate truth

and that, when this is found, we will know that the "real truths" of science do not conflict with biblical truths, for the same God is the source of them all.

The next two chapters, about forty-four pages, deal with the general theory of evolution. It is examined on the basis of G. A. Kerkut's seven assumptions, basic to the theory of evolution. Each of the assumptions are examined and found wanting of proof. In other words, there is no scientific way to prove the General Theory. On page seventy-one Dr. Sears concludes with these two paragraphs: "The evidence for human evolution is fragmentary and fraught with difficulties of interpretation. The picture is far from clear that the human species has evolved at all. It seems to me that it is time for men of science to open their minds to the possibilities of another explanation for the world of living things."

In chapter four Dr. Sears attempts to answer the question whether or not a scientist can believe the Bible. The answer is loud and clear, and it is a resounding yes. His reasoning is simple. Prove inspiration, and then you can believe the Bible. If indeed we could be happy with the first seventy-two pages of this book, we would be very unhappy with the seventy-third page. This page espouses the unscriptural position that our faith must be based on evidence. Dr. Sears then proceeds to submit the reasons why he himself, a scientist, can believe in God and believe that the Scriptures are inspired. He lays before us many Scripture passages which confirm the inspiration of Scripture. He then tells us that this is not enough because it is not sensible to have the Bible pass judgment on itself. Following this, Dr. Sears lists the four marks of inspiration which he sees in Scripture that "indicate that it is really inspired." The marks of inspiration are the following:

1. The Unity Of The Book
2. The Manner Of Writing
3. The Things The Bible Does Not Say
4. The Prophecies And Their Fulfillment

This section does contain some fine material for study purposes and discussions with some groups. In the re-

mainder of the book Dr. Sears carries on a discussion of the supernatural and of miracles. His approach is that, since one cannot disprove miracles, we can believe them.

If Dr. Sears had used his many facts and discussions for purposes other than to prove our faith or to give evidence of inspiration etc. we might here have a book which we could give to our people without any fears. His answers are true and correct; but the approach leaves much to be desired. We must bear in mind that faith and belief can derive from only one source and be strengthened by only one means--Scripture itself; and the Holy Ghost is still author and finisher of our faith. That the findings of science agree with the Holy Ghost does not prove that our faith is well grounded.

All in all, the readers of this book will find it interesting and informative. Accuracy in scientific detail cannot be challenged. Adult classes might find much food for thought in these pages.

R. Roehl



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Editor: Prof. E. Schaller, 513 W, Grover Rd.,

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Editorial Staff: C.M. Gullerud, R. Gurgel,

Contributing Editors: M. Galstad, G. Radtke,

G. Sydow, F. Tiefel.

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