

# Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Sunday School and Bible Study 9:15 AM - Divine Service 10:30 AM

## A Mourning Person

Posted on November 30, 2009 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

(Remember my dictum that if something I wrote is older than 10 years I'm not repeating myself but referencing myself. I was struck again by the truth that the Office of the Ministry is mainly for the mourning, the sick, and dying, not for those who need to be entertained, motivated, or excited PH).

People will usually describe themselves as either a morning or a night person. The Lord doesn't care for as the hymn says, "Day and night are both alike to Thee." Some people do, however, care. Lord help you, and I don't mean this in a frivolous manner if you are night pastor in morning country. People who get up with the chickens think this is the only way to be. But whether you like the morning or night you're still a person. It's a different manner when it comes to being a mourning person. These are the only kind that rightly value the ministry.

Think this is too strong to say? Consider the last paragraph in "A Pastor's Prayer" in *The Lutheran Agenda*. It closes with a prayer to "make me daily more conscious of the great responsibilities of my high office." [I don't pray this. I pray "make me daily more conscious of the great blessings of my high office" because the responsibilities all but crush me.] The prayer then proceeds to enumerate the great blessings of the office ending with "to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness..." (Is. 61:2,3).

You can't comfort those who aren't mourning. Those in Zion, or Trinity, or Bethlehem, or St. Peter, or St. John Lutheran church who don't mourn, you can't do a whole lot with. Those who aren't mourning don't care for the oil of joy; they're doing just fine even though in reality they are running on empty. And what does a person want with the garment of praise if he doesn't have the spirit of heaviness?

It seems to me that there is an implied corollary to afflict the comfortable, to give ashes for imagined beauty, the oil of sorrow to the worldly joyous, and the spirit of heaviness to those without it. This is, of course, the purpose of the law. Until the mourning is there what else can be done?

To those not mourning, our Gospel of life in the death of Christ can only be foolishness or the aroma of death. Only those mourning their sins want Blood to cover them. To the rest, that is just gross or even silly.

## Is 1984 Becoming a Reality? – George Orwell's Warning to the World

*(Before there was even a pandemic, as the country descended into the madness of LGBTQism with lockstep thinking and doublespeak in talking, I said it was as if no one had read the*

*book 1984. A member shared this article. It says it better than I. It can be viewed on YouTube as well.)*

In 1940 George Orwell wrote: "Almost certainly we are moving into an age of totalitarian dictatorships – an age in which freedom of thought will be at first a deadly sin and later on a meaningless abstraction. The autonomous individual is going to be stamped out of existence" (*Inside the Whale*).

George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* is a work of fiction, but much that is depicted in it reflects the political realities of many nations, past and present. "...at least three-quarters of what Orwell narrates is not negative Utopia, but history" (Umberto Eco). Referring to his time spent in Belgrade under Communist Rule, Lawrence Durrell wrote that: "Reading [*1984*] in a Communist country is really an experience because one can see it all around one."

In this video, we are going to explore some of the similarities between the totalitarian systems of the 20th century and Orwell's *1984*, and as will become evident, many of these totalitarian traits are re-emerging in the modern world. This investigation will be conducted in the recognition that totalitarianism relies on mass support, and so, contemporary societies desperately need more people to withdraw their support of this brutal form of rule. Shortly after *1984* was published, Orwell explained: "The moral to be drawn from this dangerous nightmare situation is a simple one. Don't let it happen. It depends on you."

Totalitarianism is a political system whereby a centralized state apparatus attempts to control virtually all aspects of life. "Everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.", the Italian dictator Mussolini succinctly put it.

While totalitarianism can emerge under the guise of various political ideologies, in the 20th century it was communism and fascism that provided the ideological support for this type of rule. Communism and fascism are often viewed as being on opposite ends of the political spectrum, but in the manner, they were put into practice in the 20th century both of these systems display the characteristics of the totalized, all-controlling state. Both use force and propaganda to attain power, crush economic and civil liberties, smother culture, partake in mass-surveillance, and terrorize the citizenry with psychological warfare and eventually mass-imprisonment and mass-murder. Speaking of Stalin's Communist Russia and Hitler's Nazi Germany, Orwell explained: "The two regimes, having started from opposite ends, are rapidly evolving towards the same system—a form of oligarchical collectivism."

In the communist and fascist political systems of the 20th century, and in *1984*, the totalitarian regime maintained a tight grip of control on the populace through the use of manufactured fear. "Totalitarian leaders, whether of the right or of the left, know better than anyone else how to make use of... fear... They thrive on chaos and bewilderment... The strategy

of fear is one of their most valuable tactics” (Joost Meerloo, *Rape of the Mind*).

Constant surveillance of all of the citizens was an additional tool in the arsenal of the totalitarian regime of 1984. Surveillance not only allowed for more effective overt control of the citizenry, but it also induced paranoia which made it less likely that any citizen would even dare step out of line. This surveillance was achieved, firstly, through the technology of the telescreen which was installed in everyone’s home and throughout the streets, and as Orwell explained: “The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously... There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment... It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized” (1984).

Secondly, mass-surveillance of the citizenry was conducted by the citizens of 1984 themselves. Each person watched everyone else, and each person was, in turn, watched by everyone else. The most innocent of expressions, an innocuous statement, or a subtle look of disapproval when Big Brother appeared on the telescreen, was reported to the Thought Police and treated as a “thoughtcrime” or a “facecrime” – as evidence that one was disloyal and had something to hide. “It is intolerable to us that an erroneous thought should exist anywhere in the world, however secret and powerless it may be.”, Orwell has the character O’Brien explain (1984).

