Report

of the

Commission on Theology

and

Church Relations

Theology of Fellowship

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP

Preamble

The document *Theology of Fellowship* grew out of studies initiated by a resolution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the St. Paul convention in 1956. The resolution requested a restudy of the question of "fellowship, prayer fellowship, and unionism." (See *Proceedings of the Forty-Third Regular Convention*, St. Paul, 1956, p. 550.) The presidents of the two seminaries appointed a committee of two members from each theological faculty to make the study. This committee searched the Scripture, particularly the New Testament, with great care to glean from it all passages which have a bearing on fellowship. The findings of this committee are embodied in *Theology of Fellowship*, Part I.

Another committee then prepared a Part II, which was to speak to the practical problems in the area of fellowship, and to study in particular the passages which have been traditionally quoted in our circles against unionism and against prayer fellowship with men who are considered to be in error in matters of doctrine.

The work of this committee was revised and adopted at a meeting of the joint faculties in October 1960 and then disseminated to the church.

Suggestions and criticisms from the field, also from sister synods overseas, suggested that the doctrine of the church and its mark (Apology VII) hod not been sufficiently taken into consideration in the above-mentioned Part II.

The Forty-Fifth Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, assembled at Cleveland in 1962, assigned the *Theology of Fellowship* to the newly created Commission on Theology and Church Relations for revision or replacement by a new document (see *Proceedings*, pp. 110 f.).

The commission instructed certain of its members, aided by theologians outside the commission, to prepare a historical study, which was to show how the concept of church fellowship developed in church history and what the Lutheran Confessions have to say on the question. The results of this study are embodied in the present Part II of *Theology of Fellowship*. The original Part II should therefore not be used as having any standing in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The exegetical and practical questions originally treated in the now superseded Part II were restudied, and the results are embodied in *Theology of Fellowship*, Part III.

The whole document is herewith submitted to the Synod by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for reference and for guidance.

PART ONE

I. God Created the Fellowship

A. GOD CREATED MAN FOR FELLOWSHIP

1. With God

God created man for fellowship with Himself (Gen. 1:26 a).[1] He made man in His own image (Gen. 1:27),[2] and Himself breathed the breath of life into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7).[3] He blessed man with the power of procreation (Gen. 1:28 a)[4] and entrusted to him a share in the government of the creature world (Gen. 1:28 b).[5] Thus He made man, as it were, a partaker both in creation and government, yet under God and responsible to Him (Gen. 2:16-17).[6] This was a personal fellowship and involved communication with the Creator (Gen. 1:29, 31).[7]

[1] *Gen. 1:26 a.* "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."

[2] *Gen. 1:27*. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

[3] *Gen. 2:7.* "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

[4] *Gen. 1:28 a.* "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth."

[5] *Gen. 1:28 b.* "Replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

[6] *Gen. 2:16-17.* "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

[7] *Gen. 1:29.* "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth. . . . 31. And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good."

2. With Man

God, who created man for fellowship with Himself, also created man for fellowship with his fellowman (Gen. 2:18, 20 b).[1] When God created Eve, Adam at once recognized her as a creature designed for fellowship with himself (Gen. 2:23).[2] By this creative act God not only ordained the fellowship of husband and wife (Gen. 2:24)[3] but also laid the basis for the larger fellowship of the whole human family (Mal. 2:10 a; Acts 17:26 a).[4]

[1] *Gen. 2:18, 20 b.* "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. 20 b. But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him."

[2] *Gen. 2:23.* "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man."

[3] *Gen. 2:24.* "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

[4] *Mal. 2:10 a.* "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" *Acts 17:26 a.* "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

B. MAN DESTROYS THE FELLOWSHIP

1. The Fall into Sin

a. With God

The fellowship for which God had created our first parents, and into which He had placed them, and in which He sought to preserve them by hedging them round about with a

commandment (Gen. 2:16-17),[1] Adam and Eve themselves broke when they yielded to the temptation of Satan and transgressed God's command (Gen. 3:1, 6).[2] That man had destroyed his fellowship with God through sin became evident from the fact that he fled from God and attempted to hide from Him (Gen. 3:8)[3] and that God drove him from the garden (Gen. 3:22-24).[4]

[1] *Gen. 2:16-17.* "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. 17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

[2] Gen. *3:1, 6.* "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" 6. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

[3] *Gen. 3:8.* "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

[4] *Gen. 3:22-24.* "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever, therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man, and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life."

b. With Man

The fall into sin also destroyed the fellowship of man with his fellowman (Gen. 3:12; 4:5, 8, 9).[1]

[1] *Gen. 3:12.* "And the man said, The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." *Gen. 4:5.* "But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." *Gen. 4:8-9.* "And Cain talked with Abel, his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

2. Fallen Man Continually Negates the Fellowship

Man has continued to negate this fellowship with God and man for which he was created (Gal. 5:19-21).[1] God continues to reveal Himself to fallen man through His works, but man's response to this revelation is a continually renewed revolt and a continual breaking of the divinely willed fellowship between God and man (Rom. 1:18-32).[2]

[1] *Gal. 5:19-21.* "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

[2] *Rom. 1:18-32* (passim). "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. . . . When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

Similarly, God's revealed Law, which clearly demonstrates God's will that man should live in communion with Him and with his fellowmen (Matt. 22:37-40)[1] provokes enmity and rebellion (Rom. 8:7),[2] which in turn leads to separation instead of fellowship (Is. 59:2; 64:6-7).[3]

[1] *Matt. 22:37-40.* "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord, they God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets."

[2] *Rom. 8:7.* "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."

[3] *Isaiah 59:2.* "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, and He will not hear." *Isaiah 64:6-7.* "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. *7.* And there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee, for Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities."

C. GOD HAS RESTORED THE FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST

1. As Promised Under the Old Covenant

As God established fellowship in the beginning, so He also took the initiative in restoring it after the Fall. When man hid himself from the presence of God, it was the Lord God Himself who sought man (Gen. 3:8, 9)[1] and called man to account (Gen. 3:16-19)[2] and gave man the first promise of redemption (Gen. 3:15).[3]

The Old Testament is the record of the continuing fellowship-initiative of God. God, in choosing Abraham and the nation descended from him for a life in covenant relation with Himself, wrote large in history His will to have communion with men (Gen. 12:2-3; 17:7).[4]

This covenant is the order established by God in which man is privileged to live under the promise of God and is at the same time called upon to live under His Law. The Law calls man to that communion which God willed as the normal structure of creation and judges him for his failure to live in that structure according to the divine will. The promise points man beyond divine judgment to the redemptive act of God which is to restore Israel and all men to the unbroken communion with God and with one another according to His gracious will (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 34:22-25; 34:30 to 31; 37:26; 2 Sam. 7:12-17; Is. 9:2; 11:1, 4, 6, 12; 54:10. Cp. Is., chapters 42 and 49).[5]

[1] *Gen. 3:8, 9.* "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?"

[2] *Gen. 3:16-19.* "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children. . . . And unto Adam He said . . . cursed is the ground for thy sake. . . . In the sweat of they face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

[3] *Gen. 3:15.* "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."

[4] *Gen. 12:2, 3.* "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." *Gen. 17:7.* "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee."

[5] *Jer. 31:31-34.* "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which My covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (the new covenant). *Ezek. 34:22-25.* "Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey, and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David. He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My Servant David a prince among them. I, the Lord, have spoken it. And I will make with them a *covenant of peace* and will cause the evil beast to cease out of the land, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods." *Ezek. 34:30-31.* "Thus shall they know that I, the

Lord, their God, am with them and that they, even the house of Israel, are My people, saith the Lord God. And ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God." *Ezek. 37:26.* "Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore" (the covenant of peace). *2 Sam. 7:12-17.* "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son. If He commit iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men. But My mercy shall not depart away from Him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee. Thy throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David." *Is. 9:2.* "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the Light shined" (see entire chapter). *Is. 11:1, 4, 6, 12.* "And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. . . . But with righteousness shall He judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. . . . The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. . . . And He shall set up an ensign for the nations and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." *Is.54:10.* "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed. But My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the *covenant of My peace* be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (the covenant of peace). See also Is., chapters 42 and 49.

2. As Fulfilled in the New Covenant

THE NEW COVENANT of fellowship between God and man which God promised in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31),[1] He established in the sending of His Son Jesus Christ into the world. The purpose of God in the Incarnation was not only to redeem man but also to bring man into fellowship with Himself (Gal. 4:4, 5; 1 Cor. 1:9).[2] The Word, the Eternal Son of God, was made flesh, and thus God Himself tented among us (John 1:14).[3]

In the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ interprets His whole mission as the establishment of the promised covenant (Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25).[4] By His sacrificial atoning death and victorious resurrection Christ consummated and fulfilled the old covenant, making good that which the perpetual failure of man had destroyed (Jer. 31:32).[5] Our Lord has thus designated His life, death, and resurrection as that great reconciling act of God which Paul describes in his Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5:19).[6]

[1] *Jer. 31:31.* "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make *a new covenant* with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah."

[2] *Gal. 4:4, 5.* "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." *1 Cor. 1:9.* "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord."

[3] *John 1:14.* "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

[4] *Matt. 26:28.* "For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." *1 Cor. 11:25.* "This cup is the new testament in My blood. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

[5] *Jer. 31:32.* "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord."

[6] *2 Cor. 5:19.* "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation."

II. God in Creating Faith Bestows the Blessing of Fellowship

A. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IN CHRIST

When Christ had completed His work upon the cross and had reconciled all mankind to God, He committed to His church the Word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19),[1] with the command that they should preach it to all the world (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-48; cp. Acts 2:4-12).[2] Through this Word men are summoned to faith, and faith is created in them (1 Peter 1:23-25; Rom. 10:17; Rom. 1:16, 17; James 1:18).[3]

The call to faith is simultaneously the call into fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9).[4] In the Gospel God effectively calls man into fellowship; in Baptism God initiates man into fellowship (Gal. 3:26-29)[5]; in the Lord's Supper God strengthens and confirms man in the fellowship into which He Himself has called and placed him (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).[6] This fellowship, created and sustained by the Holy Spirit, makes the Christian a partaker in Christ, a child of God, and therefore also an heir of God in time and in eternity (Rom. 8:16, 17; Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 10:9-13).[7]

[1] *2 Cor. 5:19.* "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation."

[2] *Acts 1:8.* "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." *Luke 24:46-48.* "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." Cp. Acts 2:4-12.

[3] *1 Peter 1:23-25.* "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." *Rom. 10:17.* "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." *Rom. 1:16, 17.* "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith." *James 1:18.* "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."

[4] *1 Cor. 1:9.* "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord."

[5] *Gal. 3:26-29.* "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

[6] *1 Cor. 10:16, 17.* "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."

[7] *Rom. 8:16, 17.* "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together." *Gal. 3:26-29.* (See no. 5 above.) *Rom. 10:9-13.* "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

B. FELLOWSHIP WITH ALL BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

Those who have fellowship with God through faith in Christ are also in fellowship with one another (1 John 1:3).[1] As faith makes all men children of God, so it also makes them all brethren in Christ (Gal. 3:26 and 27).[2] This fellowship transcends every barrier created by God

or set up by man and brings about the highest unity possible among men, the unity in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).[3] This transcending of all barriers is beautifully described in Eph. 2:11-22.[4]

[1] *1 John 1:3.* "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."

[2] [3] *Gal. 3:26-28.* "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ."

[4] *Eph. 2:11-22.* "Wherefore remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands, that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our Peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments, contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

III. In Bestowing This Fellowship God Claims for It the Whole Life of Man

A. IN THE EXERCISING OF THIS FELLOWSHIP

The life of the apostolic church is a striking exemplification of the fact that God is claiming the whole life of man for fellowship when He bestows the gift of fellowship with Himself in His Son Jesus Christ. Hardly had the day of Pentecost fully passed and the church been founded, when a very active exercise of fellowship developed within the congregation. Of the church, in the period immediately after Pentecost, we read, "And they continued steadfastly in the . . . fellowship."[1] As Acts further indicates, this exercise of fellowship, like the fellowship itself, is always mediated by Christ as He is present and active in the apostolic Word and in the sacraments (Acts 2:42; 6:2, 4; 8:14; 9:10-19; 15:36; 20:7-12).[2]

Thus the exercise of fellowship consists in an activity dominated by the Word, an activity involving the total personality. For example, the men of the first church act with and for one another in worship (Acts 2:42)[3]; in prayer and intercession (Acts 4:24-31; 12:5; 1:12 to 14)[4]; in rebuke and correction (Acts 15:5, 6, 22-29; Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:5-11)[5]; in instruction (Acts 2:42; 5:41, 42; 18:24-26)[6]; in social intercourse (Acts 2:46)[7]; in removing unfounded suspicions (Acts 9:26, 27)[8]; and in an economic aid which comprehends with a ready and active sympathy the needy brethren both at home and abroad (Acts 4:32, 34-37; 6:1-6; 11:27-30).[9] This activity is faith acting through love (Gal. 5:6).[10]

[1] *Acts 2:42.*

[2] *Acts 2:42.* "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." *Acts 6:2, 4.* "Then the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. . . . But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." *Acts 8:14.* "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John." *Acts 9:10-19* (Ananias of Damascus baptizes Saul of Tarsus). "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the Children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake. And Ananias went his way and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me that thou

mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales. And he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus." *Acts 15:36.* "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord and see how they do." *Acts 20:7-12* (Paul preaches in Troas). "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep. And as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep and fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead. And Paul went down and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive and were not a little comforted."

