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Sermon Series: The Ten Commandments

Frank Gantt

The Seventh Commandment: *You shall not steal.*

Readings: Isaiah 58:1-14, Luke 19:11-10

Sermon Text: Ephesians 4:28

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today in our review of the Small Catechism we have come to a commandment which is very likely for us to marginalize and to think of ourselves as conforming to it. We know it well: “You shall not steal.” Nobody likes a thief. While I was on vacation, I read the following statement in the Miscellaneous section of the classifieds in the local newspaper: “To whomever stole the fire extinguisher out of the bed of my pick-up, hang on to it. You’re going to need it where you are going. Nobody likes a thief.”

If you’ve ever had anyone steal something that belongs to you, if you’ve ever had your house burglarized, if you’ve ever lost your wallet or purse and had it returned with the valuable contents no longer there, then you know how violated you feel at the thought of another person in possession of what was yours. Next to our lives and our families, our possessions are the most precious things we have. We obtain them through hard work or by gifts of love, and we cherish them.

Ironically, it is in connection with that aspect of our possessions that the Seventh Commandment finds application in our lives. It’s easy to see the finger of this law pointing at us if we have knowingly taken something without permission. However, this commandment addresses not only the improper taking of another’s possessions; it also addresses the improper use of our own possessions. It is to this point that I direct your hearts as we consider what our God would have us learn from our text in Ephesians 4:28: ***“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need.”***

At first glance it may appear as though this verse doesn’t really address us, unless, of course, we are former thieves. “*Let him who stole steal no longer,*” Paul says. Since the possessions we have come from God—either by direct providence or by God giving us the strength to earn them—any taking of possessions and goods without permission of the owner is, in effect, to set oneself above God and His will that we have what we have through the means He has appointed. Thus it is stealing to take a candy bar out of the store without paying for it, or to take money that was earned by another, or to copy copyrighted material without permission (CD’s, video games, music, books, etc.).

The verse of our text also has broader application to things that many would not connect with stealing. Children, you may not throw fits in the store to try to get your parents to buy you whatever it is you want. Neither should you think that your only responsibility in life is to sit around and play with all the things your parents have bought you while there is work to be done. What about gambling and other games of chance? Gambling is not entertainment; it’s a cloaked way for people to get money they didn’t earn, or for someone else to get the money you have earned and which you ought rather to use to provide for the needs of your family and others. There is even application for us in connection with our political environment. Christians should not cast their votes on the basis of which candidate promises to send them a bigger check. That money comes from somewhere, and someone earned that money. God demands that we look to Him for all our needs, not to our government, and He expects that we help our neighbor keep what is his rather than take it for ourselves. In various ways, then, the command against stealing, spelled out in the first part of our text, is truly applicable to us all.

However, it is the second part of the verse to which I especially want to draw your attention. There Paul writes: “*Rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need.*” Though the first part of the verse speaks most directly to those who formerly lived as thieves, what the Lord says in this second part directs how we all ought to think and act. We are to work hard. Why? We may tend to think that our hard work is to pay off in the end for us personally. If I work hard, I can have a nicer

retirement, a better home, a new boat, money to spend on traveling, etc. The Lord says that primarily what we earn with our hands is to give to those who have need.

There are, no doubt, people who misuse such statements to whitewash their own laziness—that is, they make a living out of being “someone in need.” For them the Seventh Commandment also has application in that well-known verse: *“If any will not work, neither shall he eat”* (2 Thess. 3:10). Still, there are those in this world who have legitimate needs, and we are to think of our God-given ability to work as an opportunity to provide for those needs.

The first group of those who have need are persons in our own households, our families. Food, clothing, shelter, health care are all needs that our family members have. The Lord places these needs at the top when He says through His apostle, *“If anyone does not provide for his own, especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Tim. 5:8). The question is: how shall we understand “household?” Does that just include those who are living in our homes, or does it just include our immediate relatives? I believe it goes further than that, for elsewhere the Lord speaks of doing *“good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith,”* that is, our fellow Christians. When we find any Christian in need of these basic necessities of life, we should not wait to see how much and what manner of help he might get elsewhere. The very food in our pantries, the clothing in our closets, the roof over our heads, and in many cases the very money in our wallets are the good things that he needs from us, his brothers in Christ.

The Lord has much to say concerning our responsibility to meet the bodily needs of our fellow human beings and especially our fellow Christians. Unfortunately, we have handed over to politicians this responsibility which the Lord has laid directly on our shoulders. And in case you are tempted to think that government programs should primarily help those in need, please listen to two instances where the Lord speaks on this matter. One is in the form of a warning, and the other in the form of a promise. The first instance is found in the book of Isaiah. If you have never read through the book of Isaiah, do so this week. Much of the reason why the Lord brought His judgment upon Judah was because they had mistreated and did not provide for the poor. In our Old Testament lesson we are reminded that when the poor cry to Him, God will hear. Promise of blessing is also given in this gem from Proverbs: *“He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what He has given”* (19:17). So we should always view our possessions as opportunities to help those in need because 1) the Lord commands it and 2) the Lord will bless those who do.

There is, of course, a second group of needy and poor for whom we also should see our material wealth as an opportunity to provide for them. I’m talking about those who are poor in the knowledge of salvation and needy of that knowledge found only in the Gospel. Jesus taught His disciples to *“make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home”* (Luke 16:9). By calling our possessions “unrighteous mammon,” Jesus doesn’t mean to suggest that we should despise the good things which our God has given us. However, since so many people hoard those things simply to enrich their own lives, it becomes unrighteous mammon. The only permanent value that our possessions can have is when they are used to bring the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him. On Judgment Day no one will regret having used their material wealth for this purpose. Many, however, will regret that they only built up for themselves treasures on earth.

What our Lord wants to impress upon us in this Seventh Commandment goes beyond His decree that we not steal. He also requires that we use the possessions which He Himself gives us to help our fellow man in both his bodily and spiritual needs. Essentially, we should be like God in the way we handle earthly goods and possessions, noting especially what He has done and continues to do for us day by day. All that we have we can trace back to the Lord who has opened His hands and satisfied our needs. More than that, in our desperate poverty of sin which had bankrupted us all, our Lord stretched out His hands on the cross and made us rich beyond measure. Through Jesus Christ—who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor—our greatest need has been supplied. By Him our nakedness has been clothed with His righteousness, our souls have been fed with His grace, and our shelter, our home, is His very home in heaven.

Can we ever repay Him for such treasures? Certainly not! Nor does He ask us to do that. What He does ask of us—indeed, what He Himself works in us both to will and to do—is to pass on both the material blessings which He pours out upon us and the spiritual blessings of grace so richly showered upon us through Christ. Amen!

The Eighth Commandment: *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

Readings: Daniel 6:1-28, Mark 14:53-65

Sermon Text: James 3:2-8

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Just a couple of weeks ago I had a moment of extreme awe concerning the vast knowledge of our omniscient God. I was on the Internet looking at Google Earth, a website that provides aerial photographs of the whole earth. The online user can go to any point on the globe and zoom in to get a closer view. In some of the rural areas you can only get close enough to make out something that looks like a building, but in some of the more populated areas, especially in the United States, you can zoom right down and see people. Well, as I was zooming in on an area of Columbia, SC, I noticed there were three people standing outside of a church building. I thought that was interesting. Then I zoomed back out to see how far I could go before I couldn't see them. Then it occurred to me: while I can only have one perspective at a time, our Lord has both a zoomed-in view and a panoramic view of the whole earth and all of creation. He is always so close that He knows the number of the hairs on our heads and yet so far above that He sees what's happening elsewhere. It's amazing, really, when you think about it.

Now if you have already looked in the bulletin and read the Eighth Commandment, you may be wondering what one has to do with the other. Nothing really, except that as I was preparing for this sermon, I had another moment of awe in connection with the kindness and love of our God. Several weeks ago we reviewed the Second Commandment in which God forbids that we take His name in vain, and that includes either lying about God or blaspheming Him. Here in the Eighth Commandment we see that the Lord has concern not only for His great name, but also for each of our names, that is, our reputations. It is to this thought that I direct your hearts as we listen to what our God has to say to us in James 3:2-8: ***“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”***

In considering the Seventh Commandment last week, we were reminded that all of our neighbors' possessions come from God and we are not to steal them in any way. In our discussion of the Eighth Commandment today we are talking about what is essentially our most valuable possession: a good name or reputation. Obviously, it is a different kind of possession in that it is not something concrete. But it is a possession nonetheless, for it has value. It is something for which we must work hard to obtain and maintain, and it can be stolen.

When I read through these verses of James 3, especially that part about how the tongue is a fire, I'm reminded of a story from the life of St. Francis of Assisi. One of his parishioners came to him troubled by the fact that she had been with some friends and as the gossip began, she reluctantly joined in. Before she knew it, she had said so many bad things about some of her neighbors and relatives that she felt ashamed. She came to her priest to get advice on how she might atone for her sin. St. Francis told her to go to the market, buy a hen, and on the way back home pluck out a feather and lay it on the doorstep of each person's home about whom she had gossiped. Then she should return to speak with him the next week. She thought it strange, but she gladly did as she was told. When she returned the following week, St. Francis told her that she should now go back to each home and pick up each feather. She responded to that request in great frustration, “I can't because the feathers won't be there,” to which he replied, “The same goes with gossip. Once you speak ill about another, there is no undoing the harm.”

You will notice that there is nothing specifically said in our text about a person's reputation or the Eighth

Commandment. Yet the text is filled with what the Eighth Commandment covers and protects. It has to do with how we use our tongues in connection with our neighbor. The tongue is how we communicate what we know and think in our heads and in our hearts. When we hear it like that and realize the impact of that truth, let's think about the words we speak, especially about our neighbor. We then see that our hearts and our minds aren't that pretty, are they?

It's so easy to let a few words roll off our tongues about how another person is falling short in his or her responsibilities. It's so easy to use our mouths to tear down another person. In fact, it scratches an itch of sorts. You know what that itch is. It's pride. Whenever we speak anything unfavorable about another person, we are not only ruining that person's reputation, which God specifically forbids, but we are also giving people a glimpse into our own hearts. For when the tongue slanders, the heart can't be pretty.

That's why James says in our text, "*No man can tame the tongue.*" We cannot tame our tongues, for in order for the tongue to be tamed, the heart must first be tamed. Or as Scripture says, the heart must first be renewed. That, of course, is something that none of us is capable of doing, but which God Himself must do.

He does that through His Word—both the Law and the Gospel—which exposes our sinfulness and dark depravity, but also reveals His grace and loving-kindness. That our tongues are an unruly evil is due to the simple fact that we have become corrupt by sin. This corruption came about when Adam fell into sin. We see evidence of it from the first words that came from Adam's mouth when God confronted him. His heart was filled with evil, and so his words accused others, even God Himself. The same corruption was revealed in Cain and in Ham, and also in Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus' disciples. And so it happens with each of us because our hearts, like theirs, have been corrupted by sin.

Yet in His grace God took action to reclaim the fallen and untamed hearts of His people. He did what is beyond human thought when He became man in order to suffer and die as the full payment for all our sins against Him and against each other. In the person of His Son, God laid down His life on the cross and suffered the wrath that we ourselves have deserved. Speaking centuries before that great act of love, Isaiah said that He "*has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*" The result of Christ's death is even more amazing, inasmuch as God says, "*Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*" (Heb. 10:17). Think about the immense nature of that statement. We said earlier that long after our words slip through our lips, they continue to echo in the minds of others. But for Christ's sake they don't in the mind of God. They're gone, blotted from His memory forever by the blood of His Son.

