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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *wei-*  
*den*, also dass er die Schafe unter-  
weise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen  
sein, sondern auch daneben den Woel-  
fen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht  
angreifen und mit falscher Lehre ver-  
fuehren und Irrtum einfuehren.

*Luther*

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute  
mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn  
die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24*

If the trumpet give an uncertain  
sound, who shall prepare himself to  
the battle? — *1 Cor. 14:8*

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## Christian Fellowship

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The following article on "Christian Fellowship" is the second part of the essay "The Scriptural Content of *κοινωνία*, Its Manifestations and Restrictions upon Such Manifestations," the first part of which: "Fellowship with God," appeared in the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, Vol. XV, 505 ff. To give the reader an overview and enable him to follow the line of thought more easily, we epitomize the contents in the subjoined outline.

### I

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### IV\*

#### Restrictions upon Manifestations of Fellowship

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2. Restrictions Resulting from Unscriptural Doctrine and Practice.

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\* The section of the article treating this point will be published in one of the succeeding issues.

## CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

## I

## The Essence of Christian Fellowship

Christian fellowship is the inner unity of faith and hope and love. It results from our Christian fellowship with God; the former cannot exist without the latter. They are inseparable. Κοινωνία is derived from κοινωνός. Fellowship exists among those who have something in common, κοινωνόν τι ἔχουσιν. Christian fellowship exists among those who share Christ and the riches of His grace.

What we have in common is perhaps nowhere said with greater force and fullness than in Eph. 4:4-6: "There is *one* body and *one* Spirit, even as ye are called in *one* hope of your calling: *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* Baptism, *one* God and Father of *all*, who is above *all* and through *all* and in you *all*." The two words that dominate these verses are "one" and "all." Through faith in Christ, our common Savior, we all share all the blessings that "God hath prepared for them that love Him."<sup>1)</sup> Faith in Christ puts us into the proper relationship with God and, at the same time, into the right relationship with one another. Through faith in Christ we are *one* body, the mystical body of Christ, the Church. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are *one* body, so also is Christ."<sup>2)</sup> Rightly do we speak of the UNA SANCTA.

This one body is animated by *one Spirit*. There is one Spirit pervading the Church, who alone supplies the saving merits of Christ to all believers and unites each regenerate individual to the Head. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and [we] have been all made to drink into one Spirit."<sup>3)</sup> Aristotle defines friendship as "one soul dwelling in two bodies." Christian fellowship is something more exalted and far more comprehensive. It is one Spirit, the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the hearts of *all* believers. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," Acts 4:32.

Not only so, but we are united by *one hope*, for Paul continues: "Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν." We are animated by *one* hope, guided by *one* star, and striving for *one* goal. Whether we take the ἐν before μιᾷ ἐλπίδι as instrumental or as denoting the element in which the calling takes place, there can be no doubt about the meaning. When we are called into fellowship with Christ, there are held out to us "the riches of the glory of His

1) 1 Cor. 2:9.

2) 1 Cor. 12:12.

3) 1 Cor. 12:13.

inheritance in the saints,"<sup>4)</sup> "the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away";<sup>5)</sup> and it is the same hope which is held out to *all* of us. We are all partakers of the *one* blessed hope that "when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."<sup>6)</sup> Inspired by one hope, we are fellow travelers (a *συνοδία*, a synod) on the narrow road which leads unto life eternal.

Augustine has somewhere said that the only thing which effectually unites men is a common desire for the *same ends*. According as we share in this one great hope, we shall feel ourselves as brethren. We observe this beautiful sequence of thought also in Rom. 15:4-6, where Paul writes: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you [who have this *same hope*] to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." From "the hope of glory" common to all believers Paul passes at once to the duty of affectionate unanimity. The stronger the sense of peace and hope in each individual believer, the more would the believing community be lifted above the littleness of controversies. It is said that Steele and Tickell were on good terms; but they loved Addison too much to love each other, and at length became as bitter enemies as the rival bulls in Vergil. The relationship of Christians is wholly different. The closer they are united with Christ, and the more profoundly they love their common Savior, the more kindly affectioned they are toward one another.

From the hope which all Christians have in common Paul turns to the *common ground* for holding it: "*One Lord, one faith, one Baptism.*" We all believe in one Lord Jesus as the only Mediator, who gave Himself a ransom for all. "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the *same Lord* over all is rich unto *all* that call upon Him."<sup>7)</sup> We are all baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins. Applying Paul's words concerning Israel of the old covenant to the Christians of the new, we may say: "We all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drink the same spiritual drink, for we all drink of that spiritual Rock, which is Christ."<sup>8)</sup>

Through faith in the one Lord Jesus we are the children of "*one God and Father, who is above all, and through all, and in*

4) Eph. 1:18.

6) Col. 3:4.

8) 1 Cor. 10:4.

5) 1 Pet. 1:4.

7) Rom. 10:12.



you *all*.”<sup>9)</sup> The emphasis in this verse is not on the three prepositions *over* all and *through* all and *in* you all, but on *all*. The word “all” occurs no less than four times in v. 6. It is *one* God and Father who rules and watches over *all* believers, one God and Father who works through *all* His children, one God and Father who dwells in *all* those that are His.

Fellowship among believers — what a wonderful, comforting thought, especially in our day, when men and nations are rent asunder by war and hatred! All Christians the world over, regardless of race, nationality, age, sex, and station in life, constitute one spiritual family which we call the communion of saints. *Koinonía* among believers is truly international; it transcends class distinctions, party differences, national boundaries, and even battle lines. Christians may differ ever so much as to ancestry, education, habits, pursuits, political convictions — a living faith in the Christ of God binds them all closely together, so closely, in fact, that Paul in writing a letter to Philemon, the master, can call him a fellow laborer, dearly beloved,<sup>10)</sup> and in that same letter ask the *master*, Philemon, to receive his run-a-way, but converted *slave*, Onesimus, not only as a slave, but “above a servant, a *brother* beloved . . . in the Lord.”<sup>11)</sup> Blessed be the tie that knits together the hearts of men in such a unique fellowship!

Summing up, then, this sublime thought, of which, alas, we are all too little conscious, to the detriment of the Church and its blessed work, we may say: A deep and vital *koinonía* unites all Christians; for they have in common the *summum bonum* vainly sought by man-made religions and sterile systems of human philosophy: one redemption, one forgiveness, one heritage, one Spirit, one Savior, one Father.<sup>12)</sup> “We are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”<sup>13)</sup> and, if children of our heavenly Father, then brothers and sisters of one another. We like to think of ourselves as children of God, and we should. The thought of our divine sonship should thrill us to the very depths of our being as it did the beloved disciple when he exclaimed: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.”<sup>14)</sup> To be children of God is our highest dignity. But let us also think of ourselves as brothers and sisters

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9) While there is scant evidence for the ὑμῖν of the Textus Receptus, considerable evidence for the reading ἡμῖν and a preponderance against any pronoun, the context is clearly a reference to the Church. As the whole context shows, Paul is here thinking of God's relation to His people, not of His sovereignty over the universe.

10) Philemon 2.

11) Philemon 16. Cp. also Gal. 3:28.

12) Micah 7:18; Acts 17:23.

13) Gal. 3:26.

14) 1 John 3:1.

of our fellow Christians, who are, if we may use these words, fellow redeemed, fellow called, fellow sanctified, fellow justified, and fellow heirs of the glory which shall be revealed. "The mystery of Christ . . . is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." <sup>15)</sup> Oh, that we might comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height of Christian fellowship!

Stoeckhardt says aptly: "Der christliche Glaube ist, wenn man sich so ausdruecken will, das vornehmste soziale Prinzip." The Christian Church is a social or "communistic" state in a most exalted sense. Its members have all things in common in a far higher sense than the members of the mother church at Jerusalem shared their earthly possessions. They all share equally the greatest blessings in heaven and earth: the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. "Of His fullness have we *all* received, and grace for grace." "The Church is not only the fellowship of outward objects and rites, as other governments, but it is originally a fellowship of faith and of the Holy Ghost in hearts." <sup>16)</sup>

Elect from every nation,  
Yet one o'er all the earth,  
Her charter of salvation  
One Lord, one faith, one birth.  
One holy name she blesses,  
Partakes one holy food,  
And to one hope she presses,  
With every grace endued.

