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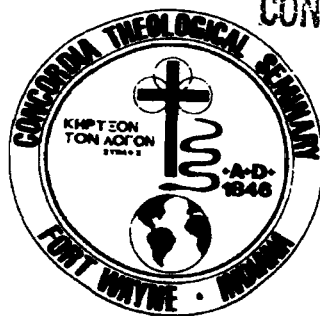
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The Pastor's Communion

Toivo Harjunpaa

This essay deals with a peculiarly Lutheran problem. It is inconceivable that such a topic should be discussed in the midst of any other major denomination, whether Catholic or Protestant. Only Lutherans show an interest in the question of the minister's self-communion. To us, all over the world, it has been and continues to be a problem of both practical and theological importance.

1. Self-Communion outside Lutheranism

This particular matter seems to have been discussed surprisingly little outside the Lutheran Church, whereas Lutheran writings on the subject from the sixteenth century down to the present day amount to thousands of pages. Probably the largest single volume ever written on the subject is the recently published work in Swedish by Dr. Helge Nyman, professor of practical theology in Finland, *The Minister's Communion in the Lutheran Service*.¹ What I have to offer in this paper is largely based on this book.

The celebrant's self-communion is not known to have been a problem before the latter part of the sixteenth century. It has always been a consistent practice and definite rule, both in the Roman and the Greek Orthodox Churches, that the consecrating priest, or the celebrant, must also receive the sacrament in order that the liturgical action be properly completed. Furthermore, the celebrant is to receive the sacrament in both kinds before it is distributed to others. The form of his own reception is always the self-communion, whether assisting priests are present or not.

It is a widely held and very old opinion both among Catholics and Protestants that self-communion was an apostolic custom, following, indeed, our Lord's own example as He instituted the sacrament. It is so self-evident to Roman liturgiologists that it is scarcely discussed by them. Thus, for instance, one finds no information concerning the origin of self-communion in the recent, very detailed history of the Roman mass by Jungmann (*Missarum Sollemnia*). Scudamore quotes Irenaeus as the earliest author (c.200) who represents the opinion that Christ, when He consecrated the bread and the wine, also partook of the elements. Among other early fathers Jerome and Chrysostom also stress our Lord's own example as the basis of the celebrating priest's self-communion. In some ancient Eastern liturgies brief

interpolations have been added to the words of institution, such as “after he had given thanks, he brake it and ate and gave to his disciples. . .”² As scriptural evidence in support of the celebrant’s self-communion in the apostolic church 1 Corinthians 2:13 and 10:18 have been quoted. These passages read as follows:

(1.) Do ye not know that they which minister holy things live of the things of the temple and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

(2.) Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

The context of the latter passage deserves our attention. The preceding two verses constitute St. Paul’s important theological interpretation of the eucharistic action: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” Reference to Acts 20:11 has also been made. This passage describes how during a Christian assembly at Troas Paul broke bread and ate of it himself.

As soon as ceremonial rubrics began to appear in ancient liturgies, both Eastern and Western, they testify to the rule of the celebrant’s obligatory self-communion.³ The Council of Toledo, in the year 681, made a rule that the priest had to commune himself each time, even if he had to celebrate more than one mass in the same day. The council quoted Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 10:18. To consecrate and not to commune the council regarded as a punishable offense against the Sacrament of the Lord.⁴ A priest who offended against this rule was to be suspended from his office for the period of one year and one day.⁵

Well over a thousand years later, in 1831, the Lutheran diocesan chapter in Gothenburg, Sweden, was prepared to go even farther in the opposite direction. It proposed a change in the church law which would categorically prohibit the pastor’s self-communion. To make it effective the chapter specifically proposed that culprits among the clergy be punished for the first offense with six month’s suspension and for the second offense with removal from the ministry.⁶ It may be a relief to some readers to learn that this

motion was never carried. However, such was the situation toward the end of the last century in Scandinavia that Swedish pastors, serving alone in rural parishes, were known and reported by name who had not once received Holy Communion for five or even seven years.⁷

How do we explain this unique Lutheran attitude, even more strange and peculiar in the light of the fact that, not only is the entire pre-Reformation tradition of the church fundamentally opposed to it, but so is also the practice of the other churches of the Reformation, the Anglican and the Calvinist? Has not the Lutheran Church stressed to some degree always, and in the first century of its existence quite emphatically, its identity with the one holy catholic and apostolic church? Has it not safeguarded with greater care and piety the historic continuity of many of the time-honored traditions and customs of the universal church than most Protestant denominations? Have not our Lutheran fathers given considerable weight in the work of reformation to the ancient principle: “quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus traditum est” — what has been accepted always and everywhere and by all?

