

A Word for Sheepdogs

THE CONSCIENTIOUS PASTOR finds himself continually presented with questions that give him pause. That's why it's good to remember that we who hold this office do not exercise it in a vacuum. We are not solo entrepreneurs in this enterprise; the Lord Jesus has commissioned a band of brothers, as it were, to serve Him as His ministers. In important questions of doctrine and practice we need to proceed collegially after careful consultation with colleagues in ministry.

Timothy Pauls presents us here with the very best in the tradition of Lutheran *gutachten*, or godly counsel regarding pastoral practice. Faced with genuine and existential questions regarding the sacramental elements, he's done his homework. Looking first at the Scriptures and confessions, then the practice of the church catholic, he sensitively and systematically explores every dimension of this question. In so doing he demonstrates what genuine "pastoral discretion" is about. Too often pastors are driven by pragmatism and whim. We can and should do better. In this paper you will find clear-eyed, careful theologically and pastorally informed guidance on the question of what elements to use in the Sacrament. Just as importantly, you will see how to navigate other thorny issues with integrity. To be a faithful pastor you need both a theologian's head and a seelsorger's heart; this paper demonstrates they are not mutually exclusive.

- Dr. H. L. Senkbeil



Elemental Certainty in the Supper

Pastor Timothy J. Pauls

“The entire Gospel and the article of the Creed—I believe in ... the holy Christian Church ... the forgiveness of sins, and so on—are embodied by the Word in this Sacrament and presented to us.”¹ So writes Luther of the Lord’s Supper, and so Christians gather often at the altar to receive the Lord’s body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins: for “where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.” In the *Small Catechism*, Luther goes on to rejoice in the sweeping availability of the Sacrament of the Altar: it is not just for a chosen few, but anyone “is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’”

The Lord is present, delivering His gifts to His people in the midst of a world cursed by sin. That curse, of course, corrupts the bodies and minds of those who kneel at the altar, and in some cases, it interferes with their reception because of reactions to the nature of the elements.

¹ Large Catechism V:32

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The genesis of this paper thus takes place at the end of a small nursing home service attended by four members of the parish. It's gone like so many others: the three women have received the Lord's Supper, but the man has refrained. He waits until the women leave, then says, "Pastor, if it's all right with you, I'm going to attend the Protestant service this week so I can receive Holy Communion. They have grape juice."

I'm taken aback. I've known "Henry" for more than fifteen years, and he's made no secret about his past. He was once a "bad drunk," in his words. He's been sober for 54 years, a sponsor to hundreds in AA. I've attempted to talk to him about the Lord's Supper before, but he's cut those conversations short. I've suggested a small drop of wine in a cup of water, diffused beyond senses, but he'll have none of it. He knew a man who vowed to stay sober except for the Sacrament, and the sip of wine for him was the gateway back to an alcoholic hell. Henry isn't going to take that chance.

He's just been diagnosed with cancer at an advanced age. The prognosis is uncertain, and he wants the Supper. Even so, I'm surprised: he's never expressed the desire before, and I've interpreted his opposition to mean a casual indifference not uncommon in his generation.

"Henry," I ask, "why do you want Communion now?"

He doesn't miss a beat. "Because I want my sins forgiven."

At his previous congregation, individual cups of grape juice formed the inner ring of the communion tray. It hadn't always been that way: when he first arrived there, the pastor insisted on wine only, because that was the practice of the synod. One day, however, the pastor announced that he had received permission from "a synod official" to serve grape juice as an alternative to wine. It

was hardly a time when the synod was unified in much of anything, nor is it a hierarchical church body that receives *ex cathedra* announcements to change doctrine or practice. Nevertheless, that congregation adopted grape juice with the understanding that "the synod said so," even though "the synod" didn't. As Henry relates this, I groan inwardly: part of unraveling this knot means a gentle contradiction of a beloved, now departed, previous pastor.

After some more conversation in what time we have, I say, "Henry, I'm going to ask you to give me a few days, and then I want to talk to you again."

"Emily" arrives in town three weeks later, along with her husband. As we sit down and visit for the first time, she shares that she has a sensitive gluten allergy and is unable to receive a communion host that contains wheat. I know their previous pastor well and count him a friend, so I ask how he dealt with her allergy previously. "He found some gluten-free communion wafers from a reliable source, and so I've been receiving those."

Once again, I ask for some time. We live in an area where gluten-free wafers have been foisted on large gatherings without catechesis, leading to uncertainty and troubled consciences; so many in the congregation I serve are predisposed against their introduction. In the meantime, we agree that she will receive the Lord's Supper in one kind; beyond that, I want to chart a course carefully.

Pastoral care doesn't happen in a vacuum. Put together, these two individuals present a fertile field for the topic of *adiaphora* in the Lord's Supper, with all the attendant issues. One refrains from wine, the other from bread. One is refraining out of fear, the other because of a medical condition.² I'll be visiting one nearly privately on the other side of town, while the other will be kneeling with the

2 Along with allergies, medicinal interactions and celiac disease may also pose problems for some in receiving the Lord's Supper.

congregation on Sunday mornings. One had a different practice affirmed by a nameless “synod official” long ago, the other from a colleague and personal friend.

Back at the seminary in pastoral theology classes, the class discussion on the matter was full of textbook-tidy alternatives and solutions. Theory is always tidy, but these aren’t theoretical people. They’re Henry and Emily. They’re afflicted Christians who have given the matter extensive thought, and they both want the Lord’s Supper for the forgiveness of sins.

While research for this paper is underway, another with celiac disease starts attending, with a memorable quote in our first visit: “I want the body of Christ. I just don’t want to be sick for the next week and a half.”

Pastoral care of these individuals isn’t in a vacuum. However I proceed, it has implications for the congregation, the pastor who follows me someday, my brothers in the circuit and their congregations, and the entire synod if we take walking together seriously.

Of course, it’s the Lord’s Supper—not ours. The solution is not what works best, but what the Lord permits in His institution of the Sacrament.

I hope that this extensive introduction hasn’t been tedious. I write it to put faces on the discussion. This is not intended to be a research paper for a seminary study, but an exercise in pastoral care.

It is no secret that Christendom is hardly united on the Lord’s Supper as to its elements, purpose or benefits. Even among confessional Lutherans, to borrow a quip from a high school teacher of mine, “wherever two or three are gathered, there are at least four different opinions.” As this paper focuses upon the nature and use of the elements, one

can find different—and strongly-held—positions within Christian church bodies along a continuum for both bread and wine. As to the bread, arguments range from the insistence that one must use wheaten bread to the shoulder-shrug that any element that approximates bread will do. As to the wine, one can find arguments ranging from a requirement to use a specific varietal of wine to insistence on non-alcoholic beverages, usually a form of grape juice. These positions are not held indiscriminately; they are the product of one’s hermeneutics, Christology and more. Even the apparently casual argument that the elements don’t matter exists for a theological reason: for those who make that argument, it *matters* that it doesn’t matter. Otherwise, they would be willing to abandon their position.