The precious truth that all who say that Jesus is the Lord are intimately related to one another is emphasized by other striking metaphors besides that of the human body.<sup>17)</sup> Christians are called a house<sup>18)</sup> or a temple of God,<sup>19)</sup> in which the individual Christians are living stones fitly framed together;<sup>20)</sup> a city of the living God;<sup>21)</sup> a holy nation;<sup>22)</sup> a commonwealth, in which the believers are fellow citizens;<sup>23)</sup> a family,<sup>24)</sup> in which we are sons and daughters of our Father in heaven;<sup>25)</sup> a royal priesthood,<sup>26)</sup> in

15) Eph. 3:4-6. V. 6: εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύνσωμα καὶ συνμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

16) Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. VII and VIII (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 227).

17) Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 12:13; 12:27; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19.

18) 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17.

19) 2 Cor. 6:16.                      23) Eph. 2:19.

20) Eph. 2:21.                      24) Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10.

21) Heb. 12:22.                      25) 2 Cor. 6:18.

22) 1 Pet. 2:9.                      26) 1 Pet. 2:9.

which all those who are washed from their sins are kings and priests together; <sup>27)</sup> branches of the one Vine, from whom they all draw strength and sustenance; <sup>28)</sup> one fold, in which all believers are sheep of the one Good Shepherd; <sup>29)</sup> the Church consisting of all those who have been called out of the *massa perditā* into fellowship with God.<sup>30)</sup>

## II

### The Source of Christian Fellowship

The glorious fellowship of the believers with one another, like the fellowship with God, is not man-made, but a creation of God. If faith, which makes us children of God, is wholly the work of God and His Spirit,<sup>31)</sup> then we also owe our Christian brotherhood to the regenerating power of the God of all grace. "Of Him the whole family in heaven and earth is named."<sup>32)</sup>

The blessed fellowship which binds men's hearts so intimately together in the Christian Church is rooted in the eternal counsel of God, according to which He chose *us* (the plural should be noted in this entire passage) in Christ before the foundation of the world to be His children, and therefore brothers in one holy family.<sup>33)</sup> It was the gracious purpose of God in the dispensation of the fullness of time to gather together in *one* all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth.<sup>34)</sup>

Again, Christian fellowship was made possible by *Christ* and His atoning work. He prayed for its consummation in the night in which He was betrayed.<sup>35)</sup> By Him (Eph. 1:5) the Father predestinated us unto the adoption of children, and the Son made possible this adoption by His vicarious atonement, by His life and death. The redeeming work of Christ possesses not only redemptive, but also unifying power. By His death Christ not only reconciled men unto God, but also established brotherly relations among men. The Law with all its ordinances and precepts created a barrier between God's chosen people and the Gentiles; a veritable

27) Rev. 1:6.

28) John 15:1 ff.

29) John 10:16.

30) Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23; *et al.*

31) Col. 2:12.

32) Eph. 3:15. Although it seems preferable to render *πᾶσα πατριὰ* with "every family," the translation of the A. V. is not untenable on syntactical grounds. In Eph. 2:21 *πάση οἰκοδομῇ* is used without the article; yet the truth of the organic unity of the Church there set forth virtually demands the translation "the whole building." For this force of *πᾶς* without the article see also Col. 1:15; 1 Pet. 1:15.

33) Eph. 1:5.

34) Eph. 1:9, 10. V. 10: ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. It seems to suit the context best if we restrict the *τὰ πάντα* in this verse to the children of God, who are spoken of in this entire passage.

35) John 17:20, 21.

state of enmity existed between the two; however, since Christ has come, the cause of this enmity has been removed. "He is our Peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] *one*, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, [thereby] having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." <sup>36)</sup> Through Him *we both* have access by one Spirit unto the Father.<sup>37)</sup>

It is the ascended Lord who gives apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, as gifts to His Church, to build the body of Christ and to promote its unity.<sup>38)</sup> From Him, as the source of energy and direction, the whole body is closely joined and knit together.<sup>39)</sup> "He was to gather together in *one* the children of God that were abroad." <sup>40)</sup> Of this mission the Great Shepherd Himself said: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and there shall be *one* fold and *one* Shepherd." <sup>41)</sup> And He made good His word. "He, Christ, came and preached peace to you which were afar off [the Gentiles] and to them which were nigh [the Jews]." <sup>42)</sup> This coming and preaching extends throughout the New Testament until all the children of God are gathered together in the *una sancta*.

Finally, the fellowship among believers is ascribed also to the *Holy Spirit*. Paul calls the unity which exists among the saints of God a unity of the *Spirit*.<sup>43)</sup> The Holy Spirit creates this unity and preserves it. He establishes Christian *κοινωνία* by kindling faith in the hearts of all believers. Luther has beautifully given expression to this thought in the explanation of the Third Article, where we confess: "I believe that the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; *even as* He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the *whole* Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the *one* true faith."

The blessed work of leading men into the fellowship with one another in the Christian Church is effected through the Word, and the Word only. John writes in his First Letter: "That which we have seen and heard *declare* we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and, truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." <sup>44)</sup> Our Savior prayed: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me *through their word*, that they all may be *one*." <sup>45)</sup> According to these and similar statements, men can come into fellowship with

36) Eph. 2:14, 15.

37) Eph. 2:18.

38) Eph. 4:11-13.

39) Eph. 4:16.

40) John 11:52.

41) John 10:16.

42) Eph. 2:17.

43) Eph. 4:3.

44) 1 John 1:3.

45) John 17:20, 21.

the Father and with one another only through the word of the Apostles and Prophets. If faith comes by hearing that Word, then Christian fellowship, which is established by faith, can come only by a believing acceptance of the Word of faith, the Gospel of our salvation.

It is well that we emphasize this truth anew in our day, when union of all Christians is sought by means *other* than the Word. Co-operation in externals is urged; co-ordination in welfare work is advocated; representative gatherings, with social problems on the agenda, are envisioned in the hope that Christendom may somehow be brought closer together. Doctrinal differences are to be ignored, which is another way of saying: The Word containing the doctrines is to be shelved in the effort to establish fellowship among churches. However, according to the Scriptures, Christian fellowship is essentially a "unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."<sup>46)</sup> How, then, can fellowship be effected and promoted by anything but the Word and the Christ it brings. All that are of the truth and hear His voice are brought into fellowship with one another through the Word. "Der Segen und das Heil bruederlicher Eintracht, die in der Welt nicht zu finden ist, waechst nicht auf dem Boden der Natur, sondern nur auf dem der auf das Reich Gottes beschaenkten Gnade."<sup>47)</sup>

### III

## Manifestations of Christian Fellowship

### 1. Joint Worship

(Gathering to hear the Word, participation in the Holy Supper, uniting in prayer)

We now come to treat some of the manifestations of Christian fellowship. We say advisedly "some," because this paper naturally cannot be exhaustive, but must limit itself to those which appear to be most important in our congregational and synodical life.

It goes without saying that there *are* manifestations of Christian fellowship. Men who have something in common, will give expression to their *κοινωνία* in one way or another. Should it be different among Christians, who are joint partakers not merely of blessings that perish but of those which are imperishable? In the life of persons re-created by the Spirit of fellowship, self-contained isolation is impossible and unthinkable. "Ein Christenmensch lebet nicht in ihm selber, sondern in Christo und seinem Naechsten: in Christo durch den Glauben, im Naechsten durch die Liebe."<sup>48)</sup>

46) Eph. 4:13.

47) Hengstenberg's pointed remark on Ps. 133:3.

48) Luther, St. Louis ed., Vol. XIX:1011.

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another," 1 John 1:6. "Dann wandeln wir rechtschaffen im Lichte, wenn wir dessen Widerschein mit Liebesfreude wahrnehmen in Gottes Heiligen und Geliebten; unsere gliedliche Gemeinschaft mit den Bruedern, die im Lichte wandeln, laesst uns wissen, dass wir Gemeinschaft haben mit dem Vater des Lichts. Gleichwie zwei oder drei Leuchter, die man in einem Saale anzuendet, nicht zwei oder drei separierte Lichtschichten bilden, sondern in *ein Licht* zusammenscheinen, weil das Licht etwas Unterteiltes und Unteilbares ist: ebenso haben zwei oder drei Christen, welche in dem *einen* Lichte Gottes wandeln, Gemeinschaft untereinander, und es ist nicht moeglich, dass ein jeder fuer sich allein, unbekuemmert um den andern, des Lichtes sich freuen sollte." 49)

It is highly significant that the first characterization which is given of the three thousand that received the Word and were baptized on the first Pentecost is this: "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayers." 50) An inner, spiritual fellowship had been established among them by their repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and forthwith there was concrete evidence of this fellowship. Nor was this manifestation something transitory. From the aorists "*ἐβαπτίσθησαν καὶ προσετέθησαν*, there were baptized and added," which mark the punctiliar action that occurred but once on that first Pentecost, Luke immediately shifts to the periphrastic imperfect, "*ἦσαν προσκατεροῦντες*, they continued steadfastly," to express the permanence of their adherence to the doctrine of the Apostles and fellowship. Fellowship is nothing sporadic; it continues to manifest itself in the life of all Christians.