How is it possible, then, that in the question of the minister's self-communion, our church has so radically departed from others, following its own solitary course? A categorical denial of self-communion can no longer be explained as a mere matter of outward ceremony and adiaphora. Important theological and dogmatic principles must be involved in such an attitude. Is there a serious scriptural reason for this unique Lutheran position which to others seems rather sectarian? Or should we reverse the statement and venture a suggestion that the rest of Christendom has gone astray and we alone are on the right road? There have been times when voices to that effect have been heard in the Lutheran Church.

2. Luther and the Era of the Reformation

One of the basic principles of the Lutheran Reformation, both liturgically and theologically, was the restoration of the congregational nature of the public worship. The Roman Mass of that day violated this principle in a most serious way. It was understood chiefly as a priestly sacrificial drama, at which, in

the case of the high mass, the people were mere passive onlookers and, in the multitudes of private masses, their presence was not even encouraged. It is especially against the latter that Luther let fall the full force of his holy anger. The private mass was an abomination and a source of corruption, both religious and moral, in the church. The complete abolition of these "corner masses" (*Winkelmeese*) was early given a high priority by Luther in the task of the Reformation.

The heart of the evangelical mass is the gift of God, the sacramental real presence of the risen Christ, and the bestowal of the life-giving fruits of His passion and death on Calvary. Thus the evangelical mass defeats its purpose if it does not lead to the climax, the communion as a table-fellowship (*koinonia*) of the believers with their Lord and with one another. For this reason even the very name for the evangelical mass gradually changed to that of the Service of the Holy Communion. A logical consequence of this interpretation of the mass, which certainly agrees with the statements of St. Paul already quoted, is the rule that the mass is not to be celebrated in the church unless there be at least a few communicants.

What was the celebrant's position concerning the reception of the sacrament in the early Lutheran Mass? What was done (a) when no more than one pastor was present or (b) when assisting clergy were present? Do we know Luther's own thinking and liturgical practice on this matter? To answer these questions we have at our disposal a wealth of material in the liturgical writings of the sixteenth century, above all in the German church orders. Luther did not say much about this subject but enough that we may form a clear picture of his views and usage.

A very important early description of the nature of the mass as a "sacrament of the whole church" and hence as a parish communion is his famous polemical writing "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (1520). Throughout this work Luther regards it as a matter of course that the celebrating minister include himself in the communion fellowship of his people whom he serves. The sacrament is a true means of grace only when it is received. Our Lord's command is "Drink ye all of it." He means all who are gathered around the table. We people can pray for one another, but we cannot receive communion for one another.⁸

In the year 1523 Luther published two of his three liturgical orders, of which the *Formula Missae et Communionis* is the more important and also more detailed, containing a great deal of theological interpretation. In the *Formula Missae* there is the following rubric after the consecration, the Lord's Prayer, and the Pax: "deinde communicat, tum sese tum populum" (then let him communicate himself first, then the people).⁹ In other words, Luther follows here the traditional usage of the church. The *Formula Missae* would have been intended, as its full title indicates, for use in the city parish of Wittenberg. There would have been no difficulty there in having the celebrant receive the sacrament from another pastor. The rubric does not suggest such a procedure but, as we shall see later, it became a law in the Lutheran tradition nevertheless.

