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CAN THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH BE UNITED?

The issue involved in this question has been launched in a publication which has recently left the Concordia Press at St. Louis.¹⁾ The unification aimed at is one in doctrine. It does not advocate organic union, but a confessional consensus of all American Lutherans. This is a distinct merit of the book. Efforts to amalgamate, or federate, organized church-bodies must necessarily recognize other interests besides the one in which all Lutherans are agreed *a priori*, viz., that the confessional standards of the Church be maintained as a common norm of doctrine and practice by all who have adopted the denominational designation of Lutherans. It would not be easy to conceive a Lutheranism which would reject, in principle, the normative authority of the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church, and still claim recognition as a Lutheran society. Lutheranism, in such a case, would be a term of different import from the one which the term has in the common acceptation. Accordingly, the book starts with a fair prospect of having an easy sailing in Lutheran waters. The only pertinent question that could be raised in the premises is,

1) *Zur Einigung der amerikanisch-lutherischen Kirche in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl.* Im Anschluss an die norwegischen Vereinigungssätze und deren Kritiken. Von Dr. F. Pieper. St. Louis, Mo. Concordia Publishing House. 1913. 100 pages; bound in cloth; 40 cts. Carriage prepaid.

WHAT IS TO BE USED IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, GRAPE JUICE OR WINE?

(Read before the Louisiana District Conference, August, 1912.)

It is a fact well known among us that total abstinence from intoxicants is not enjoined upon man by the Word of God. Nowhere does the Word of God prohibit or condemn all use of intoxicating drinks. On the contrary, it very plainly approves of the moderate use of such beverages, and has words of condemnation only for their abuse. This is readily seen from the following Scripture passages: Eph. 5, 18; Rom. 13, 13. 14; Gal. 5, 21; Luke 21, 34;—Ps. 104, 15; John 2, 3—11; 1 Tim. 4, 4; 5, 23; Col. 2, 16. However, what is quite plain to us is not equally so to others. There are church bodies which denounce each and every use of intoxicating beverages as sinful. And this condemnation, they claim, is required by the Word of God. But while this assertion may

be entirely well meant, yet in reality these people do not derive their view on the use of liquor from the Holy Scriptures. Their opinion has a different parentage.

But if intoxicating liquor is such a sinful something, if any and all use of it is mortal sin, then it certainly ought not to be used in the celebration of Holy Communion. To fill the blessed cup with a beverage which is so dangerous, apart from arguing inconsistency, would be nothing short of the most hideous impiety. Very naturally, therefore, wine was banished from the celebration of the Eucharist of these people. And this innovation is justified not only with the general prohibition of the use of intoxicants, but also with an argument of piety, *viz.*, that the elimination of wine from the Lord's Supper is demanded by brotherly love, as that sip of wine taken in Communion may awaken a desire, too powerful to be resisted, for more and stronger drink in some of the weaker brethren, and eventually become the cause of their everlasting ruin. But if wine is now, at this late date, to be ruled out, how came it to be used at all? Was it perhaps used in the original celebration? This question is met with an emphatic negative by these people. Christ plainly said at the first Supper, not that He would not henceforth drink wine, but rather that henceforth He would not drink of the fruit of this vine, until that day when He should drink it new with His disciples in His Father's kingdom. And this expression, "the fruit of the vine," it is asserted, says nothing as to the stage in which grape juice is found, and in the connection in which it occurs can only be equivalent to unfermented juice of grapes. What, now, shall we say to these things?

That the Lord's Supper celebrated by the Christian Church in every age was instituted by Christ is a fact admitting of no denial. It was none other than Christ who founded this institution and enjoined its celebration upon His faithful followers of all times. The Supper which He celebrated is therefore undeniably the original, the type, the norm of the Supper celebrated by the Christian Church. This being granted, it

very naturally follows that it is a matter of greatest moment for our present inquiry to ascertain, if that be possible, what it was that the divine Founder employed in the original celebration of the Eucharist, whether grape juice or wine. And this is not an impossibility. For turning to the records relating the institution of the Lord's Supper, we find a historic note to assist us in ascertaining, what it was that the Savior used in the first Supper, what the earthly material was in the cup which He gave to His disciples, saying: "Take, drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in my blood." Matt. 26, 17—19 we read: "Now the first day of the feast of the unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand: I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover." Cf. Mark 14, 12—14. 16; Luke 22, 7. 14. 15. From the combined statements of these three evangelists it appears to absolute satisfaction that the Lord's Supper was founded at the celebration of the passover. During the course of the paschal meal Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, and distributed it to His disciples. At the celebration of the passover He, after the same manner, took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Take, drink," etc. What did this cup contain? It did not contain grape juice. It contained wine. For the passover, celebrated somewhat differently at Christ's time than when first instituted (Ex. 12), was celebrated with wine and not with grape juice. This we learn from the Mishna. We will properly appreciate the statements of the Mishna on this matter if we bear in mind that it contains the legal decisions of the ancient rabbis, their explanations and applications of the law (mostly the ceremonial and civil law) to special cases, and their regulations regarding ceremonial observances. Naturally the contents of the Mishna are of an earlier date than the final reduction of these oral tradi-