[3] *Acts 2:42.* (See no. 2 above)

[4] *Acts 4:24-31*. "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth and the sea and all that in them is, who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness." *Acts 12:5*. "Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." *Acts 1:12-14*. "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren."

[5] *Acts 15:5, 6*. "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter." *Acts 15: 22-29*. "Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. And they wrote letters by them after this manner: The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the Law, to whom we gave no such commandment, it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." *Gal. 2:11-14*. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" *1 Cor. 5:1-5*. "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." *2 Cor. 2:5-11*. "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part, that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many, so that contrariwise ye ought rather to

forgive him and comfort him lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ, lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

[6] *Acts 2:42*. (See no. 2, p. 7.) *Acts 5:41, 42*. "And they [the apostles] departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name. And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." *Acts 18:24-26*. "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the Baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagog; whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

[7] *Acts 2:46*. "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."

[8] *Acts 9:26, 27*. "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way and that He had spoken to him and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

[9] *Acts 4:32, 34-37*. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked. For 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. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation), a Levite and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." *Acts 6:1-6*. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles. And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." *Acts 11:27-30*. "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea, which also they did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

[10] *Gal. 5:6*. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."

B. IN EXTENDING THIS FELLOWSHIP

Believers exercising their fellowship with God and with one another, and growing strong therein, labor to extend the fellowship. This they do in accord with Christ's great missionary command (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8)[1] and from a powerful inner urge to share the blessings of Christian fellowship with the world, that world for which fellowship has been purchased and intended by God (Acts 4:20; 1 Cor. 19-23; 2 Cor. 4:13 to 15; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; 1 John 1:1-7).[2]

[1] *Matt. 28:19*. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." *Acts 1:8*. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. And ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

[2] *Acts 4:20*. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." *1 Cor. 9:19-23*. "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant 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 (being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without Law. To the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake that I might be partaker thereof with you." *2 Cor. 4:13-15*. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken. We also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." *2 Cor. 5:14-21*. "For the love of Christ constraineth us because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh. Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." *1 John 1:1-7*. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness and show unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us), 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. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full. This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you, that God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. 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."

C. IN GUARDING THIS FELLOWSHIP

A Christian's fellowship with God in Christ as well as his fellowship with other Christians is an exceedingly great and precious possession (1 John 3:13, 14; Eph. 4:1-6).[1] For this reason Satan constantly strives to disrupt this fellowship by every means at his disposal. Therefore it is necessary for the church to safeguard this fellowship in every way.

[1] *1 John 3:13, 14*. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." *Eph. 4:1-6*. "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 long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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."

This the church does—

1. *By remaining steadfastly* under the power of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament (Acts 2:42; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-28; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 1 Cor. 11:26),[1] since Christian fellowship can be nourished and sustained only by the Gospel, which created it (John 8:31, 32; Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 20:20; Acts 20:27, 28; Luke 11:27, 28; John 15:7-9; 1 John 2:24, 25; Col. 3:14-16).[2]

[1] *Acts 2:42*. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." *Rom. 6:3-5*. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." *Gal. 3:26-28*. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ." *1 Cor. 12:13*. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." *1 Cor. 10:16, 17*.

"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." *1 Cor. 11:26*. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

[2] *John 8:31, 32*. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." *Matt. 28:19, 20*. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." *Acts 20:20*. (Paul to the elders of Ephesus) "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house." *Acts 20:27, 28*. "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." *Luke 11:27, 28*. "And it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee and the paps which Thou hast sucked. But He said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." *John 15:7-9*. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in My love." *1 John 2:24, 25*. "Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." *Col. 3:14-16*. "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

2. *By applying the corrective measures* of the Law and the healing powers of the Gospel whenever the church is invaded by errors in teaching and preaching (Titus 1:9; 1:13, 14; 1 Tim. 1:3, 4; 1 Cor. 1:10, 11; 3:3, 4; Eph. 4:1-6; Col. 3:14-16; 2 Thess. 3:14, 15),[1] by corruptions of morals (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3, 4; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1-3),[2] and by schismatic and separatistic tendencies (Titus 3:10; 1 Cor. 1:10, 11; 1 Cor. 3:3, 4),[3] which impede Christian fellowship. (Cp. Acts 15:1-29; also the manner in which St. Paul deals with erring Christians in his epistles. For the importance of correcting error see James 5:19, 20.)[4]

[1] *Titus 1:9*. "Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." *Titus 1:13, 14*. "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth." *1 Tim. 1:3, 4*. "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying, which is in faith; so do." *1 Cor. 1:10, 11*. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." *1 Cor. 3:3, 4*. "For ye are yet carnal. For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" *Eph. 4:1-6*. "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, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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." *Col. 3:14-16*. "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." *2 Thess. 3:14, 15*. "And if any man obey not our Word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

[2] *Matt. 18:15*. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." *Luke 17:3, 4*. "Take heed to yourselves. If thy

brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." *Gal. 6:1, 2.* "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." *2 Tim. 4:1-3*. "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, preach the Word. Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."

[3] *Titus 3:10*. "As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him." (Translation according to the RSV.) *1 Cor. 1:10, 11; 3:3, 4*. (See no. 1 above)

[4] *James 5:19, 20.* "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins."

3. *By resolutely confronting*, exposing, and excluding all that threatens to vitiate and destroy the fellowship (Matt. 7:15, 16; 16:11, 12; Gal. 5:9; 1:6-9; Acts 19:8-10; 2 John 9-11; Rom. 16:16-20; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 1 Cor. 5:3-6; Matt. 18:15-18),[1] whether it be a satanic intrusion from outside the church or a satanic perversion from within (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 2:8-11; 2 Cor. 11:2-4; 1 Tim. 4:1, 2; Matt. 24:24).[2] (Cp. 2 Peter 2:1-10; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; 1 John 2:18, 19; Eph. 5:6-11; Matt. 12:25, 30-32; Jude 17-23; 2 Peter 3:1-3, 17, 18; 1 Cor. 15:32-34; 1 Tim. 6:3-5.)

[1] *Matt. 7:15, 16*. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" *Matt. 16:11, 12*. "How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadduccees? Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." *Gal. 5:9.* "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." *Gal. 1:6-9.* "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." *Acts 19:8-10*. "And he [Paul] went into the synagog and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." *2 John 9-11*. "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds." *Rom. 16:16-20*. "Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. 18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf, but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." *1 Tim. 1:19, 20*. "Holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck, of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." *1 Cor. 5:3-6*. "For I verily, as absent in body but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" *Matt. 18:15-18.* "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

[2] *John 8:44*. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it." *2 Cor. 2:8-11*. "Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ, lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." *2 Cor. 11:2-4*. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." *1 Tim. 4:1, 2.* "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." *Matt. 24:24*. "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect."

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded 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." (Rom. 15:5, 6)

PART TWO

The Concept and Practice of Church Fellowship as Disclosed by Church History

The teachings of Scripture concerning the fellowship of Christians with God through faith in Christ, and the fellowship with one another which inevitably follows from their mutual fellowship with God as His children, as set forth in Part I of THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, are meant to be translated into practice. A study of the history of the Christian church shows that the church has sought to do this, both in the intimate circle of the local congregation and beyond, in what has commonly been called church fellowship, or *communicatio in sacris*, terms somewhat more inclusive than the expression "pulpit and altar fellowship." Pulpit and altar fellowship are, however, among the outstanding manifestations of church fellowship.

During the early centuries of her existence the Christian church sought for sound principles to guide her in the practice of church fellowship. In the following we seek to set forth the understanding and practice of church fellowship which guided the church during three periods of her history: A. during the first four centuries of the Christian era; B. during the century following the Reformation; C. during the time of the Lutheran Church in America.

A. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP DURING THE FIRST FOUR CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA

The first four centuries of the Christian era, extending to the time of St. Augustine, are of particular importance for an understanding of the subject of church fellowship. During these centuries which were marked by the rise of numerous heresies and schisms, the church was obliged to think earnestly about her true nature in the light of Scripture. As she did so, she developed principles to guide her in the practice of church fellowship, and fashioned the instruments which would enable her to carry the accepted principles into practice.

1. Church Fellowship During the Lifetime of the Apostles

So long as the apostles lived and personally supervised the churches, which were still few in number, the matter was relatively simple. Under the guidance of the apostles wicked persons were put out of the congregation (Acts 5:4-10; 1 Cor. 5:13); heretics were unmasked (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20); and the activities of potential schismatics were restrained (1 Cor. 1:10 ff.). However, as the church grew, the best efforts of the apostles no longer sufficed to exclude all gross sinners and heretics from the churches, as St. John's letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor show (Rev. 2 and 3).

2. Church Fellowship After the Death of the Apostles

If the last decades of the apostolic age already indicate that the practice of church fellowship was beset by great difficulties from wicked men and from heretical teachers within Christian congregations, these difficulties increased greatly after the death of the apostles. The return of the Lord to judgment, which He Himself had foretold (Matt. 24:3 ff.), and which the church appears to have expected as imminent (Phil. 4:5; 2 Thess. 2:1-3), was delayed. This was used by some as an excuse for a slackening of Christian living (2 Peter 3:3, 4). Moreover, the church, even under persecution, experienced a phenomenal growth, penetrating ever more deeply into the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire and beyond. The church found it increasingly difficult to keep herself free of manifestly impenitent sinners. Also the problem of the so-called "lapsi," people who had denied their Lord during persecution but later repented and desired to be readmitted to the church, troubled the church throughout the period of the persecutions and beyond.

While the church wrestled with these problems, she was constantly engaged in the struggle against heresy and schism. Of one thing the church was certain: no heretic and no schismatic could be a member of the church.[1] However, the definition of heresy and heretic, and of schism and schismatic was not simple. So long as the heretics were men like the Gnostics, who held fanciful and often revolting concepts of God, or Docetists, who taught that the Son of God had not really come in the flesh (1 John 4:2, 3), they could easily be identified and branded heretics. When, however, more subtle errors arose, or when heretics used language which appeared to differ but little from that employed by orthodox teachers of the church, it became possible for an Arius to mislead even bishops and emperor, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that this man was finally identified as a heretic and excommunicated.

It is not possible to gain an unequivocal definition of heresy and heretic from the church fathers. The father who spoke most specifically on this question is Saint Augustine.

3. St. Augustine's Definition of Heresy and Schism

St. Augustine admitted that the definition of heresy and heretic was anything but simple. When a deacon by the name of Quodvultdeus asked him "to write a compendium of all heresies which have spawned against the teaching of the Lord our Saviour since the time of His coming," Augustine responded that two learned bishops had compiled such lists, but that one had listed 128 heresies, the other 80. He concludes:

> This would surely not have happened if what appeared heresy to one of them had also appeared heresy to the other. . . . Undoubtedly, when there was a question of deciding

> what constitutes a heresy they did not see it in the same way. As a matter of fact, this is an extremely difficult definition to formulate, and when we try to enumerate all of them we have to be on our guard, not to pass over some which are really heresies or to include some which are not.[2]

Though St. Augustine admits that the definition of heresy and heretic is difficult, he clearly operates with a definition, and it is possible to show from his writings what that definition was.

Augustine recognized in heresy an *objective* element which is common to all heresy, and he also recognized in heretics a number of *subjective* elements.

a. ***The Objective Element of Heresy***

The objective element which all heresies and heretics have in common is error in doctrine; that is, a departure from some phase of the rule of faith as it gradually took form amid the labors and struggles of the church, first in the so-called Baptismal Confession, and in time in the Apostles' Creed.[3] In his interpretation of the tares among the wheat, Augustine says:

> . . . it may also be said, that the children of the evil one (mali) are heretics, who, though begotten out of the same seed of the Gospel and name of Christ, have been turned to wicked opinions and false dogmas.[4]

In this understanding of the objective element of heresy Augustine is at one with the understanding of the church both before and after him.

b. ***The Subjective Elements of Heresy***

Among the subjective elements of heresy, which are to be found in the person of the heretic, Augustine lists obstinacy, perversity, intractability, and the desire for personal gain and glory.

Writing to a friend, Honoratus, who was himself under the influence of heresy, and whom Augustine was seeking to win away from it, he writes:

> A heretic, as I suppose, is one who for some temporal advantage, and chiefly for his own glory and preeminence, begets or follows new and false opinions.[5]

To the subjective characteristics of the genuine heretic, in Augustine's opinion, belongs obstinacy in defending his error.