Three years later, in 1526, appeared Luther's important German Mass (*Deutsche Messe*). The absence of this rubric here has led Lutheran writers from at least the early seventeenth century down to the present-day to the conclusion that Luther gave up very soon this "popish" custom. This argument *ex silentio* (for there is no rubric of any kind in *Deutsche Messe* concerning the celebrating pastor's communion) becomes quite explicit, they say, in the light of what Luther has to say about the pastor's self-communion in the Smalcald Articles (1537):

But that one administer communion to himself is a human notion, uncertain, unnecessary, yea even prohibited. And he does not know what he is doing because without the Word of God he obeys a false human opinion and invention.¹⁰

It is this passage which has been widely used as a doctrinal basis for regarding the pastor's self-communion either as an entirely illegal or, at least, a highly irregular form of communion to be tolerated only under exceptional circumstances.

Nyman and a number of other Lutheran scholars are convinced that such an interpretation of this article is incorrect; it reads into the text something which is not the intention of Luther. The above passage must be reviewed in the light of the context in which it appears. Earlier in the same article Luther speaks of the buying and selling of masses and in the same paragraph makes this statement:

If anyone should advance a pretext that as an act of devotion

he wishes to administer the sacrament, or communion, to himself, he is not in earnest. For if he wishes to commune in sincerity, the surest and best way for him is in the sacrament administered according to Christ's institution.

The whole paragraph ends, finally, with these significant words:

It is not right for one to use the common sacrament of the church according to his own private devotion and without God's Word and apart from the communion of the church to trifle therewith.¹¹

It seems, then, that this passage, in the light of the whole context, is quite obviously directed against the practice of private masses, which the Lutherans had rejected from the beginning, rather than against the pastor's communion as part of general communion. Some, however, may still doubt this conclusion; since private masses had already been abolished among Lutherans, why would Luther still write about them? To those who might use such an argument it is necessary to point out the purpose of the Smalcald Articles and the political-ecclesiastical situation which had then arisen in Germany. The articles were drawn up by Luther with the possibility in mind that they might be presented to a general church council which Pope Paul III was expected to summon at that time. It is natural that the private mass be discussed in such a document.¹²

For information, moreover, on Luther's views on self-communion we are not limited only to those writings which we have already discussed. In a later work, *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen* (1539), Luther again regards it as a natural thing that the pastor in an evangelical service should receive the sacrament together with his people. This practice in his opinion is in accordance with Christ's institution. The minister who serves in the service is included in the *Communio*, in the fellowship of the people who have called him.¹³ In 1541 Luther made a written reply to a request concerning the order of the communion. Luther was of the opinion that the celebrant should always commune whereas the assisting clergy, who distribute the wine, may decide for themselves ("is qui officium publicum exercat in missa omnino una communicet").¹⁴

One very important point must be made clear, a point which might easily be overlooked. Although both the Roman Catholic

tradition and Luther seem to regard the celebrant's communion as an obligation, the motivation is entirely different. The Roman priest communes on behalf and for the people, in order to bring the eucharistic sacrificial action to its completion, but the evangelical minister or pastor receives the sacrament as an individual member in the fellowship of his people, not as part of his priestly function as liturgist. The pastor needs the gift of the sacrament for his own spiritual life and furthermore, as the shepherd of his flock, he is duty-bound in Christian love to show an example to his people. Luther thus makes a vital distinction in the case of the pastor between what he calls *Amtsperson* and *Einzelperson*, the pastor as an official person and the pastor as an individual Christian. When he conducts the liturgy, he functions as an *Amtsperson*. Only when he himself receives the sacrament is he simply one of the congregation. Luther asks: "Unless the servant of the church has been sent to receive the sacrament himself, he is not the proper person to preach and pray and baptize."¹⁵

Such then was Luther's view and the liturgical practice he used and recommended to others. The Book of Concord does not discuss the question at hand beyond what has already been mentioned. A great deal of additional light is shed by the church orders which regulated the liturgical life of the churches in various places during the sixteenth century. Nyman and others doubt whether a single Lutheran church order or liturgy existed before 1600 which prohibited the celebrant's self-communion. In fact, in several church orders of the period, rubrics similar to the one in the *Formula Missae* exist. In a number of church orders the celebrant's communion follows after the communion of the people or is said to be voluntary. In still others there is no rubric about this matter. Kliefoth's view, that the absence of the rubric indicates the disappearance of self-communion almost from the beginning throughout wide areas of the Lutheran Church, must be regarded as erroneous.¹⁶ Evidence from Lutheran churches outside Germany follows on the whole a similar course, both in Luther's time and after. In Scandinavia the custom of the minister, whether alone or with assistants, receiving the communion last was known already in the sixteenth century.¹⁷