tions to the permanency of writing, which took place towards the close of the second century of our era. A further factor to be remembered here is that, when the Mishna was written, the passover was no longer kept at Jerusalem, as at Christ's time, because the temple had been destroyed, and that its intention was to give an exact account of the proper observance of the passover, so that Israel might know what to do when it would again have possession of the city of David, and its temple would stand as and where it once stood. What, then, does it say with reference to this matter? Targum Pesachim, chap. 10, we read: "Also a poor man ate not save in a recumbent position. — And they do not open for him less than four cups of wine, even though he live on alms. At the first cup he gives thanks to God for the day and for the wine. — If any one wishes to drink between the first two cups, he may do so (according to Maimonides, because wine does not readily inebriate when drunk while a person is eating); but between the third and the fourth cup (nothing being eaten between them) he may not drink." 1) Another quotation from the same source reads as follows: "The third cup is the cup of blessing after food. Pure wine is poured in, and a mixture with water is made in the cup. The fourth is that over which they sing the Hallel, and he adds the benediction of the song: 'Let all Thy works praise Thee, O Lord,' and, 'Blessed be He who has created the fruit of the vine.'" (Pesach. 117.) Again: "In every one of those cups must be a quarter measure of wine, be it pure or diluted, be it old or new." 2) From these quota-

1) *Etiam pauper non edebat nisi circa mensam recumbens. — Nec aperiunt ei minus quam quatuor pocula vini, etiamsi elemosynis sustentetur. Ad primum poculum benedicit diei ac vino. — Inter priora duo pocula, si quis bibere voluerit, bibit (secundum Maimonidem, quia vinum non facile inebriat inter edendum); at intra tertium et quartum non bibit.*

2) *Poculum tertium est poculum benedictionis post cibum. Vinum purum infunditur et fit commixtio aquae in poculo. Quartum est, super quo perficiunt Hallel, additque benedictionem cantici laudent Te, Domine, omnia opera Tua, et: Benedictus sit, qui creavit fructum vitis. — In unoquoque poculorum illorum debet esse quartale vini, sive meri sive diluti, sive veteris sive novi. (Quoted in Paulus, *Kommentar ueber die drei ersten Evangelien*, pp. 575. 594.)*

tions it is very plain that the passover, as it had been observed in Jerusalem, was celebrated with wine. Nor need any one scruple to accept this testimony because our translation is derived not from the original, but from a Latin version. For wine the translation says "vinum" and not "mustum." *Vinum* in these translations is the equivalent of "2" which always means wine and never grape juice (see *Jewish Cyclopedia* under "Wine"), so that we are not at all at a disadvantage for being unable to refer directly to the original. Now if it was a universally accepted and established custom, while Israel kept the passover at Jerusalem, to use wine in this observance, it necessarily follows that Christ also celebrated His last passover with wine. It also follows that the cup which He consecrated and gave to His disciples to drink contained wine. Thus here already the conclusion is forced upon us that in the original Supper wine and not grape juice was used.

The *Jewish Cyclopedia*, which ought to be heeded as an authority, says in the article "Passover" that in the observance of this rite wine was used.

Schaff-Herzog, in the article "Lord's Supper," says: "At the end of the Supper, before the singing of the Hallel, He takes in like manner the cup of wine, which was passed from hand to hand four times during the paschal meal, and gives it to them."