In Stalinist Russia, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn noted that one could never be sure whether one’s neighbours, friends, co-workers, the postman, or even in some cases one’s own family, would report to the secret police a slip of the tongue, a criticism of Stalin or of Communism. For if one was reported, their fate was usually sealed: the police would knock at the door in the middle of the night and soon after one would be given the standard sentence of a “tenner” – that is, 10 years in the slave labor gulag prison camps. This form of surveillance created social conditions wherein most citizens adopted hypocrisy and lying as a way of life, or as Solzhenitsyn explains in *The Gulag Archipelago*: “The permanent lie becomes the only safe form of existence... Every wag of the tongue can be overheard by someone, every facial expression observed by someone. Therefore every word, if it does not have to be a direct lie, is nonetheless obliged not to contradict the general, common lie. There exists a collection of ready-made phrases, of labels, a selection of ready-made lies.”

In addition to a ubiquitous state of fear, in totalitarianism there exists a widespread state of confusion and mental disorientation amongst the citizenry. Joost Meerloo explained: “Many victims of totalitarianism have told me in interviews that the most upsetting experience they faced... was the feeling of loss of logic, the state of confusion into which they had been brought—the state in which nothing had any validity... they simply did not know what was what” (Meerloo. *Rape of the Mind*).

In 1984, widespread mental disorientation was stimulated via the falsification of history, and the negation of the concept of objective truth. The Ministry of Truth was the institution which falsified history. “Everything faded into mist. The past

was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth” (1984).

One of the reasons totalitarian regimes attempt to alter history is because it rids the society of any past reference points, or standards of comparison, which might remind the citizens that life in the past was so much better than it is in the sterile and oppressive present. “Within twenty years at the most... the huge and simple question, ‘Was life better before the Revolution than it is now?’ would have ceased once and for all to be answerable” (1984).

But another reason history is falsified by totalitarians is to ensure there are no historical roots to which the citizen can anchor and find truth, sustenance and strength. In totalitarianism there can be no historical information which contradicts or puts into question the reigning political ideology, nor any institution, such as a religion, which offers the individual a refuge from the influence of the State. For a totalitarian regime to condition the citizenry to accept the proverbial boot stamping on its face, it needs to control the past, and so as Orwell wrote in 1984: “Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been re-written, every picture has been re-painted, every statue and street and building has been re-named, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right” (1984).

Along with destroying or falsifying the past, widespread mental disorientation is further cultivated by destroying the belief in objective truth. This is done through a program of psychological warfare. Incessant and intentionally confusing propaganda, conflicting reports and blatant lies, are pumped out in “official reports” and through the mass media at all hours of the day. What is said today has no bearing on what may be said tomorrow, for as Orwell explained: “...the totalitarian state... sets up unquestionable dogmas, and it alters them from day to day. It needs the dogmas, because it needs absolute obedience from its subjects, but it cannot avoid the changes, which are dictated by the needs of power politics” (Orwell, *Literature and Totalitarianism*).

In 1984, for example, the Ministry of Plenty put out a bulletin that they were increasing the chocolate ration to twenty grammes a week. Orwell writes: “And only yesterday, [Winston] reflected, it had been announced that the ration was to be reduced to twenty grammes a week. Was it possible that [the citizens] could swallow that, after only twenty-four hours? Yes, they swallowed it... Was he, then, alone in the possession of a memory?”

In addition, contradictions, hypocrisies and lies form the foundation of the totalitarian ideology. The totalitarian system presents the enslavement of the individual as his or her liberation; censoring information is called protecting the truth; the destruction of culture or the economy is called its development; the military occupation of other countries is labeled as the furtherance of freedom and peace. In 1984, the Ministry of Peace instigated wars, the Ministry of Truth manufactured propaganda, and the Ministry of Plenty created shortages. On the enormous pyramidal structure of the Ministry of Truth hung the words: “WAR IS PEACE. FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.” “The official ideology abounds with contradictions even where

there is no practical reason for them... These contradictions are not accidental" (1984).

The purpose of this all-encompassing program of psychological warfare is to bewilder the mind of the average citizen. For when the citizen is bombarded with contradictions and lies and lives in what Orwell called "that shifting phantasmagoric world in which black may be white tomorrow and yesterday's weather can be changed by decree", he or she eventually ceases to know what to think, or even how to think. The distinction between up and down, fact and fiction, truth and falsity, is not only blurred, but loses significance. The belief in objective truth disappears, and the average citizen becomes completely dependent on authority figures to feed him ideas, and thus, is ready to assent to lies and to believe the most absurd things – so long as those in the political class deem it to be true. The Soviet official Gyorgy Pyatakov explained that the "true Bolshevik": "... would be ready to believe that black was white, and white was black, if the Party required it... there was no particle left inside him which was not at one with the Party, did not belong to it."

In an essay titled *Totalitarianism and the Lie*, Leszek Kolakowski, a philosopher who was exiled from Poland for his criticisms of Communism and Marxism, wrote: "This is what totalitarian regimes keep unceasingly trying to achieve. People whose memory—personal or collective—has been nationalized, has become state-owned and perfectly malleable, totally controllable, are entirely at the mercy of their rulers; they have been deprived of their identity; they are helpless and incapable of questioning anything they are told to believe. They will never revolt, never think, never create; they have been transformed into dead objects."

In 1984, the main character Winston manages for most of the book to stand psychologically outside the grasp of the Party, and its leader Big Brother, despite the widespread fear and mental disorientation which swirls around him. "Down with Big Brother", he writes in his diary, early in the book. However, after being arrested by the Thought Police and subjected to "re-education", Winston abdicates his reason and conscience and begins to accept the lies. He joins the totalitarian cult and becomes another brick in the wall of the all-powerful state. Referring to Winston, Orwell writes: "He could not fight against the Party any longer. Besides, the Party was in the right... It was merely a question of learning to think as they thought... The pencil felt thick and awkward in [Winston's] fingers. He began to write down the thoughts that came into his head. He wrote first in large clumsy capitals: FREEDOM IS SLAVERY. Then almost without a pause he wrote beneath it: TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE... the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (1984).