If we are to hope for a sensible discussion on the elements of the Lord’s Supper, then we need to spend a little time establishing our foundation and defining a hermeneutic.

Foundation

Our Lord institutes the Holy Communion Himself in Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; and St. Paul repeats this institution in 1 Cor. 11:23-25. The conflation of these texts is as follows:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”³

Also of importance is the Lord’s eschato-

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³ Lutheran Service Book, 197

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logical declaration found in each of the Synoptic institutions: "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29; cf. Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:18).

The Words of Institution form the basis for the doctrine of Holy Communion: they are the Lord's words about the Lord's Supper. St. Paul provides some additional commentary upon the Supper in 1 Corinthians 10-11, which informs our understanding immeasurably. We give thanks to the Lord for His revelation of the Sacrament in these passages, and we oppose attempts to modify His clear institution by means of allegory, arguments of type, arguments of reason or silence. All of these are employed by proponents of various positions to change the doctrine and practice of the Sacrament.

Certainty, Doubt and Conscience

As much as we like definitive answers, the tension in the discussion is not between right and wrong, but certainty versus doubt: one may be certain that he receives the Lord's Supper when he receives it according to the Lord's institution. When one moves away from that institution, he introduces doubt, and the further one departs, the more the uncertainty increases. In the lovely land of the hypothetical, one would be most certain of the Lord's Supper if he were eating from the same loaf of bread and drinking from the same chalice of wine that Jesus gave to His disciples on the night He was betrayed. In the realm of the possible, the question remains as to how much latitude one has in the elements for use in Holy Communion. The answer is found in the Lord's institution: one is to use bread and the "fruit of the vine." But how much freedom is permitted within that description remains a point of contention. Nevertheless, certainty is vital in the Supper.

By way of the law, one is certain of fol-

lowing God's Word and attendant blessings when he obeys the instructions. The most prominent type of the Lord's Supper in the Old Testament is the Passover, where the lamb's blood marked the door and its flesh served as the meal, saving from death and preserving life. Within the Lord's instructions, the lamb could be the offspring of a sheep or a goat, and the breed or color of lamb was unspecified. There was some latitude within His institution; however, I suspect that none of the Israelites considered it a good idea to opt for a paschal calf that night. It was the Lord's Passover, not theirs (Ex. 12:11). It was no time to risk the argument that following the Lord's instructions "in principle" or "in spirit" was sufficient and that the Lord wouldn't mind variation. The life of the firstborn son was at stake. One can make the argument that a calf *might* have been acceptable to the Lord, since He didn't forbid it; but such an argument of silence would do nothing to comfort a wailing mother in the darkness if it proved wrong.

According to the Lord's institution, His Supper is for the forgiveness of sins; and where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. To alter the elements of the Holy Communion is to risk the uncertainty of forgiveness, and thus also of life and salvation. Unlike the Passover, one does not find out what might be acceptable to God by the following morning; but the delayed answer is no reason to perpetuate error or doubt.

By way of the Gospel, one is certain of receiving Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins when the Supper is conducted according to the Lord's institution. To borrow terminology from Norman Nagel, there is great joy in the "located-ness" of Jesus: He promises to be found at a certain place and time—a certain where-and-when as He pleases.

It is a great comfort to the Christian that the Lord is present in His Supper, giving His body and blood for the for-

givenness of sins. To preserve the Supper according to His institution is to preserve the certainty and comfort.

Conscience also plays an important part—a good conscience *informed by the Word of God*. Apart from this, the individual is likely to determine the validity of the elements on the basis of personal feeling—such as an insecurity that leads to legalistic strictures just to play it safe, or a *laissez faire* attitude that leads to license. Attention to a good conscience guides one within the boundaries of what the Lord permits, rather than a pastor or parishioner insisting on his way because it “feels right” personally.

In the discussion of the elements of Holy Communion, those who steadfastly insist on a narrow interpretation are sometimes caricatured as persnickety cranks who live in terror of making a mistake. Such caricatures are not helpful; it’s hardly wrong to seek a careful obedience of God’s Word, all the more so in service of receiving His grace. Likewise, those who advocate greater liberties with the Lord’s institution are sometimes dismissed as apathetic to doctrine. This too is unhelpful; their position arises from a doctrinal stance. There will be those who adhere to both positions without much consideration, but those positions exist because of heartfelt doctrinal convictions.

In service to the certainty of the Lord’s Supper, the Solid Declaration states:

All the circumstances of the Holy Supper’s institution testify that these words of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (which in themselves are simple, plain, clear, firm, and beyond doubt), cannot and must not be understood other than in their usual, proper, and common meaning. For Christ gives this command at the table and at supper. There is certainly no doubt that He speaks of real, natural bread and of natural wine. Also, He speaks of

oral eating and drinking, so there can be no metaphor (i.e., a change of meaning) in the word *bread*, as though Christ’s body were a spiritual bread or a spiritual food of souls.⁴

To a very practical question, then: what is real, natural bread and wine?

Bread

Overwhelmingly, Lutheran theologians agree on the nature of suitable bread: “Whatever is baked from water and flour is indeed genuine, natural bread.”⁵ Beyond this essence, the description of bread is left to Christian freedom. Pieper cites Walther agreeably to say, “Walther, following the older theologians, writes: ‘It is unessential whether the bread is leavened or unleavened, whether it be baked of rye, wheat, corn, barley, or oats, whether it have this or that shape, provided that it is real bread baked of flour and water.’”⁶ Among those “older theologians” would be Gerhard (above) and Chemnitz.⁷

The reason for the broad definition is simple: in His words of institution, the Lord uses a form of ἄρτος, the general term for bread found in Scripture. When Paul elaborates on the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor. 10:16, he does the same. Because the Lord does not restrict His people to a specific kind of bread in His institution, the kind of flour remains a matter of Christian freedom. This introduces the possibility of gluten-free hosts. Writes John Kleinig, “Today we have flour made not only from wheat, oats and barley, but also gluten free seeds such as rye, soy, or even rice;” and “due to increasing numbers of communicants presenting with gluten intolerance, congregations might look at using soy or rice-based (‘gluten free’) wafers.”⁸ Likewise, an FAQ on the website of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod says, “Since rice is a grain, it would seem consistent with this position that bread made from this grain would be permissible.”⁹

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4 SD VII:48.

5 Johann Gerhard, *A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper* Tr. © 1996 Elmer Hohle (Malone: Repristination Press, 2000), 231.