It is unnatural for a normal child to play alone. If it has no brothers or sisters, it will invariably seek the companionship and association of other children. Should it be otherwise with a child of God? Brothers who are brothers not merely in name but in deed and in truth desire to be together. They have much in common. It is but natural, therefore, that they want to be with each other, share their joys and sorrows, and promote their common welfare. All believers are brethren in Christ. They have one God and Father. Jerusalem, which is above, is the spiritual mother of us all. Surely, then, we cannot but feel an ardent desire to be in each other's company, to sing, to pray, to rejoice, together over the priceless treasures that are ours, to build ourselves up in our most holy faith, and to work together in the closest harmony for the cause which is near and dear to our heart. Healthy, joyous

49) Besser, *Bibelstunden*, Vol. V, p. 36.

50) Acts 2:42.

congregational life must be the spontaneous fruit of Christian *κοινωνία*.

"Bunyan has a few solitary men on the highway, and these are among his finest characters—an Honest, a Valiant, and a Steadfast; but he soon brings them up with the main band. That was one of the golden days of Christian's pilgrimage when he overtook Faithful. Their souls mated at once. 'And I saw in my dreams,' writes Bunyan, 'that they went very lovingly together, and had sweet discourse of all things that had happened to them in their pilgrimage.' Life under such genial conditions becomes luxurious; winter gives way to spring."<sup>51</sup>

Now, which are some of the manifestations of Christian fellowship? They have already been indicated by a reference to Acts 2:42. The first is that we *fellowship in hearing the Word*. Let us bear in mind, we are now not speaking of communing with God in secret, but of *joint* worship. What we do alone we also like to do together, and oftentimes more so. When we eat, we do not like to eat alone; when we drive through the country, we like to go with others. A smiling landscape seems twice as beautiful when we gaze upon it in the company of like-minded nature lovers. A delicious meal tastes twice as good when eaten together with congenial table companions. Could it be otherwise among those who eat the same food in the kingdom of God? Shall we not like to sup together, drinking the wine and milk offered at the table prepared by Eternal Love? Shall we not enjoy walking together in the garden of God and plucking the fragrant flowers of our Savior's precious promises? The first Christians at Jerusalem "continued daily with one accord in the Temple, praising God."<sup>52</sup> They felt an irrepressible desire to gather around the Apostles and jointly hear their word.

So it is with all Christians. They are glad when they can go to the house of God with the multitude of them that keep holy day. Shut-ins deplore the fact that they cannot hear and sing, pray and commune, *with* the worshiping congregation. While they are genuinely grateful for the private ministrations of their pastor, they cannot suppress a fervent longing for the *public* service. "Their soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord."

As we forgive in the house of the Lord with forgiven men and women, the brotherhood promise of Psalm 133 is fulfilled: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to *dwell together* in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head

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51) Jane T. Stoddart, quoted in F. W. Boreham, *The Passing of John Broadbanks*, p. 142.

52) Acts 2:46, 47.

that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore." In this psalm the inspired singer is expressing his joy and satisfaction at the beautiful demonstration of unity and concord among the brethren of Israel as they assembled from all quarters of the land to celebrate the three greatest religious festivals at Jerusalem. He is rejoicing at the concrete exhibition of the *κοινωνία* that unites the tribes of Israel. The gatherings at Jerusalem tended to strengthen the bonds of fellowship and to promote not only national but also spiritual *κοινωνία* among the Israelites as the *civitas Dei*.

Another manifestation of *κοινωνία* is *joint celebration of Holy Communion*. Luther says: "Dieses Sakrament soll die Christen zusammenhalten." It is indeed intended to do so. When Christ instituted the Holy Supper, He did so in the company of the Twelve. He took the bread and gave it to *them*, and of the cup He said: "Take, drink ye *all* of it." And they *all* drank of it, as Christ bade them. Obviously, here was Christian fellowship of the most exalted kind. While it is not at all certain that the "breaking of bread" mentioned in Acts 2:42 refers to the celebration of the Eucharist, we do know from 1 Cor. 11:17 ff. and non-Scriptural sources that the Christians in apostolic and postapostolic days celebrated Communion in connection with the *ἀγάπαι*. Both were an expression of their intimate spiritual fellowship.

In the Lord's Supper we are united with Christ and with one another. Most appropriately, therefore, we call this sacred meal "Communion" and the guests at the Lord's Table "communicants," because by eating one bread and drinking of one cup they are brought into the most intimate communion or fellowship with one another. "We, being many, are *one* bread and *one* body, for we are *all* partakers of that *one* bread."<sup>53</sup> It is wholly Scriptural for the expositors of Luther's Catechism to say: "When we approach the Lord's Table, we bear testimony that we are of *one* faith with those who *commune with us*."

Luther, in his quaint way, gives expression to that thought in the following words: "Die alten Lehrer haben feine Gedanken gehabt und gesagt, Christus habe darum zu seinem Abendmahl Brot und Wein gebraucht, dass, gleichwie viele Koernlein ein jedes seinen eigenen Leib und Gestalt haben und, miteinander gemahlen, zu einem Brot werden, also ist wohl ein jeder Mensch ein eigen Korn, das ist, eine eigene Person und sonderlich Geschoepf; aber weil wir im Sakrament alle *eines* Brotes teilhaftig werden,

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53) 1 Cor. 10:17.



sind wir alle ein Brot und Leib und heissen ein Kuchen; denn da ist einerlei Glaube, einerlei Bekenntnis, Liebe und Hoffnung. Also im Wein sind viele Trauben, viele Beerlein, da ein jegliches seinen eigenen Leib und Gestalt hat; sobald sie aber ausgedrueckt und zu Wein werden, so ist keine Ungleichheit im Wein, sondern es ist einiger, feiner, schoener Saft; also sollen die Christen auch sein. Also haben es die Alten gedeutet und ist nicht unrecht. Denn dazu soll das Sakrament dienen, dass es die Christen fein zusammenhalte in einerlei Sinn, Lehre und Glauben, dass nicht ein jeder ein sonderlich eigen Koernlein sei und eine eigene Lehre und Glauben machen soll."<sup>54)</sup>

*Prayer* is also mentioned in Acts 2 as a manifestation of Christian fellowship. Christians who pray to *one* God and Father, like to pray not only *for* each other but also *with each other*. David, when thanking God for deliverance, exhorts the righteous: "O magnify the Lord *with me*, and let us exalt His name *together*."<sup>55)</sup> The Eleven "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." The three thousand converts of Pentecost became a praying congregation. When Peter and John had been released by the Sanhedrin under orders henceforth to preach to no man in the name of Jesus, the believers at Jerusalem lifted up their voices to God with one accord (ὁμοθυμαδόν).<sup>56)</sup>

Across the centuries and continents, fellowship approach to the throne of divine grace has been upheld as a divine duty and a glorious privilege. The Lord taught His disciples to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven." "Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers; our fears, our hopes, our aims, are *one*, our comforts and our cares." Most appropriately we call the short prayers spoken at our services "collects." In these prayers we gather the petitions of all the worshipers together and jointly make them known before God.<sup>57)</sup>

Let us do all in our power to make our hearers deeply conscious of this duty as a manifestation of their κοινωνία. The present war has taught us a lesson in this respect. It has become a regular part of our services to pray especially for the men and women in the service of our country. Few there are, if any, who do not wholeheartedly join in such intercession. But, I ask, shall we not do as much for our fellow Christians on the home front, in peace as well as in war? Someone may answer: "We do. Inter-

54) Luther, St. Louis ed., Vol. XIII:1928.

55) Psalm 34:3.

56) Acts 4:24.

57) For other explanations of the word "collect" cp. Paul Zeller Strodach, *The Church Year*, p. 17.

cessory prayers form an integral part of public worship." True enough, but do we offer these prayers as fervently as we ought? We certainly need them. And yet after a sermon we may find ourselves reading such a prayer so fast that the impression may be created we just want to have done with it, and that members, listening more or less disinterestedly, are eagerly waiting for the "Amen." It may become necessary at times to reduce the length of the sermon somewhat that we may have ample time to read the intercessory prayers slowly, and that our people may have the necessary mental alertness to follow and to make the prayers their own.