Some have taken this ending as sign of Orwell's pessimism, as an indication that humanity is doomed to a totalitarian future. Yet Orwell's motive for writing this book was not to depress nor promote a fatalistic apathy, but to warn and rouse to action as many people as possible. For Orwell understood as well as anyone that in the battle between totalitarianism and freedom, no one can afford to stand aside. The fate of each and every one of us hangs in the balance. "Don't let it happen. It depends on you" (Orwell)

(<https://academyofideas.com/2021/08/is-1984-becoming-a-reality-george-orwells-warning-to-the-world/>)

## Breathing

A 9-Part Advent-Lent Sermon Series on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chief Part of Luther's Small Catechism  
The Lord's Prayer

Our 2021 Vacation Catechetical School had the theme "Breathe" which was a collaboration between myself and three volunteers. This sermon series is an extension of that. Both themes grew out of this line from the hymn *Prayer is the Soul's Sincere Desire*: "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air," (TLH 454:5). As usual, the Wednesday services start at 7:30 PM. With the exception of Ash Wednesday, you can be heading to the parking lot by 8:30.

Dec. 01	A Deep Breath	Introduction
Dec. 08	A Breath of Holiness	1 <sup>st</sup> Petition
Dec. 15	Breathed Into	2 <sup>nd</sup> Petition
Mar. 02	Controlling Your Breathing	3 <sup>rd</sup> Petition
Mar. 09	Breathtaking	4 <sup>th</sup> Petition
Mar. 16	Holding Your Breath	5 <sup>th</sup> Petition
Mar. 23	Catching Your Breath	6 <sup>th</sup> Petition
Mar. 30	Breathe Your Last	7 <sup>th</sup> Petition
Apr. 06	The Last Breath	Conclusion

## Why an Obsession with Safety creates Sick Minds and a Sick Society

(Below is a transcript of a YouTube video a person recommended to me after I said that the problem is that the generation below us has been raised to believe they can and should avoid all risk. I couldn't find the author just the web address which is below (PH).)

"Condition for being a hero. If a man wants to become a hero, the snake must first become a dragon: otherwise he is lacking his proper enemy" (Nietzsche, *Human, all too Human*).

Our age has been called many things, but an age of cowards may best describe it given the immense fear, anxiety and helplessness that most people display in the face of even trivial threats. We are not a generation that moves forward into the uncertain future in a bold and heroic manner, instead most people fear the future and prefer safety, comfort, and ease of life, to risk-taking, experimentation and freedom. Or as the 21st century sociologist Frank Furedi writes: "Young people are socialized to feel fragile and overawed by uncertainty [and as a result]. . . the defining feature of the current Western 21st century version of personhood is its vulnerability. Although society still upholds the ideal of self-determination and autonomy, the values associated with them are increasingly overridden by a message that stresses the quality of human weakness. And if vulnerability is, indeed, the defining feature

of the human condition, it follows that being fearful is the normal state. . .”

Overawed by uncertainty, fearing the future, conceptualizing oneself as vulnerable, weak, and fragile is not a recipe for individual or social flourishing. Rather this way of life promotes mental illness and paves the way for authoritarian rule and so, as we will explore in this video, the world would benefit if more people were willing to live just a little more dangerously. For danger, when a by-product of pursuing worthwhile goals or in defense of values like freedom, justice or peace, is life-promoting and as the Roman historian Tacitus put it “the desire for safety stands against every great and noble enterprise”.

Not all societies, however, have ranked safety as high on the scale of values as does the modern West. Many flourishing societies of the past considered safety to be a secondary value and showed a remarkable capacity to take risks in the face of an uncertain future and to display courage and bravery in the presence of danger.

“Historically some of the most prosperous societies – Ancient Athens, Renaissance Italy, nineteenth-century Britain – were among those that were most oriented towards experimentation and the taking of risks” (Furedi, *How Fear Works*).

In taking the opposite approach and in showing a strong preference for safety over risk-taking the unfolding of the human potential is not actualized, but stunted. For to develop on an individual level, and to advance as a species, exploration of the unknown and experimentation with novel ways of interacting with the world is a necessity and this entails taking risks and confronting danger. But such is a price that must be paid as the alternative is to stagnate in the confines of an ever-shrinking comfort zone, to regress in body and mind, and to fall victim to anxiety disorders, depression or other diseases of despair.

A further flaw with an approach to the future that strongly favors the safe road is that it creates fertile ground for tyrannical, or even totalitarian rule, for as Alexander Hamilton famously stated: “to be more safe they at length become willing to run the risk of being less free”. When a society elevates safety to the position of a first-order value, freedom is by necessity demoted to the position of a second-order value which can be trampled on by those in power who, throughout history, have disguised tyrannical intentions with claims of wanting to make a society safer. What makes matters worse is if a society socializes people to be fearful of the future and overawed by uncertainty, the masses will welcome, or openly call for authority figures to protect them, or as Furedi notes: “Relieving people of the burden of freedom in order to make them feel safe is a recurring theme in the history of authoritarianism.”

Given that a society which deifies safety is also a society ripe for tyranny, it is up to those who favor freedom to take a more heroic approach to life. For when the menacing clouds of authoritarian rule darken the horizon unless more people are willing to take risks and face danger in the service of values such as freedom, justice, peace, and social cooperation, the grip of tyrants will only solidify, or as John Stuart Mill put it: “A man who has nothing which he is willing to fight for, nothing which he cares more about than he does about his personal safety, is a miserable creature who has no chance of

being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.”

As role models for the task of living more heroically we can look to the Ancient Greeks, a civilization that rightly held safety to be a secondary, not primary value, and which saw risk-taking and facing danger as morally commendable: “Danger makes men classical, and all greatness, after all, is rooted in risk” (Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*).

