

OUR LUTHERAN HERITAGE & THE LORD'S SUPPER
Conference Banquet Presentation for the
Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations
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What an honor it is to be asked to present such an important topic as part of the ACELC Conference centering on the very epitome of Lutheran fellowship - the Lord's Supper. Thank you to the conference committee for affording me this opportunity.

I suppose you could have invited someone with a different viewpoint than mine to stir the pot a bit and create more discussion or maybe even adjusted the assignment to bring more pizzazz to the occasion! Maybe you should have invited someone like Atlantic District President David Benke to address the topic: "Why I Enjoy the fellowship of Muslims, Jews, and Hindus in Corporate Worship", or perhaps, "Why We Really Need to Get Over Being Lutheran". But no, the committee asked a Confessional Lutheran to tell you why the defense of the fellowship of the Lord's Supper has been, and continues to be so terribly important for the integrity of our Synod. Well, fasten your seat belts...you're in for quite a ride!

So here you are all finishing up a fine meal and you want me to speak about a supper! Now, we've all enjoyed this fine repast and the excellence of fellowship among brothers and sisters in Christ, but this is not the kind of fellowship I intend to address.

To help us understand the will of God and the clear sense of His Word regarding the nature and expression of true Christian fellowship at the Lord's Table let us first go to St.

Paul in I Corinthians 10:14-22:

"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation (*koinonia*) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."

Here the discussion respecting the biblical and Confessional practice of closed communion often ends with respect to this passage but I would urge you to continue the study in the remaining verses of this citation:

"Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants (*koinonoi*) at the altar?" (v. 18)

What else can this mean but that when the people of Israel ate the sacrifices from the altar of the temple that they were receiving from that eating all the benefits that such sacrifices brought? Therefore, whoever eats from the altar of Israel is part of Israel, confesses the faith of Israel, and receives the blessings those sacrifices bring to those who eat. No one but the people of Israel were to eat of such sacrifices but only those of the household of faith. The citation then continues with a second example:

"What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants (*koinonous*) with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" (vv. 19-22)

What else can this mean other than that those who participate in the sacrifices of pagans are participating (having fellowship or *koinonia*) with demons! That is, they are by their

participation confessing the faith confessed at that pagan altar and receiving the condemnation that pagan gods receive!

Lest this turn into an exegetical paper let me say that this merely puts us in the mindset of Holy Scripture so that we can see that this mindset - unity of faith at the altar - played itself out again and again throughout the history of our Lutheran faith. So let us examine some of the examples of Lutheran communion practice and the frequently high price that was paid by many of our Lutheran fathers in defense of the unity of the altar.

As a good Lutheran, let me first take you back to one of the first manifestations of good Lutheran communion practice that Phillip Melancthon brought to the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. It is in the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV - The Mass. In paragraph 36, the Confessor writes:

“Chrysostom says, ‘that the priest stands daily at the altar, inviting some to the communion and keeping back others.’ (Dau/Bente, p. 49)

What the Confessors of Augsburg were pointing out was that not everyone was admitted to the altar. And why not? Clearly, in the context of St. John Chrysostom’s 4th and 5th century life and ministry, (which is also a part of our Lutheran heritage and history), some were not yet baptized while others were not finished with their instruction. Still others may well have been unbelieving visitors to the Divine Service. All of these exclusions testify that unity in the faith which was believed, taught, and confessed had to be preserved at the altar if the unity of the faith was not to be compromised.