For our encouragement to *unite* our hearts in prayer, let us remember, too, that *joint* prayer enjoys God's especial benediction and promise. He has given us the solemn assurance: "I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name [to pray to Me] there am I in the midst of them." <sup>58)</sup>

## 2. Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

Christian fellowship is the work of the Triune God. Yet it is also Scriptural to say that believers should "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς ειρήνης." <sup>59)</sup> The first meaning of τηρεῖν is "to guard." The soldiers who guarded at the tomb of Jesus are called "οἱ τηροῦντες." Another meaning is "to cling to, to hold firmly, to observe." Christians who are *one* in the Lord are to cherish and foster this God-created oneness of the Spirit; and they should do so most zealously. Paul's σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν accentuates this very thought. It should be our *earnest* endeavor to guard and keep the unity of the Spirit as a most priceless possession. Weymouth renders Eph. 4:3: "Earnestly striving to maintain, in the uniting bond of peace, the unity given by the Spirit."

When the Corinthians had permitted carnal partisanship to endanger and disturb their unity, Paul solemnly appealed to them: "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no division among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." <sup>60)</sup> A similar plea we find in Phil. 2:1, 2: "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit (εἰ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος), if

58) Matt. 18:19, 20.

59) Eph. 4:3.

60) 1 Cor. 1:10.

any bowels of mercies [tender mercies and compassions, R. V.], fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." If we would, therefore, manifest our Christian fellowship, here is another way in which we can do so — by making every effort to keep and promote unity of the Spirit among all those that love the Lord Jesus.

Luther was deeply imbued with this zeal. We mention Luther because he has so frequently been accused of disrupting Christendom by his unflexible loyalty towards Scripture, which has been stigmatized as inexcusable self-will and stubbornness. We call him to testify in his own behalf. "I want you [M. Bucer] to believe me that I wish this dissension of ours settled, even though my life had to be sacrificed three times over on account of it, because I saw how necessary your fellowship is to us, how much harm the dissension has done and still does to the Gospel. . . . May the Lord Jesus enlighten us and perfectly unite us — this is the burden of my prayer, the burden of my supplication, the burden of my sighs." <sup>61)</sup> This ardent spirit of Luther should characterize every Christian.

In Eph. 4:1-3 Paul points the way how this spiritual unity among Christians may be guarded and maintained: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, [thus] endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Unity is to be kept "in the bond of peace." There can be no peace where there is pride and uncharitableness. Conceit, arrogance, egotism, and an unforgiving spirit must of necessity jeopardize, if not disrupt, unity. Humility, however, and meekness make for peace and harmony.

The second guidepost that Paul erects is found in Eph. 4:13, 14: "Till we all come, in the unity of the faith [we should say, "come to, attain the unity," *καταντήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα*] and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." The ultimate purpose for which Christ gives gifts to His Church and for which all service is to be rendered is the attainment of unity, specifically, "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." "The Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward signs, but it consists especially in inward communion of eternal blessings

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61) Luther, St. Louis ed., Vol. XVII: 1975.

in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God; which fellowship nevertheless has outward marks, so that it can be recognized, namely, the *pure doctrine of the Gospel* and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ." <sup>62)</sup> If we, therefore, wish to keep the unity of the Spirit, we must earnestly strive to attain to, and maintain, unity of doctrine, by which Christian fellowship was first created. All efforts which are calculated to unite Christians and keep them united with disregard of doctrine and doctrinal differences is not in harmony with Paul's exhortation in Eph. 4 and related passages. The like-mindedness and harmony enjoined in 1 Cor. 1:10 and Phil. 2:1, 2 is patently a oneness in Christian faith and doctrine.

This unity, moreover, extends to *all* revealed doctrines. The Christians who attain to unity of faith are such as have reached maturity, who are "no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about by *every* wind of doctrine." Striving toward unity has as its necessary corollary the determined rejection of error. The responsibility for the rifts among churches rests not upon those who humbly and meekly, but boldly and unflinchingly, profess the truth, but upon those who deviate from the Word. The truth always unites; error only divides. Rom. 16:17. There may be times when we do not all see eye to eye in regard to certain doctrines. What are we to do when this becomes apparent? Not summarily anathematize those who disagree as incorrigible errorists, and immediately deny them Christian fellowship, but come together and frankly discuss the points at issue in the light of God's Word.

Here again the leaders in the primitive Church point the way. When certain men which came down from Judea taught that circumcision was still an indispensable prerequisite for salvation, and apparently did it so emphatically that Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the Apostles and elders about this question. The question was settled by a frank discussion on the basis of Scripture, in what is known as the Council at Jerusalem and might well be called the first synod held in the New Testament Church. Acts 15. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the question at issue and the procedure which was followed to arrive at a God-pleasing solution. The point that is of interest to us is this: "*They came together for to consider of this matter.*" Judaizers, who had not yet shaken off the eggshells of Old Testament legalism, asserted: "Except ye be circumcised after the

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62) Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Articles VII and VIII (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 227).

manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.”<sup>63)</sup> Paul and his assistant did not agree; they challenged these assertions in an open debate, conducted in the presence of the Apostles at Jerusalem.

Let us manifest our Christian fellowship in like manner. When there is disagreement, let us “come together for to consider of this matter,” appealing, however, not to the personal opinion of such as are regarded as “pillars” in the Church, but to the supreme arbiter in all matters of faith and life, the *norma normans*, the Word of our God. Like the Bereans, let us search the Scriptures “whether these things are so.” And let us carry on all doctrinal discussions, not in the spirit of pride and *Rechthaberei*, but with all “lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.”

### 3. Building the Body of Christ

1 Thess. 5:9, 10 Paul writes: “God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. “Wherefore,” he continues in v. 11, “comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” The Apostle bases his exhortation to comfort and build one another on the fact that the Thessalonians are to obtain salvation. We, too, have this in common, that God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light and guided our feet into the way of peace. This blessed fact makes us *κοινωνούς*, partners. We are comrades of “the way,” the *via salutis*. Can we, then, manifest our sacred fellowship in a better way than by strengthening ourselves on the narrow road, where alluring temptations and discouraging difficulties ever menace our state of grace? We are told that mountain climbers who scale dangerous heights are tied to each other so that when one falls, the others may uphold him. Shall we do less for our brethren? The Christian is his brother’s keeper and helper.

That is clearly seen also from Eph. 4. After describing the essence and basis of Christian fellowship in verses 4-6,<sup>64)</sup> the Apostle continues in verse 7: “Unto every one of us is given grace [*ἡ χάρις*, a spiritual gift] according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” to be used, as the context shows, for the benefit of all the members of the body. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are gifts of the exalted Head to the Church, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” Eph. 4:11, 12. A glance at the original (*εἰς ἔργον διακονίας*) shows that Paul is here not speaking of “the

63) Acts 15:1.

64) “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.”

ministry" in the sense in which we commonly use the term today, the public ministry, but of a "work of service" which all Christians are to render for the benefit of the Church. All the saints should join hands with their pastors and teachers to work toward one end, the building of the body of Christ.

Paul regards this subject of such importance to the welfare of the Church that he treats it at great length in several chapters of his epistles, especially in Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12 and 14, and illustrates his point most strikingly by an extended analogy of the human body. The main thought is brought to a focus in Rom. 12:4, 5: "As we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ and everyone members one of another," and in 1 Cor. 12:7: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," *πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον*, i. e., *for the common good*. Luther: "zum gemeinen Nutzen." As the members of the body do not function independently of each other, each for its own benefit, but inter-dependently for the benefit of the whole organism, so the members of the body of Christ are not to work without regard for the well-being of their fellow members, but for the welfare of the whole body. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. God hath tempered [*συνκεράσεν*, commingled] the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care *one for another*." <sup>65</sup> Even as all spiritual gifts have but one source (1 Cor. 12:11), so they must have but one aim, the good of all.

No member must live unto himself. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." By virtue of Christian fellowship a reciprocity treaty is established among Christians. "I believe that in this congregation, or Church, all things are common, that everyone's possessions belong to the others and no one has anything of his own; therefore all the prayers and good works of the whole congregation must help, assist, and strengthen me and every believer at all times, in life and death, and thus each bear the other's burden, as St. Paul teaches." <sup>66</sup> "Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have upon each of them the dew of heaven, which, being shaken by the wind, let

<sup>65</sup>) 1 Cor. 12: 21, 24, 25.

