

## COMMUNION CLOSED AND FULL

Thanks for your letter about closed communion in LCMS practice. You are right that these matters deserve a leisurely afternoon. Without being exhaustive I will make a few attempts here.

1. LCMS practice is the traditional one of the church and was first changed by the Methodists who thought that communion was a conversion agent, something like baptism. All Lutheran churches practiced closed communion, as do the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

2. Communion is not strictly a private matter, but among other things is the highest expression of fellowship and belief among those who receive it. It is a declaration of what a church believes and the assent of the communicant to what that church believes. On that account Luther refused to go to communion with Zwingli because the latter did not believe that the sacrament was Christ's body and blood.

3. Following on the above thought, could a Lutheran receive communion from a Baptist or a Unitarian or a Mormon? The one who is going to communion in a given church is saying something important about that church, and the pastor who gives communion to those who approach his altar is saying something about the communicants. So could a pastor give communion to a Baptist or a Unitarian?

4. In the early church, communion was not shared with those who belonged to churches that held to false doctrine. An historical study of this is still available from CPH, *Fellowship in the Early Church*, by Werner Elert.

5. Regardless of personal beliefs, membership in a particular church implies that its members accept that church's teachings. Thus members of Reformed and Roman Catholic churches may share beliefs also held by Lutherans, but their continued membership in these churches shows that they find these beliefs acceptable. Where members of a Lutheran church do not hold to the Lutheran teachings on this or that point, the pastor knows what his job is. After all, that is why he is a pastor.

6. ELCA fellowship with the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA, and the United Church of Christ is an explicit denial of the Lutheran Confessions, not only in regard to the Lord's supper as Christ's body and blood, but also of the person and work of Christ, sanctification, the law and the gospel, and others. The UCC requires no confession at all, not even the Creed.

7. I had wanted to send you a copy of a report printed in *Forum Letter of Lutheran Forum* of the opening service of the ELCA/Reformed Churches in the Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago. Prayers to God the Father were assidu-

ously avoided and references to the Father were kept only in the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. This is all connected with the practice of all these churches in ordaining women.

8. The ELCA's anticipated revival of an alliance with the Episcopal Church seems a minor issue in that their bishops must participate in the consecration of Lutheran bishops, something that does not fly well with Scandinavian Lutherans in Minnesota who have a strong congregational and pietistic background. Episcopalians have some real problems and are devoid of any doctrinal requirements (except bishops), the most obvious example being the Newark bishop who does not believe anything supernatural. His books are available in the library.

Some, including a few pastors, have left the ELCA, but it is difficult to leave a church body in which you have long social and financial ties. The LCMS presents to them the same difficulties about which you write, but we have a fighting chance. We are not even near the situation of the ELCA.

*David P. Scaer  
Fort Wayne, Indiana*

## A COMMENT ON TRANSLATIONS

Some of the recent translations of the New Testament sound very wooden or unnatural because of the tendency to translate the Greek aorist indicative too often by the English past tense. The aorists within passages in primary sequence, when there are no definite references in the context to time, should often be translated by English perfects. Otherwise the impression is given that the action is past and gone. For example, when Jesus is present with his disciples, he should not be made to say, "The Son of Man came," but, "The Son of Man has come." See the little section in Wenham's *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, page 140. Similarly with "you believed," when it should have been construed as ingressive.

In general, the proper sequence of tenses is often ignored. For example, "This is the gospel which was preached to you" should be "This is the gospel which has been preached to you" (1 Pt 1:25).

Far more often, when the Greek aorist expresses relative time, as in relative and temporal clauses, the English pluperfect should have been used.

English has a much wider range of tenses than Hebrew, and far too often not only the English perfect, but also its continuous perfect is overlooked in translating the Hebrew perfect. Often the English present tense is used when the continuous perfect would have been better. Psalm 34:17 is one example. In some contexts, not something like "I cried to you," but "I have been crying to you" is appropriate.

In final clauses in English, "will," "can," and "do" often appear instead of "may" in primary sequence, and their historic partners instead of "might" in historic sequence. People should not assume