It might also be kept in mind that Justin Martyr, about 150 AD, in his Two Apologies to Emperor Antoninus Pius describes the fellowship at the altar in this way:

“We call this food the Eucharist, of which only he can partake who has acknowledged the truth of our teachings, who has been cleansed by baptism for the remission of his sins and for his regeneration, and who regulates his life upon the principles laid down by Christ.” (Justin the Martyr: *Two Apologies, Readings In Church History, vol. 1*, editor Barry, Colman J. OSB, Newman Press, 1960. p. 35)

In 1054 A.D., the great schism between the Eastern Church and the Roman Church came to a head. The causes of the split are many and varied, but the result was the conclusion that the doctrine and practice of each side could not be reconciled with the doctrine and practice of the other. Therefore, the Roman Church excommunicated in mass the entire Eastern Church and likewise the Eastern Church excommunicated in mass the entire Western Church. Naturally, this meant that those of the Western Church were not welcome at the altars of the East and vice versa. Why? Because they did not believe, teach, and confess the same faith and therefore, they could not commune at the same altar. This ban from the altar between East and West continues to this day, and it should.

The Lutheran Confessions make the point repeatedly that they are not a new Church, but the re-establishment of the orthodox, Apostolic Church. They insisted (quite correctly) that the early Church fathers often promoted the very same theology that Luther espoused. This included the ban from the altar for those who held a different confession. This theology played itself out time and again in our Lutheran history and heritage. Permit me a few pointed examples.

First, consider the end result at the Lord's Table resulting from the Lutheran Reformation itself. When it became clear that the anathemas from the Council of Trent could not be reconciled with the theology of the Lutheran Reformers, it also became clear that fellowship at the altar finally had to be severed. Essentially Rome excommunicated the Lutherans, and Lutherans excommunicated the Roman Catholics. This is the logical and theological conclusion that must be reached when doctrine conflicts with doctrine. The same result occurred between the Lutherans, the Zwinglians, the Anabaptists and the Calvinists. Such contradictory theologies cannot co-exist at the Lord's Table, at which the unity with Christ includes our unity in what Christ has revealed and taught. There is and can be no unity between light and darkness; between belief and unbelief. All who hold to any false doctrine are guilty of unbelief with respect to the doctrine that they disbelieve.

It was C.F.W. Walther who underscored this correlation between unbelief and false teaching:

"2 Corinthians 6:14: 'Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do unrighteousness and lawlessness in common? Or what does light have in common with darkness?' Many think that this text does not apply to heterodox, since it speaks only of *unbelievers*. But they are wrong. The [Reformed-Lutheran] union rests on nothing but unbelief, in that it receives, justifies, or at least tolerates heterodox and those who openly teach contrary to the Word of God. One who joins the union thereby also joins the wicked and unbelievers, who are *fundamental* in it. An orthodox Christians should and must therefore earnestly flee associations and rather never receive Communion or rather die than partake of a Zwinglian Communion." (C.F.W. Walther, "Communion Fellowship", *Essays For the Church*, Vol. 1, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1992, p. 211.)

Yet efforts to blend contradictory confessions have occurred again and again throughout our history. Take for example the result of the 1555 Peace of Augsburg. This treaty between Charles V and the Smalcaldic League of Lutheran princes established the

principle of *Cuius region, eius religio*, (“His realm, His religion” - the religion of the prince is the religion of the people.) Each German prince was permitted to select either Lutheranism or Roman Catholicism to which their region would hold. If you lived in an area which was ruled by a Roman Catholic prince, then you were going to be a Roman Catholic. If you lived in an area governed by a Lutheran prince, then you were going to be a Lutheran. (To a large extent this is still true in Germany to this day.) There was also a proviso that if people did not want to remain in a region whose faith they did not confess they had a period of time when they could pack up and move to an area of their own confession. In other words, if you were a Lutheran in a Roman Catholic principedom, you had to sell your house, leave your family and life-long neighbors, leave your place of employment, up-root your family and do whatever had to be done to re-establish yourself in a Lutheran principedom. To remain in the Roman Catholic realm would mean that you would worship as a Roman Catholic and commune at the altar of Rome confessing the Roman faith. I wonder how many of our Lutherans today would make such sacrifices if placed in a similar situation? (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Augsburg.)