Still, man's heart would remain untamed. So consistent with His love displayed on Calvary, God sends His Spirit into our hearts and takes possession of them by giving us faith in Christ Jesus. Through that faith Christ establishes His throne in our hearts, ruling with His peace that which man is unable to tame. With the heart under His gracious rule, then and only then can the tongue be brought under control as well.

Now I want you to consider three ways that the Lord is working day by day to tame your tongue. These words from James are certainly a warning, but they also serve to show us what the Lord is doing in us to bring our tongues under His control. First of all, the Lord teaches us that we should never underestimate the power of the tongue. James refers to two small things very similar to the tongue: a bit for a horse and a rudder for a ship. Relatively small items, but look at what power they have over the horse and the ship. The tongue is one of those small things in life that has enormous power, either for good or for evil.

Secondly, the Lord teaches us never to underestimate the tongue's ability to destroy. Like a fire that consumes a forest, the tongue is able to destroy marriages, devour relationships, start family feuds and even wars. Just as a match can begin a blaze that destroys thousands upon thousands of acres of land and forest, so the tongue can do among us if ever we use it for evil.

Finally, the Lord teaches us always and only to use our tongues for praising Him and blessing our fellow men. Praising the Lord is done through hymns and prayers and even in glorifying God to one another. Blessing our fellow man is similar. It doesn't mean that we have to speak a formal blessing on him. But every bit of godly advice, every word of godly encouragement, every assurance of forgiveness, every reminder of God's will spoken to another, every word of truth spoken in love will prove to be a blessing for our neighbor. Lord, to that end and to Your glory we pray: rule in our hearts by Your grace and tame our tongues with your Spirit. Amen!

The Church of the Lutheran Confession—Fifty Years

David Lau

Chapter 5: The Interim Conference

“God sets the solitary in families” (Ps. 68:6). Individual pastors, teachers, congregations, and individual members of congregations had withdrawn from the various synods of the Synodical Conference. Some of those who withdrew were acquainted with others who withdrew, but this was not always the case. There was a craving for fellowship on the part of those who had withdrawn. They did not want to be alone. They needed the comfort and the support of others who had taken the same stand they had taken and on the basis of the same Word of God. At first there were only a very few, but as time went on and the offenses and the disobedience continued, the number grew larger, and so the possibility of a new organization presented itself. But for those who withdrew something was more important than organization, and that was a true unity in confession of the truth.

We need to remember that those who withdrew were individuals who had taken an unpopular stand and were used to being challenged for the positions they had taken. They were used to fighting verbal battles with their opponents. So it was not at all a self-evident thing that these individuals with their strong opinions would be able to work together in a united organization that would last. One thinks back to the 1920’s when a group protested against Wisconsin Synod practices at the time and formed what came to be known as the Protestant Conference of the Wisconsin Synod. The number in this group was substantial at first, but eventually there were major ruptures in 1930, in 1952, and again in 1964.

We think also of what happened to those who withdrew from the Missouri Synod and formed the Orthodox Lutheran Conference. It was not long before there was a division in that group, and the Concordia Lutheran Conference came into existence as a separate body. Later the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation (LCR) came into existence, but again there were divisions and more divisions down through the years, so that the LCR has remained a very small group.

In light of these developments in other church bodies, we must emphasize that God is the one who enabled those who withdrew from the Synodical Conference synods in the years from 1955 to 1961 to find each other, to become united with each other in doctrine and practice, and in time to become an organized church body that worked together in the work of the Lord. “God sets the solitary in families” (Ps. 68:6). To Him be all the glory!

In his 1978 “A History of the CLC” C. M. Gullerud explained the coming together in this way:

This was not the culmination of a mass movement with the emotional overtones which often characterize people who join as followers of a cause which they often neither understand nor fully comprehend. It was a coming together of people and congregations that had come to their own individual convictions based on Scripture which moved them by God’s grace to take a stand which ultimately had led to a severance of former affiliations with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. While some say that it was a wrong and separatistic spirit that caused the break; while others say that it was caused by men who had not been able to satisfy their ambitious spirits in their former church fellowships, witness is hereby born [sic] to the fact that deviation from doctrine was the issue—specifically the doctrine of Church Fellowship. . . . When it was recognized that the error was not just an incidental lapse but the firm stand of the bodies to which they belonged, then people and congregations here and there realized that this was a leaven which would work untold harm as time moved on. To them it was not just a matter of timing or of personal judgment but a matter of obedience to God’s Word. (2)

The coming together took place through a series of meetings convened in the years between 1956 and 1960. The first such meeting was a free conference hosted by Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mankato, MN, on September 26-27, 1956. This conference was attended both by those who had already withdrawn and by those who were troubled by synodical actions but still were members. John Lau, the reporter for this conference, said that there were 26 persons in attendance. Paul G. Albrecht of Bowdle, SD, was chosen as moderator. Pastor Hilbert Schaller presented an exegesis of Galatians 1. Pastor J. C. Dahlke offered his study of the controversy between the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods. Paul G. Albrecht read “A Report of a Minority of the Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union,” written by him and M. J. Witt. Men from the Orthodox Lutheran

Conference were also in attendance.

The report of the free conference explains that the participants were “a group of those in the Wisconsin Synod who are constrained to apply Romans 16:17-18 to the Missouri Synod.” The report then states: “It was unanimously decided to call ourselves ‘A Wisconsin Synod Study Group.’ It was also decided that future programs would include 1) an exegetical study of Galatians 2, Titus, and Romans 16; 2) a discussion of synodical development in matters of church union; 3) a study of Titus and 2 Thessalonians in relation to Romans 16, 17-18” (“Report of the First Meeting” 2). There appears to be no record of a second such meeting.

A year after the Mankato free conference another meeting took place on October 22 and 23, 1957, in Lyons, NE. The pastor of the small Lutheran congregation in that city was Tobias Pederson, who had been pastor of a large Missouri Synod congregation near Bancroft, NE. But he disagreed with the Missouri Synod position on joint prayer, Scouting, and the synod’s toleration of the signers of the Statement of 1945. Synod officials persuaded the congregation to terminate Pederson’s call, but a few members followed him and this small group organized a congregation in Lyons, where there was no Lutheran church. This congregation was supported by Immanuel Lutheran of Mankato for a time, and Pastor Pederson was a participant in many of the meetings of the Interim Conference.

The agenda for the Lyons meeting listed exegetical papers by Arthur Schulz and Gordon Radtke on passages dealing with church fellowship, an essay on Scouting by C. M. Gullerud, a presentation on Christian education by Winfred Schaller, Jr., and a report on happenings in Crete, IL, by Pastor A. T. Kretzmann, who later led his congregation out of the Missouri Synod into the Wisconsin Synod. “At this meeting it was mutually agreed that there was a need for an Article to be drawn up on the doctrine of Church Fellowship. This was the initial move toward the framing of the document later to be known by the title: ‘Concerning Church Fellowship’” (Gullerud 2). Winfred Schaller, Jr., was given the assignment to begin work on this article.

The next pertinent conference, held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane, WA, on November 18-19, 1957, was attended by the six Washington pastors: Leonard Bernthal, Robert Dommer, Ivan Zarling, Waldemar Karnitz, Gilbert Sydow, and M. J. Witt. Ivan Zarling presented an exegetical study of 2 Thessalonians 3. “It was recognized that the 2 Thessalonians 3 passages and Romans 16:17,18 spoke the same language regarding the separation principle” (Witt “Minutes of the Conference”). There was also a discussion of the difference between excommunication and separation.

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato was the site of a conference held on December 4 and 5, 1957. Pastors and teachers present were host pastors Gordon Radtke and Gervasius Fischer, M. J. Witt, C. M. Gullerud, Norman Madson, Sr., Tobias Pederson, Arthur Schulz, Paul Prueter, Jonathan Schaller, John Lau, Leonard Bernthal, Winfred Schaller, Jr., George Barthels, Vernon Gerlach, Martin Garbrecht, and Robert Rehm. Some members of Immanuel congregation were also present. The Epitome of the confession on church fellowship was presented by Winfred Schaller, Jr., and discussed at length. Another matter of concern was the Japan Lutheran Mission. M. J. Witt was elected chairman of a committee to draw up a constitution for an organization that would make possible the acquiring of the property of the Japan mission under Fred Tiefel. This organization was to be drawn up “as an interim measure,” and thus we have the beginning of what came to be known as the Interim Conference. A mission committee was elected, consisting of Gervasius Fischer, Martin Garbrecht, Mr. Doege, and Erwin Neubert, treasurer. Leonard Bernthal was elected secretary of the conference “during the interim.” Gervasius Fischer was asked to prepare a paper on church and ministry (Bernthal “Mankato minutes” 2-3). The minutes of this conference note “that the purpose of our conference was for the mutual strengthening in our confession, and to begin working toward the goal of organizing but not to fully organize at this time. It was agreed that we would let organization develop as needs arose. We also agreed that our organizing should take place upon a confessional statement which would simply and clearly set forth our faith on such doctrines as are in controversy, especially in regard to Church Fellowship” (qtd. in Gullerud 3).

The Washington pastors got together again on January 23-24, 1958, this time at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Opportunity, WA. There were discussions on the varying interpretations of Romans 16:17-18 found in the Wisconsin Synod. Leonard Bernthal was asked to prepare an exegetical study of 2 Thessalonians. It was noted that some of the pastors had to find other jobs in order to support their families. But it was also noted that “a mission committee is presently gathering funds among all the withdrawn congregations to begin alleviating the needs of the missionaries, and to evaluate what needs to be done” (Dommer 2).

One of the most productive conferences during the interim was held at Redeemer Lutheran Church in

Cheyenne, WY, on May 6-8, 1958. Twenty persons are recorded as being present, and correspondence came from nineteen others. The names of those present included pastors Edmund Reim, Richard Kuehne, Arvid Gullerud, C. M. Gullerud, Daniel DeRose, Otto W. Eckert of Winner, Herbert Witt, Robert Dommer, Tobias Pederson, Arthur Schulz, M. J. Witt, Norton Carlson, Leonard Bernthal, Gordon Radtke, Winfred Schaller, Jr.; teachers Leroy Greening and Ed Baer; and lay delegates F. Mathison, A. Tietz, and G. Schreyer. Correspondence was received from sixteen pastors who later became members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession and also from A. T. Kretzmann, Wilbert Gawrisch, and J. C. Dahlke.

In its inaugural first issue, dated June 1958, *The Lutheran Spokesman* reported:

What brought these men together? They came from varied and far-flung sections of the country: the Northwest and the Southwest; from Wisconsin to Colorado. It was not geographical factors which brought them together. They came from different synods, from different ethnic groups. Nor did they all share the same status: some had severed their relations with their former synods and some had membership in synods of the Synodical Conference. But each one had been alone, solitary in the deepest sense of that word, out of harmony with the position and practice of the various bodies of the Synodical Conference. They knew that this meeting was of God, for it was dedicated to the task of keeping God's Word in its purity. Yes, love for God's Truth drew all to Cheyenne and was the common denominator of this group. By the Word the Father was setting the solitary into families. (Schaller "Cheyenne" 4)

Norton Carlson was elected chairman of this meeting. M. J. Witt was elected chairman of the Interim Conference, and Leonard Bernthal was elected as secretary-treasurer.