Friedrich Nietzsche was also a proponent of this classical approach to life and he praised Pericles, the Athenian leader who in his famous funeral speech celebrated the Athenian’s “indifference and contempt for safety, body and life”. Contrast this to the modern world, where, to paraphrase the author Christopher Cocker, “we tend to deprive [the bold risk-takers who spur safety] of the fullness of their lives in order to support the smallness of our own” (*The Warrior Ethos*).

Fortunately, we don’t need to wait around for politicians to pass legislation to approve of a bolder approach to life, we just need to live in this manner. We need to look at the uncertain future not merely as a source of threats, but also of hope and opportunity, and we need to see risk-taking as justified when in defense of cherished values or in the pursuit of worthwhile goals. By demoting safety to its rightful place as a secondary value, we will cease living as a helpless pawn who must be coddled from youth to old-age by an authority figure and we will regain the ability to shape the course of our life. We will mature psychologically and become better equipped to cope with whatever the future brings, for as Nietzsche explains: “Danger alone acquaints us with our own resources: our virtues, our armor and weapons, our spirit, and forces us to be strong. First principle: one must need to be strong – otherwise one will never become strong” (Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*).

While taking greater risks and flirting with danger can shorten one’s life, it is helpful to remember that a long life is not necessarily a good life. A safe life, lacking real challenges and absent in adventure, is inert and leads to a withering away of body and mind into staleness, repetition, boredom and stagnation – such is not living, it is mere existing, or as the Roman stoic Seneca put it: “...there is no reason for you to think that any man has lived long because he has grey hairs or wrinkles, he has not lived long – he has existed long.”

In addition, to helping one live more fully, a courageous willingness to take risks and to flirt with danger can turn us into a great benefactor of mankind. For so long as the values that guide us, and the goals we pursue, are noble and life-promoting, courage reveals a caring attitude for the well-being of others. For unlike the coward who is concerned primarily for his or her own safety and who demands everyone else conform to his or her neurotic ways, the hero is willing to risk life and limb in the service of values that move society forward, or as Alasdair MacIntyre wrote in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*: “If someone says that he cares for some individual, community or cause, but is unwilling to risk harm or danger on his, her or its behalf, he puts into question the genuineness of his care and concern. Courage, the capacity to risk harm or danger to oneself, has its role in human life because of this connection with care and concern.”

If, therefore, we desire a fulfilling life, care for our mental health and care for the future of our society we need to act with

courage and not worship at the altar of safety. We need to take risks in the service of life promoting values, and not adhere to the view that a good life is a safe life.

“For believe me! – the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is: to live dangerously! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas!.. Soon the age will be past when you could be content to live hidden in forests like shy deer” (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*)!

(<https://academyofideas.com/2021/07/why-an-obsession-with-safety-creates-sick-minds-and-a-sick-society/>)

## Admission to the Lutheran Altar: Reflections on Open versus Close Communion

By Dr. John Stephenson, Professor of Systematic Theology at St. Catherines Lutheran Seminary, St. Catherines, Ontario (*This article first appeared in the January-April 1989, Concordia Theological Quarterly, pages 39-52. Please take the time to read this article that is over 30 years old. Remember one of the chief reasons we left the LCMS is that in 2004 Open Communion was accepted as an acceptable difference in practice not a denial of the doctrine that protects the Gospel from being polluted PRH*).

As Luther said, "The Holy Spirit is no skeptic, and it is not doubts or mere opinions that He has written on our hearts, but assertions more sure and certain than life itself and all experience."<sup>1</sup> Recent generations have seen a marked intensification of the spiritual maladies besetting Holy Christendom as church bodies of all confessions hasten to plunge into the maelstrom of end-time apostasy. What goes by the name of unionism might thus at times have to be branded by the severer label of syncretism. Unionism is the common public administration of the means of grace by those not unanimously agreed in "doctrine and in all its articles (FC-SD X, 31). Should common worship take place, however, with a goddess-fearing (and so anti-trinitarian) ELCA "pastress," the Rubicon dividing unionism from syncretism has clearly been crossed. At any rate "open communion" is where unionism takes tangible effect for the man in the pew, being a shorthand expression of the principle that the Sacrament of the Altar is properly administered to all baptized Christians who profess faith in the Holy Trinity and who are communicant members of their own church body.<sup>2</sup> But as the agenda of the ecumenical movement had spilled over from mere unionism to the more serious program of syncretism, it may be that "open communion" is being widened to embrace a wider clientele than just Christians. In other word, the "mid-course correction" of Bishop David Preus, embodied in the altar fellowship consummated between sundry Reformed church bodies and the former ALC and AELC, may be only the tip of the iceberg.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Root of Present Laxity*

The genealogy of "open communion" must be traced back at least as far as its eighteenth-century progenitor known as indifferentism. Weariness with a century and a half of confessional polemics and religiously motivated warfare caused questions of religious truth to be put on the back burner with a sense of relief. Lessing's "Nathan" provides the manifesto of indifferentism as it tells of the father bound by

family tradition to hand on the heirloom of a miraculous ring to his favorite son. Unable to decide between his three equally beloved sons, the father has two perfect copies of the miraculous ring made and passes on the three identical rings to his heirs without even himself knowing which is the genuine article and which are the imitations. Under present conditions it is impossible to determine which is the genuine ring, so each of the sons must, albeit with seemly diffidence, regard his own ring as the authentic family heirloom. In the infinitely distant future it is conceivable that the sole genuine ring may be located, but until that time no one of the sons may make immodest claims for his own ring to the disparagement of his brothers'. The point, being interpreted, is that no man can with certainty arbitrate between the competing truth claims of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, the so-called "positive" religions.