<sup>66</sup>) Luther, as quoted in Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr., *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, p. 124.

fall their dew at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished and become nourishers of one another." <sup>67)</sup>

If we bear these truths in mind, we shall, first of all, not isolate ourselves. We shall rather welcome every opportunity to foster brotherly relations for our mutual benefit. Self-withdrawal and absenteeism have no place in the household of God. While we would not make it a matter of conscience that we attend all the meetings held in our Lutheran circles, we must also say that we cannot absent ourselves from the important meetings, such as services, voters' meetings, conferences, synodical conventions, and the like, without harm to ourselves and harm to the work of the Church. The exhortation in Heb. 10:25, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," is preceded by the words "Let us consider one another, provoking unto love and to good works," and is followed by the words "exhorting one another." The word ἐπισυναγωγὴν, translated with "assembling together," refers not merely to church services, but to any gathering held for mutual edification.

Paul certainly was no isolationist. He was a "mixer" in the best sense of the word. "I long to see you," he writes to the Romans, "that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that ye may be established, that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." <sup>68)</sup> Paul longs to see the Christians at Rome face to face to bestow upon them, through the Gospel, some spiritual gift for their strengthening; but then he adds—and this is truly noteworthy—"that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." Eagerly he looks forward to a mutual benefit. How revealing, how instructive, that the great Apostle, who had repeatedly received special revelations and had been caught up to the third heaven, should yet expect consolation and encouragement from the *members* of a congregation! No one who can lay claim to being a believer is so poor in Christian knowledge and grace that he cannot impart some benefit, however small, to a brother; and none is so rich and strong that he has no need of the comfort and assurance that fellow Christians can give. Spiritual self-sufficiency is as much a nonentity as the vaunted ἀνάρκεια of the Stoics and Cynics. Christians are like the stones of an arch, strengthened in position by their *joint* presence and pressure.

Someone has said facetiously, but perhaps not untruthfully: "He is a small package who is all wrapped up in himself." *Quid*

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67) *The Riches of Bunyan*, selected from his works by Rev. Jeremiah Chaplin, p. 363.

68) Rom. 1:11, 12.

*rides? Nostra res agitur.* We ministers, too, need to strengthen and comfort one another, and we need the consolation and the inspiration that comes from members of our flock. Who has not at times received a greater spiritual gift from a parishioner than he gave? Who of us has not returned from a sick visit strengthened and comforted by the Christian fortitude of a patient cross-bearer? Did the disciples not learn an unforgettable object lesson in conquering faith in the company of the Syrophenician woman? Did Jesus not place a little child in their midst to teach the all too ambitious grownups genuine humility? The Lord would bless His own through His own, even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. We need them as much as they need us.

We cannot therefore, we dare not, isolate ourselves from our brethren without depriving ourselves of positive spiritual blessings. When the disciples were together on that memorable Easter evening, Thomas did not find peace and assurance because he was not with them. The darkest hour in the life of Judas came when he left the company of Jesus and of His disciples. Someone has said: "Unhappy he who from the first of joys, society, is cut off, is left alone amid this world of death." Even if this is an exaggeration, there is much truth in that utterance. Adapting it to our purpose, we may say: "Unhappy he who from one of the first of spiritual joys, the society of believers, is cut off and left alone; but thrice unhappy he who deliberately cuts himself off from the blessed fellowship of the saints of God in this world of sin and sadness."

Moreover, if we are always conscious of our Christian fellowship, we shall not take our ease in Zion, content to live each under his own vine and under his fig tree, but we shall always give our best to serve our brethren. We shall work, on the one hand, without despising or belittling those who seem to do less in the Kingdom and, on the other, without envying or begrudging those who have received ten talents to our five or two and who are gaining more recognition for their work than we do. We shall learn to rejoice with unfeigned joy over the successes that attend our fellow laborers. We shall not lose any time arguing about the question "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" but only ask, "Where and how can I render the greatest service to my fellow Christians?" thus reflecting the self-effacing spirit of John the Baptist as it expressed itself in the deathless words "He must increase, but I must decrease."<sup>69</sup>

In that spirit Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Who is Paul and who is Apollos but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered;

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69) John 3:30.



but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God, that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one" (ἐν).<sup>70)</sup> In the Lord's vineyard all ministers are not so many individuals, not εἰς, but ἐν, one *thing*, one *instrument* in the hand of the divine Husbandman. "Herein is that saying true: One soweth, another reapeth. And he that reapeth . . . gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may *rejoice together*."<sup>71)</sup>

Finally, if we remember that we are partners in a common enterprise, we shall never be influenced in our church work by ulterior motives or by a baneful partisan spirit, but shall work in closest harmony to achieve one purpose and one only: to build the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ. When important decisions are to be made to carry on the King's business, there will be no congregational or synodical lobbying; Christian fellowship will not permit personal friendships, alma mater ties, District loyalty, or local interests to sway our vote and support synodical policies which may find favor with some *one* group, but are not expedient for the *common* good. Differences there are, to be sure, and always will be: differences in personality, differences in endowment, differences in viewpoint—and such differences are wholesome—but that which we have in common is infinitely greater and more important than that in which we differ; and everything we say and do in the "work of ministering" must always be made subservient to one end: to build the walls of Zion. When James, Cephas, and John learned what God had done through Paul and his co-workers, they gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that they should go unto the Gentiles and the former unto the circumcision. The "pillars of the church" at Jerusalem acknowledged Paul and Barnabas as missionaries on equal footing, as partners in a common work, and with them they divided the sphere of service to carry out the Great Commission, to make Christ's way known upon the earth, His saving health among all nations.

It has often been observed that in a time of great strain, when all are waiting anxiously for the outcome of some critical event, a nation is suddenly fused together; all party differences, which formerly loomed so large, are forgotten. Shall less be said of us when we have a common enemy, the old evil Foe, who, knowing that his time is short, in league with all the anti-Christian forces and liberal churches, is attacking the Church more viciously and

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70) 1 Cor. 3:5-7.

71) John 4:37, 36.

insidiously than ever before? <sup>72)</sup> Shall we not stand together shoulder to shoulder in a united front, forgetting the small differences that tend to separate us, in view of the larger blessings and hopes that unite us in the *communio sanctorum*? "As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," <sup>73)</sup> "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." <sup>74)</sup>

#### 4. Mutual Love and Forbearance

The sublime passage on the unity of the Spirit, the building of the body of Christ, in Eph. 4:4-16 concludes with the words "unto the edifying of itself in love." <sup>75)</sup> The Church of God can be built only in the spirit of love. "Love edifieth." <sup>76)</sup> Love is the "bond of perfection" which unites and welds the hearts of believers together, so that they join hands in doing the Lord's work. Truly, there is need of that Christian virtue. The Church, as it presents itself to our eyes, is far from perfect; it still has spots and wrinkles and many such things, imperfections large and small. As we work together in the Church, our human shortcomings and failings become apparent, and they have a tendency to estrange us and keep us apart. They constitute a serious hindrance to effective building operations unless we love one another with a pure heart fervently and constantly practice Christian forbearance. And so Paul, after reminding the Colossians that in Christ "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," continues: "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." <sup>77)</sup>

72) For instances of such violent and subtle attacks see Theodore Engelder: *Scripture Cannot be Broken*, esp. pp. 428—430. — O. C. Rupprecht, "A Review of Moehlmann's *School and Church: The American Way*," *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, Vol. XV, pp. 815 ff.

73) Gal 6:10. The "doing good," as the Greek shows, ἐργαζόμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς . . . τοὺς οἰκτιροῦντες τῆς πίστεως, should not be restricted to works of charity. Paul's expression includes everything that is morally good and beneficial.

74) Ps. 137:5, 6.

75) Eph. 4:16.

76) 1 Cor. 8:1.

77) Col. 3:12-14; cp. also 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 4:32.

Paul had a right to speak thus. He practiced what he preached. The sharp contention that arose between him and Barnabas regarding the fitness of John Mark as a companion resulted in a separation at the beginning of the second missionary journey, Paul taking Silas, and Barnabas Mark; but it did not cause a permanent breach of friendship. From Col. 4:10 and 2 Tim. 4:11 we learn that they were on good terms, Mark being profitable to Paul for the ministry.