M. J. Witt presented a proposed constitution for an organization to be called "The Association for the Japan Lutheran Mission." According to Article II, the stated purpose of the organization was "to purchase and maintain property" for the association and "to encourage our people to a realization of their obligation to meet this need in obedience to Christ's commission (Matthew 28) and injunction to do good especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6, 10)." After review by a committee and lengthy discussion, it was decided that "since the constitution requires an organization more formally organized than the present status of our conference, and since we lacked definite information as to the value of the Japan Lutheran property," the matter would have to be tabled until the next conference (Cheyenne minutes 4). M. J. Witt and Gordon Radtke were asked to serve as a committee to solicit funds for a furlough for Fred Tiefel and his wife.

The affirmative section of Winfred Schaller, Jr.'s, confession concerning church fellowship was accepted as the confession of the conference and was to be made available to others. He was asked to continue with this work so that the antithetical section would be available for review at the next conference.

One major decision of the Cheyenne conference was to begin publication of *The Lutheran Spokesman* and to have it come out six times a year. Several persons were nominated for editor, including Edmund Reim, Robert Dommer, Leonard Bernthal, and Leroy Greening. The first man chosen to be editor was Winfred Schaller, Jr., with Norton Carlson as co-editor. *The Lutheran Spokesman*, March 1959, reported that the first two issues were mimeographed (first issue: 200 copies, second issue: 700 copies) and that subsequent issues were printed by a company in Cheyenne, WY, the home of the editor. By March of 1959 there were about 1,000 subscriptions. Very soon Daniel DeRose was added to the staff as Church News Editor, and Vernon Sprengeler became the Business Manager. As Michael Buck wrote in his history of the CLC, "this instrument of circulating God's Word would provide needed direction to those who were conscience-bound" (4).

No doubt, the high point of the Cheyenne conference was the presentation of Edmund Reim's timely essay, "Things to Guard Against in Our Approach Toward Realignment." The entire essay is worth reading (cf. *Journal* 2:1, pp. 1-12), but let us present only a few quotations here. Speaking to the group in 1958, Reim warned:

We have come through a crisis and arrived at a decision. At such times it is so natural to relax, to find a certain measure of satisfaction in having stood one's ground, to engage in a process of building up one's own self-esteem, usually at the expense of others who (in our estimation) did not meet the test so well. For after all, haven't we stood for the right doctrine?—Or we may sense the danger of such an attitude of complacency and, feeling the need of justifying ourselves before the world as well as before our own consciences, launch forth into an endless round of reviewing the issues, restating the arguments, re-refuting the counterarguments, reformulating our conclusions—all with the plea that we are contending for the doctrine! (*Journal* 2, emphasis in original essay)

Reim reminded the group that Satan was still very much alive:

If some have resisted him when he was seeking to move us to the left, in the direction of indifferentism and incipient unionism, will he not then seek to swerve just those into the opposite direction? . . . Satan is defeated when men stand on the simple truth of God's Word. But he gains precious ground, not only when men weaken in their adherence to this Word, but also when in an excess of zeal they go beyond it, when they seek to fortify it by well-meant but misguided additions of their own. . . . One particular danger facing us lies in the direction of developing a superorthodoxy, an arrogant attitude of pride and self-esteem that someone in Germany has with rare discernment described as "Lehrgerechtigkeit." (3)

This danger is rightly understood as the belief that one is justified by having the right doctrine rather than by trust in Christ.

Continuing his warnings against the devices of Satan, Reim also said:

Another vulnerable target at which he is sure to aim is our flesh, the flesh which we admittedly all have. Was he not already doing this when, long before we came to the point of breaking with our Synod, he showed us in greatest detail just what the dire consequences of such an action would be for our respective careers, when he pointed up the external advantages of staying with an organized church body, when he suggested methods of modulating one's voice of protest just sufficiently to remain in good standing, even while quieting one's own conscience by what one has said? . . . Will he not come right back with an attack at the other side of this same flesh, seeking to move it to an excess of righteous indignation, to a type of polemical discussion which is deliberately provocative and insufferably sure of having a monopoly of the truth? Furthermore, he knows all about the corrosive effects of self-pity, and will make every effort to lead us into feeling ourselves wronged, misunderstood, mistreated—to see ourselves as men whose true worth has not been recognized—until we yield to discouragement and withdraw into a shell of bitterness and paralyzing hopelessness. (4-5)

As an antidote to such wrong attitudes Reim proposed the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ as the model for our attitudes and actions, as outlined in Philippians 2:5-8. Finally, he proposed Christian love as described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:

It is Love bound by the Word of God. It is Love together with the Truth. . . . The two go hand in hand. If Charity would forsake this Truth, it would cease to be Love, *ἀγάπη*, a love that is a reflection of the Love of God. If, therefore, that Word of God prescribes stern measures, Charity does not hesitate to apply them, for it knows that they have their origin in God's desire that all men be saved. It may shrink from the thought of a separation, and yet will accept it nevertheless, if God directs it. It has but one thing to go by, and that is the Word, to which it resorts ever again—for its own enlightenment, as well as for the means of restoring the joy that once was. (11)

Reim concluded his essay with the prayer, "God grant us a full, rich, ever increasing measure of His Love!" (12).

Gervasius Fischer had been assigned an essay on Church and Ministry, but he was unable to attend because of illness, and so he wrote to the conference with the request that the essay be assigned to someone else. The assignment was then given to Leonard Bernthal for presentation at the next conference.

On June 10, 1958, Gervasius Fischer died of a heart attack, and "the guest speaker at his funeral was Norman Madson, the person who had nearly ten years earlier advised him to accept the call to preach in Mankato" (Joseph Lau "History of Immanuel" 147). In his funeral address, printed in the August 1958 issue of *The Lutheran Spokesman*, Madson made reference to the experience of the noted hymn writer, Paul Gerhardt:

Gerhardt was a most beloved pastor of the large St. Nicholas Church of Berlin. But when he as a conscientious pastor took a definite stand against the unionistic elector of Brandenburg, Frederick William, he was deposed and driven into exile. The closing years of his life he spent as a faithful pastor of a little congregation in Lübben. In the sacristy of that Lübben church you will find a life-sized painting of the faithful confessor, bearing this inscription in Latin: "THEOLOGUS IN CRIBRO SATANAE VERSATUS." "A theologian who has been sifted in the sieve of Satan." We like to think of our departed brother as one who had also been sifted. But he remained faithful to the end, faithful to the religion of the cross, than which there is none other by which you may be saved. (5)

The next conference was held from July 30 to August 4, 1958, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane, WA. Present at this meeting were M. J. Witt, the host pastor and chairman, and also pastors Robert Dommer, Edmund Reim, Leonard Bernthal, Winfred Schaller, Jr., Gilbert Sydow, Ivan Zarling, Waldemar Karnitz, and Vernon Greve, teacher Martin Garbrecht, and delegates Erwin Neubert, R. Overland, Mr. Potter, and H. Ceske.

Greetings were received from a number of other men who later became involved in the Church of the Lutheran Confession, as well as from Wilbert Gawrisch and Tobias Pederson.

Most of this meeting was devoted to a consideration of the antithetical section of Winfred Schaller, Jr.'s, confession on church fellowship, with special attention being given to the relationship between admonition and separation. The first two sections of Leonard Bernthal's confession on church and ministry were presented and discussed. He was asked to work out a third part and send it out with the other two parts before the next conference so that it could be discussed at that time.

Erwin Neubert of Mankato reported on the efforts of Immanuel congregation in Mankato to carry out a program of Christian education. The Interim Conference was invited to assist the congregation in this effort, especially with the training of future pastors and teachers. Some of the members of the congregation were even offering facilities that could be used for secondary and tertiary education. The conference responded to the invitation by stating that "because we are not yet formally organized and do not have the sufficient funds, we are not yet able to join hands with them," but "that we regard this invitation as a possible future training site for our pastors and teachers" (Spokane minutes 5).

Other time at the conference was given to reports on *The Lutheran Spokesman*, the Japan property, and the Tiefel Furlough Fund. It was reported that Missionary and Mrs. Fred Tiefel were desirous of a furlough no sooner than 1959. Any work on a constitution was postponed until there was an organization. As time went on, there was more realization of the need for organization in order to carry out mission work and an educational program. Edmund Reim was elected to serve as chairman for the next conference.

Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mankato was again the site for the next conference, held on January 13-15, 1959. The pastors present for this conference were C. M. Gullerud, Arvid Gullerud, Tobias Pederson, Richard Kuehne, Daniel DeRose, Winfred Schaller, Jr., Norman Madson, Sr., Robert Mackensen, Paul Prueter, George Barthels, Kenneth Hallauer, Leland Grams, Edmund Reim, M. J. Witt, Paul G. Albrecht, Christian Albrecht, Albert Sippert, Edwin Schmelzer, Otto W. Eckert, Leonard Bernthal, Marvin Eibs, Orrin Falk, Jonathan Schaller, John Lau, Gordon Radtke, Theodore Pederson, and Robert Dommer. The teachers present were Alvin Sieg, Walmar Voigt, Leroy Greening, LeRoy Hulke, Robert Rehm, Martin Garbrecht, and Ed Baer. In contrast with previous conferences attended by only a few lay delegates, this conference was attended by 20 delegates, namely, M. Melvin, C. Allen, A. Tietz, E. Krueger, Clarence Duden, M. Lynner, W. Huber, J. Hartshorn, G. Week, J. Jorgensen, O. Hansen, P. Eilers, S. Swedlund, F. Littau, Erwin Neubert, B. Doege, Clifford Kuehne, Daniel Hanel, Gene Schreyer, and Dale Redlin.

Winfred Schaller's confession on church fellowship was one of the main topics for consideration. The first draft of the entire document had now been studied carefully by the conference, and by God's grace "agreement to the doctrine on Church Fellowship was expressed by the group." The document was then placed into the hands of an editing committee made up of Edmund Reim and George Barthels. Pastor Schaller was thanked "for his many extensive hours of work on our confession of Church Fellowship" (Mankato 1959 minutes 4-5).

The other major presentation was Leonard Bernthal's paper on church and ministry, with much discussion of the Bible's use of the word *ekklesia*, translated "church." More work was needed, and Pastor Bernthal was asked to continue his labors. Seminars for the discussion of certain points in the doctrine were to be arranged by the chairman, Edmund Reim.

There were progress reports on *The Lutheran Spokesman* and on the Japan Mission and other mission work. The conference chose George Barthels and Paul Prueter as a Mission Committee. A Japan Property Committee was also chosen, which included Robert Rehm, Otto W. Eckert, and George Barthels.

For the first time the conference gave more thought to Christian education. Alfred Fremder's essay, "There Is No Excuse," was read by Robert Rehm. Gordon Radtke "presented the need for higher education and spoke of the means available and the funds necessary for it. He stated that there are about 34 in their area ready for High School and about 14 ready for college and seminary. He presented two possibilities . . . : either to begin a complete program of education . . . , or to offer a program of counseling to supplement the instruction of students at other schools." The response of the conference was that nothing could be done by the conference yet "because we are not yet united upon a confessional statement" (Mankato 1959 minutes 3).

The conference was seemingly united on the confession concerning church fellowship, but a difficulty arose in putting it into practice at these Interim Conference meetings. Some of the participants had withdrawn from Synodical Conference synods, whereas others had not. Making the situation even more complicated was

the fact that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod had separated from the Missouri Synod, but not from the Synodical Conference. Pastor Robert Mackensen was troubled by these inconsistencies, and a committee appointed to deal with this problem offered the following proposal (attached report to conference minutes):

In order that we may practice religious fellowship in accordance with Holy Scripture and not be guilty of unionism we move that this Interim Conference define its membership by means of the following resolutions: 1) Its membership be made up only of those Synodical Conference pastors, teachers, and delegates of congregations which, because Romans 16: 17-18 commands us to avoid heterodox church bodies, have withdrawn their membership from the Synodical Conference and are not otherwise affiliated. 2) That only such members will have the right to vote, hold office, serve on committees, partake of the Lord's Supper and lead in religious devotions at all conferences. 3) By this resolution we do not mean to discourage those who are in sympathy with our position from attending and contributing to our discussions.