But perhaps some are not satisfied to accept these quotations from authorities of the highest order as sufficient to prove that Christ used wine in the first celebration of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps the proof offered thus far seems to be lacking in stringency. If so, there is an argument on the strength of which we maintain that Christ in the institution of the Supper used wine from which there is no reasonable escape. We have reference to the fact that grape juice at that time of the year when the passover was held was a physical impossibility. In the article "Agriculture" in the *Jewish Cyclopedia* we find the following: "The first crops planted (by the Jews) were the pulse varieties early in Heshwan (October); barley followed

a few days later and wheat last of all. The harvesting seasons were Nisan (April) for barley, Siwan (early June) for wheat, Tishri (September) for fruits." The correctness of these statements is borne out by passages from the Scriptures. Lev. 26, 5 the promise of God to Israel is, that if it keeps His commandments, their threshing shall reach unto the vintage and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time. Micah 7, 1 the Church, complaining of her small number, voices this lament: "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat." The summer, accordingly, was the time when grapes were ripe. To be more exact, the vintage in Palestine lasted from June to September. Now we are not informed that the Jews were cognizant of a process by which to preserve grapes entire from September to April. Neither is there any record stating that Christ, at the last passover He celebrated, miraculously produced grapes to fill the passover cup with their juice, or that He halfway inverted the miracle of Cana by making grape juice out of wine. Nor yet is there the slightest shadow of evidence that the Jews knew how to preserve grape juice in its original form. However, we do know something about the use to which grapes were most largely put after they had been gleaned. The Jews made wine of them, an operation which required but little time. "From the vats" (into which it ran from the press) "the wine was dipped into leather bottles or earthen jars (Josh. 9, 13; Jer. 13, 12). There it was allowed to ferment, and this process began within from six to twelve hours." That seven to ten months after the process of fermentation had begun wine had evolved we may safely believe. And until reliable evidence is brought forward to establish with positive certainty that the Jews had vintage in April, or that they possessed chemicals to keep grape juice unfermented for nearly a year, or that they had modern refrigerators and cold storage plants, we must believe that Christ used wine in the celebration of the first Lord's Supper.

From the original Supper we now go forward to the apos-

tolic celebration of this rite. The Savior had commanded His Church to celebrate the Holy Supper even as He had celebrated it, down to the end of time. And the apostolic Church was obedient to its Lord's injunction: "This do in remembrance of me." This appears from Acts 2, 42; 20, 11. This is seen also from 1 Cor. 11. Nor are we at a loss to determine what was used by the apostolic Church when celebrating the Lord's Supper. We may learn this from the eleventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Let us carefully examine the verses of this chapter bearing on this matter. The apostle, first of all, sharply rebukes the Corinthian Christians, because, when they "came together into one place, this was not to eat the Lord's Supper." He does not mean to say that in the Corinthian congregation Communion was not celebrated, but that the manner of celebrating was improper. For according to v. 21, in eating, every one "took before other his own supper, and one was hungry and another drunken." An evil practice had crept into this congregation in connection with the Lord's Supper. Some of the members, very likely those of some wealth, brought an abundant supply of food and drink to the assembly, while others brought nothing. And they that brought much ate and drank much. In fact, some drank so freely as to become intoxicated. But this was not what the apostle had taught them. Therefore he says, v. 22: "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not?" If they desired to eat and drink liberally, they should do this at home. Their behavior was a flagrant breach of the law of brotherly love. It was wrong to eat and drink to satiety, leaving the poor to stand by neglected and unfed. It was, furthermore, not proper that they indulged in the cup that inebriates. That wrong practice described in v. 21 was not what St. Paul had taught them. What he had taught them he states vv. 23—26, *viz.*, to celebrate the Lord's Supper even as Christ had done in the night in which He was betrayed. Now what strikes us most forcibly is, that the apostle does not take the Corinthian Christians to task for

tolerating the use of wine in their religious assemblies. If he had been of the conviction that any and every use of wine is sinful, then, as an apostle of Christ, he had the bounden duty to censure in unequivocal terms what he knew to be exceedingly sinful. Had this been his conviction, he must have flared up in holy indignation, and the eleventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians should have embodied a few lightning bolts of righteous wrath from the inspired apostle directed against those who dared to bring the drink of devils to their religious meetings. But there is no trace of anything of this kind. The apostle is highly displeased with those who become "drunken," but not one syllable does he write to indicate that wine was entirely out of place in the church. And the reason for this is not remote. When the first Christians celebrated Communion, they themselves brought the earthly elements, bread and wine, to their services. So it was also in Corinth. However, there were some who, instead of bringing bread and wine for Communion only, brought a full meal, evidently not satisfied with the order of things St. Paul had taught them. For this the apostle reprimanded them. But he did not banish wine from their service. And from this we infer that he considered it self-evident that wine should be brought; indeed, he considered it an absolute necessity. For the celebration, he had taught them, was not his own invention. On the contrary, he had received of the Lord that which he had delivered unto them. That which he had received of the Lord, however, was nothing else than the celebration of the Supper as Christ had instituted it in the night in which He was betrayed. What Christ used we already know. And there is not the frailest pin of evidence on which to hang the hypothesis that the observance of Communion as Christ taught it to St. Paul differed in any respect from the original Supper. Now the absence of a sweeping prohibition of wine at the services of the Corinthian Christians becomes thoroughly comprehensible, and drives the conclusion home with irresistible force that St. Paul delivered unto these people to celebrate the Holy Supper with wine.