Then consider the faithful Lutherans who found themselves caught up in the Bohemian Revolt of 1618 to 1621, as one part of the horror that was the Thirty Year’s War. The area of Bohemia was largely Lutheran, but King Ferdinand II of Germany betrayed that arrangement by confiscating Lutheran properties for the Roman Catholic faith despite a previous royal guarantee of religious freedom throughout Bohemia by Emperor Rudolph II. This resulted in the Lutheran princes tossing Ferdinand’s appointees and secretary out of a second story window of the royal castle in Prague. The “tossed” survived their fall

because they landed in a pile of horse manure underneath the window through which they had been ejected. (I am not making this up!) This, in turn, prompted Ferdinand to send an army of 25,000 well-trained troops to crush the rag-tag, thrown-together army of 30,000 Lutherans in the Battle of White Mountain in which 4,000 Lutherans and Protestants were killed with Catholic losses at only about 800.

Under the command of Count Tilly, the Roman Catholic forces beheaded 27 Lutheran and Protestant Lords in Prague's Old Town Square on what became known as, "The Day of Blood". If you travel to Prague today you will still find 27 crosses inlaid in the cobblestone of that square in tribute to those who were slain.

Following the "Day of Blood", about 5/6ths of Bohemian nobility went into exile and their properties were confiscated. Ferdinand then ordered the Bohemian Expulsion of 1621 in which all Lutherans and Calvinists were ordered to either immediately convert to Roman Catholicism or leave the realm in three days. All that had to be done in order to avoid such displacement was to declare yourself to be in altar fellowship with Rome. Most did not. Again, I must wonder how many of today's Lutherans would have such courage?

Farmsteads before the Battle of White Mountain numbered about 151,000, but by the year 1648 that number was reduced to 50,000. The number of inhabitants in that formerly Lutheran land decreased from three million to 800,000 by the end of the Thirty Year's War. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_White_Mountain.)

Now consider the plight of the Lutherans of Salzburg, Austria, in 1731. In predominantly Lutheran Salzburg (then a city/state), Roman Catholic Archbishop Leopold von Firmian branded the Lutherans and Protestants as “rebels” and “seditious” because they insisted on gathering publicly for worship and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper according to either Lutheran or Protestant rite. Von Firmian ordered the expulsion of all non-Roman Catholics from his archbishopric. All that had to be done was to avoid expulsion was to renounce their “false religion” and register as Roman Catholics and give up to the authorities all their Lutheran or Protestant books. Essentially, this meant to declare themselves in pulpit and altar fellowship with Rome.

Landowners who did not convert to Roman Catholicism were given two days to sell their land and leave. Tenant farmers, tradesmen, laborers and miners were given eight days to leave. Essentially members of the Archbishop’s family were able to confiscate much of the flood of land on the market for themselves. Many of the Salzburg Lutheran’s children were taken away from them to be raised Roman Catholic with those serving as “foster parents” telling the children that their parents had died.

The winter of 1731 was unusually harsh and a terrible winter storm came upon the exiles during their exodus only increasing their suffering. The number of exiles forced from their families, homes, businesses, property and nation was 21,475. While more than 16,000 Salzburgers settled in east Prussia, 200 traveled to Holland, and another 300 to the United States, where they established New Jerusalem Lutheran Church in New Ebenezer, Georgia, which continues to this day. Sadly, the compromises the Salzburger’s refused to make to

stay in their homes have now been made as the congregation now belongs to the ELCA and has a woman pastor, the Rev. Eleanor J. Russey. As a congregation of the ELCA open communion is regularly practiced meaning that had their ancestors done what their descendants now do, there would have been no need to have lost so much in 1731. Sadly, the fervor to defend pure doctrine and retain an orthodox practice of the Lord's Supper is no longer part of that congregation's faith. (<http://historicaltextarchive.com/print.php?action=section&artid=561>.)

That brings us to the Prussian Union of 1817. Most of you know this story but for some of you the details may be new. King Frederick Wilhelm III wanted to restore a crumbling Christian faith suffering from the combined effects of the Napoleonic wars, Pietism, and the elevation of human reason during the on-going Age of Enlightenment. A Calvinist himself he viewed the differences between Calvinists and the majority population of Lutherans as being counter-productive toward his efforts to re-invigorate the Christian faith. (Those silly doctrines just always seem to get in the way of unity, you know.) Thus, the king set about to unite the Lutherans with the Calvinists...that is to say, to turn the Lutherans into Calvinists.