This proposal was tabled until the next conference.

The next conference, held in Red Wing, MN, on August 18-21, 1959, was a stormy one. Two pastors, Otto W. Eckert and Kenneth Hallauer, had notified the conference that it should proceed as a free conference without devotions rather than as a conference based on unity of doctrine. This question became the first order of business, and a committee with M. J. Witt as chairman was appointed by Chairman Edmund Reim to give response to this matter. The two pastors (Eckert and Hallauer) had objected to the tabled resolution of the previous conference because it implied that the Synodical Conference synods had been agreed on the doctrine of church and ministry. In other words, withdrawal from one of the synods of the Synodical Conference was, in their opinion, not sufficient evidence of unity of confession. The committee stated that objection should not be made to the tabled resolution because it had not been approved by the conference. Moreover, it was the position of the conference "that it will not tolerate less than complete agreement" in any area of doctrine "as a basis for fellowship" (Red Wing minutes 3).

The minutes of the conference do not contain a list of the persons present. Committee assignments and other statements in the minutes indicate that at least the following were present: pastors Edmund Reim, Gordon Radtke, Otto W. Eckert, Kenneth Hallauer, Waldemar Karnitz, M. J. Witt, Winfred Schaller, Jr., Robert Dommer, George Barthels, Richard Kuehne, Marvin Eibs, Vernon Greve, Arvid Gullerud, Gilbert Sydow, Leonard Bernthal, Orrin Falk, C. M. Gullerud, Leland Grams, Christian Albrecht, Fred Tiefel; teachers Martin Garbrecht, Alvin Sieg, Robert Rehm, LeRoy Greening; and delegates Elmer Fitschen, Mr. Breutzman, William Maurer, M. P. Melvin, Erwin Neubert, and perhaps Vernon Fuerstenau. Others were probably there as well. Greetings were received from Robert Mackensen, George Schweikert, John Moldstad, Victor Tiefel, Arnold Tiefel, and George Tiefel.

Discussion continued on the doctrine of church and ministry, based on seminars held on this doctrine in Mankato since the previous conference and also on the basis of Leonard Bernthal's essay on the church and ministry. No agreement on wording was attained at this conference, and the matter was returned to Leonard Bernthal for further work.

The committee responsible for editing the confession Concerning Church Fellowship reported that "the conference found itself in complete agreement with the doctrinal substance of the confession" (Red Wing minutes 6). Various suggestions had been offered for improvement in wording. One such amendment satisfied Fred Tiefel, who at first had deemed the confession "unscriptural" because of the word *must* used in a certain place in the confession.

By the time of the Red Wing conference Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mankato had begun to prepare for the first school year of Immanuel Lutheran College (including seminary and high school). Robert Dommer, Edmund Reim, and Adelgunde Schaller had accepted their calls to teach full-time. The conference expressed its thanks to the Immanuel congregation and stated: "The conference pledges its moral and financial support of the school and will, wherever possible, encourage young people to avail themselves of the facilities now being offered" (Red Wing minutes 6).

In connection with the recent conventions of the Wisconsin Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the conference stated: "We must conclude, therefore, that both the Wisconsin Synod and the E.L.S. are persisting in unscriptural fellowship with the heterodox Missouri Synod and we are constrained to give our full support and encouragement to those who have severed, or are in the process of severing, their membership in the above bodies in obedience to God's Word" (Red Wing minutes 6).

In its report of the Red Wing Conference *The Lutheran Spokesman*, October 1959, had this to say:

In response to many prayers for God's blessing upon this conference, the Lord graciously led us safely through the troubled waters which rose up threateningly before us. History bears out the fact that minority groups are confronted with numerous peculiar temptations and afflictions. In the movement toward realignment over the past years, we have experienced the Lord's goodness and strength in being spared the usual minority temptations and in being defended against the usual afflictions. The Lord did see fit, however, to permit such temptations and afflictions to come our way during the past year and to concentrate themselves upon our August conference. . . . We left the sessions filled with humble gratitude for the grace given us by God to weather the storms that threatened, grateful for hearts that were made patient, loving, long-suffering, understanding, but uncompromising" (Radtke 4-5).

The last conference before the organizing convention in August of 1960 was held at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato on January 19-21, 1960. At this conference a distinction was made between regular conference members and conference visitors. The pastors who signed as regular members were Albert Sippert, Ralph Schaller, Paul F. Nolting, M. J. Witt, Daniel DeRose, Vernon Greve, Helmuth Rutz, Arvid Gullerud, Bertram Naumann, Marvin Eibs, Martin Galstad, Robert Reim, Otto Abrams, Egbert Schaller, George Barthels, Christian Albrecht, J. B. Erhart, Leonard Bernthal, C. M. Gullerud, Paul Pruetter, Otto J. Eckert, and Robert Dommer. Some of these had never before attended an Interim Conference meeting. Among those pastors who signed as visitors were L. W. Schierenbeck, Norman Madson, Sr., Rollin Reim, Karl Brandle, and Edwin Schmelzer. Teachers who signed as regular members were Robert Rehm, Alvin Sieg, Ronald Roehl, David Gullerud, and LeRoy Greening. There were thirty delegates from congregations, more than ever before: Henry Blum, Chris Horsted, Walter Reinhardt, Vernon Fuerstenau, Edwin Engel, Alfred Tews, Emil Schopp, Lars Larson, Arthur Kolb, Kurt Storm, Vernon Sprengeler, Orville Klatt, Martin Fuerstenau, Robert Serfas, Charles Gutzman, Bruno Doege, Clifford Kuehne, Norman Harms, Daniel Hanel, Harold Laube, Lester Maas, Arthur Klotz, Walter Romberg, Carl Romberg, Franklin Hansen, James Pelzl, Orville Noeldner, Erwin Neubert, Robert Traub, and E. H. Fruechte. Letters of greeting were received from George Tiefel, Robert Mackensen, Carl Thurow, Jonathan Schaller, J. C. Dahlke, Gerhard Pieper, Waldemar Schuetze, Gerhard Mueller, Paul G. Albrecht, John Lau, Fred Tiefel, William Wiedenmeyer, Gilbert Sydow, Paul G. Koch, Leland Grams, Richard Kuehne, and Vernon Gerlach. Edmund Reim served as chairman of this meeting, with Paul Nolting as secretary.

The editing alterations to Concerning Church Fellowship were accepted. Edmund Reim was asked to write a preamble to Concerning Church Fellowship, and it was decided that this document be published as the confession of the Interim Conference. The Mankato Seminar on church and ministry had proposed six points to summarize this doctrine. Leonard Bernthal's paper on church and ministry as well as these six points were given to an editing committee made up of C. M. Gullerud, Robert Dommer, and James Pelzl, tasked to formulate the conference's position on church and ministry.

Other business included reports on mission work, Immanuel Lutheran College, and *The Lutheran Spokesman*. George Barthels read a paper entitled "A Re-Study of the Brief Statement." Martin Galstad presented an evaluation of the Wisconsin Synod theses on church fellowship. The Constitution Committee presented its suggestions. The time for a permanent organization was close at hand. The conference report in *The Lutheran Spokesman* of February 1960 stated: "Now it is becoming important to organize ourselves as a church body. There are several reasons. Some have chosen to interpret our lack of organization as a lack of unity. Though organization does not prove unity, it will be wise to remove this cause for offence. More vital is the fact that our joint mission and educational work is growing. A greater degree of organization is required to provide efficient operation. Finally, our numerical growth is a factor" (Schaller "Decently" 2).

The years 1956 to 1960, the years of the Interim Conference, were important in the history of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. So many things could have gone wrong. One of God's blessings to the group in its infancy was the balanced leadership of Edmund Reim, who was always warning the group against going too far in either one direction or the other. Evidence of this leadership shines through in his remarks to the January 1960 Mankato Conference, as recounted in Gullerud's "A History of the CLC":

At this conference, as for some time past, we shall be considering matters of confession. In expressing ourselves on the several issues that are before us we need to guard against two dangers, that of ignoring or being indifferent to issues that do exist, and the other of making issues of things that God has placed into the area of our Christian liberty. Both are of course wrong, and only the Word leads aright: "This is the way, walk ye in it!"—Or it may be a matter of dealing with a point on which a recognized difference exists, where the flesh may on the one hand tempt us to speak so vaguely and in such general terms that the difference is

simply not settled, or on the other, to speak in terms that are so aggressive, so challenging and provocative that the calm and careful study that is called for by the issue becomes impossible and the purpose of the entire discussion is defeated. Can there be any doubt as to the way which Scripture here points out? We shall in these next few days begin to consider the problems of organization. That organization of some kind is needed, we know. That organization can become a stifling thing, destructive of the God-given rights and freedom of congregations and individual Christians, that is something that experience and history have taught again and again. To use wisely the advantages of organization, to guard well against the abuses thereof, to keep our eyes and hearts attuned to the Word which shows that way, that will be our task during these next days. May God grant us wisdom and understanding. (qtd. in Gullerud 6)

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Chapter 6: The Beginnings of Immanuel Lutheran College

Those involved in the Interim Conference recognized the need for Christian education beyond the elementary level, but their lack of organization prevented them from moving ahead. Although the Interim Conference found itself unable to proceed with a definite plan, Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mankato recognized the same need and took action. Actually, the Lord Himself had already provided a location for the school and persons willing to expend their energies and financial resources for this worthy goal. The story of the beginnings of Immanuel Lutheran College is remarkable, showing the providential care of our God for His struggling children.

What follows is the account of the beginnings of Immanuel Lutheran College as written in and cited from Joseph Lau's "The History of Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mankato, Minnesota; 1865-1961," pages 149-158, along with excerpts from Egbert Albrecht's essay for the 25th anniversary of Immanuel Lutheran College. Egbert wrote "Our Anniversary Memorial to the Lord" and presented it at the 1984 Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Another account of the beginnings of Immanuel Lutheran College is available in "Throughout All Generations," written by Eunice Roehl for the 50th anniversary of the school.

Being aware of the need for a school, as expressed by the Interim Conference, and knowing the problems that were arising at Bethany [the ELS school in Mankato, which Immanuel students had been attending], Pastor Radtke took every opportunity to involve Immanuel's members in a solution. The problem was first discussed at a Parent-Teachers' Organization meeting. This group then referred the matter to Immanuel's Board of Christian Education. The board submitted a report of its preliminary study to the Church

Council, who in turn reported to the congregation at its next meeting on April 3, 1959. Immanuel voters responded to the report by appointing a fact-finding committee, whose job it was to obtain necessary information concerning the possibility of the congregation operating a high school, college, and seminary. One of the first things the committee did was to send out questionnaires to prospective students to determine the number of students who would make use of the school.

The committee presented its report in the form of five resolutions at a congregational meeting on May 25, 1959:

1. Be it resolved that Immanuel congregation recognize the present need for Christian higher education of her young people, especially the training of pastors and teachers, and therefore give her blessing to the proposed project of a high school, college courses, and a seminary. The congregation will support this project with her prayers.
2. Be it resolved that Immanuel Congregation consent to the use of the name, IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE, for this project in education.
3. Be it resolved that Immanuel Congregation instruct her fact-finding committee to draw up the necessary articles of incorporation of the proposed Immanuel Lutheran College, limiting the board of control to members of Immanuel Congregation, Mankato, thereby maintaining supervision of doctrine and practice in the college.
4. Be it resolved that Immanuel Congregation approve a slate of professors this evening and instruct the fact-finding board to do the electing and calling.
5. Be it resolved that Immanuel Congregation approve use of the projection room in the church parlors as a seminary college class room for this coming school year.