3. *The Irregularity and Abolition of the Self-Communion*

A change in thinking and liturgical practice becomes noticeable as the pastor's self-communion developed into a problem and a point of controversy in the Lutheran Church. Even in far-away Sweden, as early as 1562, Archbishop Laurentius Petri spoke of pastors who declined to receive the sacrament unless it was placed in their mouths by other pastors. Such a novelty the archbishop regarded as the devil's work and warned against it.¹⁸ That a gradual change was taking place during the latter half of the sixteenth century can be seen also from the writings of Martin Chemnitz. While defending the celebrant's right to self-communion, he is willing to admit that it should not be regarded as the only solution. A Christian's conscience must not be bound by any rule which the Bible has not made.¹⁹ Self-communion was granted in theory, but in actual practice it was becoming more and more customary for pastors to serve communion to one another. What were the reasons for this gradual change which eventually led to such radical proposals as those mentioned earlier, wherein self-communion was regarded as a punishable crime? The most important factors in the new development were a changed view of the nature of the sacrament, the obligatory preparation for its reception by private confession, and finally a changed view of the nature of the ministry.

The order of the evangelical masses that Luther prepared seems strange to us as they have no specific form of confession and absolution, without which we cannot think of Holy Communion. In place of public confession Luther warmly recommended, and he himself rather regularly practiced, private confession before going to communion. This confession usually took place a day or two before the communion. Communion was, as a rule, celebrated every Sunday and festival day. Luther does stress very clearly the voluntary nature of the confession. The common people were to come at least a few times a year to private confession for instruction in the Christian faith if for nothing else. There is a brief communion exhortation, homiletical in style, right after the sermon in Luther's German Mass. But it has no absolution, nor is it intended to take the place of private confession. In the *Formula Missae* Luther gives this brief explanation of the Pax Domini in the liturgy:

But immediately after the Lord's Prayer shall be said the Peace of the Lord, etc., which is, so to speak, a public

absolution of the sins of the communicants, truly the Gospel voice announcing remission of sins, the one and most worthy preparation for the Lord's Table, if it be apprehended by faith and not otherwise than as though it came forth from the mouth of Christ Himself.²⁰

At the turn of the century dogmatists were ready to advance several reasons against the practice of self-communion. The fact that, for instance, the famous John Gerhard in his widely read *Loci Theologici* accepted such arguments indicates the rapid spread of these views. It is more in harmony with Christ's institution if the sacrament is received from another person's hand. Nobody can absolve himself but must go to another pastor for confession. The usage should be the same in receiving communion. One's own faith is strengthened when another person is present. It is also an expression of the mutual love and respect between the servants of the church. It now became common to interpret the previously cited passage in the Smalcald Articles as prohibiting the practice of self-communion. It was also claimed by some that the apostolic church did not know the custom.²¹ Some of these arguments seem rather weak and forced. One of the favorite arguments was the close parallelism that was said to exist between the two sacraments. The orthodox fathers often referred to baptism, pointing out that nobody baptizes himself and arguing that similarly no one should administer communion to himself.

The necessity of receiving absolution before communion became, in the course of the seventeenth century, the most important single impediment to the practice of self-communion. Everywhere the Lutheran Church now introduced a strict rule of obligatory private confession without which communion was not allowed. No one, not even a king, was excepted from this rule. Thus each pastor had to have his own father-confessor to whom he confessed his sins privately and from whom he obtained divine absolution. It was only natural that he should want to receive the blessed sacrament from the hand of his *confessionarius*. But this reception was only possible as part of the communion of the congregation. Thus arose the custom that two pastors always administered communion to each other, a custom still almost universally observed by Lutherans. A problem of real difficulty existed, however, in the case of numerous pastors

who served congregations alone, where ministerial help on communion Sundays was not to be had. When we consider that public opinion, the views of influential theologians, and the rules of ecclesiastical and civil authorities all warned against the dangers of self-communion, we can sympathize with the plight of many lonely pastors at that time—and for that matter, long afterward, down into the latter part of the last century, in fact.