For the 300th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation Wilhelm commanded a combined Lutheran-Reformed communion service in his court chapel, but was disappointed that this was not widely imitated in his kingdom. Then in 1821 the king (not a theologian), wrote his infamous *Agende*, or liturgy-book with its compromise (read Calvinist) form of service, but again it was not widely accepted. Irritated and impatient by the widespread

opposition to his unification plans, the king simply ordered the introduction of the union liturgy and so again on the Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, by Royal edict, the union liturgy had to be utilized by both Lutheran and Calvinist churches in the land. It would seem that Wilhelm understood the principle of *lex orende, lex credendi*, (as you worship, you believe.) If you change the way that people worship, then you change the way you believe. This was Welhelm's goal.

Of course, the real Lutherans would have no part of it. They wanted to worship in accord with their ancient liturgies and to celebrate the Lord's Supper according to traditional Lutheran rite, but it was now illegal to do so, and those who disobeyed the King's order were to be punished.

Now faithful, Confessional Lutherans had to meet secretly in the deep woods, in cellars, and barns to worship and commune. Now noblemen and merchants were heavily fined for allowing historic Lutheran liturgies to be conducted on their properties. Now faithful Lutheran pastors were arrested, removed from their calls, and sometimes imprisoned for daring to disobey the kings forced union, and blood money was paid to those who turned them in to the authorities. Now midwives were ordered to report the birth of all Lutheran children. Lutheran baptisms were declared invalid by the State. Now Lutheran babies were sometimes forcibly re-baptized in official union churches under police compulsion and their parents were punished with fines or imprisonment.

In one village the faithful Lutherans, (now called the “Old Lutherans”) were attacked on Christmas Eve by a military force of 500 soldiers, who drove weeping women away from the church with swords and bayonets, forced open the church doors and “installed” the union pastor with his union liturgy. The army refused to end the occupation until the protesting parishioners would start attending the union services.

(Kurt Marquart, *Anatomy of An Explosion*, Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977, pp. 11-14; and Walter O. Forster, *Zion On the Mississippi*, Concordia Publishing House, 1953, pp. 16-17.)

Finally, in response to this unrelenting persecution the Old Lutherans began to flee home, nation, family, and livelihood for the United States and Australia, where freedom to practice their faith could be enjoyed.

One such group of about 250 emigrants left Bremerhaven, Germany, on the ship *Copernicus* in the fall of 1838, making the crossing in 59 days to New Orleans, and from there to St. Louis, Missouri, on the steamship *Rienzi* arriving on January 19, 1839. Others would follow the same year and again more in 1842, and in 1847.

(Walter O. Forster, *Zion On the Mississippi*, Concordia Publishing House, 1953, pp. 202-225.)

They settled with great hardship, suffering much loss of life in a settlement in Perry County, Missouri. In 1847, this group of emigrants fleeing the religious persecution of the Prussian Union joined with other Lutherans to form The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in Chicago, Illinois. Like other Lutherans before them, they left all behind so that they might worship like Lutherans and commune with Lutherans without compromise of their confession and faith.

(Walter O. Forster, *Zion On the Mississippi*, Concordia Publishing House, 1953, pp. 352-389.)

Tragically, today The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has many congregations who have abandoned not only the historic Lutheran liturgies for which so many suffered and fled persecution, but also many have compromised the right administration of the Lord's Supper that so many before them lost everything to retain.

In the first Constitution of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Article IV - Business of the Synod, our founding Synodical fathers wrote:

1. To stand guard over the purity and unity of doctrine within the synodical circle, and to oppose false doctrine...10. To strive after the greatest possible uniformity in ceremonies." ("Our First Synodical Constitution", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. XVI, No. 1, April, 1943.)