We see proof of Paul's forgiving, magnanimous spirit also from what is related in Phil. 1. While he was imprisoned in Rome, "some preached Christ even of envy and strife, of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to his bonds."<sup>78)</sup> What was the Apostle's reaction to Gospel preaching from such impure and unholy motives? Far from being moved to rancor and bitterness, which depresses the spirit and dampens one's zeal, he rather rejoiced that this preaching resulted in the furtherance of the Gospel. "What difference does it make?" he says; "All that matters is that in one way or other, from false motives or honest ones, Christ is preached." "I herein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."<sup>79)</sup> Paul was willing, yea, happy, to endure the vexatious, disheartening experiences with these "Gospel preachers," whoever they may have been. To take such an attitude required not only complete devotion to his ministry but also a large measure of love and forbearance toward those ostensibly but not genuinely engaged in the same work. May a double portion of Paul's spirit be upon us! "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one to another."<sup>80)</sup> Brotherly love, the epiphany of *κοινωνία κατ' ἐξοχήν*.

### 5. Brotherly Admonition

Solomon says: "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to rend and a time to sew, a time to keep silence and a time to speak."<sup>81)</sup> There is a time charitably to cover sin, but there is also a time to reprove the sinner. There is a time when it would be wrong and an outright denial of Christian fellowship not to speak.

Christ tells us: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone."<sup>82)</sup> We note the emphasis on the word "brother." It is a *brother* who has trespassed, a *brother* who is lost while unrepentant, a *brother* who is

78) Phil. 1:15 ff.

79) Phil. 1:18.

80) John 13:35.

81) Eccl. 3:1, 3, 7.

82) Matt. 18:15. In passing, it may be said that the words "against thee" are not found in the Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. The reading of the critical text widens the field of activity for Christian fellowship.

to be gained, a *brother* for whom Christ died to make forgiveness possible. Are we, then, not doing the brotherly thing if we endeavor to show him the error of his way? When Paul exhorts the Galatians, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness," he motivates his exhortation by addressing them as "brethren." The fact that we are brothers and sisters in Christ imposes upon us the sacred obligation to restore one who has fallen from the faith. Far from manifesting an unbrotherly attitude by a timely admonition, we are thereby rather giving evidence of our Christian fellowship. We show that we are concerned about the spiritual welfare of our fellow believers.

Moreover, the fact that we are brethren will prompt us to reprove and correct in the proper spirit, the spirit of meekness, patience, and humility. Being brethren who are subject to the same temptations, we are sympathetic and understanding.<sup>83)</sup> If the erring brother does not accept the admonition, we should take with us one or two others; if he remains impenitent even then, Christ bids us, "Tell it unto the church." The responsibility of one or several becomes the responsibility of *all*.

There is another aspect to this manifestation of *κοινωνία* which should not be lost sight of. There are no ranks in Christ Jesus; none is higher and none lower. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."<sup>84)</sup> Christian fellowship therefore cannot be a respecter of persons. We learn this from an incident related in Gal. 2. When Peter first ate in the company of uncircumcised Gentile Christians but later began to draw back, fearing that he might offend some Jewish Christians that had come down from Jerusalem and, as a result, led other Jewish Christians, and even Barnabas, to dissemble with him, Paul publicly remonstrated with Peter. Seeing with unerring insight the serious implications and the far-reaching effects of Peter's withdrawal, Paul denounced the action as false play and hypocrisy. It is not our purpose to enter upon a detailed interpretation of this passage. The point of immediate interest is this, that Paul rebuked Peter. An Apostle, who in sincere self-abasement calls himself the least of the Apostles, did not hesitate to censure another Apostle who was regarded as a pillar in the Church. Here we have a manifestation of Christian fellowship which "knows no man after the flesh" but only brothers in Christ and is deeply concerned about their spiritual welfare.

Would to God that brotherly admonition were practiced

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83) Gal. 6:1: "Consider thyself lest thou also be tempted."

84) Matt. 23:8.

much more diligently in the Church than it is and that all were as ready to accept reproof as they are to administer it. Peter (to his credit be it said) did accept Paul's rebuke. Excitable as he was by nature, there is no evidence that he became angry or resented the admonition of Paul. If we may judge "from silence," we can infer: Peter acknowledged that he was wrong and that Paul was right. The impulsive disciple had learned that also in the spiritual realm, life is a give and take, a lesson Christians cannot learn too well. "Willst du, dass wir mit hinein In das Haus dich bauen, Lass es dir gefallen, Stein, Dass wir dich behauen." This counsel of Rueckert may find application to us. We, who as living stones are to be built up a spiritual house, are not finished products, but are hewn from a rock with many rough edges and sharp corners. We need much polishing and chiseling before we fit perfectly into the holy temple of the Lord.

### 6. Avoiding Giving Offense

Believers manifest their Christian fellowship by building themselves up in their most holy faith. There is, however, also an *aedificatio ruinosa*, which tears down what Christ would have us build up. This is done by giving offense to fellow Christians. Giving offense, therefore, is something we should scrupulously avoid, for "whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!"<sup>85)</sup>

Paul treats the subject of offense very fully in 1 Cor. 8 and 9 and Rom. 14. Not all Christians have a strong faith; many are weak and easily influenced. Again, such as are converts from another faith (e.g., the Jewish Christians in apostolic days or Lutheran converts from Catholicism) often are not strong, that is, fully persuaded in their mind on adiaphora, the observance of holy days or the eating of certain foods. Our attitude toward them should be that we avoid everything which may cause such brethren to act against their conscience and thus to commit a sin. Though we are fully persuaded in our mind that things indifferent are not sinful, we should not disregard brethren who are weak in understanding, but gladly, for *their* sake, forgo our right.

The fact that something is lawful does not make it expedient.<sup>86)</sup> The same Paul who refused to circumcise Titus in order to assert and defend the Gospel with its freedom from the Mosaic Law, over against the Judaizers, had Timothy circumcised because of

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85) Matt. 18:6, 7.

86) 1 Cor. 6:12.

the Jews who were still weak and would have been scandalized if Paul had been associated with an uncircumcised man as a co-worker.<sup>87)</sup>

Not infrequently we meet with Christians who take this attitude: "I have a right to do what is not forbidden explicitly, and I will not curtail my rights because of some weak brother or sister." They are quite unwilling to respect the tender conscience of fellow believers. That was not the spirit of Paul; he was very willing to practice self-denial to the uttermost in order not to offend a weak brother. "If meat make my brother to offend," he writes to the Corinthians, "I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."<sup>88)</sup> Here again the emphasis is on the word "brother." Paul's readiness to forgo his rights was prompted by a loving concern for his brothers in the faith. The same solicitude prompts him to warn the Corinthians: "Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols, and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"<sup>89)</sup>

The duty of the strong and able Christians is to make their highest aim not the liberty of self but the good of the brotherhood. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."<sup>90)</sup> This appeal to the Christian readers is underscored by pointing to Christ, who pleased not Himself, but for men's salvation endured the contradiction of sinners against His Father and Himself. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."<sup>91)</sup> "Let us follow after the things which make for peace and the things wherewith one may edify another."<sup>92)</sup>

If this is to be taken to heart by all Christians, how much more by those who are shepherds and bishops of souls, whose lives, because of their position, exert more influence than those of their church members. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians, "All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his

87) Gal. 2:3, 4; Acts 16:3.

88) 1 Cor. 8:13.

89) 1 Cor. 8:9-11. "Emboldened" translates *οὐκοδομηθήσεται*. This is the *aedificatio ruinosa* mentioned above.

90) Rom. 15:1, 2: ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τῷ πλησίον ἀρεσκέτω... πρὸς οἰκοδομήν.

91) Rom. 15:7.

92) Rom. 14:19.

own, but every man another's wealth.<sup>93)</sup> Give none offense, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles nor to the Church of God,"<sup>94)</sup> is climaxed by the statement "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."<sup>95)</sup> "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."<sup>96)</sup>

### 7. Christian Giving

Christians share all spiritual blessings in Christ: righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost; in so far as they are led by the Spirit, they are ready to share lesser gifts, material blessings, as well. They do not like to see any of their brethren in want. We see this beautifully exemplified in the first Christian congregation at Jerusalem during the days of their first love. "All that believed had all things common."<sup>97)</sup> "As many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the Apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."<sup>98)</sup>

That the writer of Acts recognized in this freewill sharing a manifestation of *κοινωνία* we see from the preceding verse: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."<sup>99)</sup> Because the believers were of one heart and of one mind, they regarded their possessions as common property, as a *κοινόν*. Each used his own possessions as a trust held of God for all. Parenthetically it may be added that this was not communism in the accepted sense, but brotherliness toward the needs of fellow Christians. The *Guetergemeinschaft* was wholly voluntary, and it was only partial: as the need arose, they sold their possessions to relieve the wants of the poor in their midst.