This development in the meaning of Holy Communion and the obligatory nature of private confession had important consequences for the life of the Lutheran Church. The pastor became more like a judge, or a strict schoolmaster, than a sympathetic shepherd of souls. In the institution of private confession he had an effective means of controlling the lives of his people. The orthodox pastor used this authority, above all, for a strict and frequent rehearsal of the catechetical knowledge of his people. The number of communion Sundays began to drop considerably from what it had been in the days of the reformers. The gulf between the clergy and the laity became wider. The seventeenth-century Lutheran pastor, unlike Luther, found it difficult to consider himself anything but an *Amtsperson*. He was often eminently aware of the great *potestas jurisdictionis* which was his by virtue of ordination. This authority was, above all, manifested in “the power of the keys” to loose and bind, to excommunicate and to absolve.²² What had been natural to Luther and others a century earlier seemed unnatural and wrong to the men of orthodoxy, that one and the same pastor could function both as a giver and receiver in the communion service. In fact, the incongruity of the dual position of the pastor at the service was time and again used as one of the reasons why self-communion should not be practiced.

The obligatory use of private confession proved in the long run to be too ambitious a program, even when the number of communions per year was reduced. Practical necessity, therefore, led to a change. Gradually, as an obligatory institution, the order of public confession, which still is with us, came into existence. Private confession was kept, but from now on as a voluntary rite of the church. It is obvious that the nature of confession and absolution changed when private confession gave way to general confession. The latter gradually became merely another preaching service (featuring a *Beichtpredigt*) with a pronouncement of

forgiveness after a general confession. In some churches, notably in Denmark and Norway, private absolution survived as a custom, even though group confession became established as a separate preparatory service.²³ The change from private confession to public confession was not necessarily a negative development. It has been pointed out that obligatory private confession had become a hasty, mechanical formality where the demands of time pressed hard on the pastor with a large number of communicants. In the case of general confession, a longer address by the pastor, together with questions and prayers, could better prepare the people for a worthy reception of the Lord's Supper.²⁴

This change did not, of course, solve at all the acute problem of the communion of unassisted pastors. Even where definite legislation against self-communion was not introduced, public opinion had become so opposed to it that pastors would tend to avoid the issue. Various solutions were tried to help the clergy. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries pastors in a certain area would come together with their families and have a special communion of their own, followed by feasting in the parsonage. That this custom aroused criticism is no wonder. It looked too much like the private masses which the Lutheran Church had so definitely rejected.²⁵

In many of the Lutheran churches self-communion had been declared illegal by definite ecclesiastical or state legislation. The church of Saxony, Luther's own church, was the first to point the way.²⁶ However, Germany always remained divided on this question. In some territorial churches, interestingly enough, especially in those where the Calvinistic influence had always been a notable factor, such as Wuerttemberg and Hessen, the pastor's self-communion was theologically defended and liturgically practiced.²⁷

Although pietism and rationalism within the eighteenth-century Lutheran Church presented two markedly different movements, and both again differed greatly from the orthodox tradition, yet in the matter of the pastor's self-communion there existed remarkable agreement between these three schools both in thought and practice. This is the reason that seventeenth-century orthodoxy has been able to hold the field so tenaciously where the practice of the minister's self-communion is concerned.