> Those . . . in the Church of Christ who savor anything morbid and depraved, and, on being corrected that they may savor what is wholesome and right, contumaciously resist, and will not mend their pestiferous and deadly dogmas, but persist in defending them become heretics, and going without [scil. The Church] are to be reckoned as enemies....[6]

A clear recognition of the subjective elements which characterize the genuine heretic enables St. Augustine to draw a sharp line of distinction between a heretic and an erring person who is not a heretic. Not to be classed as heretics, according to Augustine, are persons who are deceived by a heretic, and in ignorance follow him. Writing to Honoratus, who was enmeshed in the toils of the Manichaean heresy, he writes:

> If I thought, Honoratus, that there was no difference between a heretic and one who follows heretics, I should judge that my tongue and my pen alike should remain quiescent in this matter. But there is a great difference. A heretic, as I suppose, is one who for

> some temporal advantage, and chiefly for his own glory and preeminence, begets or follows new and false opinions. He who trusts such men is deluded by some illusory appearance of truth and piety. This being so, I thought I ought not keep silent. . . .[7]

Also not an heretic, according to St. Augustine, is a person in the Catholic church, who holds an heretical opinion, however in the erroneous persuasion that it is the teaching of the church. Concerning such a person Augustine says:

> I consider him as not yet a heretic unless, when the doctrine of the Catholic faith is made clear to him, he chooses to resist it, and prefers that which he already holds.[8]

According to Augustine people who inherited error are not to be accounted heretics.

> . . . those who maintain their own opinion, however false and perverted, without obstinate ill will, especially those who have not originated their own error by bold presumption, but received it from parents, who had been led astray and had lapsed, those who seek truth with careful industry, ready to be corrected when they have found it, are not to be rated among heretics.[9]

Less sharp is Augustine's definition of schism and schismatic, though he is firm on the proposition that neither heretics nor schismatics are true members of the church. Concerning the difference between a heretic and a schismatic he says:

> It is customary also to ask wherein schismatics differ from heretics, and to find that it is not a different faith which makes schismatics, but the fact that a group has broken fellowship.[10]

When Cresconius, who was in the Donatist schism, resented having Donatists called heretics, he stated the difference between heresy and schism as follows:

> A heresy is a sect following different beliefs; a schism a separation following the same beliefs.

Augustine accepted this. However, he adds a bit later:

> I can approve even more that distinction between schism and heresy, according to which a schism is said to be a recent dissension in the congregation from some diversity of opinion (for a schism cannot happen, unless those who make it follow something different); a heresy, however, is a schism which has become old (*inveteratum*).

He offers that if the Donatists will concede this, he will call them schismatics rather than heretics.[11]

4. The Concept of Heresy and Heretic in Luther

We consider it useful to append to this study of the concept of heresy and schism in St. Augustine a study of the concept of heresy and heretic in Luther, who owed so much in his theology initially to Augustine.

Luther, even as Augustine, knows an *objective* and a *subjective* side in heresy and heretics. Essentially his statements agree with those of the Bishop of Hippo. On the objective side of heresy he says:

> A heretic is a person who does not believe those parts [scil. of the Christian doctrine] which are necessary to believe.[12]

Tetzel had called Luther a heretic because he had written against indulgences. That, countered Luther, is not a heresy since the matter of indulgences is not an article of faith.

Commenting on Acts 24:14 Luther says:

> Within Christendom all those are called heretics, who step outside the unity and common manner of the Christian faith . . . and believe in a manner peculiar to themselves, and choose ways for themselves; therefore the two words *catholicus* and *haereticus* are against each other. *Catholicus* he is called who is with the multitude and agrees wholly with the entire congregation in faith and spirit; as St. Paul says to the Ephesians, ch. 4, v. 5; one baptism, one faith, one Lord, one Spirit, etc.; but *haereticus* he is called who invents a way and party of his own. Therefore *haereticus* really means a man who has his own opinion in divine matters, a peculiar man (*ein Sonderling*) who knows something better, and chooses his own way to heaven.[13]

Commenting on Ps. 11:1, Luther writes:

> The holy fathers understood this Psalm of the heretics, and rightly so; only we must understand under heretics all those who teach a different righteousness than the righteousness which avails before God like the Jews and all those who urge works, or all who trust in their works, of whom the Church today is full. . . .[14]

Again Luther writes:

> This is a mark of all heretics, hypocrites, and enthusiasts, that they invent their own picture of God.[15]

Again he says:

> That man is not to be called a heretic who, contrary to the commands of the Church omits ceremonies, even though he sins, because he does not keep what he promised. . . . That man must be called a heretic who errs stubbornly in an article of faith, and maintains his error.[16]

Similar expressions could be multiplied on the objective side of heresy.

However Luther, like Augustine, also knows a subjective side of heresy. On this subject he writes:

> . . . They [scil. heretics] are not conquered by the power of evidence, they do not permit themselves to be led by reason, also they are not won through the reputation of others, but are proud against all these things, and keep the upper hand, until the hand of the Highest changes them.[17]

He stresses in particular the love of honor on the part of heretics:

> Thus do commonly at all times all heretics, that they draw to themselves the honor, which is due the Church and the people of God; for each of them pretends to be closest to God.[18]

Again:

> Heretics do not merely err, but refuse to be instructed, defend their error as being right, and fight against the truth, which they know, and against their own conscience. Concerning such St. Paul says (Titus 3:10, 11): You are to avoid a heretic, when he has been admonished once or twice and you are to know, that such a man is perverted, and

> sins *autocatacritos*, that is, intentionally and against better knowledge, and wants to remain in his error.[19]

In the course of time Luther came to the conclusion that heresy is the sin against the Holy Ghost, because he had never seen or read of a heretic being converted.

> I have . . . never read, that the teachers who start heresies have been converted; they remain hardened in their opinion . . . they do not permit anyone to teach them or to hinder them. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness. For it finds neither sorrow nor repentance, but defense and excuses, as though it were a holy, precious thing, and as though the true Gospel, which is against it, were wholly of the devil.[20]

In view of this essentially Augustinian concept of heresy and heretic in Luther we are not surprised to find Luther agreeing with Augustine also in his refusal to consider erring Christians heretics.

Concerning a man who is ignorant of an article of faith he says:

> That man cannot be called a heretic, who is not acquainted with an article of faith.[21]

In defense of himself against the charge that he is a heretic, he writes:

> The law [canon law is to be understood] defines and describes a heretic as a man who defends his error stubbornly. This we on our part have never done, but freely showed testimony from the Word of God and Scripture, and have gladly listened to the opinion of others.[22]

Strong in its insistence on the difference between an erring Christian and a heretic is particularly the following statement, in which Luther uses the example of St. Augustine himself to establish and illustrate the difference:

> [The Holy Spirit] prophesies publicly and mightily that mingled among Holy Church there will be builders of wood, straw, and hay, that is, teachers who nevertheless remained on the foundation would suffer damage through fire but would nevertheless be saved. This cannot be understood of heretics. For these lay another foundation, while those remain on the foundation, that is, in faith in Christ, are saved and are called God's saints, nevertheless have some hay, straw, and wood, which must be burnt through the fire of Holy Scripture, however without harm to their salvation. As St. Augustine says of himself: "Err I may; a heretic I will not be." The reason is that heretics do not merely err, but are not willing to be corrected, defend their error as being right, and fight against the truth which they have come to know. . . . But St. Augustine will gladly confess his error, and be instructed. Therefore he cannot be a heretic, even though he should err. All other saints do likewise, and gladly give their hay, straw, and wood to the fire, that they may remain on the foundation of salvation.[23]

The similarity between the concept of heresy and heretic in Augustine and in Luther is unmistakeable. There is, however, also a difference, due to Luther's clearer understanding of the doctrine of justification and of the nature of the church.

The conception of heresy and heretic here set forth from Augustine, and particularly from Luther, is traceable in the Lutheran dogmaticians of the 17th century, and is plainly evident in some of the writings of Dr. C. F. W. Walther.[24]

5. The Concept of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church

The concept of heresy and schism as set forth from the writings of Augustine was intimately linked with Augustine's concept of the church, which was generally the concept in the Western Church during the Middle Ages, except that after Augustine the primacy of the pope tended to play an increasingly important role in that concept. Nor should it be overlooked that this concept aroused strong protest from men like William of Occam, John Wyclif, and John Hus.

It has been properly said that there was no dogma[25] of the church before the Reformation. The doctrine had not been confessionally fixed. There were, to be sure, two creedal statements on the church. The Apostles' Creed says: "I believe in . . . the holy Christian church, the communion of saints," and the Nicene Creed: "I believe one holy catholic and apostolic church." Neither of these statements constitutes a developed doctrine of the church. Dr. Werner Elert, in his book *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche* etc., presents evidence that the expression in the Apostles' Creed, "the communion of saints" may not have been understood originally as a synonym of the holy Christian church, but may have meant "participation in sacred things," in the sense of the Sacrament of the Altar.[26]

The words of the Nicene Creed, "I believe one holy, catholic, and apostolic church" do not define the church by a dogmatic definition. Rather, they indicate what qualities Christians at the time of the Nicene Creed and thereafter ascribed to the church. These are, indeed, genuine qualities of the church. However, these qualities were not perfectly understood and defined by Augustine and other church fathers, because the doctrine of justification, which is basic for a proper understanding of the church, was not adequately understood by them.

Augustine and other teachers before and in his day taught that the church is *one* in the sense of one visible organization. Heretics and schismatics and their adherents did not belong to this *one* church. They were considered to be without hope of salvation unless they left heresy and schism and joined the *one* church.

This *one* church was *holy*, not so much through the forgiveness of sins (for as has been said, the doctrine of justification was obscured even in the theology of St. Augustine and other church fathers) but because it was the *one* church; its unity guaranteed its holiness.

This one, holy church was *catholic*, that is, it was diffused throughout the world. In Augustine's view a sect could not possibly be the church, because it was not *catholic*, not diffused throughout the world.

Finally the church was *apostolic*, that is, linked to the apostles by the apostolic succession of bishops. In Augustine's view any church outside the apostolic succession could not be part of the true church.

This one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church was understood to be a visible, tangible body of men. It became even more visible and tangible when the bishop of Rome achieved the primacy over the other bishops.

Rome has been very slow to announce a definition of the church. Nevertheless she has operated through the centuries with a tacit definition that was understood both by herself and by her critics. Melanchthon was setting forth this tacit definition fairly when he said in the Apology:

> Perhaps our opponents demand some such definition of the church as the following. It is the supreme outward monarchy of the whole world in which the Roman pontiff must have unlimited power beyond question of censure. He may establish articles of faith,

> abolish the Scriptures by his leave, institute devotions and sacrifices, enact whatever laws he pleases, excuse and exempt men from any laws, divine, canonical, or civil, as he wishes. From him the emperor and all kings have received their power and right to rule, and this at Christ's command; for as the Father subjected everything to him, so now this right has been transferred to the pope. . . .[27]

This is essentially the definition later set forth by Robert Cardinal Bellarmine and taught since his time to many generations of Roman Catholic priests in the dogmatics courses in their seminaries.

> The church is a union of men who are united by a profession of the same Christian faith, and by participation in the same sacraments under the direction of their lawful pastors, especially of the one representative of Christ on earth, the Pope of Rome.[28]

With such a concept of the church the doctrine of justification, which is the heart and core of New Testament teaching, had of necessity been obscured and corrupted. The church was believed to consist of those who, within the visible limits of the Roman Catholic Church, gave allegiance to the pope, and agreed with the doctrines taught by that church. Those who separated from this church, no matter how faithful they were to the teachings of Scripture, were either heretics or schismatics, and were without hope of salvation unless they returned to Mother Church.

Such was the development of the doctrine of the church, and such was the understanding of heresy and schism from the time of Augustine until the Reformation. The practice of church fellowship was determined by the understanding of the nature of the church, and of the nature of heresy and schism. Catalogs of heretics and heresies were drawn up time after time, beginning with St. Irenaeus, in order that Catholic Christians might know what doctrines and whose fellowship to avoid. Bishops gave letters of recommendation to clerics who traveled, in order that they might be accorded the privileges of fellowship.

Being in fellowship with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church entitled the layman to participate in the sacraments; it enabled one cleric to officiate in the parish of another, with proper permission. But above all things, *church* fellowship was *altar* fellowship.[29] This understanding is still preserved centuries later by the prince of Lutheran dogmaticians, John Gerhard, when he says in his *Loci*:

> So there is a threefold *koinonia* (fellowship) laid down by the apostle: (1) the sacramental participation in Christ's body and blood, which takes place by way of the bread and wine that has been blessed, 1 Cor. 10:16; (2) the spiritual apprehension of the entire Christ and all His benefits, which takes place by true faith, 1 Cor. 11:26; (3) the fellowship of the church as a body (*communio corporis ecclesiae*), 1 Cor. 10:17: "We many are one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one bread." The first fellowship (*koinonia*) is the foundation of the others, because the spiritual participation in Christ and His benefits is confirmed and sealed in the believers through the sacramental fellowship (*koinonia*). The fellowship of the church as a body can, for the sake of teaching, be designated as twofold: namely, as external and as internal; the external fellowship exists among all who embrace the same doctrine and make use of the same sacraments; the internal fellowship exists among those only who truly believe, who have the Spirit of Christ. The external fellowship of the church as a body arises from the sacramental fellowship (*koinonia*); the internal, however, arises from the spiritual fellowship (*koinonia*).
>
> (Volume V, Locus XXI, Cap. XI, ed. Preuss, p. 98)

Other phases of fellowship, however, came in for some consideration. The Council or Synod of Laodicea, of uncertain date, though falling into the latter half of the fourth century, therefore antedating St. Augustine somewhat, forbade among other things prayer with heretics and fellowship with Jews and heathen at their religious feasts.