John 14:6 inoculates even the weakest believer against full blown Enlightenment Age indifferentism, but rationalism's elder sister pietism, with her elevation of "life" above "doctrine" and blurring of the differences between Lutheran and Reformed theologies into a pan-protestant mélange, injected into church life a virus of indifferentism sufficiently strong to incubate the practice of "open communion." What is North American Protestantism en masse but a blend of rationalism and pietism? Zwingli's posthumous influence has transcended by far his achievements during his lifetime. What was denied him at Marburg in 1529 was offered him by S.S. Schmucker in the "Definite Platform" of 1855 and by contemporary Lutherans. Our religious *Sitz im Leben* is a nonsacramental synergism kept barely alive by the embers of yesterday's biblicism-such is the visage of the North American Protestantism which invites us to embrace its ethos, practices, and programs.

There is something defiantly counter-cultural about refusing "open communion" in the spirit of Luther at Marburg. The "Galesburg Rule" set the teeth of American Protestantism on edge, which has by now taken its revenge. "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only" seems a dead letter in the ELCA. Nor can habitual reaffirmation by synodical conventions of the LCMS of "close communion" blind our eyes to the fact that at parish level our stance on altar fellowship is honored in the breach as well as in the observance. Let no one underestimate the pressures to which many parish pastors are subject. Applied to the church, American democratic theory is apt to reduce the office of the holy ministry to a servant of the voters' assembly. The pastor is expected to administer the holy sacrament in accordance with his congregation's wishes. And pressure comes not only in the shape of lay usurpation of the office of the keys. As the end of the church year looms in sight, statistics must be collated. Officialdom smiles on growth, but frowns on stagnation. A pastor is tempted to cut corners and stimulate growth by admitting Reformed prospects instantly to the Sacrament of the Altar. The polite request that potential converts first receive instruction in the Six Parts and then come to the altar is apt to be taken amiss: there is an unmistakable tension between sticking to principle and achieving the maximum growth.

The more adamant the LCMS is in her opposition to indifferentism, the more urgently she will seek to root out open communion. We must take care here to observe the due order

of first the horse and then the cart. Unless the demon of indifferentism is first exorcised, disciplinary measures to close our altars will produce only surly, uncomprehending parishioners. Given the massive cultural pressures that render our walking together in a common confession akin to walking into a hurricane-force wind, the exorcising of indifferentism is going to be no easy task. Indeed, it is a task that can only be accomplished over a period of years, in the midst of much frustration and at the cost of many tears. Pastors in every state of the union know the bitter experience of being informed by the parents of a teenage confirmand that he cannot possibly be expected to be present at the Divine Service every week, since the local high school has scheduled hockey practice on Sunday mornings. Nor does attendance at weekday evening confirmation instruction fare any better. Sports again or tomorrow's test are much more important than instruction in the Word of God! Our end-time apostasy has an unerring instinct to cut the nerve of congregational discipline.

We venture to take a threefold approach in our demonstration that "open communion" involves denial of the Word of God and therefore unfaithfulness to Christ Himself, to whom as head we His body are rightfully subject. The Sacrament of the Altar must be considered in itself. Next, its immediate ramifications with respect to the other articles of faith must be considered. Thirdly, we must consider admission to the blessed sacrament in terms of the office established by our Lord for, among other things, the administration of Holy Communion. Our reflections aim to show that "close communion" is not a severe discipline imposed on Christendom by harshly legalistic clergy from without, but rather a corollary of all the articles of faith working as Gospel from within.

### *Barriers to Open Communion*

#### *1. The Essence of the Blessed Sacrament*

As Pieper said, belief in the words of institution, that is, in the real presence, "excludes the Christians in Reformed denominations" from the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>5</sup> Article VII:32 of the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord is a most unpopular aspect of the Lutheran confession of the Holy Supper. Just as the Gospel is stifled in the Church of Rome, even so the sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ has been surrendered by the Reformed church bodies. Hermann Sasse was not joking when he wrote that, as the Roman mass was celebrated for the last time in the minster of Zurich, the souls under Zwingli's jurisdiction bade farewell not only to the accretions of the pope, but also to the very Sacrament of the Altar itself. The baby was thrown out with the bath-water. Zwingli and all Reformed Christendom which followed in his train have never intended to celebrate the one Lord's Supper founded by Jesus Himself, the one in which real bread and real wine become, by His Word, His real body and His real blood, to be eaten and drunk by His Christians. For Lutherans and Reformed to partake of the same Holy Communion would therefore involve blatant dishonesty and the forfeiture of religious integrity. Elert and Sasse have convincingly shown that unanimous confession of the real presence was intended in the formulation of *sanctorum communio* in the third article of the Apostles' Creed. Church (and hence altar) fellowship is obviously denied those who reject any article of the creed. Luther's stance at Marburg represented no passing fit of temper but rather flowed from his loyalty to the Holy Scriptures which

he maintained to the end of his days. Rejection of the Christ-specified essence of the holy sacrament entailed refusal of church and, hence, especially altar fellowship. Choosing his words with care as one who would shortly render account to the Chief Shepherd, the aged Reformer made clear to those who "do not want to believe that the Lord's bread in the Supper is His true, natural body, which the godless person or Judas receives orally just as well as St. Peter and all the saints" that they should "not expect to have fellowship with me. This is final."<sup>8</sup>

The Lutheran Holy Communion and the Reformed Communion are not one and the same, and so the Lutheran Reformed inter-communion is *eo ipso* a charade. Union is impossible without unity, and there can be no unity where communicants commune in different realities. My devout remembrance of Jesus Christ while eating and drinking symbols of His absent body and blood cannot-unless Hegel be followed-be the same thing as Christ's refreshing me through His body and blood present in and under the elements. At this point we must insist that what is really present in the Lord's Supper is not simply Christ as a person, but quite specifically His actual body and His actual blood. Much mischief has been wrought by Lutherans keen to water down the real presence into a shadow of itself. This latter process has kept pace with a parallel development in the area of Christology. The allegedly patristic and un-biblical ontological concepts of our Lord's two natures are labeled as too complex for modern man to grasp. Ontological Christology is exchanged for a functional Christology in which talking about Christ seems to degenerate into nothing more than talk about the world. Now if Christ is not a real God-Man, then He has no real body and blood, with the result that Lutherans would have to admit that Zwingli was right after all.