Now fair-mindedness compels assent to the statement that St. Paul considered wine an indispensable necessity for the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper. But if the Lord's Supper which he taught the Corinthians was celebrated with wine, then he also, most assuredly, taught the other congregations which he founded and instructed to use wine as one of the earthly elements in this ordinance. Then, likewise, the Lord's Supper as the other apostles taught it to their churches must have been celebrated with wine. For all taught the observance of the Supper as they had learned it from the Lord. Thus the practice of pure Christianity, the practice of the apostolic Church under the guidance of men directed and upheld by the Holy Spirit, was to celebrate the Holy Supper not with grape juice, but with wine.

Passing on from the apostolic age and from the hallowed confines of the inspired writings of apostles and evangelists into the broad expanse of patristic literature, we find abundant testimony as to the material used in the celebration of the Eucharist in those days. It was bread and wine. For the sake of brevity only a few quotations are adduced. Justin Martyr (*Apol.* I, 65) gives a full description of the manner in which the Eucharist was celebrated in his time. There he says in part: "Then bread and a cup of water and wine are brought to him who presides over the brethren. . . . Those among us who are called deacons give to each of those present to partake of the consecrated bread and wine and water."³ Tertullian says (*De Oratione IV, Adv. Marcion.* IV, 40): "In the bread is accounted the body of Christ. His blood He hath consecrated in wine."⁴ Cyprian (*Epist. 63 ad Caecilian.*) writes: "When in the cup water is mixed with the wine, the people are made one with Christ and the multitude of believers is united to Him in whom it believes."⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cateches. IV,*

3) Ἐπειτα προσφέρεται τῷ προεστῶτι τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἄρτος καὶ ποτήριον ὕδατος καὶ κραμάτος. . . . Οἱ καλούμενοι παρ' ἡμῶν διάκονοι διδάσων ἐκάστῳ τῶν παρόντων μεταλαβεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ εὐχαριστηθέντος ἄρτου καὶ οἴνου καὶ ὕδατος.

4) Tertullian, quoted from Krauth's *Conservative Reformation*.

5) Quando in calice vino aqua miscetur, Christo populus adunatur et credentium plebs ei, in quem credit.

Epist. ad Coelosyr.) says: "In the type of bread His body is given thee, and in the type of wine His blood. His sacred flesh and His precious blood we receive in the bread and wine."⁶⁾ Quotations of this kind could be multiplied without much trouble. Thus the Christian Church of the first centuries gives its testimony to the propriety of using wine in the Lord's Supper. In fact, failure to use wine was accounted a mark of heresy. The Ebionites and Eneerates used water instead of wine. The Artotyritae observed their Lord's Supper with bread and cheese. However, these bodies were catalogued as heretics, and one of the heterodox opinions that relegated them to the company of false believers was their peculiar view as to what was to be used in the celebration of Holy Communion.

From what has thus far been stated the conclusion evolves with certainty that the original Supper was celebrated with wine, and that the apostolic Church likewise employed wine in its Eucharist. It furthermore appears that the cup of blessing which the Christian Church of the first centuries had on its altars was filled with wine. It must be admitted that a practice of the postapostolic Church does not necessarily establish a law for the Christian Church. And the Lutheran Church has never found trouble in setting itself right with doctrines, institutions, and practices of that period which could not lay claim to a better reason for their perpetuation than their origin in the early centuries after apostolic times. Nor do we attach too much weight to the testimony of the fathers quoted above. Their testimony has weight and value only inasmuch as it is corroborative of apostolic doctrine and practice. However, with the apostolic age and with the example of Christ things are very different. Their practice in this matter partakes of the nature of an authoritative example, is something necessarily to be imitated. Their example cannot be disposed of with such platitudes as, "Times change, conditions are different now than they were 30 or 60 after Christ," or, "Not everything that Christ did necessarily implies a law of universal obligation

6) Quoted from Krauth's *Conservative Reformation*.