Canon VI of this synod states:

> It is not permitted to heretics to enter the house of God while they continue in heresy.

Canon IX forbids catholics to worship with heretics:

> The members of the Church are not allowed to meet in the cemeteries, nor attend the so-called martyries of the heretics, for prayer service; but such as do, if they be communicants, shall be excommunicated for a time; but if they repent, and confess that they have sinned they shall be received.

Concerning prayer with heretics, Canon XXXIII says:

> No one shall join in prayer with heretics or schismatics.

Canon XXXVII concerns itself with fellowship between Christians and Jews:

> It is not lawful to receive portions sent from the feasts [religious feasts are meant] of the Jews or heretics, nor to feast together with them.

We note in Canon XXXVII that Jews and heretics are linked together, as being under the same condemnation. Both were outside the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, and therefore without hope of salvation.

Canon XXXVIII, still concerned with the Jews, says:

> It is not lawful to receive unleavened bread[30] from the Jews, nor to be partakers of their impiety.

Finally, Canon XXXIX addresses itself to the question on religious fellowship with heathen:

> It is not lawful to feast together with the heathen, and to be partakers of their godlessness.

It is evident that heretics, Jews, and heathen, were all excluded from fellowship with catholics, because all were considered outside the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, and therefore not members of the body of Christ, outside the kingdom of God. They were darkness, while the church was light, and, as the Synod of Laodicea declares, "Light hath no communion with darkness."[31]

B. THE REFORMATION AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS IN THEIR BEARING ON THE QUESTION OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

The Reformation began as an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church, which, as pious men had complained long before Luther, was in need of a reformation in head and in members.

The attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church as a body failed, and Luther and his adherents were excommunicated as heretics.

The Lutherans drew up the Augsburg Confession, which they believed to be wholly in harmony with the teachings of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, but at variance, as

they well knew, with the Church of Rome. The Ausgburg Confession, and the remaining confessions which were in time drawn up to explain and to defend the Augsburg Confession, departed from Roman Catholic doctrine most visibly in this, that they set forth the Biblical doctrine of justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, and declared it to be the central article of the Christian faith.

This departure from Roman Catholic doctrine was inevitably accompanied by a doctrine of the church which differed markedly from the Roman Catholic conception. Instead of stressing membership in a visible organization under the rule of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the Lutheran Confession says:

> The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly.[32]
>
> Properly speaking, the church is the assembly of saints and true believers.[33]
>
> We do not concede to the papists that they are the church, for they are not. Nor shall we pay any attention to what they command or forbid in the name of the church, for, thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd.[34]

1. The Marks of the Church (*Notae Ecclesiae*)

Of the greatest importance for the understanding of the historical Lutheran position on pulpit and altar fellowship is what the Lutheran Confessions say concerning the marks by which this church, which consists of "saints," "true believers," "the holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd" may be recognized. These marks, or *notae ecclesiae,* are "the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ."

> The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ.[35]

These marks of the church, though without this specific designation, are already referred to in Augustana, Art. VII.

> It is taught also among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.[36]

These *notae*, or marks of the church, to be sure, describe the church of the *pure* Word, and the unadulterated sacraments. They are not, however, meant to deny that the church can exist also where the Gospel is partly obscured by error. Nevertheless they have throughout the history of orthodox Lutheranism served to establish the limits of pulpit and altar fellowship, and to distinguish the Lutheran Church from other churches.

Simultaneously with the Lutheran Church and its confessions the Reformed Church, an outgrowth of Zwingli's reformatory efforts, came into being with confessions of its own. All efforts to unite the Lutherans and the Reformed in doctrine failed.

A little later the Roman Catholic Church acquired a Roman Catholic confession in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent.

The so-called left wing of the Reformation produced a number of sects which did not identify themselves with either of the three chief divisions in western Christendom.

In the Preface to the *Book of Concord* the Lutheran confessors first of all affirm their continued adherence to the Augsburg Confession, which according to their conviction presents nothing but the pure teaching of the orthodox Christian church and of the ancient ecumenical creeds:

> They (the Lutherans) have held fast and loyally to the doctrine that is contained in it (the Augsburg Confession), that is based solidly on the divine Scriptures, and that is also briefly summarized in the approved ancient symbols, recognizing the doctrine as the ancient consensus which the universal and orthodox church of Christ has believed, fought for against many heresies and errors, and repeatedly affirmed.[37]

In the Preface to the *Book of Concord* the Lutheran confessors also define their attitude toward other churches, particularly the Reformed, and toward heresy and heretics. It is evident from the following quotation that they did not hereticize whole churches in which error was taught, but only "false and seductive doctrines and their stiff-necked proponents and blasphemers."

> With reference to the condemnations, censures, and rejections of false and adulterated doctrine, especially in the article of the Lord's Supper, these have to be set forth expressly and distinctly in this explanation and thorough settlement of the controverted articles in order that everybody may know that he must guard himself against them. There are also many other reasons why condemnations cannot by any means be avoided. However, it is not our purpose and intention to mean thereby those persons who err ingenuously and who do not blaspheme the truth of the divine Word, and far less do we mean entire churches inside or outside the Holy Empire of the German Nation. On the contrary, we mean specifically to condemn only false and seductive doctrines and their stiff-necked proponents and blasphemers . . . inasmuch as such teachings are contrary to the expressed Word of God and cannot coexist with it. . . . But we have no doubt at all that one can find many pious, innocent people even in those churches which have up to now admittedly not come to agreement with us. These people go their way in the simplicity of their hearts, do not understand the issues, and take no pleasure in blasphemies against the Holy Supper as it is celebrated in our churches. . . . Consequently the responsibility devolves upon the theologians and ministers duly to remind even those who err ingenuously and ignorantly of the danger to their souls and to warn them against it, lest one blind person let himself be misled by another.[38]

The Lutheran confessors in the same Preface to the *Book of Concord* express their warm love and concern for the Reformed Christians, who were at that time undergoing persecution in some places, in the words:

> For just as Christian charity causes us to have special sympathy with them, so we entertain a corresponding loathing for and a cordial disapproval of the raging of their persecutors.[39]

In all these expressions in the Preface to the *Book of Concord* the Lutheran confessors are reaffirming the necessary distinction between heretics, who are outside the body of Christ, and erring Christians, who are and by God's grace remain children of God, even though troubled by error. They are also reaffirming their understanding of the church; "Properly speaking, the church is the assembly of saints and true believers."[40]

2. Pulpit and Altar Fellowship in the Lutheran Church

The subject of pulpit and altar fellowship is not discussed *expressis verbis* in the Lutheran Confessions. However, the basis for pulpit and altar fellowship, as it has been understood in the Lutheran Church where it was loyal to its confessions, is set forth in Augustana, Art. VII:

> And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

The doctrine of the Gospel is not here to be understood as one doctrine among many, or as a bare recital of John 3:16, but rather as a doctrine composed of a number of articles of faith. For the doctrine of the Gospel cannot be understood or preached without the Article of God, which the Lutheran confessors say they teach *magno consensu*, (AC, I), The Article of Original Sin, which shows man's need for the Gospel, the Article of the Son of God, who became incarnate and redeemed man. The true understanding of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession is correctly set forth by Herbert J. A. Bouman as follows:

> This does not mean that the specific *locus "de justificatione"* considered by itself is all that the Lutherans consider indispensable. Rather they regard the entire *corpus doctrinae* as bound up inextricably with justification. All doctrines have their place in this doctrine. All doctrines stand or fall with the doctrine of justification.[41]

This is also the meaning of the Formula of Concord when it says, Epitome, Art. X:

> We believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, *as long as there is mutual agreement in [the] doctrine and in all its articles . . .*[42]

It should be noted here that doctrine is singular, but that this doctrine consists of a number of articles.

It should furthermore be noted that our Confessions use the terms *doctrina* and *evangelium* as synonyms:

> . . . the assembly of saints who share the association of *the same Gospel* or teaching.[43]

Though the subject of pulpit and altar fellowship is not discussed *expressis verbis* in the Lutheran Confessions, these confessions themselves became the effective limits for pulpit and altar fellowship for Lutherans. Those who subscribed to them were automatically in pulpit and altar fellowship with one another. Those who did not subscribe to them, but adhered to other confessions, were, according to the Preface to the *Book of Concord*, not condemned as heretics; the Lutherans could even "have special sympathy with them." However, church fellowship, *communicatio in sacris*, with them was impossible. This followed inevitably from the doctrine of the church as it is contained in the Lutheran Confessions, which demand for true unity of the church "that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word."[44]

However, while *communicatio in sacris* was impossible with men who were not considered heretics but erring Christians, the Preface to the *Book of Concord* recognizes a responsibility of Lutherans toward such erring Christians:

> . . . the responsibility devolves upon the theologians and ministers to remind even those who err ingenuously and ignorantly of the danger to their souls and to warn them against it, lest one blind person be misled by another.[45]

In line with this responsibility so-called colloquies (Religionsgespraeche) were repeatedly held by Lutheran theologians with Roman Catholic and also with Reformed theologians. At the colloquy of Regensburg in 1601 neither Lutherans nor Roman Catholics appear to have considered it improper to open the colloquy and the individual sessions of the colloquy with prayer. Numerous passages in the official minutes of this colloquy state that all meetings were opened with liturgical prayers and that representatives of both sides changed off in conducting the opening devotions.[46]

At the Colloquy of Thorn in 1645 where Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed met, the Lutherans asked that the same procedure be followed. When the Catholics refused, and insisted that they alone conduct the opening devotions the Lutherans refused to attend the devotions under these conditions.[47]

From these cases it appears that the Lutherans, during the period of orthodoxy, did not refuse, as a matter of principle, to pray with Reformed and even with Roman Catholics. They did refuse when they themselves were treated as heretics.

C. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

In Europe during the centuries following the doctrinal agreement established among Lutherans by the Formula of Concord, church fellowship was established by subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. Though European nations in which the Lutheran church had found a place, and particularly Germany, were divided into many relatively small principalities, each with its own territorial church, nevertheless, subscription to the Lutheran Confessions assured full church fellowship to all, and both pastors and laymen could move freely from one territory or land to another and enjoy pulpit and altar fellowship with Lutherans wherever they found them.

However, when the Lutheran church came to America, where territorial churches were nonexistent, new units of fellowship came into existence, the so-called ministeria, and the synods. The ministerium began as an organization of ministers who generally worked in one and the same area, and who practiced pulpit and altar fellowship with one another. The synods, which were organized somewhat later, were not, as had been the synods before the Reformation, councils of clergymen called together to deal with doctrinal or practical problems but more or less permanent organizations of congregations with their pastors for the purpose of work and fellowship.

Various factors were responsible for the proliferation of synods which is observable in the Lutheran Church in America during the 19th century. The country was still relatively new; distances were great, and the means of communication and transportation were rather primitive; differences in language and customs complicated the formation of one Lutheran Church in America still further. Another very persistent obstacle was difference in doctrine. Some Lutherans in America had come out of circles which had been greatly influenced by rationalism,

others bore the stamp of pietistic influence, and yet others were so-called Old Lutherans, who were very loyal to the Lutheran Confessions. Still others held mediating positions.

The question which these synods had to face was whether, in view of their doctrinal differences they could be in church fellowship with one another. The struggles of the various synods for church union, whether by merger, or at least by the establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship, were long and arduous. The meaning of subscription to the Lutheran Confessions became a matter of debate. The degree to which Lutheran pastors and Lutheran congregations were to be bound by the Lutheran Confessions was not understood in the same way by all. Moreover, individual synods tended to change their attitudes in this matter with the passage of time. Sometimes a group would grow more conservative, sometimes more liberal in the understanding and application of its obligation to the Lutheran Confessions.

In every case the understanding on the part of a synod of its confessional obligation had a strong influence on its understanding and practice of church fellowship.[48]

1. Confessionalism and Church Fellowship in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and in the Synodical Conference

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod came into being as a strictly confessional Lutheran body. Its pastors subscribed to the whole *Book of Concord*, not *insofar as* (*quatenus*), but *because* (*quia*) it is a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.

The Missouri Synod was not, however, separatistic, but its leaders sought to draw all Lutherans in America together on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions. They tried to achieve this in accord with the pattern of the colloquies held in Germany and other European countries during the decades following the Reformation. This was in harmony with the previously quoted statement in the Preface to the *Book of Concord* (see above, pp. 17 f.).

Dr. C. F. W. Walther and his co-workers were fully cognizant of the difference between erring Christians and erring churches on the one hand, and heretics on the other. In this they were in agreement with the understanding of heretic and heresy as previously set forth from the writings of St. Augustine and Luther.[49]

Colloquies were held between members of the Missouri Synod and members of the Buffalo Synod at Buffalo, N.Y., in 1866, and between representatives of the Missouri Synod and of the Iowa Synod in Milwaukee, Wis., in 1867.