What is given in the Holy Supper? The really present exalted Christ, acting through His earthly minister, consecrates and distributes His actual body and blood to communicants believing and unbelieving alike. Thomas Aquinas platonizes; not the actual body, but the substance, that is, the idea of the body, is present. Luther believes; the body born of Mary, which hung on the cross, which now reigns in glory at the Father's right hand, is present. This truth is impossible to understand but easy to believe. And thus we believe on the basis of 1 Corinthians 10:16 and, above all, the scriptural narratives of the institution of the sacrament.<sup>9</sup>

Confession of the real presence is the third precondition listed by Francis Pieper for participation in the holy sacrament (the first two being baptism and the ability to examine oneself in accordance with 1 Corinthians 11:28). Not only integrity but also pastoral concern demand this restriction. It would seem that Lutherans are increasingly open to the Reformed understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:29, taking the body to be discerned as the mystical body (the church) rather than the actual historic body of Christ present in the elements. A rereading of Paul, who connects the danger with the elements and not the congregation, and of Luther would be in order. Not a few bulletin announcements follow Luther and Paul, that is, our Lord Himself, in urging that only those commune who acknowledge the real presence. Such a printed restriction is undoubtedly intended to preclude "open communion" and hence to preserve the confessional principle. There are problems with this procedure, however. First, even regular

communicants do not always read the bulletin, much less visitors. Secondly, even if non-Lutheran visitors do read the bulletin's communion invitation, is it likely that they understand what is written there? To begin with, a generic visitor is unlikely to concede that a Lutheran pastor may supervise the content of his faith. Moreover, teaching the real presence involves hours of catechesis, discussion back and forth, and the assimilation of the true faith in the setting of the worshipping congregation. Should a casual visitor sign a communion registration card phrased in an orthodox way, it is unlikely that he has any idea what is meant and even if the registration of a non-Lutheran communicant is to take the form of a personal announcement to the pastor, can we really take seriously as confession of faith a smile and a nod when the pastor, a few minutes before the Divine Service begins, says something about the bread and wine being the Lord's body and blood? Pieper's statement about confession of the real presence as a precondition for admission to the sacrament contains the law's accusing bite: "This provision excludes the Christians in Reformed denominations."

None of us are foot-loose and fancy-free individuals bidden to church-shop our way as tourists through earthly Christendom; rather we are pilgrims attached by baptism and confirmation to particular altars and particular pulpits. The admission of Reformed Christians to Lutheran altars betrays contempt for the various Reformed confessions, not respect. Considering the real presence in itself has a one-sided effect in excluding only the Christians of Reformed denominations from our altars. Bulletin announcements making access to the altar conditional upon confession of the real presence could, of course, have the heartening upshot of vastly increasing the number of Lutheran Christians on earth. Since not only Lutherans but also Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians confess the real presence, defining Lutherans exclusively in terms of profession of the real presence would instantly boost the membership of the Church of the Augsburg Confession from the forty-five million figure given by the Lutheran World Federation to somewhere in the region of the one billion mark. This sensational result indicates that the premise upon which it is built is at fault: the real presence must be considered not only in itself, but also in the setting of the other articles of faith.

## 2. *The Blessed Sacrament in Its Relation to the Other Articles of Faith*

As Walther said, "Hence in whatever church one partakes of the Holy Supper, one professes that church and its doctrine. There cannot be a more intense and fraternal fellowship than that into which one enters with those in whose company one enjoys the Holy Supper (1 Cor. 11:26 and 10:17). There is therefore a great difference between sometimes listening to a sermon in an alien ecclesial communion and partaking there in the celebration of the Holy Supper ... Holy Communion, by way of contrast, is an act of confession; if one communes in an alien church, one actually joins it, appears as a witness for its doctrine, and pronounces its members one's brothers and sisters in the faith."<sup>10</sup>

Carefully considered, the blessed sacrament itself proves the wisdom of the confessional formulation "doctrine in all its articles." Belief in the real presence connects with every other

article of faith. What one believes concerning the real presence corresponds to what one believes concerning the person of Christ and the nature of the Scripture. And what one believes concerning the purpose of the real presence cannot be divorced from what one believes about justification. Just as the celebration of Holy Communion itself is not an occasional extra of congregational worship life, but rather the living heart thereof, so likewise one's belief concerning the Lord's Supper is invariably, on close inspection, a microcosm of one's grasp of the Christian faith as a whole. Thus, bare agreement on the real presence does not necessarily indicate deep consensus regarding the faith in its fullness. The fact that Roman priest and Lutheran pastor each holds the body of Christ in his hand in the distribution does not mean that these clerics are at one concerning the essence of Christianity. Joint acknowledgement of the real presence in the sacrament coexists with the deepest divisions concerning the very nature of the Gospel. Dissent as to the material principle of Christianity also includes divergence on its formal principle. Why does one believe in the real presence? The assertion of the pope, the weight of church tradition, and the voice of Christ in Sacred Scripture are not equal authorities. A real-presence reductionism tears at the tissue of the faith, in which the various articles combine to form one integral whole.