6 Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, volume 3 (St. Louis:

Concordia, 1953), 354, footnote 94. More recently, Stephenson reaffirms Walther’s nod to this adiaphoron (Stephenson, John R. *The Lord’s Supper, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics Volume XII*. (Northville: The Luther Academy, 2003), 259)

7 “For it is certain that bread is of the essence of the Lord’s Supper. Whether it should be of wheat, whether leavened or unleavened, was at one time debated with great heat, and arguments were gathered from Scripture about the grain of wheat and about the day of the Lord’s Supper. But the church judged correctly that these things are free and not of necessity for the sacrament.” (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, vol. II. Tr. Fred Kramer. (St. Louis: CPH, 1978), 540)

8 Document prepared on behalf of the Department of Liturgics for the Commission on Worship, Lutheran Church of Australia.

9 <http://www.lcms.org/faqs/doctrine#gluten>, accessed February 3, 2016.

Both Kleinig and the LCMS website are quick to note that the inclusion of gluten-free grains is a matter of pastoral discretion.¹⁰ Note also the use of “might” and “seem” in the quotes above: there are plenty of considerations before adopting a different host, as we will discuss below.

Though well-accepted generally within Lutheranism, this position is hardly universal throughout Christendom.

On the one hand, some insist that the bread to be used in the Sacrament must be wheaten bread in nature. This is the position of perhaps some strange bedfellows, the Tridentine catechism of Rome and Lutheran pastor Heath Curtis, though they arrive at the same conclusion by different routes.

The Tridentine catechism states that, despite the existence of different sorts of bread made with various grains, “it is to be observed that, with regard to the former, the sacramental matter, according to the words of our Lord, should consist of wheaten bread; for when we simply say bread, we mean according to common usage, ‘wheaten bread.’”¹¹ The “words of our Lord” cited by Trent are not the Words of Institution; rather, the catechism appeals to the bread of the presence in the tabernacle, an Old Testament type of the Holy Eucharist: “the Lord commanded that the loaves of proposition, which prefigured this Sacrament, should be made of ‘fine flour.’”¹² The “fine flour” of the shewbread was *סֶלֶם* (LXX *σεμίδαλις*), specifically ground from wheat; in the catechism’s argument, the details of the type dictate the attributes of the antitype. At least, they do to a point: for although the bread of the presence was specifically to be unleavened in the tabernacle, the Tridentine catechism declares that the use of leavened bread does not “render the sacrament null.”¹³ The Roman Church

still stands on its insistence of gluten in communion hosts, calling non-gluten hosts “invalid matter” for the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁴

Curtis posits that Walther’s liberties with the type of flour can be traced back to a quote by Luther in *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments* (1525), in which he suggests that either wheat or barley might be used. He suggests that Luther here allows his polemic to “overrun his exegesis,”¹⁵ and that Chemnitz’s support for Luther (see quote in footnote 7) is intentionally tepid. To the contrary, Curtis asserts that *ἄρτος* refers specifically to wheaten bread, unless it is accompanied by a modifier (e.g., *barley bread*). He’s not without some high-power support, for the 1996 edition of the Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie lexicon defines *ἄρτος* as “a cake or loaf of wheat-bread.”¹⁶ The Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich (2000) lexicon has the broader definition of “bread,” but Curtis attributes this to Danker’s sympathy for Luther’s theology. Perhaps the greatest hurdle to his argument is the miracle of the “Feeding of the Five Thousand” in John 6:1-15 versus the Synoptic accounts; for in John 6, Jesus feeds the masses with *ἄρτους κριθίνους* or (“barley bread”), but in the Synoptics with *ἄρτους* without an adjective. The parallel texts would appear to make *ἄρτους* synonymous with *ἄρτους κριθίνους*; however, Curtis makes a detailed argument that John changes the material to barley bread in his account in order to draw attention to 2 Kings 4:42-44 as a type of the miracle.

Curtis presents a smart, well-articulated argument; and his purpose is that parishioners be certain they are receiving Christ’s body according to the Lord’s institution. He may be right; however, this would require that a translational error by Luther be perpetuated by Chemnitz, Walther, and more recently the

Note also the use of “might” and “seem” in the quotes above: there are plenty of considerations before adopting a different host, as we will discuss below.

10 Kleinig writes that congregations should only proceed with gluten-free hosts “if the individuals concerned, the pastor, and the whole congregation are satisfied that they really constitute ‘bread.’” The LCMS FAQ continues, “Nothing here would preclude someone bringing bread to the pastor that is gluten free. However, Lutheran practice would require the pastor to consecrate this bread together with the elements being used in the Communion service. You are encouraged to discuss this with your pastor.”

11 J. Donovan, tr. *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas), 150.

12 Donovan, *Catechism*, 150. The term “loaves of proposition” come by way of the Vulgate, which translated *סֶלֶם* as *panes propositionis*. (See, for instance, Ex. 25:30).

13 Donovan, *Catechism*, 151.

14 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “Letter to all Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences concerning the use of low-gluten altar breads and mustum as matter for the celebration of the Eucharist” (June 19, 1995), and “Circular Letter to all Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences concerning the use of low-gluten altar breads and mustum as matter for the celebration of the Eucharist,” (July 24, 2003), www.vatican.va.

15 Heath Curtis, “What Is Bread? ΑΡΤΟΣ in the New Testament with Implications for Sufferers of Celiac Disease and the Interpretation of John 6:1-15.” (Unpublished; available on Scribd), 3.

16 Curtis attributes the error of Luther, et al, to a misunderstanding in semantic domains during translation: *ἄρτος* is translated as *Brot* in German or *panis* in Latin, both of which have a greater range of meaning than does *ἄρτος*.

17 I ran across Pastor Curtis’ paper at <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2012/06/grape-juice-communion-in-one-kind-part-two/>. A survey of the 51 comments will demonstrate a lively and emotionally-charged discussion as to the certainty of the elements in response to his writing.

18 Beza writes, “The Supper will indeed be celebrated aright if something which by common use or by the circumstances of the time is interchangeable with bread or wine is employed in their stead. For this was the mind of Christ, when He selected bread and wine for these mysteries, that by setting forth the signs of these things by which our body is nourished He might display true spiritual refreshment so to say before our eyes. He does not therefore stray from the opinion of

1981 systematics department of Concordia Theological Seminary and the 1983 Commission on Theology and Church Relations, among others. It would mean that John's use of ἄρτος in John 6:1-15 does not provide a parallel definition to the Synoptic accounts, which hardly seems certain. Further, while it's true that Danker's lexical definition of ἄρτος is in agreement with his Lutheran theology, one could equally argue that the Liddell-Scott definition of ἄρτος as *wheat* bread is in agreement with those editors' Anglican roots. That's quite a few giants to slay, and while Curtis makes a convincing case, his argument can achieve no more certainty than the traditional position he challenges.