At the Milwaukee Colloquy all sessions were opened with a liturgical service.[50]

Free conferences for members from all Lutheran groups who "subscribed to the Augsburg Confession without reservation" were held for the purpose of discussion of doctrine at Columbus, Ohio, in 1856; at Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1857; at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1858; and at Fort Wayne, Ind., in 1859.[51]

These free conferences were all opened and closed with liturgical services.[52]

While the free Lutheran conferences among Lutherans who subscribed to the Augsburg Confession without reservation did not succeed in uniting all the synods which were represented at the free conferences, they were instrumental in bringing about the organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in 1872.

2. The Confessional Principle in The Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod and in the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America

Missouri, which had come into being as a body strictly loyal to the Lutheran Confessions, had for decades stressed:

a. That the Confessions must be subscribed to *quia*, not *quatenus*, i.e. *because*, not merely *insofar as*, they are correct expositions of the Scripture;

b. That all doctrines taught in the Confessions are binding;

c. That subscription to the Confessions must be implemented by corresponding public teaching (*publica doctrina*) in pulpit, instruction room, seminary, and in the church's publications, and that all who departed from this norm were to be disciplined.

i. *Evaluation of This Principle*

Point a. of the above position which calls for unqualified subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, is necessary in order that a congregation may have the assurance that its pastor is really a *Lutheran* pastor, who will preach the Lutheran doctrine. The so-called *quatenus* subscription would open the floodgates to arbitrariness in doctrine.[53] Point b. is necessary for the same reason.

Point c. which stresses that Lutheran doctrine must not merely be subscribed to on paper, but must actually be taught in pulpit, instruction room, and in the church's seminaries and publications, is wholly in accord with the Augsburg Confession, which, according to the German version, lays the stress on *publica doctrina* when it says:

> . . . it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church *that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it* . . .[54]

ii. *Churchly Practice As a Criterion for Church Fellowship*

Along with unqualified subscription to the Lutheran Confessions as well as public teaching in accord with the Confessions a third principle of church fellowship is stressed in the writings of the fathers of the Missouri Synod. It is this that also the churchly practice must be in harmony with the confessions.

Principles basic in the thinking of the fathers of the Synodical Conference with respect to churchly practice and its relationship to church fellowship were laid down in the 18 Theses, the first sixteen of which were discussed at the meetings of the Synodical Conference from 1873- 1879.[55] The third of these theses reads:

> The sole external bond of fellowship between individual Lutheran congregations among different peoples and languages is the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

Thesis four says:

> Therefore that is not an orthodox Lutheran congregation or Lutheran church body which does not accept the doctrinal and polemic words of this confession as it reads.

Thesis five says:

> Also he who denies the deductions which properly follow from the words of this confession is not a true member of the Lutheran Church, even though contrary to all right, he clings to the name Lutheran.

An example of such a deduction or conclusion is given in the sixth thesis:

> From the character and nature of this orthodox confession it follows of necessity that churchly practice must be conformed to it. For every churchly action is either an immediate expression and actual carrying out of the confession, or at least such an activity which, even though it may lie in the area of Christian liberty, nevertheless dare not actually contradict the confession.

Because they were persuaded that churchly practice must be in conformity with the church's confession the fathers of the Synodical Conference concluded that churchly practice may become a criterion for the granting or denial of church fellowship.

> Thesis 7: From this necessary connection between the confession and the church's practice it follows logically that a Lutheran Synod, in which the reigning practice is in accord with the confession, dare not unite with another Synod which calls itself Lutheran, but in which the reigning practice is contrary to the confession.

Subsequent theses show that the fathers considered the following to be practice contrary to the confession, and therefore a bar to church fellowship: toleration on the part of Lutheran pastors of pulpit and altar fellowship with non-Lutherans; lack of firm testimony against membership in secret societies; the serving of united (*unierte*: referring to the kind of 'union' of Reformed and Lutheran churches first established in Prussia in 1817) congregations by Lutheran pastors; the toleration of temporary calls for pastors; lack of earnestness in the establishing of parochial schools; lack of proper care in seeing to it that only orthodox books were used in church, school, and home; and the absence of doctrinal and church discipline.[56]

Essays and articles from the pens of Professors A. L. Graebner, George Stoeckhardt, and Martin Guenther provide evidence that the importance of churchly practice in harmony with the Lutheran Confessions continued to occupy the thinking of the leading theologians in the Missouri Synod also after 1879 and that they continued to consider practice in harmony with the Confessions necessary for church fellowship.

Dr. Graebner was careful to define what he meant by churchly practice:

> Churchly practice is the sum total of the formal actions (*Verrichtungen*) and institutions (*Einrichtungen*) which belong to the life of the Church as such.[57]

The fathers sought to distinguish between the life of sanctification of individual Christians and churchly practice. In an article entitled "*Lutherische Praxis*" in *Der Lutheraner*, signed G (Prof. Martin Guenther) this sentence appears:

> When we speak of Lutheran practice, we do not mean the personal life of the individual members of a congregation, or of a church body, but that which the congregation does as a body, or what it tolerates in its midst, its activity, its institutions, its regulations.[58]

Yet the same article draws an analogy between the faith and life of the individual Christian on the one hand, and the church's confession and churchly practice on the other, and says:

> Even as that man is not a Christian whose life contradicts the confession: I am a Christian, so also that is not a Lutheran congregation, not a Lutheran body, whose churchly activity (*kirchliches Tun*) contradicts the Lutheran Confession.

An essay by Dr. George Stoeckhardt, delivered in the Central District in 1895, indicates that theologians of other Lutheran bodies often spoke critically of the confessional position and the resulting practice in the Missouri Synod. He writes:

> As the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod, so also Missourian practice has, as it were, become proverbial. Our ecclesiastical opponents understand by it a harsh, rigoristic, legalistic practice. The same accusation is also made against our doctrine. . . . This accusation does not fit. . . . Some call our practice legalistic for the very reason that it is in accord with the Word of God, in particular with the Gospel.[59]

The synodical fathers who insisted that the practice of the church should flow from, and be in harmony with the church's confession, were by no means unaware of the fact that there are some matters in the area of churchly practice which are not established by the Word of God. On this point Dr. A. L. Graebner says:

> Churchly practice is in part established by the norm of God's Word, in part subject to the free judgment of the Christian congregation.[60]

He adds:

> Insofar as churchly practice is established by the Word of God, the oneness of the norm demands unity of churchly practice as a divine command to the whole church. So far as churchly practice is subject to the free judgment of the congregation, unified churchly practice dare not be demanded as though it were a divine command.

It was only of ecclesiastical practice clearly demanded by the Word of God and by the Scriptural confession of the church that the fathers held that it was a norm for the granting or withholding of church fellowship.

iii. *Evaluation of Churchly Practice As a Criterion for Church Fellowship*

On the positive side it should be said that the founders of the Synodical Conference were deeply concerned to be and to remain loyal to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. They believed that this could be achieved only if churchly practice flowed from and was regulated by the church's confession. On this point G. writes in *Der Lutheraner*:

> The Confession is not to be a mere empty formula, is not to remain a dead letter on the paper of the constitution, but the Confession must regulate the whole activity of a church body, its churchly actions must be in harmony with the Confession and permeated by the Confession.[61]

It must be said that while the fathers emphasize time and time again that what they said about churchly practice as a criterion for church fellowship concerning only practice demanded by the Word of God and the Lutheran Confession, it appears that at times they demanded for church fellowship more with respect to churchly practice than is warranted by the Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions. The following theses from the 18 theses on church fellowship, which were discussed and accepted during the early years of the Synodical Conference may serve as examples:

> Thesis eleven: It is a contradiction of the Confession, when a church body is content that her pastors do not have a proper but only a temporary call from their congregations, or if the church body itself encourages this disorder through the custom of licensing.
>
> Thesis twelve: It is a crying contradiction of the Confession when a church body which calls itself Lutheran and desires to be Lutheran does not show earnest zeal, so far as it is able, to start orthodox parochial schools where these are not in existence.[62]

Furthermore, such demands in matters of practice coupled with charges of laxity in discipline were a major factor in disturbing the relations of the synods in the Synodical Conference particularly in the decades preceding the year 1960, leading finally to the withdrawal, first of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and then of the Wisconsin Synod from the Synodical Conference. What appeared to some not only allowable but perhaps even necessary in the light of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions was pronounced sinful unionism by others.

While at the organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in 1872 the founding fathers appear to have been able to agree on the "Theses on Church Fellowship," as time went on it became increasingly impossible for all at all times to agree on "the deductions which properly follow from the words of this confession" or on the precise churchly practice which would in a given situation conform to the confession.

ABBREVIATIONS

BC *The Book of Concord*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert et al. Philadelphia, 1959.
NPF *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Ph. Schaff and H. Wace. Buffalo and New York, 1886- 1900; reprint, Grand Rapids, 1952 ff.
PG *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne. Paris, 1857- 66.
PL *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne. Paris, 1844- 55.
WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke.* Weimar, 1883 ff. *Tischreden* (WA TR).

FOOTNOTES

[1] Cf. Canons VI, XXXII, XXXIII of the Synod of Laodicea, and Canon VI of the Council of Constantinople (NPF, Second Series, SIV, 127. 149. 183). See also Werner Elert, *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsaechlich des Ostens* (Berlin, 1954), pp. 93-96, and Tom Hardt, "Keine Kirchengemeinschaft mit Haeretikern!" *Lutherische Blaetter*, XII, 65 (July, 1960), pp. 62 ff.

[2] *Epist*. 222, 2 (PL 33, 999): trans. in Roy J. Deferrari, ed., *Fathers of the Church* (New York, 1956), XIII, 114 f.

[3] Cf. Heinz Brunotte and Otto Weber, eds., *Evangelisches Handlexikon* (Goettingen, 1956), I, 950: "Neben der Bildung des Kanons der Hl. Schrift entstanden schon sehr frueh in den Gemeinden Glaubensbekenntnisse zum liturgischen und katechetischen Gebrauch, die allmaehlig im Apostolikum ihre eigentliche Gestalt fanden und in dieser Form zur Glaubensregel (regula fidei) wurden."

[4] *Quaestionum Septemdecim in Matthaeum Liber Unus*, xi, 1 (PL 35, 1367). The English translation is by Fred Kramer, as also in subsequent quotations unless otherwise noted.

[5] *De Utilitate Credendi*, 1 (PL 42, 65); trans. in J. H. S. Burleigh, ed., *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia, 1953), VI, 291.

[6] *De Civitate Dei*, xviii, 51 (PL 41, 613); translated in NPF, First Series, II, 392.

[7] *De Utilitate Credendi*, 1. See footnote 5.

[8] *De Baptismo Contra Donatistas*, iv, 16 (PL 43, 169); translated in NPF, First Series, IV, 457.

[9] *Epist*. 43 (PL 33, 160); trans. in Roy J. Deferrari, ed., *Fathers of the Church* (New York, 1951), XII, 182.

[10] *Quaestionum Septemdecim*, etc. See footnote 4.

[11] *Contra Cresconium Donatistam* (PL 43, 469 ff.).

[12] *Eine Freiheit des Sermons päpstlichen Ablass und Gnade belangend* (WA 1, 391).

[13] *Evangelium von den zehn Aussätzigen*. 1521. (WA 8, 389).
[14] *Operationes in Psalmos* (WA 5, 352).
[15] *Enarratio Psalmi II*. 1532 [1546] (WA 40, II, 252).
[16] *Propositiones . . . adversus totam synagogam Sathanae et universas portas inferorum* (WA 30, II, 422).
[17] *Operationes in Psalmos* (WA 5, 327).
[18] *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose von 1535- 45* (WA 43, 213).
[19] *Von den Conciliis und Kirchen* (WA 50, 545).
[20] *Vier tröstliche Psalmen an die Königin zu Ungarn* (WA 19, 610).
[21] *Propositiones*, etc. See footnote 16.
[22] WA *TR* 4, No. 4637.
[23] *Von den Conciliis*, etc. (WA 50, 544 f.).
[24] John Gerhard discusses the question of heresy and heretics at the end of the section on "The Ecclesiastical Ministry" (*Loci Theologici*, ed. E. Preuss [Berlin, 1867] VI, 261- 264). He begins with a discussion of the terms for heresy and heretic in Greek, Hebrew, and German, and shows what the concept of heresy and heretic was, first in the church fathers, then under Roman Catholicism. His discussion indicates that the definition was never fixed, and that many foolish views were expressed on the subject, particularly under the papacy. He quotes with approval statements on the subject by Augustine, and then states his own view. From his treatment of the subject, which covers six closely printed columns, we quote what amounts to his conclusion:

> Not all who err with respect to the faith or the interpretation of Scripture are immediately heretics. For all heretics err with respect to the faith, but not all who err are immediately heretics, which Augustine, in the preface of the book Concerning Heresies to Quodvultdeus expresses thus: Not every error is a heresy, although no heresy, which has its foundation in corruption, could be a heresy without some error. And elsewhere he writes: Err I may, a heretic I will not be.
>
> So certain teachers of the church, in explaining certain sayings of the Scripture, erred from the proper and genuine sense, whom nevertheless we cannot at once place in the list of heretics, since in this life we "know in part and prophesy in part," 1 Cor. 13:9.
>
> Consider Augustine . . . where he shows that it is one thing to miss the genuine sense of some passage, and another thing to depart from the rule of faith. Moreover some, with their error, do not impinge directly on the foundation of the faith itself, but, holding fast to the foundation of the church, which is Christ in His person and office, build on this foundation hay and stubble, 1 Cor. 3:11 ff., of which kind was the error of Cyprian concerning rebaptizing those who had been baptized by heretics, and the error of Augustine that infants should be given the eucharist, etc. To consider such at once heretics is by no means proper, since heretics seek a different foundation outside of Christ, while these build on the foundation the stubble of erroneous opinions.
>
> Some also number among the heretics those who in their faith cherish private errors, although they do not disseminate them, nor labor to draw others to their side. But although such err with great danger to their souls, nevertheless, speaking accurately and properly, they are not heretics, for these are described thus in Holy Scripture, that they come to seduce others, Matt. 7:15; that they come to the Lord's sheepfold in order to steal, to hurt, and to destroy, John 10:10; that they stir up divisions and offenses, Rom. 16:17; that not only they themselves depart from the truth, but also subvert the faith of others, 2 Tim. 3:13; that they bring in damnable sects, 2 Peter 2:1; that they are deceivers, going out into the world and bringing in strange doctrines, 2 John 7, 10.
>
> Finally, unless there is added to error, which attacks the foundation, stubbornness it cannot yet be judged to be and to be called heresy in the proper sense. For this evil is to be sought neither wholly in the intellect, nor only in the will. For even as the true and saving faith embraces at the same time knowledge in the mind, and assent and trust in the will, so heresy embraces at the same time error in the intellect, and, in the will, stubbornness. . . . Augustine says, 1.18, De Civitate Dei, c. 51: "Those in the Church of Christ who savor anything morbid and depraved, and, on being corrected that they may savor what is wholesome and right, contumaciously resist, and will not mend their pestiferous and deadly dogmas, but persist in defending them, are heretics." On the other hand, as the same man writes (Epist. 162): "Those who maintain their own opinion, however false and perverted, without obstinate ill will, especially those who have not originated their own error by bold presumption, but received it from parents who had been led astray and had lapsed, those who seek truth with careful industry, ready to be corrected when they have found it, are by no means to be rated among heretics. . . ."

Finally Gerhard gives his own view concerning what is to be considered heresy, and who is to be called a heretic:

> From all this it is possible to establish the fact that the following factors must be present if a person is properly to be called a heretic:
>
> 1. He must be a member of the visible church, received through the sacrament of baptism;

2. He must err in the faith, either that he introduces a new error, or that he embraces an error which he has accepted from another (although the former seems to fit the heresiarch, the latter the heretic) . . .
3. That the error impinge directly on the very foundation of the faith;
4. That to the error is joined malice and stubbornness, through which he, although admonished repeatedly, nevertheless defends his error obstinately;
5. That he stirs up dissensions and offenses in the church, and splits its unity.

It is to heretics thus defined that Gerhard then applies the Scripture passages which have traditionally been quoted in the Synodical Conference against every form of unionism.

It appears that Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the diligent and astute student of Gerhard's *Loci*, had such a concept of heretic in mind when in 1852 he formulated the second thesis of his book, *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt* (Erlangen, 1875): "Zu der Kirche im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes gehoert kein Gottloser, kein Heuchler, kein Unwiedergeborener, *kein Ketzer*."

[25] In theological parlance a dogma is a teaching established by divine revelation and formally defined by the church through a council or a pope. Cf. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen, eds., *A Handbook of Christian Theology* (New York, 1958), pp. 80 f.

[26] Werner Elert, *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsaechlich des Ostens* (Berlin, 1954), pp. 5- 22.

[27] Apology, VII- VIII, 23.

[28] Robert Cardinal Bellarmine, *De ecclesia militante*, 2, quoted in Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis, 1954), p. 269.

[29] Elert, *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft*, pp. 132 f.

[30] Unleavened bread was the bread eaten at the Jewish Passover celebration.

[31] NPF, Second Series, XIV, 123-160.

[32] Augsburg Confession, VII. This and all following citations of the Confessions are according to the translation in BC.

[33] Ibid., VIII.

[34] Smalcald Articles, XII.

[35] Apology, VII- VIII, 5.

[36] Augsburg Confession, VII.

[37] BC, Preface, p. 3.

[38] Ibid., p. 11 f.

[39] Ibid., p. 12. The Latin reads: "Quemadmodum enim christiana caritate moti in societatem doloris cum eius dudum venimus. . . ."

[40] Augusburg Confession, VIII.

[41] Herbert J. A. Bouman, "The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Confessions," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXVI, 11 (Nov., 1955), 804.

[42] Formula of Concord, Epitome, X, 7.

[43] Apology, VII- VIII, 8.

[44] Augsburg Confession, VII.

[45] BC, Preface, p. 12.

[46] Cf. Jac. Heinbronner, *Acta Colloquii Ratisbonensis* (Regensburg, 1602), pp. 25, 27, 71, 102, 131, 170, 224, 350 f. A similar occasion was the common worship at the opening of the synod of Sandomierz in 1570, in which representatives of Polish Calvinism, Polish Lutheranism, and the Unity of Bohemian Brethren participated. Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels* (New York, 1964), p. 147.

[47] Cf. Albert Hauck, ed., *Herzogs Realenzyklopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (Leipzig, 1907), XIX, x. v., "Thorn, Religionsgespraech": "Wieder eine andere Differenz betraf die Gebete am Anfange der Sitzungen; die Katholiken beanspruchten die Abhaltung der gemeinsamen Eroeffnungsgebete fuer sich, waehrend die Lutheraner [Huelsemann and Abraham Calov were among them] verlangten, dass die Parteien darin abwechseln sollten; die Reformierten gaben den . . . Katholiken nach, die Lutheraner aber beteten vor jeder Sitzung in ihrer Stube besonders; doch muss bemerkt werden, dass die Gebetsformel der Katholiken sich in allgemein-christlichen Ausdruecken hielt und z. B. die Anrufung Marias und der Heiligen vermied."

[48] Cf. Robert H. Fischer, "The Confessionalism of American Lutheran Church Bodies of German Background," in Vilmos Vajta and Hans Weissgerber, *The Church and the Confessions* (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 73- 83.

[49] For statements of Walther in *Der Lutheraner* that bear this out, see the article by Erwin Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XV, 8 (Aug., 1944), 537 f.

[50] Cf. J. P. Beyer, *Stenographisch Aufgezeichnetes Colloquium der Vertreter der Synode*, etc. (Chicago, 1868), p. 1: "Begonnen wurde mit einem liturgischen Gottesdienste, den Pastor F. Lochner als Pastor loci leitete, auf welche Weise auch alle folgenden Sitzungen eroeffnet wurden."

[51] Cf. Erwin Lueker, ed., *Lutheran Cyclopedia* (Saint Louis, 1954), s. v., "Free Conferences," p. 390.

[52] Cf. Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences," op. cit., pp. 543-559.

[53] C. F. W. Walther, "Warum sind die symbolischen Buecher unserer Kirche von denen, welche Diener derselben werden wollen, nicht bedingt, sondern unbedingt zu unterschreiben?" *Der Lutheraner*, XIV (1858), pp. 201 ff.

[54] Augsburg Confession, VII, 2 f.

[55] The importance of churchly practice (*kirchliche Praxis*) also for church fellowship was discussed on the basis of Eighteen Theses on Church Fellowship drawn up by Wilhelm Sihler at meetings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference in the years 1873-77 and 1879. Sixteen of the 18 theses were discussed at length and approved almost unanimously. See *Verhandlungen der Ev.-luth. Synodal-Conferenz* (St. Louis, 1874 ff.) for the years indicated except 1873, for which see *Verhandlungen der zweiten Versammlung der Ev.-luth. Synodal-Conferenz von Nordamerika* (Columbus, 1873), pp. 5 ff.

Subsequently there was an essay by A. L. Graebner, "Die kirchliche Praxis," *Verhandlungen der sechzehnten Versammlung*, etc. (St. Louis, 1896); an article, "Lutherische Praxis," in *Der Lutheraner*, XLVII (1891), pp. 91 f., signed "G." [Martin Guenther?]; and an essay delivered by George Stoeckhardt before the Central District, "Unsere Missourisynode ist eine wahrhaft evangelisch-lutherische Gemeinschaft, denn sie schoepft alle ihre Lehren aus dem klaren Schriftwort," *Verhandlungen der dreiunddreissigsten Jahresversammlung des Mittleren Distriktes* (St. Louis, 1895), pp. 9- 96.

[56] Cf. *Verhandlungen*, 1873, pp. 7 ff.; and see below, footnote 62.

[57] Graebner, "Die kirchliche Praxis," p. 5.

[58] G., "Lutherische Praxis," pp. 91 f.

[59] Stoeckhardt, "Unsere Missourisynode, etc.," p. 45.

[60] Graebner (note 55), p. 7.

[61] _____, p. 91.

[62] Cf. *Verhandlungen* [Synod. Conf.] 1873, pp. 5- 8:

> Thesis 11
> Es widerspricht ferner dem Bekenntnis, wenn die kirchliche Koerperschaft es sich gefallen laesst, dass ihre Pastoren keinen ordentlichen, sondern nur einen zeitweiligen Beruf von ihren Gemeinden haben, oder sie gar selber diese Unordnung durch das Licenzwesen staerkt.
>
> Thesis 12
> Es ist ein schreiender Widerspruch wider das Bekenntnis, wenn eine lutherisch sich nennende und lutherisch sein wollende kirchliche Koerperschaft keinen Ernst und Eifer beweist, rechtglaeubige Gemeindeschulen, was an ihr liegt, in Gang zu bringen, wo sie nicht vorhanden sind.

PART THREE

Specific Questions Regarding the Practice of Fellowship

As stated in the Preamble, the document, THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, grew out of studies initiated by a resolution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the St. Paul convention in 1956 requesting a restudy of the question of "fellowship, prayer fellowship, and unionism."[1]

The committee appointed to make this study searched the Scripture, particularly the New Testament, with great care to glean all passages which have a bearing on fellowship. Its findings are embodied in the THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part I. The committee found that "Fellowship, both between the believer and his God, and between the believer and his fellow believer, looms large in the Holy Scripture in both Testaments."[2]

The findings in Part I may be summed up briefly as follows: God created man for fellowship both with Himself and with his fellowmen. Man destroyed this fellowship by the fall into sin, by which he became an enemy of God and brought strife and enmity into the human family. However, God in His great mercy in Christ redeemed man from sin in order that He might restore him to fellowship with Himself and with his fellowmen in the Christian church.

The Scripture, particularly the New Testament, abounds in passages which extol this fellowship.[3] Therefore Christians should consider fellowship, also church fellowship, the normal thing in their relations with one another. They should desire such fellowship, and should constantly be concerned to extend the blessings of this fellowship to others.

However, the New Testament also contains a number of passages which warn against persons, teachings, and actions which are injurious to Christian fellowship, and commands Christians to avoid such persons, teachings, and actions.

The committee appointed to restudy the question of "fellowship, prayer fellowship and unionism" saw as one of its tasks to study with great care the passages which command separation from or avoidance of certain persons in the interest of fellowship.

Part III of THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP addresses itself to a study of the Scripture passages which command separation and seeks to give answers to questions concerning "fellowship, prayer fellowship, and unionism."

A. AN EXAMINATION OF THE PASSAGES WHICH COMMAND SEPARATION

The passages of Scripture which command Christians to separate themselves from certain persons, teachings, and practices are in particular the following: Matt. 7:15, 16; Gal. 1:6-9; Acts 19:8-10; 2 John 9-11; Rom. 16:17, 18; Titus 3:10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

These passages do not appear to have been used by Luther and his co-workers in the manner in which they have often been used in our time: to forbid all work and worship with men with whom they are not wholly in accord doctrinally; nor are they so used in the Lutheran Confessions.

John Gerhard, the great orthodox Lutheran dogmatician, whose celebrated *Loci Theologici* was first issued in 1620, makes no such use of these passages. We find him quoting Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:9; 1 John 4:1; and 2 John 10 to show that the church must guard against false teachers, and that laymen are capable of judging doctrine.[4] Beyond this he draws no deductions from these passages.

According to the evidence from the history of the Lutheran Church these passages appear to have come into prominence, and to have been used much as they have been used in the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, about the time of the Colloquy of Thorn in Poland in 1645, when unsuccessful doctrinal discussions were conducted among Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed.[5]

It is therefore necessary that we examine, even if briefly, the chief of the passages which have since the time of the Colloquy of Thorn been quoted by some against all joint prayer with Christians of other confessions, no matter what the occasion. In the following we offer a brief examination of a number of these passages in context.