When the Church grew and some of the widows of the Grecian Jews were overlooked in the daily ministration, the disciples, under the leadership of the Twelve, elected almoners who directed and supervised the distribution of goods to the satisfaction of all.

93) Wealth, τὰ τοῦ ἐτέρου, i. e., advantage, benefit.

94) 1 Cor. 10:23, 24, 32.

95) 1 Cor. 10:33. Here we call to mind also Paul's unforgettable words in 1 Cor. 9:19-22: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant (δοῦλος) unto all that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law, as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law; to them that are without Law, as without Law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without Law." Cp. Acts 18:8; 21:23-26.

96) 2 Cor. 4:5.

98) Acts 4:34, 35.

97) Acts 2:44.

99) Acts 4:32.

Again κοινωνία in action! The Christians elsewhere were imbued with the same spirit of fellowship. When the members of the mother church at Jerusalem were destitute, the Macedonians contributed willingly to aid them. "It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are in Jerusalem (κοινωνίαν τινὰ ποιήσασθαι). It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are; for if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." <sup>100)</sup>

Paul acknowledges this spontaneous manifestation of their κοινωνία with warm words of commendation when he writes in 2 Cor. 8:3, 4: "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." <sup>101)</sup> More literally translated, the words in verse 4 would read: "With earnest entreaty they begged from us the favor of being allowed to share in the service now being rendered to God's people." They give us this picture of the situation: Paul told the Macedonians of the destitution of the Christians at Jerusalem. He may have mentioned, too, that he was collecting funds for the relief of the needy. The immediate reaction was this: Paul did not have to beg or urge them to participate in the collection; they rather said in effect: "Paul, let us also have a share in this ministration. We consider it a privilege to take part in the collection." Here we have κοινωνία at its best.

What a beautiful picture to contemplate! What an inspiring example for us to emulate! Christian giving was to the Macedonians not an irksome, unwelcome task to be deprecated or evaded, but a glorious privilege, a grace, a χάρις, to be earnestly sought and coveted and a welcome opportunity to practice Christian fellowship. We shall do well to make the most of this beautiful thought when we preach on Christian giving. If this exalted conception of giving always dwelt in the hearts of our people, a new era would dawn for the work of our Church and our Lutheran charities! If that thought took deep root in our hearts, what unlooked-for pleasures would be in store for those on whose shoulders falls the task of admonishing to Christian giving! Admonishing? No! The roles would then be changed. Rather than have pastors and synodical officials encourage members to

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100) Rom. 15:26, 27.

101) 2 Cor. 8:4: μετὰ πολλῆς παρακλήσεως δεόμενοι ἡμῶν τὴν χάριν καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους.



contribute, the members would request their pastors to grant them a share in giving.

Of course, this golden age will never come. There are only isolated cases where such a spirit manifests itself. The Old Adam is not *κοινωνία*-minded. The new man says: "What is mine is thine." The old would rather turn that around. Therefore we shall have to continue to exhort ourselves and our members, by the mercies of Christ, to give; and when we do so, let us also emphasize the principle of fellowship underlying the gift. The exhortation "Distribute to the necessity of the saints" in Paul's language reads: *ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἁγίων κοινωνοῦντες* (Rom. 12:13), that is, *share* the needs of the saints, make them your own so as to relieve them. In Heb. 13:16: *τῆς εὐποιᾶς καὶ κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε*, may be translated: "To do good and to *communicate* forget not," but here again *κοινωνία* expresses the fellowship evinced by Christian benefactions.

What was said above chiefly with regard to gifts of charity applies with equal force to contributions for the support of the Church and its work. Giving for the support of ministers and missionaries is everywhere viewed as a manifestation of *κοινωνία*. Ministers share with their hearers the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the hearers share their temporal possessions with their pastors. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things," Paul asks the Corinthians, "is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"<sup>102)</sup> Although Paul was ready to waive his right to claim financial support in most of his fields of labor, so that the progress of the Gospel might not be hindered,<sup>103)</sup> the basic principle remains that the messengers of the King should eat at the table of His subjects.<sup>104)</sup> "Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"<sup>105)</sup> "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the Temple? And they which sit at the altar are partakers with the altar?"<sup>106)</sup>

That the remuneration given by congregations to the pastors and teachers is concrete evidence of their Christian fellowship we learn also from Phil. 4:14, 15, where Paul writes: "Ye have done well that ye did communicate with me (*συγκοινωνήσαντές μου τῇ θλίψει*) in my affliction. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Now, ye Philippians know also that

102) 1 Cor. 9:11. The carnal things, *τὰ σαρκικά*, here clearly denote things needed for the sustenance of the body.

103) 1 Cor. 9:12.

105) 1 Cor. 9:7.

104) 1 Cor. 9:14; Matt. 10:10.

106) 1 Cor. 9:13.

in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only." The Greek in verse 15 reads: οὐδεμία μοι ἐκκλησία κοινώνησεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήψεως εἰ μὴ ὑμεῖς μόνοι, that is, no church fellowshiped with me in reckoning expenditures and receipts. If the Philippians had done literally what Paul expresses figuratively, they would have kept a ledger in which they would have listed Paul as creditor and themselves as debtors. Here again Paul speaks of the gifts of the Philippians as a fellowship that they established with him.

In this connection we should also like to quote the familiar words in Gal. 6:6: "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate (κοινωνεῖτω) unto him that teacheth in all good things." It is quite evident, however, that these words do not mean what according to the Authorized Version and Luther they seem to mean: "Der unterrichtet wird mit dem Wort, der teile mit allerlei Gutes dem, der ihn unterrichtet." The words ought to be translated thus: "Let him that is taught in the Word share all that is good with his teacher," i. e., let the disciple make common cause with his teacher in everything that is morally good. In the sphere of Christian morality there is no double standard. What is good for the Christian teacher, is good for the Christian hearer. There is no higher moral code for the teacher than for the disciple.

This meaning is demanded, first of all, by the Greek verb κοινωνέω, which, in the New Testament, never denotes a *communicatio*, but a *communio*; not *Anteil geben*, but *Anteil nehmen*. Moreover, the rendering offered above is contextual. In the preceding verses Paul speaks of the proper attitude toward an erring brother, a spirit of meekness and humility, prompted by a knowledge of our own weakness. In the verses following Gal. 6:6 Paul continues: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." While it must be conceded that God is mocked if we neglect to provide adequately for our Christian teachers, and that we cannot thus turn up our noses at the Lord without incurring His wrath, it would seem very strange if the Apostle should limit those serious words in vv. 7 and 8 to the neglect of this *one* Christian duty. However, if we refer them to the whole realm of Christian morality, they apply with the greatest force.

Finally, the rendering given above fits naturally into the situation among the Galatian churches. They had been misled and deceived by the pseudo-apostles. The true relation between Paul and them had been broken. The κοινωνία between teacher and

taught had received a rude shock.<sup>107)</sup> This rupture, or cleavage, could be healed in no other way than by recognizing the error of their ways, returning to their former allegiance and love, and working harmoniously with their spiritual father in every good and worthy endeavor.

### 8. Christian Greetings and Social Activities

Salutations and social life — what has that to do with *κοινωνία*? Please do not think that we are speaking in a spirit of levity when we mention these as manifestations of Christian fellowship. If we are in earnest with our belief that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for instruction in righteousness,” we must believe this also in regard to those passages in which the holy writers send greetings to their Christian readers. While there are salutations in almost all the letters of the New Testament, Rom. 16 is made up almost entirely of Christian greetings. In this chapter Paul extends warmest greetings to many *individual* Roman Christians, and in consequence more than twenty names of early Roman believers are known to us. Besides, the Apostle offers salutations to *groups* of Roman Christians, for instance, to those who worshiped in the house of Priscilla and Aquila and to the slaves on the estates of Andronicus and of Aristobulus and to the groups of persons designated by the words “and all the saints that are with them.”

Indeed, *not a single member of the Roman church is overlooked*. This becomes apparent when the Apostle goes on to say, “The churches of Christ salute you.” From chap. 1:7 it appears that the persons referred to by the pronoun “you” in 16:16 are “all that be in Rome beloved of God, called to be saints.” Too, all Roman Christians are included in the succeeding eight salutations.