Reductionism may be defined as the casting aside of accessories in order the more firmly to retain hold of the fundamentals. To some the Lutheran definition of the article of justification as the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae* may seem redolent of reductionism, but for this suspicion to prove well-founded justification must cease to be a fruit of Christology and turn into a facet of anthropology. Justification, in Luther and the Confessions, presupposes the Trinity, our Lord's one person in two natures and His theanthropic work of reconciliation, and the work of the Holy Ghost in the means of grace. In other words, justification does not displace the other articles of faith but rather sets them in proper focus. The confessional understanding of the Holy Supper likewise does not stand in isolation from the other articles of faith; instead it concretely pinpoints their evangelical significance.

Those who would consider confession of the real presence as the sole prerequisite to admitting baptized Christians of whatever persuasion to Lutheran altars can claim no support from the Reformer himself. Luther understood sin whole, grace whole, and doctrine whole. Doctrine, for him, was like a ring, which, when broken in just one place, ceases to be a ring." The Reformer refused to allow for the possibility that one may be partly orthodox, wrong on the real presence but right on justification. There are no degrees of orthodoxy or heterodoxy; doctrinal purity is an all or nothing matter: "For it is certain that whoever does not rightly believe in one article of faith, or does not want to believe (after he has been admonished and instructed), he surely believes no article with an earnest and true faith ... for this reason we say that everything is to be believed completely and without exception, or nothing is to be believed. The Holy Spirit does not let himself be divided or cut up so that he should let one point be taught and believed as trustworthy and another as false ... for it is characteristic of all heretics that they start by denying one article of the faith; after that, all the articles must suffer the same fate and they must all be denied, just as the ring, when it gets a crack or a chink, is totally worthless. And if a bell cracks

at one place, it does not chime anymore and is completely useless."

Fellowship in the Sacrament of the Altar therefore presupposes fellowship in the faith and in all the articles of the faith. Denial of this principle logically involves denial of the unity of Scripture. Moreover, a sharing of the holy things between those not in doctrinal agreement indicates small appreciation for the wisdom of the church in her age-old habit of expressing her one faith in binding creeds and confessions. Should dogma come apart into bits and pieces and no longer be guarded and transmitted as a whole, the Lutheran procedure of admitting communicants to the altar after prior instruction in the Six Parts will soon be dropped as a tradition of men. Our discipline, however, is suffused with the mind of Christ: taking the Six Parts as a whole confesses the unity of the Bible and is thus a corollary of the *claritas Scripturae*.

### 3. *The Office of the Ministry*

As Luther said, "We do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come" (LC V, 2). Likewise, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession states: "In our churches mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals, when the sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved" (Apology XXIV, I). Francis Pieper expresses a far-reaching truth which the flesh of Christians, even Lutheran Christians, is all too apt to forget: "...the pastor is personally and directly responsible, not only to the congregation, but also to God, with regard to the persons he admits to the Lord's Supper."<sup>13</sup> And Walther brings the charge that a clergyman who practices open communion thereby shows himself "an unfaithful and careless shepherd devoid of conscience" ("*ein untreuer, sorg- und gewissenloser Seelsorger*").<sup>14</sup> Parishioners in our congregations are known to ask their pastor by what right he asks non-Lutherans not to commune at his altar. Walther's reply to this question, which has lately been set forth with scholarly eloquence in the July 1988 issue of the Concordia Journal, does not beat around the bush: the impossibility of open communion is directly bound up with the fact that "a clergyman [*Prediger*] is not meant to be just a teacher, but also a shepherd, bishop, and watchman (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 13:17; Ezek. 3:17-21), not merely an administrator of the holy sacraments, but also a steward of them (1 Cor. 4:1)." Only those bereft of pity would seek to force open communion on a Lutheran clergyman, since they thereby bring down on his head the curses of Ezekiel 3 and 33. Our Lord not only instituted the means of grace, but also established the office which is publicly to administer these means of grace until the Last Day. The pastor is responsible to his Lord for the preparation of those youngsters and new adult members whom he admits to the altar through the rite of confirmation, as well as for the ongoing preparation of his flock as a whole. When he receives members of sister congregations at his altar, he does so on the understanding that they have been and are being nourished with the same doctrine by a brother pastor.

Dissociation of the Sacrament of the Altar from the office established for its celebration and administration is invariably a most dangerous procedure, and it is well to note that the protest voiced by the St. Louis faculty against a lay ministry pilot program faithfully reproduces a solemn warning issued by Walther himself in his *Pastorale*: "The great majority of our

theologians, with Luther at their head, are of the opinion that the Holy Supper should never be administered by someone who does not stand in the public preaching office or by a so-called layman. [This principle stems] partly from the fact that with respect to the Holy Supper-unlike baptism and absolution-no emergency situation can arise which would justify departure from God's order (1 Cor. 4:11; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4), partly from the fact that the Holy Supper is a public confession which ought therefore to have public ministers, and partly from the fact that such clandestine communion can easily beget schisms."<sup>16</sup> A called and ordained pastor is married to the body of Christ, but a "lay minister" or seminarian does not enjoy this relationship with the church of God. The practice, brought about in cases of clergy shortage, of having nonordained men distribute "pre-consecrated elements" is to be regretted on two counts: first, a Roman Catholic understanding of the consecration is being adopted on grounds of expediency; and, secondly, the administration of the sacrament by those not so charged by God through the church suggests disregard for the holy ministry.

### *Conclusion*

Restoring orthodox practice in congregations where liberal practice had prevailed for a score or more of years cannot be achieved overnight. Pastors who intend, under God and with His aid, to reintroduce proper discipline must start not with dictates but with doctrine. It is a disturbing fact that some clergy are no longer using the Small Catechism in their confirmation instruction, preferring rather to teach a course of their own arrangement. One cannot but voice an anguished protest against this procedure; the faith once delivered to the saints in the Scripture is not ours to play with as we will. Just as the Sunday Divine Service is not a program to be made up according to each individual pastor's whim and fancy, but must mediate the one Gospel and the one Sacrament of the Altar through tried and tested fitting vessels given in officially approved liturgies, so likewise humility calls for us to pass on the faith to coming generations without eccentricity, onesidedness, or showmanship of any kind. A Lutheran is one who learns (and keeps learning) Christ through the summary of Sacred Scripture given in the Small Catechism:

Lord, teach us ever to retain  
The catechism's doctrine plain,  
As Luther taught the word of truth  
In simple style to tender youth.