Matt. 7:15, 16

> Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

> Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

In this passage Jesus warns His followers to beware of false prophets. For a correct understanding of this passage it is necessary to know what a *false prophet* is. This in turn calls for a Biblical understanding of what a *prophet* is. According to Scripture not every teacher of religion, also not every faithful teacher of the Christian doctrine, is a prophet. A prophet is "one who speaks for God or a deity: a divinely inspired revealer, interpreter, or spokesman."[6]

This definition, taken from a modern dictionary, harmonizes closely with definitions of prophet and prophecy in standard lexica of the New Testament.[7]

As the term prophet in Scripture seems not to be used of teachers in general, but of divinely commissioned teachers into whose mouth God has put His Word and commanded them to proclaim it, so also the false prophet is not every teacher who either from ignorance or from malice proclaims error. Rather the false prophet (Greek: *pseudoprophetes*) is a pseudo, a fake, who claims to be a divinely commissioned spokesman for God when in fact God has not sent him.[8]

That the false prophets against whom our Lord warns in Matt. 7:15 ff. are thought of, not merely as purveyors of lies, but as men who falsely claim to be prophets of God, is indicated also by verses 22, 23, which are part of the warning against false prophets. Here these people are quoted as saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?"

As genuine prophecy both in the Old and in the New Testament was often accompanied by genuine miracles, so false prophets have again and again tried to bolster their claim to be prophets by purported miracles (Deut. 13:1, 2; Rev. 16:13, 14).

According to the strict Biblical usage of the term, therefore, not every erring teacher should at once be called a false prophet, much less erring Christians or whole churches.

This is in no wise to say that there are not real false prophets in the world today. There have been such at all times. There are such today, both pretending to be inspired spokesmen for God, and claiming to perform miracles.

Nor is this to say that the church dare ever relax her vigilance against every error in doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3, 4; Acts 20; 28-30). But the church ought not to use this passage loosely, as though all erring Christians and perhaps whole erring churches were to be treated as false prophets, who are wolves in sheep's clothing. This would be a serious error against the doctrine of the church, because also *erring* Christians are *Christians*, and members of the body of Christ.

Gal. 1:6-9

> I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel;
>
> Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ.
>
> But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
>
> As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Gal. 1:6-9 was written against well-known heretical teachers of apostolic times, the so-called Judaizers, who taught that Christians had to be circumcised and to keep the ceremonial law of Moses, or they could not be saved. (Cf. Acts 15:1.) St. Paul very properly recognized

this as destroying the Gospel itself, and told those who accepted this teaching, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace." (Cf. Gal. 5:4.)

This passage must be applied against all teachers who, after the manner of the Judaizers, teach Christians to build their hope of salvation on the works of the Law. It is a constant warning to teachers and hearers alike against moralism, synergism, and the confusion of Law and Gospel.

However, Gal. 1:6-9 must not be applied indiscriminately to every erring Christian or teacher, much less to whole churches in which the Gospel is preached, even though this preaching may be accompanied by doctrinal errors. It deals with teachers who overthrew the Gospel, the very foundation of the church's faith. Therefore St. Paul pronounces a curse upon them, a thing which would be unthinkable, if he were dealing with erring Christians.

Acts 19:8-10

> And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.
>
> But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.
>
> And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

This passage shows how St. Paul dealt with a situation when, in a synagogue in Ephesus, where he had preached the Gospel and many had been converted, some "were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way [the Christian faith is meant] before the multitude."

Realizing that here he was dealing, not with weak or erring Christians, who needed to be taught, but with hardened enemies of the Christian faith, Paul "departed from them, and separated the disciples." Evidently he found a different place for his preaching, for after this he "disputed daily in the school of one Tyrannus."

2 John 7- 11

> For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
>
> Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.
>
> Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.
>
> If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:
>
> For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

This passage speaks of traveling teachers who came to the homes of Christians, making propaganda for their teachings or seeking free meals and lodging or both. These teachers are called "deceivers" and "antichrist," v. 7. Their error is that they "confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

This kind of false teacher is well known from the first Epistle of John and from extra-Biblical literature. The error is that of Docetism, which held that Jesus was indeed the Son of

God, but that His human nature was not real. According to these teachers, the Son of God had not really come into the flesh.

This was not an error which built on the foundation "wood, hay, stubble" (1 Cor. 3:12), but which overthrew the very foundation of the Christian faith. Therefore the apostle also says concerning such a teacher, "Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

This passage is properly applied to all who seek to overthrow the foundation of the Christian faith, particularly those who deny the incarnation of the Son of God in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It strikes with full force all those who would make Jesus Christ something less than "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary."

Rom. 16:17, 18

> Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.
>
> For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

This passage, perhaps more than any other, has figured prominently in past discussions of what has come to be called unionism. A number of widely divergent interpretations of the passage have been proposed.

A careful examination of this passage in its context reveals that it occurs in a chapter aimed by the apostle at *strengthening* the fellowship not only in the congregation at Rome, but between the Roman church and other Christian churches as well. Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea is commended to the church at Rome, v. 1; Aquila and Priscilla, and a host of others who were known to Paul, were to be greeted. There are in all 14 requests by the apostle to greet certain persons with whom he was acquainted, and who were then in Rome, though it appears that it had never been Paul's own good fortune to visit this great city (cf. 1:10).

After the greetings comes the request that the Christians in Rome express their fellowship with one another with an holy kiss, v. 16. This is followed by the assurance: "The churches of Christ salute you."

Into this context of fellowship in the church in Rome and with the Christian churches everywhere, a fellowship cemented by greetings and sealed with the holy kiss, comes the warning: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them; For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Paul does not name these disturbers of the peace and fellowship of the church, and it is of little use for Christians today to try to say with certainty who they were. The following facts, however, are clear from his words:

1. Christians must be on their guard against those who seek to disrupt their fellowship in Christ;
2. The men whom Paul here commands his readers to mark and avoid are not the victims of past schisms and divisions. Rather, they *cause* (Greek: *tous . . . poiountas*; RSV: those who create dissensions, etc.) divisions and offenses.

Paul tries to cement the church together in love and fellowship in Christ; these men try to divide it.

3. They make these divisions and offenses "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." This doctrine is the Gospel, which all Christians have learned, and which alone brings the Christian church into being and preserves it.[9]
4. Because these trouble-makers are not erring Christians, who need to be taught, but people who attack the church's very foundation, namely, the Gospel, the apostle commands the Christians in Rome to avoid them, and judges: "They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

A careful study of Romans 16:17, 18 underscores the importance of observing the distinction between erring Christians, who must be instructed, and heretics, who attack the foundation of the church, as this distinction was set forth in THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, from writings of St. Augustine, of Luther, and from the Preface to *The Book of Concord*.

Titus 3:10, 11

> A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;
>
> Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

The term rendered "heretick" by the King James Version is translated in the RSV as "a man that is factious," that is, a man who creates factions or divisions.

This rendering is in accord with the original meaning of the term. Whether he makes factions by means of false doctrine, as is usually the case, or whether he divides the church by other means, does not alter the church's duty with respect to him. A man who seeks to divide the church is to be admonished once or twice, and then avoided. For it is evident that, if the church successfully avoids a man who would divide it, he cannot accomplish his aim.

The heretic or factious man, who will not yield to admonition, is judged to be a self-condemned man.

On this passage Luther says:

> Heretics do not merely err, but refuse to be instructed, defend their error as being right, and fight against the truth, which they know, and against their own conscience. Concerning such St. Paul says (Titus 3:11, 12): You are to avoid a heretic, when he has been admonished once or twice, and you are to know that such a man is perverted, and sins *autocatacritos*, that is, intentionally, and against better knowledge, and wants to remain in his error.[10]

It should be obvious that Titus 3:10 should be applied, not to erring Christians, who can be corrected, but to stubborn errorists who refuse to be instructed.

2 Cor. 6:14-18

> Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
>
> And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

> And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
>
> Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,
>
> And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

In this passage, addressed to the Christians who lived in the heathen environment of Corinth, where both the Christian faith and Christian morality were constantly in danger, Paul warns, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

It is clear that the people against whom the apostle warns are not erring Christians, but the unbelievers by whom they were surrounded. It is not crystal clear precisely what the apostle meant by "being unequally yoked together." The Greek word, "heterozygountes," is found only here in the New Testament, and only once in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, where it is used to translate the word rendered in the King James Version as "gender with a diverse kind" (Lev. 19:19). It has often, and with reason, been understood as forbidding Christians to marry unbelievers.[11]

In the Lutheran Church the passage has been referred in a wider sense to fellowship. At the time of the Reformation Luther used it to warn against having anything to do with the Roman Catholic mass, which he considered idolatrous. The passage is applied a number of times against the Roman Catholic Church in the Lutheran Confessions.[12]

Our Confessions do not use the passage against the Reformed, nor against erring Lutherans. Later the passage was used by Lutherans against Reformed teachers, whom they considered stubborn heretics. Finally, in the history of the Lutheran Church in this country, some Lutherans, also in our own Synod, used the passage to forbid fellowship with other Lutherans who were considered to be in error.

It is evident that those who use the passage in this way have gone beyond the clear words of the text, which forbids being "unequally yoked together with *unbelievers*."

Summary Statement

Concerning all these passages it is clear that they were originally spoken or written for specific situations and apply first of all to these specific situations.

It is, however, equally true that, like all Scripture these passages too were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4), and the church must, until the end of time, study also these passages and draw from them light and instruction for her life in fellowship. She will use them properly when she is taught by them to avoid men who, either by false teaching or separatistic, schismatic, factious activities attack the Gospel and the faith of Christians. She will be misusing these passages if she uses them to hinder the church's ongoing attempts to heal the schisms in the church and to foster the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

B. UNIONISM AND SEPARATISM

In the discussions of the question of church fellowship among Lutherans two terms are frequently used, *unionism* and *separatism*. Neither word has been defined either uniformly or in a manner acceptable to all. This lack of clearcut definitions has been a serious hindrance to profitable discussions and mutual understanding.

In the following we attempt to clarify these two concepts in a manner that is consonant with the teachings of Scripture and of the Lutheran Confessions.

1. Unionism

The terms *unionism* and *unionist* as ecclesiastical terms came into use in connection with the efforts of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia to effect a union of the Lutheran and of the Reformed churches in his realm in 1817, the tercentenary of the Reformation. The union was to be effected by declaring the doctrines which divided the two confessions to be differences in nonessentials.

This Prussian Union was very distasteful to loyal Lutherans, and those who favored the union were called unionists (Unionisten).[13]

The terms "unionism" and "unionist" were frequently used by the fathers of the Missouri Synod, though also the term "syncretism" (*Synkretismus*), which had been generally used prior to 1817, and "mixing of religions" (*Religionsmengerei*) were extensively employed.[14]

In part these terms were used, as they had been in Germany, to characterize the union of Reformed and Lutherans without removal of the doctrinal differences which divided them.

Later, however, the terms "unionism" and "unionist" were frequently applied when Lutherans who were not wholly agreed in doctrine and practice nevertheless worked and worshiped together.[15]

It is difficult to get a clearcut definition of unionism from the literature of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. An official definition of unionism by the Missouri Synod in 1932 reads:

> We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9, 10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21 (*Brief Statement* . . . , Par. 28).

It should be noted that here unionism is *church fellowship* with adherents of false doctrine generally, not only with Reformed, as the word *unionism* was originally used.

Another definition, later in time than the *Brief Statement*, appears to include in the concept of unionism far more than church fellowship with adherents of false doctrine, namely also "joint work of those not united in doctrine," and "mixed (promiscuous) prayer among those who profess the truth and those who deny any part of it."

We quote the following, as embodying the essential points, from the longer statement:

> Religious unionism consists in joint worship and work of those not united in doctrine. Its essence is an agreement to disagree. . . .

The statement then lists the familiar passages, a number of which have been treated exegetically above, and adds:

> In the light of these texts all joint ecclesiastical efforts for religious work (missionary, educational, etc.) and particularly joint worship and mixed (promiscuous) prayer among those who profess the truth and those why deny any part of it, is sinful unionism.[16]

In this last definition of unionism particular stress is laid on activities which do not assume church fellowship, like praying with Christians of another confession. The last part of this definition of unionism seemed to many to make impossible even the joint prayer for the Holy Spirit's aid by Lutherans of differing synods when they met to seek to overcome their

differences. It was also thought to brand participation in prayer at mixed gatherings, civic and patriotic, as sinful unionism.

2. Separatism

Like the term *unionism*, so also the term *separatism*, is not a Biblical but an ecclesiastical word. Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* defines separatism as "a disposition toward secession or schism," and a separatist as a "dissenter from an established church."

While unionism is often and variously defined in the writings of our synodical fathers, the term separatism occurs much less frequently. Eckhardt gives the following definition of separation and of separatism:

> *Separation, eine Trennung auf schriftgemaesse Weise wegen falscher Lehre, und Separatismus, eine Trennung wider die Schrift aus allerlei andern Gruenden*.[17]

It is evident that the concepts of unionism and separatism are intimately related. Unionism is attempted union when separation is in order, and separatism is separation when union is in order.

3. Unionism and Separatism: Twin Dangers to the Church

Both unionism and separatism constitute serious dangers to the church. Unionism ignores genuine differences in doctrine, and treats them as though they were unimportant. It tends to foster laxity in doctrine, which, like the little leaven, will in time leaven the whole lump (Gal. 5:9). On the other hand, separatism, as already St. Augustine clearly stated, sins against love and divides the church, just as surely as unionism undermines it. The church must therefore, for its own safety, shun both unionism and separatism.