Despite having no budget for such a project and no faculty committed, Immanuel's voters unanimously adopted all five resolutions (Lau 149-150).

At the May 25, 1959 special meeting of Immanuel Congregation, the voters not only gave their blessing to this effort, the use of their name, Immanuel, set up a Board of Control, but they adopted a slate of candidates from which that board could call its first teachers. The slate included the names of Alfred Fremder, Mrs. Adelgunde Schaller, Vernon Gerlach, Martin Galstad, Edmund Baer, Robert Dommer, Gilbert Sydow, Clifford Kuehne for the high school, and Edmund Reim and Norman A. Madson for the seminary. It was then agreed to remove the names of two men, Martin Galstad and Norman A. Madson, since these two men were still affiliated with the Synodical Conference and considered ineligible to serve on the faculty of the new school. The Board of Control called Edmund Reim as Dean of the seminary, and Robert Dommer as the Principal of the high school. They also called Mrs. Adelgunde Schaller to teach in the high school department. . . . The members of that first Board of Control were: A. Affolter, W. Affolter, W. Briggs, E. Busse, W. Doring, M. Garbrecht, A. Hanel, D. Hoffman, W. Klammer, C. Kuehne, E. Neubert, R. Rehm, R. Schreyer, A. Timm, A. Weigt. Advisory members: G. Radtke, E. Reim, R. Dommer (Albrecht 13).

One thing Immanuel did have available to them was a school building. Earlier, in January 1953, four members of Immanuel, Walter Affolter, Albert Affolter, William Klammer, and Erwin Neubert purchased four adjoining lots on Harper and Third Street in the Columbia Park area in northwestern Mankato. The previous owner of the land, a woman not affiliated with Immanuel, was pleased that the land was intended for church purposes and sold it for a fraction of its commercial value. Not long after this purchase was made, Pastor Fischer was informed that a country schoolhouse was going to be sold at an auction. This school was located twelve miles west of Mankato, near Lake Crystal. Even though they had only meager funds on hand, the four property owners asked Fischer to make a bid for the school building on their behalf. He did, and they became its new owners for \$700. They were also informed that it had to be moved from its site within thirty days.

With the help of other volunteers from Immanuel congregation, these four families spent all their available free time preparing both the land on Harper and Third and the school building for the move. Soon all was prepared and a moving company was hired to transport the building. A problem arose, however, when the railroad company, whose tracks they needed to cross, requested \$2,000 to lengthen the telegraph cables under which the building was to pass. Being unable to pay this amount, these members devised a plan for the roof to be lowered into the building and attached by twenty-four hayloft hinges. Every effort was made to minimize expense; even the hayloft hinges, after being used, were polished and returned to the store for a full refund.

The work was far from over, however, when the building reached its site. A foundation needed to be laid, and professional help was too expensive. Throughout the summer of 1953, the four owners and volunteers from

Immanuel worked evenings and Sundays to prepare the building for use. They worked tirelessly, despite not knowing what purpose the building would serve. Some members, including Pastor Fischer, thought the building may be needed by those who broke from the Wisconsin Synod, if they were the minority group in their congregation. Those who anticipated that it might be used some day for a kindergarten poured the entrance steps to the building at a height of only six inches for the benefit of short legs. No one at that time, however, dreamed the building would one day become Immanuel Lutheran High School.

Upon its completion, the building was called the “North Chapel.” Pastor Fischer conducted weekly Bible classes there until his health began to fail in 1955. In 1956, Pastor Schaller used the building as a base for mission work. Following the deaths of Fischer and Schaller, the North Chapel stood vacant for several years with the exception of summer Bible school.

After the May 1959 meeting when Immanuel congregation decided to open a high school, college, and seminary, the four owners of the North Chapel offered their building for school use, rent free. Once again Immanuel members volunteered their labor to remodel the building to make it suitable for school use. After the partitioning and plaster work was done, the building contained two classrooms, a library, an office, and two washrooms. The cost of the project was covered by free-will offerings. Albert Affolter and his wife volunteered to provide janitorial services for the building.

During the summer of 1959, a faculty for the school was secured. Edmund Reim agreed to be the seminary professor after he was convinced Bethany seminary was no longer suitable. Robert Dommer, formerly a pastor of a Wisconsin Synod congregation in Spokane, Washington, accepted the position of high school principal. Adelgunde Schaller, wife of the late Hilbert Schaller, agreed to teach in the high school department. These instructors also offered to teach college subjects that were necessary for those preparing to become Christian pastors and teachers. Instruction in secular college subjects was to be provided through an arrangement with Mankato State College. Immanuel congregation realized the limitations of its small faculty and cramped facilities, but felt it would be able to provide something more important:

We shall not be able to offer our students the best in accommodations, materials, and other practical matters, but by God’s grace, we shall provide our students with sound Scriptural training and guidance in the truth of His Word. This, finally, is the only safeguard for our youth! [*The Immanuel Lutheran* July 1959].

Since there were no reserve funds available for the project, the congregation found it necessary to charge a tuition to provide funds for faculty salaries. The high school and seminary tuition was set at \$75 per semester, and the college at \$37.50 per semester. It realized the financial limitations of many of those who wanted to attend the school:

We are mindful of the general low income of our people, and the financial struggles of our missions—their pastors and teachers. We have attempted to establish a very fair and moderate tuition neither too high nor too low for its intent. The tuition must be paid in advance per semester, since we need this income for salaries [*The Immanuel Lutheran* July 1959].

Professor Reim and Adelgunde Schaller helped the budget-stretching process by accepting reduced salaries the first several years.

The high school opened its doors on September 8, 1959, with an enrollment of twenty-four, many of whom were from outside the state of Minnesota. The following morning, Professor Dommer conducted the opening service using Psalm 1 as his text, emphasizing that the school would be blessed only if it were founded solely on the rock of God’s Word. He called Immanuel High School “a prayer which God had graciously brought to a reality” [Albrecht 14]. The following Sunday, a service of dedication was held at Immanuel Church. At this service the three instructors were installed. The school was dedicated to the glory of God and to the Scripture-based instruction of His children.

On September 16, 1959, the college and seminary departments opened with a service conducted by Professor Reim. The college began with an enrollment of eleven. The two seminary students enrolled had attended Bethany seminary the previous year. Classes for these two departments were conducted, for the most part, in the basement of Immanuel Church in a storage room between the fellowship hall and the furnace room. One student recalled having to speak louder every time the furnace started. As the school year progressed, several part-time volunteer instructors made it possible to increase the number of college courses offered.

On December 20, 1959, the following appeared in Immanuel’s Sunday bulletin: “Due to the increasing number of congregations which have withdrawn from the Wisconsin Synod, we are experiencing a steady growth in the number of students who desire to attend our Immanuel Lutheran High School or College. We are

in URGENT NEED of families who will offer these students housing for the balance of the school year.” Volunteers were found and the housing needs were met. On January 11, 1960, Professor Reim reported at a congregational meeting: “Our bold plan is working. Our school is functioning, and, we believe, with a reasonable degree of success.” A week later, the Interim Conference met in Mankato. Upon the recommendation of Pastor Radtke, the conference appointed a four-person Advisory Committee to work with Immanuel’s board of control (Lau 150-156).

The first year of operation of Immanuel Lutheran College came to an end on June 3, 1960. Professor Martin Galstad preached the sermon on 2 Peter 3:18 and chose as his theme GROW IN GRACE. The high school choir sang *CANTATE DOMINE* and *THE BENEDICTION* under the direction of Professor Robert Dommer. Pastor C. M. Gullerud of Eagle Lake, and part-time professor of Religion in the college department, presented the diplomas to six graduates in behalf of Professor Edmund Reim, who was hospitalized after a heart attack. The graduates were—College: Religion Course, David Menton; Teacher Course, Henry Hasse, Richard Ohlmann; Pre-theological Course, Dale Redlin, Gene Schreyer; Seminary, Clifford Kuehne. The high school graduation was held on June 9. Pastor Waldemar Schuetze of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, preached the sermon. Professor Dommer presented diplomas to the ten graduates: Marion Fitschen, Peter Fleischer, Gary Hanel, Gloria Heller, Marie Kluckman, Carol Lowinske, Sandra Messerschmidt, James Sandeen, and Miriam Schaller (Albrecht 14-15). Robert Timm was the tenth graduate.

The graduating class of 1960 published a yearbook entitled *THE LANCE*. Its dedicatory inscription said: “It is with great esteem that our graduates and students of 1960 dedicate this first anniversary memento of Immanuel Lutheran College—High School, College and Seminary Departments—to those who have had the God-given courage, faith, and foresight to establish our school.” Professor E. Reim was asked to write on Christian education in two or three hundred words. He wrote as follows:

Topic: CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. Space: Two or three hundred words. What can one say about so great a topic in so few words, except to state that one is for it? To be for Christian Education—because of its Author, our Blessed Lord and Savior; because of the great subject with which it deals, our salvation; because of the glorious goal to which it leads, Life Everlasting; for the sake of those who shall benefit by it, our children, to whom we leave no greater heritage than to have taught them the Way of Life. But it’s not alone what one says about Christian Education that counts, but how one says it. And there your present writer can point to many others whose actions in connection with our modest undertaking at Immanuel Lutheran College are speaking louder than words; the little group of men who had the courage and devotion to get our project started a year ago; then all those who worked so hard in order to make our high school building and seminary room ready for use; the students, some of whom are so far from home, and who all have so cheerfully accepted the discomforts under which so much of our work is done; and above all, the teachers who have worked so faithfully at such great sacrifice—all of these have said by their actions what we have tried to put into words at the beginning of this brief article: Christian Education—WE’RE FOR IT! This is what makes the mere existence of Immanuel Lutheran College such a powerful testimony. (Albrecht 15)

During the summer of 1960, partly due to the publicity of *The Lutheran Spokesman*, more potential students were made aware of Immanuel School. Early indications of an increase in enrollment led the school’s board of directors to secure additional classroom space and faculty members for the upcoming school year. At a meeting on July 11, 1960, the congregation was informed that C. M. Gullerud had accepted the call to assist Edmund Reim on a full-time basis in the seminary. Gullerud, once a pastor in the Norwegian Synod, had taught part-time at Immanuel its first year. Paul Koch, formerly a pastor in the Wisconsin Synod, also joined the faculty. The classes he agreed to teach would further reduce the number of classes students would have to take at Mankato State College. Ronald Roehl, formerly a teacher at a Wisconsin Synod school in Appleton, Wisconsin, was added as a full-time member of the high school faculty. In addition to his academic load, he coached the school’s athletic teams.

The problem of classroom space was also remedied during the summer of 1960, when the four property owners of the lots on Harper and Third Street used their combined borrowing power to finance the construction of a 40’ by 60’ cement and steel building on their property. In addition to providing two large classrooms, the new structure also supplied space for lockers. This new structure, placed next to the original school, allowed for all of the high school and most of the college classes to be taught at the same location. The new building was dedicated at a special service on October 9, 1960.