Examples of the tenacity of this position are provided by the prominent theologians Klaus Harms and Christoph Ernst Luthardt. Harms became famous through his ninety-five theses issued against theological rationalism and unionism. Publishing his, as well as Luther's, theses on the eve of All Saints Day in 1817, Harms made a passionate plea to his fellow Lutherans to return to the faith of Luther and the confessional heritage of the Reformation. That Harms himself had not reached that noble goal, at least in every respect, becomes apparent when we learn his views on Holy Communion. Harms was categorically opposed to the pastor's self-communion, and he employed all the usual seventeenth-century arguments to prove his point. A person should not go often to communion. In his *Pastoraltheologie* Harms gives the advice that pastors should carefully examine the motives of those who desire communion more than twice or three times a year. Such tendencies are unhealthy and must be brought under proper control! That very frequent communion was the practice of the early church did not disconcert Harms. Those were still primitive, undeveloped times, he said.²⁸ Luthardt, half a century after Harms, goes so far as to insist that pastors should not receive communion at all when they are officiating, even when an assistant is present. They should only receive communion when they have no official function at the service.²⁹

4. The Restoration of the Pastor's Self-Communion

A gradual restoration of the legal right and liturgical practice of the pastor's self-communion began about a century ago in Germany and spread later to other countries. The restoration is not yet complete, but the situation has changed very markedly during the past century. Many factors have contributed to this development.

The revival of church life and the growing sense of churchmanship, both during the last century and in our own age, have led to a widespread practice of more frequent services of Holy Communion. In such a situation the pastor's own desire to commune in the fellowship of his congregation has pressed upon him with an urgency which has demanded a satisfactory solution. The study of the Bible and church history has helped to remove old obstacles. J. L. Koenig's careful and well

documented study of the history of the celebrant's self-communion since New Testament times had a very wide influence and has contributed greatly to the new movement in Germany.³⁰ In 1879 the General Synod of the Prussian Church took legal action to make the pastor's self-communion permissible where assistant clergy was not available.³¹ Other churches followed Prussia's example. No doubt the widespread and intensive research on Luther which began with the publication of a critical edition of Luther's works has also been a contributing factor in the solution of this problem. A better knowledge of the sacramental theology of the reformers and their liturgical practice has been welcomed by many.

In our own time two additional factors of some influence should be mentioned. The ecumenical movement awakened interest in the liturgical life of other communions. The work which the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has done in the field of worship has affected concepts of corporate worship and its underlying theological principles.³²

Secondly, recent investigations concerning the origin of the Christian eucharist and its Jewish background have lent support to the view that the consecration of the bread and wine at the Jewish sacred meal, whether the passover or another religious fellowship meal, was followed by the "self-communion" of the host before others participated.³³ The Talmud has a rule that he who pronounces the benediction over the bread and wine must also receive them. Similarly, in some versions of the canons of Hippolytus of Rome (c. 200 A.D.), the duty of the consecrating bishop to commune himself is mentioned.³⁴ There is no need to assert that our Lord Himself partook of the bread and wine which He consecrated at the Last Supper. In the light of Jewish customs some New Testament scholars of in our day maintain this view. They would so interpret the meaning of the words of Jesus, "I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."³⁵ The majority of New Testament scholars, however, take the position that Jesus did not partake of the elements which He consecrated. The very purpose for which Jesus instituted the sacrament would seem to exclude His own communion.³⁶

This point, however, constitutes no barrier to the minister's

self-communion. Even though the liturgist functions as Christ's representative, as His ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20), he cannot identify himself with Christ. He is and must always remain one of the disciples for whose spiritual well-being this sacrament was instituted. As such he is asked to "take and eat" and "to drink of it." Is it not the risen Lord who is present and who gives Himself to us in this sacrament?

Nowhere in the Lutheran Church is private confession any longer regarded as an obligatory preparation for communion. In wide areas, both among the pastors and the laity, private confession has completely disappeared. Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have taken the place that once belonged to the pastor. The individual care of souls has become largely secularized and the church has suffered a real loss. Lutheran theologians in our time represent the view that the officiating minister participates in the public confession and absolution and thus has the right to commune as well.³⁷

Many pastors, however, have undoubtedly felt that their own spiritual preparation does not receive enough attention at services where they function as liturgists. Therefore they tend to refrain from self-communion. The liturgical tradition of the church has been aware of this need. Since early times various prayers have preceded the act of communion. Some of these prayers have been intended for the celebrant only, others for all communicants. The Roman tradition included such prayers long before the time of the Reformation. In some German sixteenth-century Lutheran church orders these are recommended for the use of the pastor before he communes himself.³⁸ In the proposed revision of the liturgy of the Church of Finland a silent prayer for all communicants is suggested at this point in the service. It is partly based on the scriptural prayer, "Domine, non sum dignus," which in the Roman tradition precedes the celebrant's communion. The Finnish proposal reads:

Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter into the unclean room of my heart. Have mercy upon me for Thy precious blood and Thy life-giving death and victorious resurrection. As I receive Thy holy grace, grant that it may be for the nourishment and strengthening of my soul and body. Amen.³⁹

Nearly everywhere the legal and theological barriers have been removed and the way opened for the Lutheran pastor's self-communion. It is, however, quite generally understood to be intended as a right to be used only when the pastor serves the congregation alone. The former Swedish Archbishop Eidem, for instance, urged his clergy to use this privilege and show a good example to his people. But he took it for granted that, where two pastors are present, they commune one another.⁴⁰ When this dual form of the pastor's communion is stressed in the way which Dr. Eidem does, it easily creates the impression that self-communion of the celebrant is not quite right and should only be practised as a kind of second-best solution. Nyman touches this question at the end of his investigation:

The difference in the form of communion must not be emphasized in such a way that it would appear to be better and more appropriate for a minister to receive the sacrament from a fellow minister and that he would consequently feel himself prevented from communing when such assistance is not available; nor should he have a feeling that he is using an emergency form when he practises self-communion. In order to have two forms of the liturgist's communion practised side by side it must be presupposed that they really are considered equally correct. If the liturgist's communion by the hand of another person is presented even in some measure as a better kind of usage than self-communion, then one has allowed himself to be bound up by a tradition which has arisen through a series of misconceptions and misinterpretations.⁴¹

Nyman's argument is certainly worth serious consideration and would appear to be in harmony with the theology of the Reformation. However, a custom which has become a nearly universal Lutheran tradition through centuries of use cannot be changed all at once. Liturgical changes are always delicate matters and should only take place when the necessary teaching has come first.

Nothing has been said about the views and practice of American Lutheranism. I have not had the opportunity to explore articles written by Lutherans in America. Undoubtedly the Lutheran churches in this country reflect largely the views and usages of

European Lutheranism. In conclusion, however, two well known American liturgiologists may be quoted. Dr. Strödel in his widely used *Manual of Worship* refers to "the abundant historical Reformation precedent" in recommending self-communion. During the singing of the *Agnus Dei*, this action should take place in the following way:

[The minister] will stand before the altar and first receive the host, saying privately, *The Body of Christ given for me*. Then he receives the wine, saying privately, *The Blood of Christ shed for my sins*. After this, with folded hands and bowed head, he says privately, *The Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His precious Blood strengthen and preserve me in true faith with everlasting life*. Then if time permits he will offer his own thanksgiving and consecration of self to his Lord.⁴²

The eminent liturgiologist Luther D. Reed made this statement in his *Lutheran Liturgy*:

The ministers at the altar make their communion first. When there is an assistant minister he may administer to the officiant whose reception of the elements is necessary for the formal, if not for the actual, completion of the ceremony. After his own reception the officiant administers to the assistant minister.

Those who believe that when there is no other minister present the officiant should commune himself urge this as the natural and fitting completion of a liturgical action which has other than purely personal values. They also believe that participation by the minister in the reception is essential to the idea of fellowship inherent in the very nature of the Communion.⁴³

We may add that Dr. Reed's view was officially accepted in American Lutheranism with the publication of the *Service Book and Hymnal* in 1958. Among the general rubrics concerning the service the following is included: "The minister himself may first receive the bread and wine and shall then administer the same to the people."⁴⁴

In the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, in widespread use since 1978 among Lutherans in this country and in Canada, a rubric occurs in the Communion Rite itself which has a more direct wording

than the optional general rubric of 1958. After the bread and wine have been consecrated and are ready for distribution, rubric 35 states in part: "The presiding minister and the assisting ministers receive the bread and wine and then give them to those who come to receive."²⁴