Curtis' arguments do need to be evaluated. If he is correct, he has done a great service. However, broaching the topic and disagreeing with the longstanding practice of the Lutheran church necessarily introduces doubt into the minds of his readers.¹⁷

At the other end of the continuum is the argument that the host need not be bread at all. John Stephenson briefly addresses the claims of Theodore Beza and—by extension—John Calvin. Both held that, due to common use or circumstance, substitutes for bread and wine might be employed without departing from the Lord's institution.¹⁸ There are twin errors at work in the assertion, one of which is the inclination of Reformed theologians to make use of reason and assume more than the Lord says; there is simply no evidence that Jesus would permit interchangeable elements based upon availability. Also, the assertion is possible only because Calvin and Beza deny that the bread and wine actually communicate Christ's body and blood. Because they are merely symbols for remembrance, the substance of the elements is less important than their function.¹⁹ Apparently, it is more im-

portant that the host be broken in remembrance than that it be bread, and it is more important that the wine be poured out in remembrance than that it actually be wine.²⁰ The example of Calvin and Beza serves as a fine example that a loose approach to the essence of the elements is not out of doctrinal apathy, but out of strong doctrinal conviction—and one tainted with a latent Gnosticism.

The general definition of bread as "whatever is baked from flour and water" remains as a definition for suitable hosts for the Lord's Supper. This definition would include gluten-free rice wafers, though some might balk because of the absence of rice from mention among biblical grains.²¹ Nevertheless, rice flour and water may be used to make bread.

Even so, a departure from wheaten hosts should be the exception, not the rule. It is the generally accepted practice of the Church catholic, and while allowances may be made for those in special need, the general practice should be maintained as an ecumenical acknowledgment.

Wine

The discussion of what makes for suitable wine is subject to much more debate, and the continuum of thought is expansive here as well. At one end, I remember arriving one morning as a delegate to the 1995 LCMS convention and finding at my seat a delegate-submitted proposed resolution that LCMS congregations use only varietals traced back to first-century Palestine, so as to follow our Lord's institution as nearly as possible.²² At the other end, one finds the Beza/Calvin position that the essence of the drink doesn't matter. In between is the discussion of the meaning of τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου, or "the fruit of the vine."

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Christ who, without revolutionary intent, substitutes for bread and wine things which have, while not an equal, yet at any rate a similar analogy to food." He also relays a response by Calvin when asked about Christians in America who partook of the Sacrament where wine was not used: "Calvin responded that, since our Lord would Himself have used some other suitable beverage if wine had not been available in the Judea of His day, appropriate substitution could be made" (Stephenson, *The Lord's Supper*, 259, footnote 1).

¹⁹ Jesus' command to "do this in remembrance of Me" in no way implies that He is not present in the Supper. Reformed and Lutheran definitions of "symbol" differ. For the former, a symbol is an indication of something not present; and for the latter, a symbol indicates what is present but not seen. Regarding the use of such terms in Scripture, Kodell comments, "For us, the word 'symbolic' is often used in contradiction to 'real,' and a symbol is an action or object that stands metaphorically for something else. To the Hebrew mind, symbols were realities in their own right, the prophetic word made visible. The symbolic action of the thing brought the event into existence" (Kodell, 63). Here in Idaho, mountain passes are full of signs indicating sharp turns to the left or

right: the night driver is well-advised to recognize that the curves thus symbolized are present, though not seen quite yet; and his remembrance of their unseen presence will prevent an untimely descent off a cliff to the rocks below.

²⁰ According to Stephenson, the breaking of the bread in Reformed practice is to remember Christ's suffering body (261); per Fritz, it is also to remember that Jesus broke the bread at the Last Supper (John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1932), 141).

²¹ Scripture is not quite devoid of gluten-free flour: millet appears as an ingredient to bread in Ezek. 4:9. Though not a popular bread flour, recipes for millet bread can be found online.

²² This resolution never reached the floor, nor is it part of the official record of the convention. Given the contentious nature of such meetings, it is possible that it was distributed as parody. My thanks to the research staff of the Concordia Historical Institute for their patient, ultimately fruitless, efforts to track this down. For recent attempts to identify possible wines of biblical times, see

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/israel-aims-to-recreate-wine-drunk-by-king-david-and-jesus-1.2448937>.

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Within the Lord's institution, the contents of the cup are never described specifically as οἶνος, or wine. Instead, Jesus refers to it by synecdoche as "cup" (Luke 22:20) or "the fruit of the vine." There is no doubt that the cup that the Lord blessed at the Last Supper was filled with wine; however, debate remains over His use of the term τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου. In addition to οἶνος in the first century, there also existed τρύξ (in Latin, *must*), or unfermented grape juice.²³ Distinct from τρύξ, we must also add to the discussion pasteurized grape juice, first produced by Dr. Thomas Welch in 1869 for the express purpose of providing "unfermented sacramental wine" for his fellow churchgoers in Vineland, New Jersey.²⁴

While Lutherans have historically equated "fruit of the vine" with "wine," Theodore Graebner contended that Jesus employed the more general term rather than οἶνος:

Yet we must not overlook the fact that Jesus calls the wine of the Sacrament by the general term 'fruit of the vine.' None of the arguments based on rabbinical lore have convinced me that this means only fermented wine. At any rate, the Lord would not establish an essential part of the sacramental act (as, for instance, the essence of the elements) on so obscure a point of Jewish usage.²⁵

In addition, Graebner offers the observation that Lutherans have always accepted either leavened or unleavened bread for the Sacrament, so:

"By what line of reasoning are we compelled to deny a genuineness of the Sacrament because unfermented wine is used when we do not deny the validity when fermented bread is used? (The process

of fermentation in both elements is the same chemically.)"²⁶

Despite these observations, Graebner adamantly opposes the use of unfermented grape juice in the Lord's Supper,²⁷ though he argues that one cannot prove the exclusive use of wine exegetically. However, one must take issue with Graebner's dismissal of "rabbinical lore." "Fruit of the vine" is not found in some obscure Talmudic passage, but in the Passover liturgy, which addresses God as "Creator of the fruit of the vine"²⁸ in the blessing of the first, third and fourth cups of wine.²⁹ At the Last Supper as Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples, the immediate context suggests that the Lord was not creating space for the use of τρύξ, but making direct reference to the wine blessed and drunk throughout the Passover meal.³⁰

Graebner is a lonely voice among the Lutherans, and perhaps the first to comment prominently after Welch's successes at pasteurization. He notes that in Walther's time, "the question of grape-juice had not yet arisen," then suggests that Walther would have supported his position given the latter's comments on freedom regarding wine in the Supper, "wenn es nur Trank vom Gewaechs des Weinstocks ist"³¹ ("as long as it is drink from the fruit of the vine"). However, when Pieper cites the same Walther quote, he does so to insist that "true wine" and "genuine wine" be used.³² When Stephenson refers to Walther's comments, he mentions, "While Walther was not obliged to confront the infiltration into Lutheran circles of the sectarian use of unfermented grape juice, his denunciation of the practical effects of ancient Gnostic error can fortify those now faced with the abuse."³³

Lutheran theologians preceding Graebner write with the assumption that wine is the proper referent of τοῦ γενήματος

23 τρύξ was collected when a vat was first filled with grapes: before pressing began, the weight of the fruit would cause some grapes to burst with little exposure to the yeast spores on the outside of the skin. This was collected by the Romans into jars: sealed and immersed in a cold river or salty water to prevent fermentation, it could be kept for up to a year (Winton, 10-11).