The wise planning of the congregation proved to be essential. The 1960-61 school year began with fifty-seven enrolled in high school, twenty-one in college, and six in seminary. The total enrollment was more than double that of the previous year. Of these eighty-four students, forty were lodged in the homes of Immanuel's members or in a rented house that served as a dormitory. Dale Redlin, a seminary student, agreed to be the dorm supervisor. Immanuel's members helped furnish this building with bunk beds, cots, sheets, pillows, blankets, and cooking utensils. Nearly all of those who graduated from Immanuel's day school in 1960 attended Immanuel High School.

All of these efforts made by Immanuel's members to build and maintain the school demonstrates their commitment to providing Christian education for young people. Not only were they interested in their children's education, but they made every effort to provide spiritual training for students from all over the country with whom they were doctrinally united. They also anticipated the day that the Interim Conference would become a synod; when Immanuel School would serve the vital role of training pastors and teachers to fill the synod's churches and schools (Lau 156-158).

When the Interim Conference became the Church of the Lutheran Confession at its 1960 convention in Watertown, South Dakota, and the continuation of that convention in January of 1961 in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, the time was right for Immanuel Lutheran College to become the concern of the whole church body rather than that of one congregation. "The Board of Control directed a letter to the Sleepy Eye convention in January, 1961, praising God for having caused the school to grow from its first enrollment of 37 students in September, 1959, to 84 students. . ." (Albrecht 16).

The Board of Control made the following offer to the convention: "This Board stands ready to transfer at cost to the Church of the Lutheran Confession title to this physical plant and to four lots on which it stands. . . . By resolution of the Voters' Meeting of January 9, 1961, the congregation stands ready to transfer this function of supervision to the Church of the Lutheran Confession at this time." The convention gladly accepted the offer and assumed control of Immanuel Lutheran College. It expressed the gratitude of the church body to the founders and supporters of the school, who, under God, had made it possible to inaugurate this important work of Christian higher education (Albrecht 16-17).

God's providential care of Immanuel Lutheran College did not come to an end when the school was transferred to the Church of the Lutheran Confession. In a later chapter of this history we shall see what God had in store for this school which had such humble beginnings.

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"This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me"

***Does Scripture demonstrate that
the sacramental use of grape juice is valid?***

John Ude

Editor's Note: Quotations in the body of this article are cited according to MLA guidelines. See the Works Cited section for title of the source and its publishing information. Notes are also used to provide explanatory or supplemental information. The concluding paragraphs of part I (*Journal* 49:1 Mar. 2009, p. 48) form the basis for the introduction to part II of this article.

To recapitulate the two positions, view A states that the use of grape juice in the Lord's Supper does not put the validity of the sacrament in doubt. View B, on the other hand, says that the use of grape juice in the

Lord's Supper does put the validity of the sacrament in doubt, and therefore only wine should be used. Similar to the claim made by Prof. David Lau,¹ *the latter view does not deny that the sacrament could be valid with the use of grape juice, but there is no way for Christians to be sure of that.*

The point at issue, then, is whether Scripture gives validity to the use of grape juice in Communion. In order to be sure that the sacrament is valid, it must be based completely on the LORD—His directions, His grace, and His promise. Basing our view and practice on human assumption leads to doubt about the validity of the sacrament. Thus we face a crucial question. Is there a clear word of Scripture to show that Jesus intended to include grape juice when He instituted the sacrament and referred to the contents of the cup as the “fruit of the vine?”

Part II: What Does the Bible Say?

In seeking the Bible's answer to this question, we revisit Schuetze's article, “Fruit of the Vine,” and its defense of using grape juice in some circumstances. In order to compare his arguments and evidence with what the Bible says, we consider each of his points individually. I summarized his evidence given in “Fruit of the Vine” as seven points listed earlier in this article.² These are examined one by one below.

Point 1: “Fruit of the vine,” like similar Jewish phrases, denotes the vine as the earthly source of certain blessings from God and is not a specific term for a specific item (Schuetze 131).

Some would say that the very term “fruit of the vine” is broader than wine. So from that point of view any suggestion that the use of grape juice raises doubt in the sacrament would be a subtracting from what Scripture would allow. In response we begin by looking at the use of the term in its New Testament context, especially in Matthew 26:26-29:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup (τὸ ποτήριον), and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine (ἐκ τούτου τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου) from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.”

Usage of the phrase τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου is not found anywhere else in the New Testament except the parallel references to the Lord's Supper in Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:18.³

We examine the key phrase according to its two component words, γένημα and ἄμπελος. The first means *product, fruit, harvest, or yield* and is defined as “that which comes into being through production.”⁴ The second word, ἄμπελος, means *grapevine* and is the genitive modifier of the first. In the contexts of the Septuagint and the New Testament it refers to a physical grapevine, or to Christ as the Vine, or in figurative reference to others as the grapevine of the Lord.

Outside the parallel usage in the texts above γένημα does not occur in the singular. In plural form it is found in two places:

Luke 12:18 So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops (τὰ γενήματα) and my goods.”⁵

2 Corinthians 9:10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits (τὰ γενήματα) of your righteousness.

It would seem that some variety of kinds are included both in Luke 12, “all my crops,” and in 2 Corinthians 9, “the fruits of your righteousness.” In both instances γενήματα has the article. And in both of these we find the plural.

Granted, the two examples here are not enough to prove a rule at work. Still, we wonder, could the plural forms reflect a significant usage at the time? That is, a usage whereby if Jesus intended to speak of more than one kind of product from the grapevine, the use of the plural τὰ γενήματα in Matthew 26, etc., would have helped to make that clear? These questions are at best an argument from silence and therefore inconclusive. But the potential argument they raise may suggest a possible reason why Jesus' words did not convey a broader meaning than grape wine. To state this in a more direct way, Jesus' use of the singular with the article, τοῦ γενήματος (as said in connection with the Lord's Supper), may be an indication that “the fruit of the vine” means the one specific product of the vine that was used in the cup of the Passover meal.

Even more telling is the other modifier Jesus uses to specify “this fruit of the vine” in Matthew 26:29. In

reference to the cup He said in verse 28: “This (τοῦτο) is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Then in verse 29 He resumed that reference in His solemn declaration, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine. . . .” There is no question either historically or culturally that “this fruit of the vine” used in the Passover cup was grape wine. Wine was the specific fruit of the vine primarily used in their culture at that time and referred to by this term.⁶

This leads us to investigate whether the phrase “fruit of the vine” (τὸ γένημα τῆς ἀμπέλου) has its origin in or is used anywhere in the Old Testament. But we do so with certain precautions in mind. Obviously, the Old Testament was not originally in Greek. And since it is the Greek phrase that is used by inspiration in the New Testament wording of the Sacrament of the Altar, how much can we determine about its meaning from a similar phrase in the Old Testament? Unless the Holy Spirit connects the two phrases for us, we must be careful about imposing the meaning of one upon the other. It is faulty hermeneutical procedure to establish the meaning of a word or phrase on the basis of similar words used in a different language, time, and context.

We focus our search for the Greek phrase and its component words in the Septuagint translation (LXX) of the Old Testament. But since it is only a translation, the usage there provides information mainly about the understanding of the words in the context of Old Testament Hebrew rendered into Koine Greek at the time the Septuagint translation was being made and used in the third and second centuries BC. What stands out in the search is that three phrases, τὰ γενήματα τῆς γῆς, τὰ γενήματα τοῦ ἀγροῦ, and γενήματα δικαιοσύνης are used with some frequency in the LXX. It also appears that the plural γενήματα with these genitives indicates a variety or plurality of the *fruits* (or yield) *of the ground*, *fruits* (or yield) *of the field*, and *fruits of righteousness*. In the Old Testament Septuagint the plural forms (γενήματα, γενημάτων, γενήμασιν) outnumber the singular forms (γένημα, γενήματος, γενήματι) by a ratio nearing three to one.⁷ Both singular and plural forms are used to translate the Hebrew words פְּרִי (fruit), תְּבוּאָה (product, yield; income, gain), and to a lesser degree יְבוּל (produce) and a few others.

The Septuagint uses singular and plural forms of γένημα to refer to grain and crops grown from the ground or field and also to grapes grown and harvested in a vineyard. In Deuteronomy 22:9 the LXX renders the Hebrew תְּבוּאָת הַכֶּרֶם with τοῦ γενήματος τοῦ ἀμπελώνος, meaning “the produce (fruit) of the vineyard,” which is not quite the same as τὸ γένημα τῆς ἀμπέλου. In Habakkuk 3:17 יְבוּל בְּגִפְנֵיִם is translated with γενήματα ἐν ταῖς ἀμπέλοις (NKJ: “. . . nor fruit be on the vines”). In both of these passages, however, context does not determine if wine is meant or even implied. The singular γενήματος in Deuteronomy 22:9 and the plural γενήματα in Habakkuk 3:17 probably refer to nothing more than grapes, what was grown in the vineyard and on the vines. How those grapes were to be used is not indicated.

One passage where the words ἀμπέλου γενήματος refer to wine, at least indirectly, is Isaiah 32:12. But the word order is reversed from Matthew 26:29 and articles are not used. The Hebrew גִּפְנֵי פְרִיָה, a singular anarthrous noun with a Qal participle of פָּרָה bear fruit, be fruitful, is translated as ἀμπέλου γενήματος (NKJ: “fruitful vine”). And the context of the phrase indicates that wine is understood. The previous verses describe the immoral people who will mourn for the fruit-bearing vine because it is not bearing fruit. The subsequent verse indicates their former sinful merriment and revelry, which presumably included the misuse of wine. Isaiah 32:13 (NIV): “And for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briars—yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry.” NKJ has: “On the land of my people will come up thorns and briars, yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city.” Similar prophecies bring out that the divine curse or blessing to come would be manifest in the lack or abundance of wine, not grape juice. Cf. Joel 1:10: “The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails.” Also Joel 2:19: “The LORD will answer and say to His people, ‘Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.’”

The Hebrew גִּפְנֵי פְרִיָה of Isaiah 32:12, translated with ἀμπέλου γενήματος, is also used in Zechariah 8:12. Again, the context shows that this Hebrew statement referred to wine. The Hebrew words are more pertinent than the Septuagint Greek for two reasons: 1) it is what God inspired as His Old Testament Word, and 2) Jesus on Maundy Thursday was undoubtedly speaking in Aramaic, a type of Hebrew. In the prophecy of blessing given in Zechariah 8:12, we note the LXX using καρπὸν instead of γένημα and also the context provided by verse 19:

12) For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit (LXX: ἡ ἄμπελος δώσει τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς

for Heb. תְּתֵן הַיָּבֵשׁ תְּתֵן פְּרִיָּהּ), the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew—I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these.

19) Thus says the LORD of hosts: “The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.”

In response to point 1 above we affirm that Jesus undoubtedly used wine for the institution of the Lord’s Supper. His use of the singular with the article, τοῦ γενήματος, and especially the demonstrative “this” in Matthew 26:29 seem to indicate that Jesus probably did not intend “this fruit of the vine” to be broader in meaning than grape wine, but instead He was specifying the one fruit of the vine there in the cup of the Passover meal. The Old Testament LXX, similarly, uses ἀμπέλου γενήματος to translate the Hebrew פְּרִיָּהּ הַיָּבֵשׁ in a context in which wine was implied. Though the New Testament record does not have a text with οἶνος in reference to the sacrament, the Lord’s expression “fruit of the vine” seems to indicate wine and was understood in His culture, especially in the Passover setting, as referring to wine. And Jesus says, “This do.” Nothing from the Old or New Testament Scripture reveals that Jesus intended to include grape juice in the phrase “the fruit of the vine.” That is a human assumption at best. Thus we contend that the scriptural usage of “the fruit of the vine” gives no certain validity to the use of grape juice instead of wine in Communion.