C. SUGGESTED GUIDELINE FOR THE CHURCH IN THE PRACTICE OF FELLOWSHIP

The task of avoiding unionism on the one hand and separatism on the other while faithfully performing the church's God-given tasks has proved difficult throughout the ages, and will continue to prove difficult until her Lord's return. Christians will at times be puzzled in specific situations, particularly when they are dealing with a church with which their own church is not in pulpit and altar fellowship.

No statement, including this THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, can give complete guidance for every possible case. However, the following guidelines appear Scripturally sound, and in harmony with the Lutheran Confessions:

1. Our Synod should treasure the fellowship in the Gospel and in the sacraments which it enjoys with its sister churches and which it expresses through what is usually called pulpit and altar fellowship; and it should foster this fellowship with all diligence;
2. Our Synod should work zealously for the extension of this fellowship by engaging in doctrinal discussions with other churches in the interest of achieving such fellowship where this can be done without compromising sound doctrine;

3. Our Synod should understand that, in the case of doctrinal discussions carried on with a view to achieving doctrinal unity, Christians not only *may* but *should* join in fervent prayer that God would guide and bless the discussions, trusting in Christ's promise Matt. 18:19: "Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven."[18]

   The opening prayer on such an occasion should be suited to the specific situation. If all parties meet in an atmosphere of mutual confidence there will be no problem. In a tense or an uncertain situation it may be suggested that the conference use the great hymns and liturgical prayers of the church, as was done at the Colloquy at Ratisbon where representatives of the two sides changed off opening the sessions with the "Veni Creator Spiritus" (Come, Holy Spirit) and the "Pater noster" (Our Father);[19] and as did the fathers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, when at the Milwaukee Colloquy the local pastor opened every session with a liturgical service.[20]

4. Our Synod should clearly recognize that, in the case of necessary work on the local, national, or international level, where the faith and confession of the church are not compromised, and where it appears essential that the churches of various denominations should cooperate or at least not work at cross purposes, our churches ought to cooperate willingly to the extent that the Word of God and conscience will allow.

5. In the many cases which do not seem to fall readily under the guidelines enunciated above (e.g., prayers at all kinds of meetings), every Christian should for his own person observe the apostle's injunction, "Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind" Rom. 14:15; and his warning, "He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

   With respect to his brother, whose conscience may not judge in all such matters as does his own, let every Christian observe the instruction of the same apostle, "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. . . . So each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:10, 12).

6. It will be remembered that THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, closes with a discussion of churchly practice as a criterion of church fellowship, and of the difficulties experienced internally by the Synodical Conference in connection with the application of this criterion.[21]

   Our Synod will be well advised to retain the principle that Scriptural practice is important for church fellowship. When ecclesiastical practice is in harmony with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the church is edified. On the other hand, when ecclesiastical practice constitutes a demonstrable denial of the Gospel, the work of the church is undermined. However, Christians ought not apply this principle legalistically or employ doubtful logic and labored conclusions to prove that a certain practice is against the Gospel. In the matter of churchly practice the individual congregation should be guided by the same considerations as are set forth under point 5 above, on the basis of Rom. 14:5, 10, 12, 23.

Conclusion

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations now submits this THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part I, II, and III, to *The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* for reference and guidance.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved the church, and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25), protect and bless His church in all the world; may He Himself guide His children everywhere into all truth, and cleanse the church of all heresy and schism. May He bless also the church as it exists in *The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* and in the synods in fellowship with it. May He grant us grace to proclaim His Word with boldness and with power and to exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2); to love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17); to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15); to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, for there is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all (Eph. 4:1-6).

TH. F. NICKEL, *Chairman*
HERBERT J. A. BOUMAN, *Secretary*

FOOTNOTES

[1] *Proceedings of the Forty-Third Regular Convention*, St. Paul, 1956, p. 550.
[2] *Theology of Fellowship*, Preamble.
[3] 1 John 1:3; Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 4:11, 12.
[4] Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, ed. Preuss, Berlin 1863, I, 202, 216; V, 355.
[5] At the Colloquy at Ratisbon in 1602 Lutherans and Roman Catholics had taken turns with the opening prayers. (Cf. *Theology of Fellowship*, Part II, Footnote 46.) It appears that at Thorn the Lutheran spokesmen, among them Huelsemann and Calov, expected that the same arrangement would prevail. Upon arrival, however, they found that the Roman Catholics insisted that all opening services were to be conducted by Roman Catholics. The result was that the Lutherans refused to attend the opening services, and prayed instead in a private meeting of their own. In his *Historica Syncretistica* (1682) Abraham Calov not only gives valuable information and documents relating to the Colloquy of Thorn but also about the whole syncretistic controversy which developed in connection with the union efforts spearheaded by Georg Calixt. Calov gives among others these reasons advanced by the Lutherans why they could not yield to the Roman Catholic demands in the matter of the prayers:

1. The apostle forbids that anyone should have fellowship with darkness and the spiritual Babylon. 2 Cor. 6; Rev. 18.
2. There is nothing in the royal invitation (the colloquy had been called by the king of Poland) about joint prayers and ceremonies; rather that those who had left Roman Catholicism should be distinct and separate.
3. The royal invitation of Dec. 1, 1644, gives sacred guarantees that charity should be preserved among all. But parity is violated if we are hindered from reciting our own prayers and called, as it were, before a tribunal, with the prayers of the Roman Catholics thrust upon us.
4. The colloquy is to be charitable; but it is a contradiction of charity to forbid those who have equal rights to conduct prayers with their fellows, to take away from them the liberty to pray in public; if we were to condescend to pray with the Roman Catholic gentlemen, we should sin against charity, by which we should give offense to the weak. Rom. 16.
5. Liberty has been granted three provinces of greater Prussia in the exercise of religion, according to the teachings of Holy Scripture and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; why should there not also be liberty of reciting prayers, as in our churches so also in a hall and in a public act of confession.

6. It militates against our protestation, in the preliminary conditions, which the Roman Catholic part has already confirmed. . . .
7. It militates against our instructions, in which we are commanded to hold firmly and to defend the equality of our side.
8. It militates against our conscience, which forbids to harm the neighbor; our neighbor, who is related to our faith, would be harmed if we were to pray together with Roman Catholics.
9. We have been instructed to procure and do all things which could be conducive to avoiding schisms in our churches, and establish harmony instead, and to nourish harmony with the churches which are outside [our realm], with which we are joined in fellowship of faith. But agreeing to pray [jointly] in public, will give cause for schism, disturb harmony, offend the churches without, who will be surprised that we should be willing to have the liberty of praying taken away from us.
10. We confess Christ also in our prayers, therefore he who forbids us these, takes away from us the liberty of confessing Christ.
11. Our instructions prohibit us from accepting from the Roman Catholics even so much as the manner of conducting the colloquy; much less will it be right to accept from them the manner of praying.
12. A charitable colloquy ought not to have the power of a synod, or the power to compel. But to compel the party of the Augsburg Confession and to forbid them prayer in public, what, I ask, is this if not to exercise the power of a synod against it?

There follow additional reasons why the Lutherans believed they could not consent to pray with the Roman Catholic party. The Scriptures referred to are 2 Cor. 6:14-18 (Rev. 18); and Romans 16:17, 18.

In Part V of the second preliminary chapter to the same book, *Historica Syncretistica*, which he superscribes, "Wahrer, Gott wohlgefaelliger Kirchenfriede muss auf Gottes Wort gegruendet, und der goettlichen Wahrheit in den Stuecken unsers Glaubens nicht entgegen sein," (True God-pleasing peace in the church must be based on the Word of God, and dare not be contrary to the divine Word in the articles of faith). Calov quotes without exegesis the following passages: 2 John 10, 11; 2 Peter 1:1, 2; 2 Peter 3:17; Gal. 1:9; 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Rom. 16:17, 18; Titus 1:9, 10; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 3:10; 2 Cor. 6:14-17 and others. These, essentially, are the passages which have been quoted in the Synodical Conference against prayer with Christians of other confessions. For further information the student is directed to this work of Calov's. The text from which we quote reveals neither the name of the printer, nor the place of publication. The historical material on the whole syncretistic controversy is found in Schmid, Heinrich, *Geschichte der synkretistischen Streitigkeiten in der Zeit des Georg Calixt*, Erlangen, Verlag von Carl Heider, 1846. On the Colloquy of Thorn see also under *Thorn, Religionsgespraech*, in *Herzogs Realenzyklopaedie fuer Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, Leipzig, 1907, Vol. XIX.

[6] See *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, G. and C. Merriam Co., 1961, under "prophet."

[7] Bauer (Arndt-Gingrich), under *propheteuo* (prophesy): "To proclaim a divine revelation; prophetically reveal what is hidden; foretell the future, prophesy." Thayer, under propheteia: "Prophecy, that is, discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events."

The prophet, (*prophetes*) is then defined as "an interpreter or spokesman for God, one through whom God speaks . . . One who speaks forth by divine inspiration. . . . In the New Testament one who moved by the Spirit of God and hence His organ or spokesman solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration. . . ." This is essentially also the understanding in the 82-page article on *prophetes* and related words in Kittel, Friedrich, *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Vol. VI, pp. 781- 863. For this understanding the article refers to Deut. 18:20; 34:10; Jer. 28:8 ff.; Amos 3:7.

[8] This understanding of "false prophet" is widely recognized by the lexica for New Testament studies.

Bauer (Arndt-Gingrich) recognizes two meanings of *pseudoprophetes*: "False prophet, one who falsely claims to be a prophet of God or who prophesies falsely." Thayer: *pseudoprophetes*: "One who acting the part of a divinely inspired prophet, utters falsehoods under the name of divine prophecies."

We translate the following on *pseudoprophetes* from the lengthy article by Friedrich in the *Theologisches Woerterbuch*:

> The Word *pseudoprophetes* is not employed by St. Paul. It is found eleven times in the New Testament, of these, three times in Matthew, and three times in the Apocalypse. The question whether the pseudoprophet is one who falsely claims to be a prophet of God, or whether he is thus designated because he proclaims what is false, must be answered differently in the New Testament according to the context. In most cases pseudoprophets are people who come purporting to be prophets without actually being such. According to

> Matt. 7:15 they act as though they were prophets, but are in essence liars. In Mark 13:22; Matt. 24:24; 1 John 4:1 (cp. 2:18) they are mentioned together with pseudo-Christs. As the pseudo-Christ is not a Christ who spreads lies, but falsely claims the title of Christ, so the pseudoprophet is first of all a person who takes to himself the title of prophet without being a prophet. 1 John 4:1-3 shows that the pseudoprophet is also a man who proclaims lies; for he is recognized as a false prophet in this that he represents a false doctrine. 2 Peter 2:1 the false prophets of the Old Testament are compared with the false teachers of the present, who bring in destructive heresies. They are therefore people who proclaim lies. But by and large the false prophet is not called a pseudoprophet because his teaching and prophesying is false, but because he makes the false claim that he is a prophet. From the fact that he is a false prophet there follows then in most cases that he also proclaims what is false, and thus spreads lies. (P. 831)

[9] It should be noted, for a proper understanding of this passage, that the term doctrine in Scripture, when applied to the truth, is almost always in the singular. On the side of the truth Scripture knows of one doctrine, the doctrine of God or Christ. On the side of error it knows of doctrines, e.g., doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1). The Formula of Concord similarly uses doctrine in the singular for Gospel (FC, Ep. V, 5; see also FC, SD, X, 31).

In later usage in the church we have become accustomed to speak of doctrines in the plural to designate what Luther and the earlier theologians of our church, and notably the Lutheran Confessions, called articles, that is, integral parts, of the one doctrine, that is, the Gospel. Thus, the article of justification is considered the chief article of the Christian doctrine. (Cf. THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, p. 19.)

[10] Von den Conciliis, etc. (WA 50, 544 f.)

[11] The RSV renders the passage, "Do not be mismated with unbelievers."

[12] Cf. *The Book of Concord* (Tappert), 328. 41; 493. 6; 611. 6; 615. 22.

[13] Brockhaus, *Conversationslexikon*, *16*. *Band* (Leipzig, 1887), p. 39.

[14] The term *Synkretismus* was employed during the period of 17th-century orthodoxy to denote efforts to reunite Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed. These efforts are described in Abraham Calov's *Historia Syncretistica*.

[15] E. Eckhardt, *Homiletisches Reallexikon* (St. Louis), has no less than 18 pages of reference to "union" and "unionism," indicating how live this subject was in the thinking of the synodical fathers.

[16] Fuerbringer, L., Th. Engelder, and P. E. Kretzmann (eds.), *The Concordia Cyclopedia* (St. Louis, 1927), under Unionism.

[17] *Separation*, a separation in a Scriptural manner on account of false doctrine, and *separatism*, a separation against the Scripture for all kinds of other reasons. Cf. Eckhardt, under *Spaltung*.

[18] The prayer here enjoined is prayer among Christians met for a God-pleasing purpose. Joint prayer with non-Christians is to be avoided.

[19] Cf. THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, p. 19.

[20] Ibid., p. 22. As one respected Lutheran theologian, Dr. Hermann Sasse of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia, has urged, the least that Christians can do on such occasions is to pray together:

> Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
> For round us falls the eventide;
> Let not Thy Word, that heavenly light,
> For us be ever veiled in night.
> (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 292)

[21] THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, pp. 24- 29.

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