24 <http://www.welchs.com/about-us/our-story/our-history>

25 Theodore Graebner, *Pastor and People: Letters to a Young Preacher*, (St. Louis: CPH, 1932), 58.

26 Graebner, *Pastor and People*, 58. A quick internet search will reveal plenty of defenses of the idea that Jesus included τρύξ or meant it at the exclusion of οἶνος. Graebner's argument is at least both interesting and unencumbered by a preconceived conviction that Jesus must have used grape juice because alcohol is evil. Nevertheless, it would be a poor argument to refute those who advocate unfermented grape juice by asserting that Jesus never calls the contents of the cup τρύξ, because He never calls it οἶνος, either.

27 "I would say without any reservation that grape juice should not be substituted for fermented wine in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. I would not partake of Communion where it is celebrated under that condition and would not

affiliate with any congregation that introduced the use of grape-juice." Graebner, *Pastor and People*, 57

28 Edward A. Engelbrecht, ed. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 1763.

29 Arthur Just, *Concordia Commentary: Luke 9:51-24:53* (St. Louis: CPH, 1997),

822. For a copy of the Seder liturgy translated into English, see

http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/661624/jewish/English-Haggadah.htm. There is debate whether or not the Passover featured a fourth cup in the first century, or if it was a later addition.

30 "'Fruit of the vine' is, exegetically, synonymous with wine." (Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), 16).

31 Graebner, *Pastor and People*, 58.

32 Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* 3, 354, footnote 94.

33 Stephenson, *The Lord's Supper*, 261.

34 Triglotta, (554-5).

35 Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* 3, 354, footnote 94: "In order not to introduce an element of uncertainty into the Sacrament, one should refrain from using grape juice, since it is doubtful whether it is still 'the fruit of the vine' after having undergone the pasteurizing process. R. E., 2d ed., I, 53: 'A

τῆς ἀμπέλου. Significantly, I think, Luther wrote in the Small Catechism that the Sacrament of the Altar is “the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine (Wein),”³⁴ making no room for an expanded interpretation of “fruit of the vine.” One might argue that they did so because they wrote before the advent of pasteurized grape juice, but it is also true that the Church was already contending with heretical [Gnostic] groups that used “unfermented grape juice” or other substitutions (water, milk, honey) in the early centuries.³⁵

All of that said, however, there is very little trustworthy research available that specifically defines the semantic domain of τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου, apparently because there aren’t many clues from which to draw. Did Jesus use wine at the Passover? Undoubtedly, so one is sure he follows the Lord’s institution when he uses wine in the Sacrament. But does τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου³⁶ include or exclude τρύξι? Maybe, maybe not:³⁷ it isn’t certain, and that’s the point. If one uses τρύξι in place of wine, he can’t be as sure that it is in fact the blood of Christ that is given.³⁸

Christian Freedom and the Lord’s Supper

Christian freedom must play a part in a discussion of the elements of the Lord’s Supper, for there are aspects that are considered *adiaphora* nearly universally. The wine may be red or white, the bread leavened or unleavened. The vessel that serves as the “cup” for the wine may be a chalice, multiple chalices or even individual cups. The bread may be one large loaf broken into pieces, or individual wafers. This is not to say that each option is equally desirable, for different choices imply different symbolism and levels of reverence—a silver chalice teaches something far different than a disposable, individual plastic cup. How-

ever, none of these aspects change the essence of the elements; as Gerhard argues, “The outward, accidental and incidental qualities in no way detract from the essence of the thing.... Through these incidental characteristics, therefore, nothing is detracted from the essence of bread and wine, nor furthermore, from the essential elements of the holy Supper.”³⁹ One might twitch a bit at the use of Aristotelian categories to make the point; nevertheless, his point is that real bread and wine are to be used in the Sacrament, according to Christ’s institution.⁴⁰

In his discussion of the elements, Gerhard does the service of defining the boundaries for discussion: Christ’s institution on the one hand, and Christian freedom within that institution on the other. Thus he warns in support of the former:

If, in case of an emergency, one cannot obtain bread and wine, then it is better to omit the administration of the holy Lord’s Supper than to go against the express institution of Christ. Just as it is not to be regarded as a Baptism when the external element of water isn’t used and something else is used in its place, so also it is not a Supper of the Lord, when something else is substituted for the bread and wine.⁴¹

And on behalf of the latter:

[It is the holy Supper] just so long as it is obviously bread and wine. Accordingly, anyone who would make requirements in these matters fights against the article of Christian freedom, and he causes unnecessary offense to simple hearts within the Christian Church.⁴²

For the purposes of evaluating Christian

Gerhard does the service of defining the boundaries for discussion: Christ’s institution on the one hand, and Christian freedom within that institution on the other.

number of substitutes for wine are found among heretical sects ... the Encratites used water, others milk, honey, unfermented grape juice ... But the Church has not failed to declare all this to be improper and insisted on the use of true wine.” Pieper here is citing the *Real-encyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, Edited by J.J. Herzog and G.T. Plitt, page 53.

36 It should be noted that non-grape wines (rhubarb, blackberry, etc.) are not included in the term.

37 Curiously, after insisting on the necessity of *wheaten* bread for the hosts, the Roman Catholic Church permits τρύξι under certain conditions for those who are unable to receive wine. (Ratzinger, “Letter” and “Circular Letter.”)

38 In the discussion of pastoral practice, it’s been suggested that freshly-squeezed juice from grapes is certainly an acceptable alternative; because without pasteurization, the process of fermentation has begun and the juice is “on its way” to becoming wine. In effect, goes the argument, it is already wine but with only the slightest amounts of alcohol. In my opinion, it’s certainly closer to Christ’s institution than pasteurized grape juice, as the process of pasteurization is employed specifically to *prevent* the certainty of wine. However, one should make the argument with accurate

information: Maurine Johnson, winemaker for the St. Chapelle Winery in Caldwell, Idaho, writes that it is true that grape juice “will ferment on its own if not filtered, refrigerated and otherwise preserved,” which delays—but does not prevent—fermentation. However, this doesn’t mean that fermentation is immediate: because “yeast spend a certain amount of time in log phase, which is building the population” before converting to alcoholic fermentation, it will be several hours before minute traces of alcohol are present (correspondence with Johnson, May 28, 2015). Freshly-squeezed grape juice is to wine sort of as unbaked bread dough is to bread: it might be “on its way,” but it hasn’t quite arrived.