Point 2: Though in the context of the Passover meal the Hebrew culture understood the “fruit of the vine” as wine, nevertheless, one cannot maintain that a Jewish person always thought of wine when he heard the term. Outside the context of the Passover meal “fruit of the vine” appears to have had a broader meaning, namely, “products of the grape vine” (Schuetze 131).

The logic seems to break down here. We are seeking to determine the meaning of τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου in the context of the Passover, not outside of it. And as Schuetze rightly states, Jesus, His disciples, and everyone of that first century Jewish culture would have understood τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου in the context of the Passover as a direct reference to wine. Furthermore, his conclusion regarding a broader meaning is based on an uncertain equating of the plural concept “products of the grape vine” with the singular expression “fruit of the vine.” Consider also these thoughts on the matter given by John Pfeiffer:

Schuetze bases much of his argument on rabbinical writings, both modern and ancient. Whereas these references are interesting, they do not serve well as guidelines to interpreting Scripture. I am sure that we would find a multitude of references that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible. . . . Scripture is capable of standing alone. Indeed, Scripture interprets Scripture. . . . Since this expression (γένημα τῆς ἀμπέλου) is used nowhere else in Scripture, it would be a mistake to assume that the Lord is herein indicating that modern, pasteurized grape juice is appropriate.⁸

The question has been raised: if Jesus wanted to make it clear that we are to use only wine in the Lord’s Supper, why did He not use οἶνος, the Greek word that specifically means wine?⁹ But such a question is only an argument from silence, which may provide a plausible view at best; it can not establish a proof in fact. In the context of the Passover τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου had become a technical term for wine. Schuetze even states, “With the term ‘fruit of the vine,’ Jesus is using a formal and solemn phrase taken from the thanksgiving prayer in the Passover liturgy. According to the Babylonian Talmud the prayer offered over wine began, ‘Blessed are you, our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine’” (131). Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary* notes a similar thing: “γένημα τῆς ἀμπέλου is to be equated with פְּרִי הַיָּבֵשׁ, which occurs in the blessing of the paschal cup in Ber., 6,1 and T. Ber., 4,3. . . . The expression of the Evangelists is particularly close, therefore, to that of contemporary Judaism” (Büchsel 685).

As mentioned before, Jesus on Maundy Thursday was undoubtedly speaking in Aramaic, a type of Hebrew. But what He said that evening did not originate directly from Old Testament usage. In the Old Testament יָבֵשׁ, the noun for “vine,” is used 53 times, and פְּרִי, the noun for “fruit,” is used 45 times. But they are never used together as a phrase. It appears, then, that Jesus Himself spoke the Hebrew/Aramaic idiom of His day, פְּרִי הַיָּבֵשׁ (“the fruit of the vine”), to refer to the Passover wine that He had used to institute the sacrament. This was the occasion for the Holy Spirit to use the parallel Greek term, τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου, in the inspired Gospel accounts. So all the information we have indicates that Jesus and those hearing Him would have understood the phrase τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου in the context of the Passover as wine.

The usage of “fruit of the vine” outside of that context is inconclusive and cannot determine with certainty that the use of grape juice instead of wine in Communion is valid.

Point 3: Usage in the Talmud, especially in connection with the Nazarite vow, uses “fruit of the vine” in reference to all products of the grapevine (Schuetze 131-132).

Prof. Schuetze’s connection of the Nazarite vow to the expression “fruit of the vine” is tied mainly to statements made in the Talmud. Referring to usage outside the context of Passover, he writes:

But can we say that a Jewish person always thought of wine when he or she heard the term, “fruit of the vine?” When this author asked a cross section of 21st-century Jewish rabbis, “What is meant by the term ‘fruit of the vine,’ the response was ‘grapes’ or ‘products of the grape vine.’” The Talmud would seem to support this broader understanding of the term. In speaking about Nazarites, it states, “Keep off, we say to a Nazirite; go round the vineyard and come not near it!” and then points out that this is to be done “as a precautionary measure to avoid the possibility of breaking the law which forbids the fruit of the vine to a Nazirite.” It seems unlikely that the only concern here was that the Nazirite would be tempted to drink some wine.

This leads us to another section in Scripture which would seem to shed some light on this subject and make us wonder whether the term “fruit of the vine” can be restricted to “wine.” With the Nazarite vow the fruits of the vine are treated as a unit. It is true that the Nazirite was to abstain from all alcoholic drinks. Yet he was also to avoid all products of the grape vine. (131-132)

At this exact point in Schuetze’s article Numbers 6:1-4 is referred to and quoted in a footnote (fn 4, 132). But in this very pertinent Scripture, God’s own giving and wording of the Nazirite vow, the term “fruit of the vine” does not occur. The expression, it would seem, can only be found in the texts of Judaism.

Of greater importance here is the actual wording of the Nazirite vow and its broad requirements of abstinence given in Numbers 6:1-4:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.’”

We compare the key expressions found in the Septuagint and Hebrew texts. These expressions and their translations are underlined below.

ἀπὸ οἴνου καὶ σικερα ἀγνισθήσεται ἀπὸ οἴνου καὶ ὄξος ἐξ οἴνου καὶ ὄξος ἐκ σικερα οὐ πίνεται καὶ ὄσα κατεργάζεται ἐκ σταφυλῆς οὐ πίνεται καὶ σταφυλὴν πρόσφατον καὶ σταφίδα οὐ φάγεται πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς εὐχῆς αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πάντων ὅσα γίνεται ἐξ ἀμπέλου οἶνον ἀπὸ στεμφύλων ἕως γιγάρτου οὐ φάγεται

A literal translation of the LXX text of verses 3-4: He shall be sanctified from wine and liquor. He shall not drink from wine, nor sour wine from wine, nor sour wine from liquor. Neither shall he drink from whatever is pressed out from grapes. Neither shall he eat grapes either new or dried. All the days of his vow he shall not eat from all, as much as comes from the vine, wine from grapes until seeds.

מִיַּיִן וְשֵׁכָר וְיַיִר חֲמֹץ וְיַיִן וְחֲמֹץ שֵׁכָר לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְכָל־מִשְׁרַת עֲנָבִים לֹא יִשְׁתֶּה וְעַנְּבֵי בַיִם לְחִיּוֹם וַיִּבְשָׂיִם לֹא יֹאכַל:
כָּל יְמֵי נִזְרוֹ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מִגֶּפֶן הַיַּיִן מִחֵר צִנּוֹת וְעַד־זֶג לֹא יֹאכַל:

A literal translation of the Hebrew text of verses 3-4: From wine and intoxicating drink he shall be separated. The vinegar of wine and the vinegar of intoxicating drink he shall not drink. And all juice of grapes he shall not drink. And grapes either new or dried he shall not eat. All the days of his consecration he shall not consume from all that is made from the vine of the wine, from unripe grapes even until the skin.

No one can argue that the Nazirite vow actually uses “fruit of the vine.” The Septuagint words in Numbers 6:4 are πάντων ὅσα γίνεται ἐξ ἀμπέλου, not ἐκ τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου. In view of this significant difference, we make the following observations.

A. In stark contrast to Jesus’ use of the demonstrative pronoun “this,” Numbers 6:4 in the LXX has πάντων ὅσα, which combines “all” and “as much as,” a comprehensive form of expression that refers to every kind

of fruit and resultant product that the grapevine bears.

- B. The Hebrew words מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מִגֶּפֶן הַיַּיִן, literally “from all that is made from the grapevine of the wine,” seem to imply the main purpose of the vineyard and its vines. Might the Hebrew wording, therefore, fit better with the understanding that Jesus meant wine—that is, if a connection between the Nazirite vow and His words can indeed be made? It seems better not to make such a connection.
- C. Modern culture undoubtedly has a different perspective on grape juice than they had in biblical times. Perhaps the Nazirite vow had to be so broad because without pasteurization and refrigeration alcohol was often present to some degree in all products of the grapevine.

It should be noted that the grape juice of today is not like the grape juice obtained in biblical times. Modern grape juice is free of alcohol because the pasteurization process kills the yeast bacteria that is naturally present in the juice. The grape juice of Christ’s day would have been mildly alcoholic, since they did not know about pasteurization. The natural presence of yeast in the grape juice would have begun the fermenting process soon after the juice was squeezed from the grape. Unless one can produce a climate-controlled and isolated environment, unpasteurized grape juice will be exposed to yeast and will begin to ferment.¹⁰

The usage found in the Talmud, especially in regard to the Nazirite vow, seems to be a main argument that “the fruit of the vine” was understood in a broader way than wine. However, as noted above, different words with different meanings are involved and used in different contexts. Word usage in the Nazirite vow does not change the fact that Jesus and those hearing Him understood ἐκ τούτου τοῦ γειμήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου in the context of the Passover as wine. And as said in response to point 2, the usage of “fruit of the vine” outside of the Passover context is inconclusive and cannot guarantee that the use of grape juice instead of wine in Communion is valid.

Point 4: In the Lord’s statement, “this fruit of the vine,” given in Matthew 26:29, the word “this” does not specify the “fruit of the vine” in the cup as wine, but refers to “the entire Passover/Lord’s Supper celebration” (Schuetze 132, footnote 7).

What Schuetze claims in the footnote is, of course, framed by what he says in the body of the article. He makes his point in this way:

Some take the τούτου (*this* fruit of the vine) in Matthew 26:29 as proof that Jesus was referring to the specific “fruit of the vine” that was found in the Passover cup, i.e., wine. Yet Luke’s account would seem to argue against this. He places Jesus’ reference to the “fruit of the vine” at the drinking of the cup that preceded the institution of the Lord’s Supper. In Luke’s account Jesus also adds, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15,16). This would seem to indicate that Jesus is speaking of the bread and the cup in a collective sense, as a reference to the entire Passover celebration. (132)

Footnote 7 is said in reference to the last sentence above and reads:

This would make Jesus’ use of the term “fruit of the vine” in the Lord’s Supper a synecdoche. This does not mean that the term “fruit of the vine” does not help us identify the contents of the cup. It simply means that the emphasis of the word “this” refers to the entire Passover/Lord’s Supper celebration and not just the type of fruit of the vine that happened to be in the cup. (132)

Response to this claim on our part requires a closer look at the three texts that use the pertinent expression:

Matthew 26:26-29 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup (τὸ ποτήριον), and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine (ἐκ τούτου τοῦ γειμήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου) from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

Mark 14:22-25 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup (τὸ ποτήριον), and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine (τοῦ γειμή-

ματος τῆς ἀμπέλου) until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

Luke 22:15-20 Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then He took the cup (ποτήριον no article), and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine (τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου) until the kingdom of God comes.” And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” Likewise He also took the cup (τὸ ποτήριον) after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”

In view of all that the Lord’s Supper texts reveal, we hold that the demonstrative “this” spoken by Jesus and recorded in Matthew is specifying wine and nothing less as the “fruit of the vine,” present at the Passover, by which Jesus gives His blood-bought covenant, the Lord’s Supper. What Luke records does not contradict this. We maintain this claim for the following reasons.