Diligent, unremitting catechesis is the means whereby the Holy Ghost can bring all Christians to acknowledge the irrefutable force of Elert's words: "By his partaking of the sacrament in a church a Christian declares that the confession of that church is his confession. Since a man cannot at the same time hold two differing confessions, he cannot communicate in two churches of differing confessions. If anyone does this nevertheless, he denies his own confession or has none at all."<sup>17</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. On the Bondage of the Will (Library of Christian Classics, XVII), p. 109.
2. Such a definition of "open communion" would appear to capture the essence of the official communion policy of the Anglican Church at the present time. Until a generation ago, the Anglican Church regularly communed only episcopally confirmed Anglicans. The measure adopting "open communion" in the Church of England was introduced by G.W.H. Lampe, a Cambridge professor who was a lifelong Freemason and, in the last years of his life, an avowed unitarian.
3. The Advent 1988 issue of Lutheran Forum sets forth distressing evidence that WCC-sponsored ecumenism has lately degenerated into outright syncretism. See Mark E. Chapman, "A State of the Church Report: Ecumenical Paganism?" (p. 7). Some years ago I was informed by a college contemporary, a priest in the Church of England, that he had endeavoured to persuade some Moslems visiting his Sunday service to partake of Holy Communion! The breakdown of age-old discipline is clearly in the air when the (relatively conservative) Oxford Anglican



theologian Rowan Williams can openly dismiss 1 Corinthians 11:27 in offering the following anaemic rationale for communing only Christians: "To share eucharistic communion with someone unbaptized, or committed to another story or system [viz., a heathen], is odd-not because the sacrament is 'profaned,' or because grace cannot be given to those outside the household, but because the symbolic integrity of the Eucharist depends upon its being celebrated by those who both commit themselves to the paradigm of Jesus' death and resurrection and acknowledge that their violence is violence offered to Jesus." Resurrection. Interpreting the Easter Gospel (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1982), p. 68.

4. See Karl Barth's chapter on Lessing in his Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 256 and following.

5. Christian Dogmatics, 111, p. 383.

6. Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 5-11.

7. See Sasse's essay "Sanctorum Communio," printed as Appendix 11 in the revised edition of This Is My Body (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), pp. 351-370.

8. LW 38, p. 304 (Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament, 1544).

9. A young theologian of the ELCA, David Yeago, has an article in the Reformation 1988 issue of Lutheran Forum entitled "On Declining the Invitation: Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue 111 and the Doctrine of the Eucharist." Yeago's Lutheran instincts are betrayed by his unfathomable timidity precisely at the point of defining the real presence. While wishing to specify the sacramental gift as the Lord's body, Yeago subjects the concept of "body" to tortuous philosophical circumlocution: "The early Lutherans held that the concept of 'body,' in scriptural usage, does not imply the presence of a lump of stuff; rather, 'body' is the coincidence of identity and availability. If the sacramental elements are associated with Jesus Christ as he is identified by the biblical narrative (as they are by the words of institution), and if he is available to us by way of actions (eating and drinking) performed with the elements, then the elements are his body .... Those for whom the notion of body inescapably implies material substance will not be comfortable with Lutheranism's

outright identification of the sacrament with Christ's body; we may chide them for metaphysical timidity, but we should not break communion with them simply on that account" (pp. 25-26). Since for Yeago the sacramental body is not identical with the natural, historical body assumed in the virgin's womb, his courageous opposition to Lutheran-Reformed intercommunion would seem unfounded. For a defense of the real presence as the presence of the Savior's actual body and none other, see Tom B. A. Hardt, Venerabilis et Adorabilis Eucharistia (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1988), especially chapter 1, "Verum Corpus."

10. Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie (fifth edition, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1906), p. 145.

11. LW 38, p. 307.

12. Op. cit., p. 308.

13. Christian Dogmatics, III, p. 389.

14. Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie, p. 146.

15. Op. cit., p. 142. Be it noted that in decent churchly parlance sacraments are "administered," a process which involves, in the case of the Lord's Supper, the "distribution" [Austeilung] of the sacred body and blood. There is something deplorably slovenly about the formulation "serving communion"; our Lord's body and blood are of infinitely greater dignity than the tidbits and drinks "served" at social gatherings!

16. Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie, p. 175.

17. Eucharist and Church Fellowship, p. 182.

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## OCTOBER 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 <b>ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM</b>	4 <b>JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM</b>	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 <b>NO CONFIRMATION</b>	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 <b>NO CONFIRMATION</b>	19	20 <b>DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM</b>	21	22	23
24 <b>ADULT CLASS 12:15 PM ST. CRISPIN EVE DINNER 5:00 PM</b>	25 <b>JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM</b>	26 <b>BUDGET MEETING 6:30 PM</b>	27 <b>DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM</b>	28	29	30

<b>31</b> <b>FLOOR ART</b> <b>PRESENTATION</b>  <b>ADULT CLASS</b> <b>12:15 PM</b>						
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### NOVEMBER 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	2 ELDERS' MEETING 6:30 PM	3 DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	4	5	6
7	8 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	9 VOTERS MEETING 7:00 PM	10 DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	11	12	13
14	15 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	16	17 DANIEL BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	18	19	20
21	22 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	23	24 THANKSGIVING EVE SERVICE 7:30 PM	25	26	27
28	29 JR. CONFIRMATION 5:30PM	30	DEC 1 ADVENT VESPERS 7:30 PM			