39 Gerhard, *A Comprehensive Explanation*, 230

40 “Genuine natural bread, baked from flour and water, is used for the holy Supper by virtue of Christ’s institution. But it is not specified that the bread be large or small, or whether, in preparation for the celebration, one breaks it into pieces prior to or during the distribution; in the same way, whether it is baked round or long [loaf], just so it is actually bread. So also, whether the wine is red or white, old or new, nothing depends on that; just so it is the vintage of a wine-vine.” (Gerhard, *A Comprehensive Explanation*, 230)

41 Gerhard, *A Comprehensive Explanation*, 229.

42 Gerhard, *A Comprehensive Explanation*, 230-231.

Lacking a definite answer, it's left to move to the next question: is "less sure" sure enough?

freedom and the "fruit of the vine," the best comparison is to the example of leavened or unleavened bread. Graebner rightly points out that both leavened bread and wine make use of yeast and fermentation; thus Graebner argues that if either leavened or unleavened bread is acceptable for the Supper, so also is either leavened or unleavened "fruit of the vine" acceptable. It's a fair argument if one is arguing on the basis of chemistry, but a better question is how Scripture treats the terms. Within Scripture, ἄρτος by itself may be either leavened or unleavened bread: the bread that Jesus breaks at the Last Supper is clearly unleavened because it is Passover (the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Luke 22:1), even though the ἄρτος is not modified by ἄζυμος during the institution of the Supper. Within the Bible then, bread may be either leavened or unleavened.

There is no such thing as unleavened wine in Scripture. But is there such a thing as unleavened "fruit of the vine"? We are back to where we were before: it all depends if τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου is a direct reference to the Passover blessing of wine, or if it is a general description that may include both οἶνος and τρύξι. Thus we're back to the same answer: we're sure that οἶνος is included, but less sure about τρύξι.⁴³

Lacking a definite answer, it's left to move to the next question: is "less sure" sure enough?⁴⁴

A consensus here is an unattainable luxury. Take, for instance, these two Lutheran books on pastoral theology, both of which acknowledge the uncertainty of the inclusion of τρύξι in the institution—yet which differ on pastoral counsel. On the one hand, Schuetze and Habeck delicately opine, "Since the term used for the contents of the grape is 'fruit of the vine,' the use of unfermented grape juice in case of an emergency cannot be considered invalid."⁴⁵ Mueller and Kraus, on the other hand, lean

against: "Nonalcoholic grape juice, a pasteurized product of the nineteenth century, is not referred to in the institution of Christ, and its use in the sacrament raises a question whether the words of Christ have been followed or not."⁴⁶

Indeed, it seems where two or three are gathered, there will be four different opinions.

Pastoral Considerations

Amounts

In many exceptional cases, the pastor is able to find an acceptable remedy with the elements normally used in the congregation: those who suffer interfering health problems will have a wide range of sensitivity to the offending substance, as well as severity of a reaction. For many, the solution may be a smaller piece of the host. Those who struggle with alcoholism may be able to receive the blood of Christ as long as they do not sense the wine in taste or odor; thus a drop of wine diffused in a chalice of water may resolve the issue. Intinction preserves the elements, although it does start to stray from the institution of eating and drinking.

Such remedies are known. This paper is meant to address more difficult cases, where an individual is unable or unwilling to withstand the slightest bit of some ingredient, leading to the consideration of gluten-free bread and unfermented grape juice.

One Kind

Though hardly an ideal solution, communion in one kind has a place in consideration. The Lutheran Confessions speak of communion in both kinds in several places (CA and Apology XXII; SA III:VI; FC EP/SD VII); and though they speak to a different topic (withholding of one kind from the laity), there is some help here. The Confessions are insistent

43 Thus the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), after stating that "fruit of the vine" is synonymous with "wine" (see footnote 30), doesn't condemn the use of unfermented grape juice outright, but says only that "The substitution of grape juice raises the question of whether the Lord's instruction is being heeded." (CTCR, *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*, 1983, 16)

44 From here, more doubt can further assist a pastor in tying himself up in knots: if he can't reach satisfactory answer as to which elements are permissible, then he's going to be uncertain as to whether or not he's providing the best pastoral care for the individuals in need.

45 Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck. *The Shepherd Under Christ* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1974), 92. This book is published by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which promotes the acceptability of unfermented grape juice in the Supper when necessary.

46 Norbert H. Mueller and George Kraus. *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1990), 97. This book is published by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which discourages the use of unfermented grape juice in the Supper.

on communion in both kinds, most of all because it is faithful to the Lord's institution. However, the reason that imbues these articles is the certainty of receiving Christ's gifts, and the joy that both kinds are given by Christ for His people. In contrast, the Confessions do not present a legalistic argument that our adherence earns or causes the Lord's presence and grace; it is not that our following His institution effects His presence, but that our failure to do so precludes it.

The Confessions thus condemn the Roman church for legalism in the sense that their manmade decrees prevent the laity from receiving the blood of Christ; and likewise the Sacramentarians, because their denial of the Real Presence means that they receive only bread and wine.

In his considerations, the pastor should keep both the Scylla and the Charybdis in mind. If one pursues the purity of elements too far, he will be guilty of legalism—making up rules that prevent reception of Christ's body and blood.⁴⁷ The intent may be sincere, but the result is legalistic all the same. On the other hand, if one disregards the nature of the elements too much, he risks a supper that is his and not the Lord's, where the elements do not deliver the body and blood of Christ.

How far is too far? Again, Scripture does not provide a clear answer. This line of thought is not provided here to clarify when bread is bread and wine is wine, but to help the pastor examine his own thoughts and motives in the decisions he makes and the care he provides.

People

Like it or not, the pastor's own faith is one of those with which he must be concerned, because a pastor who is uncertain about the Sacrament he distributes risks either a troubled conscience or a blunted one. The snares of

legalism and doctrinal apathy look to lead him to one or the other, and they often disguise themselves as proper distinctions of Law and Gospel. The pastor also needs to examine himself regarding emotional attachment, ensuring that he is evaluating the situation from the perspective of Christ's Word, not out of feelings toward those entrusted to his care, be they fondness or annoyance. For the sake of the weaker brother, he may need to sacrifice a bit of personal comfort; and if he errs, it should be on the side of Christian charity and not legalism. Mutual conversation and consolation with fellow pastors can't be recommended highly enough.