for all Christians of all times." The present matter, unfortunately for some people, does not belong under this flexible and capacious category. For this matter, the use of wine in the Lord's Supper, is hedged in and safeguarded by a word of Christ, by a command of the God-man Himself. Christ's command to His Church is: "This do in remembrance of me," viz., take bread and wine, even as I have done, give thanks over them, and eat and drink. And through St. Paul the same Lord gives the same injunction. And this command is binding upon all Christians down to the end of time. From this manner of celebrating Holy Communion we dare not depart, if we would continue faithfully in the Word of our Lord and Savior. Indeed, we are constrained by this command of Christ, "This do in remembrance of me," to label the practice of substituting grape juice for wine in Communion a deviation from the Word of Christ, an unwarranted innovation, amounting to forfeiture of that title most dear to true Christians, namely, a true disciple of Christ. Furthermore, since Christ Himself used wine in the Holy Supper, and since St. Paul taught the Corinthians to likewise use wine, and since by the command of Christ this is obligatory upon all Christians, it follows that persons who undertake to supplant wine with grape juice in the Lord's Supper have no complete Sacrament of the Altar. A substitute for wine inevitably carries with it the elimination of an essential element of the Eucharist. Only of the eucharistic bread are we permitted to say, "This is Christ's body," and only of the eucharistic wine are we allowed to say, "This is Christ's blood." Only when we use bread and wine in the Supper, are we assured that in, with, and under them shall we receive the body given into death for us, and the blood shed for the remission of our sins. The assertion that "grape juice meets all the demands of the case" (Peloubet, *Commentary on Matthew*), and therefore does not imply the elimination of an essential factor, is simply not true. Grape juice is not wine. Grape juice that has become wine has undergone an essential change. If it is permissible to use grape juice instead of wine,

then it is also permissible, on the strength of the assertion that the expression "the fruit of the vine" says nothing as to the stage in which grape juice is found, to use wine that has turned into vinegar, as that, too, is of the fruit of the vine. But this expression, "the fruit of the vine," is not as indefinite as some would have us believe. What Christ had in the cup at the passover was wine. And this He calls the "fruit of the vine." Hence this expression is, under the circumstances, an exact equivalent of the term wine. Moreover, in the already quoted passage from the Mishna we are informed that the *paterfamilias* adds to the Hallel the words: "Blessed be He who has created the fruit of the vine" (above Pesach. 117), referring to that which was drunk at the passover, which was wine, again identifying the fruit of the vine with wine. Hence we argue that only if we use wine in the Lord's Supper are we sure that in it we shall receive Christ's blood. And people who go to such lengths of temerity as to displace the wine of the Lord's Supper with grape juice mutilate that blessed ordinance and deprive themselves of a priceless blessing.

In the introduction already it was pointed out that the erroneous view of certain sectarian bodies concerning alcoholic beverages led them to eliminate wine from the Lord's Supper. In addition to this there is something else that must have aided greatly in prompting them to adopt their false position with reference to the matter under discussion, and that is their denial of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the consecrated elements of the Eucharist. Bread and wine are to them merely symbols, signs, mediating and imparting nothing. They had, prior to using grape juice instead of wine, already abandoned and rejected the true Lord's Supper. Naturally, therefore, it was a small matter to substitute something else for wine. Their spiritual ancestors had, so to speak, paved the way for them in this matter, and that on the very contention that the earthly elements of the Lord's Supper are merely symbols and nothing more. Calvin was of the opinion that where bread and wine could not be obtained something else might lawfully be sub-

stituted. Beza follows him, and asserts that in default of bread and wine other things could rightly be taken. It cannot therefore create much surprise when their offspring now make a rule of what they considered only as a possibility, and declares in the name of extraordinary holiness that wine may not be used and a substitute must be employed. For if the Lord's Supper contains only symbols, and nothing but symbols, the spiritual nourishing of the soul may just as well be represented by eatables and drinkables other than bread and wine. Nay, if wine be as objectionable as they would have it appear, then something else must be utilized.

Scriptures, however, speak a very different language regarding the real nature of the Eucharist. The cup of blessing is the communion of the blood of Christ; the bread is the communion of the body of Christ. In other words, eating and drinking the eucharistic bread and wine we partake of, we receive orally the body and blood of Christ. And this participation is strictly limited to, and inseparably bound up with, the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Hence it is unwise, unsafe, and counter to the Word of God to use anything else than bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. And it is wise, absolutely safe, and in full agreement with the Word of God to abide by the original order of things in the celebration of the Holy Supper. In fact, in all matters of faith and practice the right and the only course is the course indicated by the infallible Word of God.

Gretna, La.

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