- A. Jesus’ words in Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, and Luke 22:18 (“I will not drink of the fruit of the vine [τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου] until the kingdom of God comes”) are apparently referring to more than a physical abstinence from wine, as Schuetze also notes. They clearly have His suffering and death in view and anticipate His pending work of atonement on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.
- B. In Schuetze’s argument it must be conceded that both cups (the cup of Luke 15:17 and the cup of Luke 15:20) were still wine; so even if Luke was referring to the cup before the Lord’s Supper, it contained wine, not juice.
- C. It is possible that in the scenario of Maundy Thursday Jesus spoke the words of Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, and Luke 22:18 at separate times during the evening. If that is the case, then the Holy Spirit has given us the Lord’s statements in three separate texts, with Matthew as the only Evangelist to record the word “this.” Luke’s reference does not alter the fact that Matthew’s recorded words of Jesus, “this fruit of the vine,” specify the wine from the Passover cup that was the same wine Jesus used to give His own blood and the new covenant to His disciples.
- D. When Jesus says, “this fruit of the vine,” He calls attention both to the specific fruit of the vine, namely, the wine in the Lord’s Supper as the vehicle and also to the specific covenant of forgiveness in His blood that He is giving through the sacramental wine. He closely identifies the two, as He also does when He says, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.” By synecdoche He names a part for the whole, and thus we should equate the “cup” references with the wine that He used and with the real presence of His blood shed for us on the cross.
- E. Notice, too, that the absence of “this” in Mark and Luke helps to confirm that “the fruit of the vine” is really the same throughout “the entire Passover/Lord’s Supper celebration” (132, fn 7), that is, each cup has the same contents, the same substance. Now if we can maintain agreement with points A and B above, then Jesus is not saying that He will not drink **any** fruit of the vine until “I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” Nor does He say that we will be drinking mere **generic** fruit of the vine either. In His sacrament, decreed for the New Testament Church to use until He returns, the “fruit of the vine” in the “cup” is “the covenant in His blood.” He has so identified them and linked them together that by the simple phrase, “this fruit of the vine,” Jesus has specified the wine present at Passover as that which the disciples were to use in remembrance of Him and that which Christians were to receive as the blessed seal of their inheritance and as spiritual food for their faith—all part of the covenant feast that we now celebrate at His table. Such richness of grace is exactly what He has promised and brought to pass through the power of His blood shed for us on the cross and through the power of His words spoken so long ago.
- F. Another scenario than point C is probable, namely, that like Matthew 26:29 and Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18 does refer to the cup used by Jesus in the institution of the sacrament. Luke’s placement of Jesus’ reference to the “fruit of the vine” in verse 18 does not separate it unduly from the institution of the Lord’s Supper in verses 19-20. The “for” (γὰρ in v.18) is pointing ahead to these verses where the fruit of the vine will be used in the institution of the sacrament. The “for” of verse 18 also explains why Jesus had such a “fervent desire” to celebrate this momentous Passover with them (Luke 22:15). This would be no mere ritual, but the actual giving and ratifying of the new covenant in great anticipation of His kingdom coming and being fulfilled through the victory of His death and resurrection.
- G. In either of the possible scenarios (C or F), Jesus is acting as gracious Lord and benefactor and as the

testator of His will and is so determining the terms of His new covenant as established by His body and blood which are given in, with, and under the bread and the “fruit of the vine.”

H. If His words, “this fruit of the vine,” do not distinguish the specific beverage that Jesus is holding in the cup at the Passover meal, then Prof. Schuetze’s whole argument that “fruit of the vine” includes grape juice would have to be forfeited. For if Jesus’ words “fruit of the vine” are only collectively referring to “the entire Passover/Lord’s Supper celebration,” then the beverage He uses in the Lord’s Supper is never identified as the “fruit of the vine.”

Point 5: Though the early church used wine in the sacrament, and Luther insists that wine only is to be used in the sacrament, and the Lutheran Confessions repeatedly refer to wine as what is being used in their celebration of the sacrament, it is Scripture alone that determines doctrine and practice (Schuetze 133).

Schuetze is certainly correct that Scripture alone determines doctrine and practice. Yet many conservative Lutherans have confessed that bread and wine are the material elements Jesus wants us to use in the sacrament. Therefore we should consider their confession and practice in the light of Scripture.

The Lutheran principle in connection with the sacramental elements is that the quality, quantity, and shape are adiaphora. So it does not matter if we use water for baptism that has a high iron count. It does not matter if we have one cup or two, or whether we apply the water with our hand or a shell. The substance we use, namely, water, does matter. So the question before us is not parallel to a question like: “May we apply water in baptism by pouring or immersing?” Scripture determines that water is the material element to apply in the name of the Triune God. It does not determine the method. Similarly, Scripture determines the substance, the material element, to be distributed with Jesus’ word, “This is My blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” Jesus refers to that material element as “the cup” being used in the Lord’s Supper. We have seen every indication pointing to the cup’s contents as wine. Scripture refers to what is in that cup as “the fruit of the vine.” We have seen that in the Passover context “the fruit of the vine” was understood to be wine. The quality of the wine, the percent amount of alcohol, the quantity of the wine, and the shape of the cup we use to distribute the wine do not matter. The substance we use does matter. Grape juice and wine are not the same substance. Fermentation causes a chemical change in the substance.

At this time we wish to include another scriptural indication that the “fruit of the vine” was understood in the early church as wine. Notice that the beverage the Corinthians brought for their agape meal and the sacrament which followed the meal was leading to drunkenness.

1 Corinthians 11:20-21 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.

For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. The Apostle Paul goes on to chastise them for their carelessness and their attitude. And in verses 23-26 he recounts the institution of the sacrament, the words that Jesus said, and the Lord’s mandate to “do this in remembrance of Me.”

Point 6: The temperance movement has claimed “a biblical mandate to avoid all alcoholic beverages. As a matter of confession it may be necessary to use fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper. Yet we have to [be] careful not to go too far in reacting” (Schuetze 134).

There is no clear scriptural demonstration that using grape juice in the sacrament is valid. It is not going too far, then, to bring the objection that the use of grape juice raises doubt about the validity of the sacrament administered with grape juice. On that basis also it is not going too far to express the caution that grape juice should not be used in the sacrament.

The Reformed churches have generally accepted the use of grape juice, but they have also rejected that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament. Some Reformed churches have denied that there is any need to use the earthly elements that Jesus used in the sacrament.¹¹ They deny the real presence, and they deny that the forgiveness of sins is given through this new covenant in His blood.

But this Supper is the new covenant, and the new covenant is the forgiveness of sins. The treasure which Jesus has given us in this sacrament certainly calls us to respect also the earthly elements through which He gives this treasure.

1 Corinthians 11:25 *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”*

Matthew 26:28 *“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of*

sins.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, when 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 lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Romans 11:27 “For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

Hebrews 10:16-17 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Point 7: Some have such an aversion to alcohol that even a sip affects them. We want them to be able “to focus on the meaning of the sacrament rather than on the material elements” (Schuetze 134).

We share Prof. Schuetze’s concern that people with an aversion to alcohol, along with all communicants, focus on the meaning of the sacrament rather than on the material elements. However, there is no clear demonstration in Jesus’ words that the use of grape juice in the sacrament is valid. Substituting grape juice for wine, therefore, raises doubts instead of removing them. Many communicants with an aversion to alcohol do not have a problem taking a small sip of wine and focusing on the tremendous spiritual treasure Jesus is bestowing in His blood shed for them and given to them in that wine. For those who do have a problem, a better solution than changing the material element is to dilute it with water. This practice not only diminishes the alcohol content, but also harmonizes well with what people were doing at the time of Christ. Wine used in biblical culture generally was diluted before consumption.

Conclusion

Some may be tempted to think that if we need to go through all of this debate, then it can’t be clear and it doesn’t really matter. But if it is not clear that Jesus’ words were meant to include grape juice, then it does matter what exactly He would have us do in obedience to His command and for the real blessing of our souls.

The sacrament must be based on Jesus’ words and promise, not on mere human assumption. We are not subtracting from His word by maintaining a practice that is clearly within His institution. Because the sacrament is such a great treasure, we will want to follow a practice which we are certain is in accordance with what Jesus instituted for His people to do. There is no doubt that Jesus used wine for the institution of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus’ use of the singular with the article, τοῦ γενήματος, and the demonstrative “this” both indicate that He probably did not intend “the fruit of the vine” expression to be broader in meaning than grape wine, but was probably referring to the one specific fruit of the vine which was used in the cup of the Passover meal. We note also that the Old Testament Septuagint uses ἀμπέλου γενήματος in a context where it refers to wine. At the Passover Jesus used wine on Maundy Thursday, and all the information we have indicates that in the context of that Passover He meant wine when He said “the fruit of the vine.”

Talmud references to the Nazirite vow are the main argument used to maintain that the expression “fruit of the vine” was understood in a broader way than wine only. The actual wording of the Nazirite vow, however, does not really support this idea. All the information available to us indicates that Jesus and those hearing Him understood ἐκ τούτου τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου in the context of the Passover as referring to wine only—not in a broader sense.

Thus we maintain that neither Jesus’ words nor any other Scripture gives certain validity to the use of grape juice instead of wine in Communion. No, we cannot categorically deny that the sacrament could be valid with the use of grape juice. But it is uncertain. The point at issue is whether Scripture gives validity to the use of grape juice in Communion. There is no clear command or word of God that provides that certain validity. At best the use of grape juice in the sacrament is based only on human assumption, which in turn creates doubt about the

validity of the sacrament that is administered with grape juice.

Notes

¹“Since our Lord, however, did not Himself emphasize the use of grape wine or unleavened bread, but guided the first three Evangelists and the Apostle Paul to use the terms ‘bread’ and ‘fruit of the vine,’ we cannot absolutely and categorically declare that those who use leavened bread and grape juice together with the words of institution of the Lord are not receiving the Lord’s body and blood in the sacrament” (emphasis Lau’s).

² Cf. part I of the article, *Journal* 49:1, pages 43-44.

³ In Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:18 the Majority text has γενήματος. In Matthew 26:29 the Majority Text has γεννήματος, which elsewhere means *child* or *offspring*. Cf. Matthew 3:7.

⁴ This definition is given in the Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich lexicon, 3rd edition, which also says in the same listing that γένημα is used “of wine as the *product of the vine*.”

⁵ In this passage the Nestle-Aland text has τὸν σῆτον. However, the Textus Receptus and Majority Text reading has very good support among the older uncials and early versions.

⁶ To this same point John T. Mueller states: “Christ used the expression in question as a special term for wine, which was invariably used by the Jews at their sacred festivals. Quite manifestly the expression γένημα τῆς ἀμπέλου is the Greek for כֶּרֶם הַיַּיִן, which even to-day the orthodox Jews use in their consecration of the Kiddush cup . . .” (525).

⁷ In the canonical books of the Old Testament Septuagint the plural forms number 45 and the singular forms number 17.

⁸ In email correspondence dated May 30, 2008, John Pfeiffer made these remarks in response to the *WLQ* article, “Fruit of the Vine.” Prof. Pfeiffer is a faculty member of Immanuel Lutheran Seminary and president of Immanuel Lutheran College.

⁹ The wording of this question does not imply that Jesus would necessarily have had to say this in Greek to the disciples on Maundy Thursday. But in the inspired record of the Gospels, the word οἶνος would be the specific term in view and would thus be in the text.

¹⁰ “The yeast responsible for fermenting the sugars in the fruits are usually present in the grape skins, and fermentation will occur whenever there is a break in the skin (take a deep breath the next time you go hiking and pass a bunch of guava fruits that have fallen to the ground)” (Wong “Role of Yeast”).

¹¹ In a broadcast some time ago this writer heard a Reformed preacher suggest that his radio audience go into the kitchen and get some Coke and an Oreo to celebrate the Lord’s Supper together.

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