There are plenty of considerations about the faith of the communicant, too, of course; and in each case where the individual wants to depart from the normal elements on the altar, his reasoning must be explored. The communicant's answer may indicate a false belief, such as the idea that the recipient's faith—not Christ's institution—makes the element worthy.

The communicant's response may also betray a false idol. A gluten allergy is often a legitimate concern, depending on the individual's sensitivity to stimuli and severity of reaction (or he may have just read an article on the internet and imagined a worst-case scenario that doesn't apply to him); on the other hand, one who wants grape juice because wine isn't part of his diet plan has probably made an idol out of flesh or fitness. It is not unknown for alcoholics or other addicts to play on victimization, and thus to demand an option for the sake of being noticed; or to risk making alcoholism into an idol of fear. When such idols are found, the application of Law and Gospel continues: is the communicant demanding a change in service to the idol, or because he recognizes his sin and dearly desires forgiveness and deliverance?

While there may be pressure to resolve the matter in a timely fashion,

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47 Along with pursuits to pinpoint the varieties of the apostolic era, a similar danger would be trying to determine the exact kind of wheat used in 1st century Jerusalem. For the record, emmer wheat, durum wheat, spelt and bread wheat were all in use at the time of Christ; once a staple of the Middle East, emmer wheat is no longer used. While sometimes compared to buckwheat, none of them are related; the comparison likely comes from the size of the seed before farmers developed wheat to produce grains larger than buckwheat. Because of this genetic manipulation, the wheat seeds of today differ from those used in New Testament times although the basic genetics remain the same: wheat is still wheat. (Email conversation with Dr. Martin Friedrichs, June 25, 2015)

When it comes to walking together, the administration of the Sacrament should be at the top of the list of sensitive issues.

there is no divinely-imposed schedule for catechesis, and patient instruction will often be the best path to resolution.⁴⁸

The sphere of consideration expands beyond the pastor and the individual communicant, because this is the Lord's Supper for His Church, not just individual Christians. Pastoral care of the individual must take into account the entire congregation; and if any changes are made to a congregation's practice, they must be preceded by the pastor teaching the congregation.⁴⁹ The purpose is certainty: the congregation must be catechized when changes to the practice of the Supper are made, lest they begin to doubt that Christ Himself is present—or begin to make false assumptions about what makes it a holy Communion.

Considerations expand from there, because pastoral care of individuals can ripple through a circuit and beyond. Pastors know too well the parishioner's argument, "But the pastor down the road does it!" Within the LCMS, the constitutional exception about inexpediency of bylaws⁵⁰ has been sometimes misinterpreted as the right of pastor and congregation to do whatever seems right in their own eyes—and thus poking the eyes of others in the process. There is no easy or quick remedy; but a start is that pastors keep in mind what effect their decisions will have on brother pastors and sister congregations. When it comes to walking together, the administration of the Sacrament should be at the top of the list of sensitive issues.⁵¹

At the same time, one ought not react too quickly and harshly to a pastor with a more expansive view of *adiaphora* in the Lord's Supper, as one who holds to wheat-and-wine-only will be tempted to treat one who permits gluten-free bread and unpasteurized grape juice. The latter is not automatically a Gnostic heretic; in fact, his practice *might* be acceptable to the Lord, though unverifiably so to us. Remember: within the realm of this discussion, we are stuck with the contin-

uum of certain to uncertain, not a definitive right versus wrong.

Confession

The acceptability of some practices may vary because of a time of confession. It is well-known that breaking the bread at the distribution in Lutheran churches was no longer an acceptable *adiaphora* for a time, because it appeared to confess the Reformed denial of the Real Presence. Besides such a time of confession, there is simply the consideration of what various practices teach: plastic cups hold liquid and bread that scatters crumbs is bread, but the use of such in the Supper may easily imply irreverence for the Lord's body and blood.

Culture will play a part as well—not in the suitability of elements, but the individual's perception of their worthiness. Growing up in the Pacific Northwest where it isn't so common, cornbread has always struck me as a delicacy—more like a brownie than "bread." Though corn flour meets Walther's standard, it would take some serious mental processing on my part to consider "cornbread" to be "bread." It doesn't mean it's not bread; this is my problem, not the cornbread's.

"Emergency" Communion and the Consequences of Being Wrong

It's often said that there is no such thing as an emergency communion. If someone is unable to partake in the Lord's Supper, the grace given in his Baptism is still offered by means of the Lord's absolution. If even communion in one kind is an unacceptable option, it is better to refrain from the Supper than to participate in such a way that troubles one's conscience.

On the other hand, while one advocates neither intentional error nor undue risk, what are the consequences of being wrong? What if, for instance, Curtis' position is correct and only wheaten bread is appropriate for Holy Communion?

48 "A similar pastoral problem is posed by those rare instances where a severe physical reaction is caused by the elements (as, for example, when the recipient is concurrently taking certain medications, or is simply allergic to one or the other of the elements). The pastor, in such cases, will surely stress the Gospel's power and total effectiveness in the individual's life and patiently seek a practical solution that both honors Christ's word and satisfies the desire to partake in the Lord's Supper." (CTCR, *Theology and Practice*, 15)

49 See footnote 10.

50 See LCMS Constitution, Article VII:1.

51 In his paper, Curtis notes that the 2001 LCMS convention approved (by the significant margin of 814-184) Resolution 3-16, resolving that "congregations be encouraged to use only wine for the sacrament." (Curtis, 11)

ion? What would this mean for churches that have followed Walther's position and made use of barley for the sacramental bread? Perhaps they have received bread, wine and the blood of Christ—but not the body; or perhaps they have rendered the entire Sacrament invalid by ignoring part of the Lord's institution, and so receive only bread and wine.⁵² However, this does not necessarily make them Gnostic heretics who deny the presence of Christ in material elements, but Christians who have misunderstood the Words of Institution. They have then perhaps cost themselves forgiveness in the Sacrament, but remain in their baptismal grace renewed by means of God's Word. If the Sacramentarians' error of intentionally changing the meaning of Christ's words results in having only bread and wine,⁵³ then the error of unintentionally using an invalid bread would surely result in nothing worse. Likewise, pastoral counsel to one who has previously received pasteurized grape juice at the altar would certainly include the assurance that the individual had received the grace of Christ by means of Baptism and the Word, and that His grace also covers those sins we commit—or may have committed—unknowingly.