Now what is the significance of this long list of salutations? Of the salutations from Paul, the great Apostle, from Timothy, his famous co-worker, from the trio of men who, as Godet suggests, were delegates of their congregations in the matter of the collection for the poor at Jerusalem, from the rich and hospitable Gaius, from Erastus, the treasurer of Corinth, from Quartus, a plain, simple brother in Christ, as well as from all the churches of Christ? What is the significance of these many greetings to the galaxy of saintly Roman men, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and cultured persons, to men widely known for their deep understanding of the Gospel, for their devotion and testimony to their Savior and

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107) Gal. 3:1. [The interpretation of Gal. 6:6 given above is shared by many other scholars and certainly is not contrary to the analogy of faith. It should be said, however, that the view which Luther held still has many endorsers. Ed. note.]

their sufferings for His sake, and for the loving care bestowed upon the Apostle by some of them? What is the significance of the salutations to the equally brilliant body of Christian women, married and unmarried: of Phebe, the deaconess, now in Rome; Mary of Rome, the admirable trio of Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis; the mother of Rufus; and the sister of Nereus, all shining examples of what women may do in the service of the Church? Aye, what does this all go to show? Nothing else than this, that Paul, his colaborers, and fellow believers wish to evidence their interest in their Roman brethren, their love of them, their unity of spirit and fellowship with them.

We have a touching example of this spiritual kinship today, especially in the lively correspondence carried on between the Christians at home and their loved ones who are gone to the camps or the front. Our pastors and members, both individually and in groups, vie with one another in sending Christian literature, messages of cheer, news letters, and friendly greetings to their brethren and sisters separated from them through the exigencies of the world conflict. Every missive of this nature is in reality a manifestation of Christian fellowship. It makes the absent ones realize: "We are gone, but not forgotten. Our church cares. We are their brethren still. They feel with us; they rejoice with those that do rejoice and weep with those that do weep."

We cannot but feel deeply moved by such manifestations of Christian fellowship; but shall we not show that same concern toward those at home? Shall we shake hands across the sea and coldly pass by the brother at our door? If we write warm fellowship letters to those far away, shall we not have a friendly greeting or a warm handclasp for those near by? Christians in our congregations sometimes complain that they are all but ignored by fellow members, especially by such as are supposedly in the higher social strata. "We go to the same church," they say, "sing and pray together, but receive not so much as a greeting when we enter or leave." If that is true, it is most regrettable. Should there not be at all times an outward expression of the inward oneness? It is not necessary, of course, that we embrace each other in Oriental fashion. Westerners by and large are not as demonstrative and emotional as the men of the East. Then, too, some people are more reserved and retiring, although they have a heart aglow with fervent love for their brethren; but certainly only good can come of it if Christians *show* a little of that warmth in their association with their fellow believers.

And now a brief word on the social life of Christians. There are those in our circles who decry any social activity carried on within the precincts of Lutheran church property. They urge

that the Christian church has no commission to engage in the amusement business or to provide entertainment for its members. Unquestionably true; but it is just as true that Christians who worship together like to meet occasionally in a social way and enjoy wholesome fun. In Acts 2:46 we read of the Christians at Jerusalem: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

The second part of this verse does not refer to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but simply to the practice of meeting in smaller and larger groups in different homes to eat their meals jointly. Their ordinary life, even on its material side, was radiant with a new joy of religious fellowship. All social gatherings of Christians, if rightly conducted, may indeed be a manifestation of Christian fellowship.

### Concluding Remarks

We pause in retrospect. As we review the history and the work of our Church in the light of what has been said in the preceding paragraphs, there wells up in our heart a feeling of profound joy and gratitude for the abundant manifestations of Christian fellowship in our midst. The organization of our Synod almost one hundred years ago grew out of the desire of truth-loving immigrants to give outward expression to their common faith, to foster true unity, and jointly to build a Lutheran Zion in this Western world. The present work of our Church in all its congregations, schools, colleges, and on its far-flung mission fields is a constant manifestation of Christian fellowship, which must gladden the heart of everyone.<sup>108)</sup>

For all these manifestations we thank God; for by the grace of God we are not strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. By the grace of God we have been privileged to enjoy sustained Christian fellowship, to build ourselves up in our most holy faith, and to extend the borders of His kingdom far beyond our shores. We appropriate Paul's prayer in his letter to Philemon: "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, [praying] that the communication of thy faith may become

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108) It was a happy thought of the writer (he preferred to remain anonymous) to offer in the *Lutheran Annual* for 1944 a brief summary of the work of our Synod under the caption "The Fellowship of Synod." "In your Synod," says the author, "you are on the way with all your fellow believers to bring Christ to the world. Your Synod is a fellowship of believers to carry the message of salvation to men lost in sin." *Lutheran Annual*, 1944, p. 45.

effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." 109)

While thanking God for the good He has wrought in us, we are deeply humbled by the knowledge that our Christian fellowship does not always manifest itself as freely and fully as it ought. The zeal to keep the unity of the Spirit is sometimes wanting; fraternal relations are often disturbed by unbrotherly attitudes and actions; an individualism asserts itself at times which is too rugged to be good for the use of edifying. Happy are we that we can close the chapter on the manifestations of Christian fellowship with the comforting truth that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 110)

The place of these treasured words in Scripture is most significant. They form the conclusion to John's pithy sermon on fellowship. To make them stand out in bold relief, we quote in full: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have *fellowship with us*; and, truly, *our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ*. . . . If we say that we have *fellowship with Him* and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have *fellowship one with another*, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 111)

While John is writing to his "little children" concerning κοινωνία and leading up to the thought that our Christian fellowship is concrete evidence of our fellowship with God, the disquieting thought arises in his mind that our fellowship with one another, woefully deficient as it is, remains a weak foundation for our confidence before Him who knows the heart and tries the reins; therefore, he concludes his inspired reflections by finding comfort in the redeeming blood of the Christ of God.

The blood of the Son of God, which cleanses us from all sin, purifies us—thank God!—also from our lack of brotherly love and all the imperfections that taint our Christian fellowship. Christ's cleansing blood keeps us in fellowship with God and thus in fellowship with one another. His precious blood unites us every day at the foot of the Cross. His blood makes us brothers again when sin has estranged us. That blood will gather us forever with all the saints before the throne of the Lamb, to sing with one

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109) Philemon 4-6. The Greek in verse 6 reads: ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν, that the *fellowship of your faith* may become active in knowledge of every good thing among us regarding Christ.

110) 1 John 1:7 b.

111) 1 John 1:3-7.

heart and one mind the new song: "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." <sup>112)</sup> Then

From sorrow, toil, and pain,  
And sin we shall be free,  
And *perfect* love and friendship reign  
Throughout eternity.

Milwaukee, Wis.

C. AUGUST HARDT

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## The Lord's Prayer, the Pastor's Prayer

### The Third Petition

The pastor prays to the Father: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." His privilege and duty is to understand the meaning of this petition and to convey it to his congregation. If he fails in this, he is incompetent; if he is incompetent, he should either acquire knowledge or return the shepherd's staff to Jesus. The knowledge of God's will is indispensable to faith and life. To attain this sufficiency, the faithful pastor strives earnestly to ascertain the meaning of this petition. That pastor was the devil's servant who said to an afflicted parishioner: "Don't worry about God's will. It is absolute and unsearchable. You cannot change it anyway."—To understand this prayer, simply pray it. Pray it as a child prays it to our Father. Let the Spirit interpret the meaning.—Our pastoral obligation is to declare unto our congregations all the counsel of God. Acts 20:27.

Because this prayer is the petition for the grace of obedience and submission, it has been designated as the difficult petition. To our sinful flesh each petition, including the Fourth, is objectionable. The Third Petition may seem at first repellent. We study it, and we find it interesting, then attractive, then invaluable, then indispensable. We may stumble as we approach it, but it lifts our heart and soul to joy and unending bliss.

It is always in place to ask, What is the Father's will? We search for a definition of the concept *will*. We consult scholastic philosophy, St. Thomas, Dun Scotus, Kant, also William James, and the modern psychologists. They tell us that will is a faculty which can be analyzed as, first, the sensing of and approach to alternatives, second, the examination of these, third, the choice of action; that will can be influenced and controlled by conscience, intellect, emotions, appetites, by the material and the

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<sup>112)</sup> Rev. 5:9, 10.