Orthodox Lutherans have always rightly rejected the tenants of the theory of "Reconciled Diversity" with which multiple church bodies have justified various declarations of pulpit and altar fellowship between church bodies with often widely divergent doctrine and practice. Essentially, Reconciled Diversity attempts to find whatever theological common ground may exist between Lutheran or non-Lutheran church bodies and simply declare whatever outstanding doctrinal difference to be "non-divisive". In such manner, as an example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has declared full altar and pulpit fellowship with the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church of America, the Presbyterian Church - USA, the Episcopal Church - USA, The Moravian Church, and the United Methodist Church.

<http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion-Partners.aspx>.

While officially rejecting the theory of Reconciled Diversity, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod practices Reconciled Diversity within its own Synodical fellowship by turning a blind eye toward both official error and tolerated error among us. In fact, we are in pulpit and altar fellowship with pastors and congregations which openly practice altar fellowship with members of church bodies who hold to false doctrine even concerning the Holy Supper itself. We are in pulpit and altar fellowship with pastors and congregations who permit women to openly participate in the functions of the pastoral office in public worship. We are in pulpit and altar fellowship with pastors and congregations who are openly involved in the false doctrine of the so-called Charismatic Movement. We are in altar and pulpit fellowship with pastors and congregations of the LCMS who have rejected the Confessionally mandated use of the historic liturgies of the Church in favor of a numbers-driven embrace of the principles of the Church Growth Movement that does not recognize the true mission of the Church. We are in pulpit and altar fellowship with pastors and congregations which permit laymen to engage in Word and Sacrament ministry without a proper call. The fact of the matter is that we may not any longer point accusing fingers at the ELCA without also pointing them to our own Synod because we are embracing many of the ELCA's errors ourselves.

It was a Spanish born, Harvard professor and philosopher George Santayana who famously said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Today,

many Lutherans have no knowledge of their own past and do not treasure what so many before them sacrificed so much to keep. Sadly, often without a second thought, such treasures are being tossed away as “irrelevant” to modern Americans. In a pell mell rush to gain numerical growth the right administration of the Lord’s Supper is being sacrificed on the false altars of “inclusiveness”, “friendliness”, and a misplaced valuing of “tolerance” and “diversity”. Instead of properly feeding God’s sheep on the rightly preached Word and the properly administered Sacraments, many have denigrated our theology and worship in order to merely entertain the goats!

The congregations of the ACELC are simply working to retain the treasures of the Church. We are serving as a voice of conscience echoing Holy Scripture, our Lutheran Confessions, and the faithful saints before us who sacrificed so much, so that our beloved Church body may not loose its Lutheran theology, practice and character. Brothers and sisters, thank you for standing with Lutherans of every age in defending the truth of God’s pure doctrine, retaining the rightly administered precious Sacramental gifts He has given us, and upholding the fellowship He has provided among us who share the One, True Faith!

The Death of Jesus Christ My Lord

<p>1. The death of Jesus Christ, our Lord, We celebrate with one accord; It is our comfort in distress, Our heart’s sweet joy and happiness.</p>	<p>2. He blotted out with His own blood The judgment that against us stood; For us He full atonement made, And all our debt He fully paid.</p>
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<p>3. That this forever true shall be He give a solemn guarantee: In this His holy Supper here We taste His love so sweet and near.</p>	<p>4. His Word proclaims and we believe That in this Supper we receive His very body, as He said, He very blood for sinners shed.</p>
<p>5. We dare not ask how this can be, But simply hold the mystery And trust this word where life begins; “Given and shed for all your sins.”</p>	<p>6. They who this word do not believe This food unworthily receive, Salvation here will never find -- May we this warning keep in mind!</p>
<p>7. But blest is each believing guest Who in these promises finds rest; For Jesus shall in love remain With all who here His grace obtain.</p>	<p>8. Help us sincerely to believe That we may worthily receive You Supper and in You find rest. Amen! They who believe are blest.</p>