Good, Better, Best

Within those elements that are acceptable for use in the Lord's Supper, there will be some that are better than others for a variety of reasons.⁵⁴ One might, for instance, establish the following hierarchy of breads for use in the Sacrament, from "best" to "acceptable."⁵⁵

1. Wheat, both because of its prominent use in Old Testament grain offerings and its traditional and catholic use in the Church throughout history
2. Barley, because of its common use in breads in biblical times
3. Other grains of the ancient Middle East: e.g., rye, millet and spelt
4. Other grains of the Middle East,

but cultivated later in history: e.g., oats

5. Other grains unknown in the ancient Middle East: e.g., corn, which is first discovered in the Americas
6. Communion in one kind (wine only)

Regarding the one who must adhere to a gluten-free diet, a low-gluten wheaten host is better than one made of rice or sorghum.⁵⁶

One might likewise establish a hierarchy of wine as follows:

1. Wine
2. Diluted wine
3. Dealcoholized wine, which still contains a minute portion of alcohol
4. Intinction
5. Communion in one kind (bread only)

Clearly, some elements are better than others; but others are efficacious too.

An Inconclusive Conclusion

As for Henry and Emily, with whom I began, I developed a plan of pastoral care for each with the assistance of research, prayerful deliberation and the fraternal counsel of others. After consideration, I've chosen not to reveal the outcome in this paper, lest I become "the pastor down the road" whose practice is used by some to pressure their own minister. Instead, I close with a word of grace that extends also to the pastor, called to care for the souls of Christ's people and administer the Sacrament according to Christ's institution. As he endeavors to shepherd the sheep faithfully, his vocation will be wrought with all sorts of uncertainties in a sinful world. He also is not saved by a flawless lifetime work of pastoring, or by guessing the correct direction perfectly when confronted with doubt-filled situations. It is given to him to minister faithfully,

Within those elements that are acceptable for use in the Lord's Supper, there will be some that are better than others for a variety of reasons.

⁵² "To preserve this true Christian doctrine about the Holy Supper, and to avoid and abolish many idolatrous abuses and perversions of this testament, the following useful rule and standard has been derived from the words of institution: Nothing has the nature of a Sacrament apart from the use instituted by Christ or apart from the action divinely instituted. This means, if Christ's institution is not kept as He appointed it, then there is no Sacrament. This is by no means to be rejected, but can and should be encouraged and maintained with benefit in God's Church. The use or action here does not mean chiefly faith. Nor does it mean the oral participation alone. It means the entire external, visible action of the Lord's Supper instituted by Christ: the consecration, or words of institution, the distribution and reception, or oral partaking of the consecrated bread and wine, of Christ's body and blood. Apart from this use, it is to be regarded as no Sacrament..." (FC SD VII:85-87a; McCain, 575-576)

⁵³ FC SD VII:32

⁵⁴ The gradation of practice goes back to the earliest Christians. See, for instance, Didache VII, which for Holy Baptism prefers "running water" to "other water," cold water to warm, and immersion to pouring.

⁵⁵ I'm indebted to members of the Doxology Collegium, and especially Dr. John Kleinig, for this avenue of thought.

⁵⁶ The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Missouri, have developed a wheaten host which is tested to contain only 0.01% gluten, available for purchase online. Depending on the gluten-allergy sufferer's sensitivity, this may be a very helpful solution.

avoid willful ignorance of the Lord's
Word, and rejoice that the blood of Jesus
Christ also cleanses him from all of his
sins. ☩

*It is given to him
to minister
faithfully, avoid
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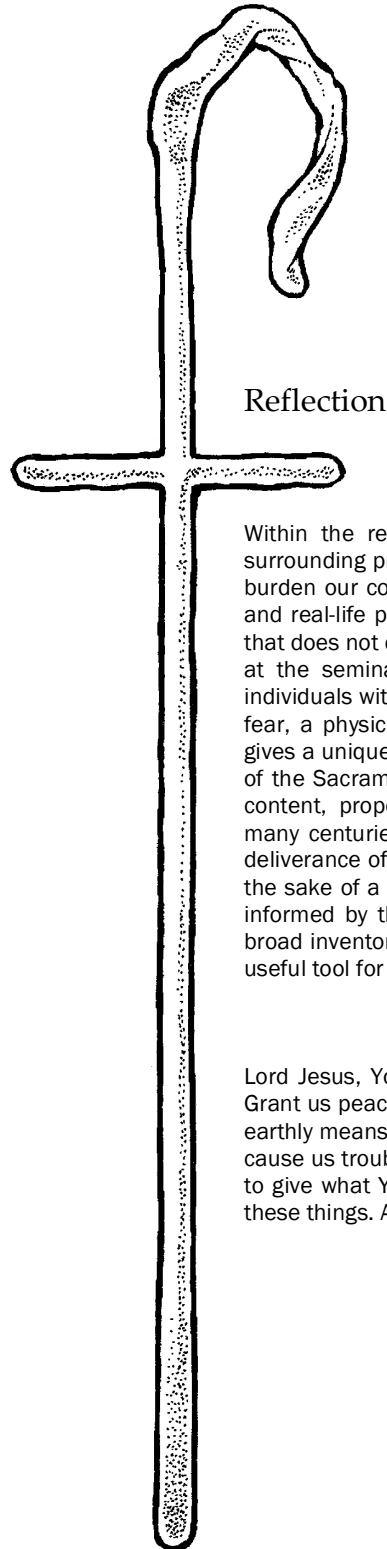
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Reflection

Within the realm of the care of souls, every pastor experiences uncertainty. Doubts surrounding proper use and practice have a tendency to wreak havoc on our thoughts and burden our consciences. These fears originate at the intersection of theological precision and real-life practical application. Somewhere in the middle of this juncture is a situation that does not quite fit the “textbook-tidy” molds we learned in our pastoral theology classes at the seminary. The pastor soon discovers that in the world of *seelsorge* there are individuals within the greater church-militant that struggle with a specific need, a particular fear, a physical ailment, and perhaps other factors that impact pastoral practice. Pauls gives a unique sampling of some of these encumbrances that affect faithful administration of the Sacrament of the Altar. He delves into the deeper issues of appropriate elemental content, proper administration, practical concerns broached by the church-at-large for many centuries, and most importantly — that which is at the very heart of all this — the deliverance of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins to those we have been called to serve. For the sake of a good conscience in the faithful administration of the Sacrament of the Altar informed by the Word of God is the fundamental objective for this important work. The broad inventory of practical considerations makes this article very informative as well as a useful tool for the pastor.



Lord Jesus, You are the very substance of eternal life given for us in Your Holy Supper. Grant us peace of mind and heart to know Your forgiving work granted within these simple earthly means of bread and wine. In matters of uncertainty that plague our conscience and cause us trouble, help us realize that You remain Lord of The Supper and that You promise to give what Your Word says You will give. In Your holy and most precious name we pray these things. Amen.

- *Pastor Tyler Arnold*