ENDNOTES

1. Helge Nyman, *Kyrkotjaenarens naatvardsgant i lutherskt gudetjaenstliv*, Acta Academiae Aboensis, Humaniera XXXI, 4 (Abo, 1955), 280 pp.
2. W. E. Scudamore, *Notitia Eucharistica* (London, 1872), pp. 542-543.
3. The celebrant's self-communion is mentioned as a rule to be followed in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (VIII, 13), in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, XVII (Edinburgh, 1870), p. 235.
4. Scudamore, *op.cit.*, p. 605.
5. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 12.
6. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 100.
7. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 146.
8. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in *Works of Martin Luther*, II (Philadelphia, 1916), pp. 209 ff.
9. Nyman, *op. cit.*, p. 37; *Works of Martin Luther*, VI (Philadelphia, 1932), pp. 90-91.
10. *Concordia or Book of Concord* (St. Louis, 1950), p. 138.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
13. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 39.
14. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 44.
15. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 47.
16. Th. Kliefoth, *Liturgische Abhandlungen*, V (Schwerin, 1858), p. 119.
17. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
18. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 62.
19. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
20. *Works of Martin Luther*, VI, pp. 90-91.
21. Nyman, *op. cit.*, pp. 74f.
22. Nyman, *op.cit.*, pp. 165f. The strongly institutionalized concept of the ministry may be illustrated by the following question which the pastor asked of those who came to confession: "ob Sie vor Gott und dem Predigtamt sich als armen Suender bekennen. . ." See Aleksii Lehtonen, *Die Livlaendische Kirchenordnung des Johannes Gezelius* (Helsinki, 1931), p. 149.

23. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 168.
24. Lehtonen, *op.cit.*, p. 161.
25. Nyman, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-104.
26. Nyman, *op.cit.*, pp. 94ff.
27. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 86.
28. Nyman, *op.cit.*, pp. 121-122.
29. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 128.
30. The title of Koenig's book is *Der jedesmalige Mitgenuss und das Selbstnehmen des heiligen Abendmahles von Seiten des konsekrierenden Geistlichen nach Schrift und Geschichte dargestellt* (Demmin, 1859).
31. Nyman, *op.cit.*, pp. 128 ff.
32. The commission's report, *Ways of Worship* (New York, 1951), deserves careful study.
33. See Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster, 1952), p. 52; Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York, 1955), pp. 22, 44. *The Manual of Discipline*, one of the Dead Sea scrolls refers to a similar custom; see Theodor H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures in English Translation* (Garden City, New York, 1956), p. 310.
34. Hans Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl* (Bonn, 1926), p. 210.
35. See Charles Gore on Luke 22:18 in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London, 1943), III, p. 235; also Frederick C. Grant on Mark 14:28 in *The Interpreter's Bible*, VII (New York-Nashville, 1951), p. 878. A.U.B. Higgins, too, takes the position that Jesus partook of the bread and wine in the Upper Room; see his *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London, 1952), p. 47.
36. Jeremias, *op.cit.*, p. 165, takes this view and cites several other authorities who share his position. C.H. Dodd's comment on Luke 22:15-16 in his *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London, 1952), p. 56, may be quoted as an illustration of this view: "I earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before my passion (but I shall not do so), for I tell you, I shall never again eat it until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God."
37. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 178. Dr. Reed quotes Martin Chemnitz in support of this view, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 349.
38. See Bernhard Klaus, "Die Ruestgebete," in *Leiturgia. Handbuch des evangelischen Gottesdienstes*, II (Kassel, 1955), p. 555.
39. *Suomen Evankelis-Luterilaisen Kirken Kirkkokaesikirja. . .Ehdotus* (Pieksaemaki, 1957), p. 32.
40. Nyman, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-153.
41. Nyman, *op.cit.*, p. 247.
42. Paul Zeller Strodach, *A Manual of Worship* (Philadelphia 1946), p. 241.

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43. Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, pp. 348-349.
 44. *Service Book and Hymnal*, authorized by the Lutheran churches cooperating in the Commission on the Liturgy and Hymnal, p. 275.
 45. *Lutheran Book of Worship*, prepared by the churches participating in the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), p. 71.

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