

Should Baptized Infants Be Communed?

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The topic of infant Communion has, in the last several years, been one of intense concern among many Lutherans both here and abroad. Any discussion of the “rites of initiation,” or the means of entry into the Family of Christ, must answer the various questions about the place of infants. Lutherans, as confessors of the true catholic Church, steadfastly affirm infant Baptism. What reasons can be put forward for admitting infants to the Holy Supper, and what objections have been raised? These questions can be considered under several headings: historical, theological, and pastoral.¹

I. The History of Infant Communion

The historical data for infant Communion is, to some extent, bound up with the evidence for infant Baptism. Since Baptism (accompanied by Chrismation) was always seen as the sacrament of entrance, those who were baptized were given Communion in the same Service. There is, however, more specific evidence. Before we examine these documents, most of which are liturgical in nature, it is vital that we understand the way in which liturgical scholars routinely understand ancient liturgical texts. It is standard accepted procedure, itself supported by experience and material evidence, to understand and expect that ancient liturgical documents reflect the rites in actual practice at least one to two generations prior to the date when the document was written down.² The very fact that they were written down (and so preserved) is an indication that these rites were already accepted as normative. These were not week-to-week word processor creations.

A. The practice of the Church until the 13th Century.

The earliest document evidence we have is that of the **Didache (ca. A.D. 60-100)**. Here we read:

"[(Chapter 9, Section 1] In regard to the Eucharist- you shall give thanks thus: [2] First, in regard to the cup: -We give you thanks, our Father, for the holy vine of David your son, which you have made known to us through Jesus Christ your Son. Glory be to you forever. [3] In regard to the broken bread: -We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son. Glory be to you forever. [4] As this broken bread was scattered on the mountains, but brought together was made one, so gather your Church from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For yours is the power and the glory through Jesus Christ forever. [5] Let no one eat or drink of the Eucharist with you except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord: for it was in reference to this that the Lord said: 'Do not give that which is holy to dogs.'" ³

¹ I do not claim any originality in the argument of this paper. I have attempted to cite evidence in sufficiently full a form as to make it clear that the original context or intent of the authors are not being twisted.

² Dating of manuscripts is, admittedly, sometimes difficult to do with precision.

³ *The Faith of the Early Fathers Vol. I*, page 3, section 6.

What we see with this and similar passages is a unity of Baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist. All were initially received at the same Service. If we accept infant Baptism as the practice of the Church from the beginning⁴ then we are also compelled to see infant Communion during the same period since no exclusive language is used with regard to infants in any of the available documentation. The burden of proof falls upon those who wish to assert that infants and young children were considered a special case, since the evidence simply states that the baptized were anointed/chrismated and given the Holy Communion.

We see another example in *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome (ca. A.D. 215)*⁵. Hippolytus recounts the order for Baptism. We should note the following: [section 21] "Baptize first the children; and if they can speak for themselves, let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them." After describing the rite of Baptism he continues, [section 22]:

"Thus he [the bishop] shall do with each. And immediately afterwards they shall pray at one with all the people; and not until all these things have been completed shall they pray with the faithful. And when they have finished praying they shall give the kiss of peace. [23] And then the deacons immediately bring the oblation to the bishop; and he eucharists the bread into the antitype of the Body of Christ; and the cup of mixed wine, for an antitype of the Blood, which was shed for all who believe in Him; and milk and honey mixed together for the fulfillment of the promise made to the fathers, which spoke of a land flowing with milk and honey, that is, the very flesh of Christ which He gave and by which they who believe are nourished like little children, since he makes sweet the bitter things of the heart by the gentleness of His word... So it shall be done to each one."⁶

To this we can add the witness of **Cyprian**, especially in his work, *On the Lapsed (Treatise III) (A.D. 251)*. Here we find two instructive excerpts, the first a reference to those children carried or led by their apostatizing parents to sacrifice to idols during time of persecution. Speaking of such children⁷ Cyprian writes: "Will not they, when the day of judgment comes, say, 'We have done nothing, nor have we forsaken [Martimort translates the Latin: "We did not deliberately abandon"⁸] the Lord's bread and cup.'⁹ Later in the same work we have the following account:

"Learn what occurred when I myself was present and a witness. Some parents who by chance were escaping, being little careful on account of their terror, left a little daughter under the care of a wet-nurse. The nurse gave up the forsaken child to the magistrates. They gave it, in the presence

⁴ Which, of course, we must do for both historical and theological reasons. See Das and the two titles by Jeremias.

⁵ This document is notoriously difficult to date, especially because of the lack of early manuscripts and the plain evidence of later additions or emendations to the original text.

⁶ *The Faith of the Early Fathers Vol. 1*, pp. 169-171, section 394i.

⁷ He speaks of "infants also, placed in the arms of parents" which will lose while still "little ones what they had gained at the very first beginning of their nativity."

⁸ III:63

⁹ *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V:39.

of an idol whither the people had flocked (because it was not yet able to eat flesh on account of its years), bread mingled with wine, which however itself was the remainder of what had been used in the immolation of those that had perished. Subsequently the mother recovered her child. But the girl was no more able to speak, or to indicate the crime that had been committed, than she had before been able to understand or to prevent it. Therefore it happened unawares in their ignorance that when we were sacrificing, the mother brought it in with her. Moreover, the girl mingled with the saints, became impatient of our prayer and supplications, and was at one moment shaken with weeping, and at another tossed about like a wave of the sea by a violent excitement of her mind; as if by the compulsion of a torturer the soul of that still tender child confessed a consciousness of the fact with such signs as it could. When, however, the solemnities were finished, and the deacon began to offer the cup to those present, and when, as the rest received it, its turn approached, the little child, by the instinct of the divine majesty, turned away its face, compressed its mouth with resisting lips, and refused the cup. Still the deacon persisted, and, although against her efforts, forced on her some of the sacrament of the cup. Then there followed a sobbing and vomiting. In a profane body and mouth the Eucharist could not remain, the drought sanctified in the blood of the Lord burst forth from the polluted stomach. So great is the Lord's power, so great is His majesty. ...This much about an infant, which was not yet of an age to speak of the crime committed by others in respect of herself.¹⁰

This is clearly the most explicit evidence from the early period that infants were being given the Sacrament of the Altar, regularly and as a matter of course. The incident is not set out to discuss the Communion of infants *per se*. It is mentioned matter of factly as part of Cyprian's account of those who fell away during persecution. This adds to the weight of the assessment of infant Communion as a commonplace, accepted practice.

John Chrysostom's *Homily on St. Matthew* (c. A.D. 349-407) gives further support for the universality of infant Communion, since Cyprian's Carthage and Chrysostom's Constantinople were geographically well separated. While not completely explicit, the language used here is reflective of the practice:

"He mingles Himself with each one of the faithful through the mysteries. He feeds with Himself those whom He has begotten, and he does not farm them out to another, and thus he also persuades you again that He has taken your flesh. Let us not, then, be remiss, since we have been counted worthy of so much love, of so much honor. Do you not see the babies, how eagerly they grasp the breast, how impetuously they fix their lips upon the nipple? Let us similarly approach this table, and the nipple of the spiritual cup. Or, rather, with much more eagerness let us, as infants at the breast, draw out the grace of the Spirit. Let it be our one sorrow not to partake of this food. The things offered here are not within man's power.

¹⁰ *Ante-Nicene Fathers* V:444.

He who did these things then, at that Supper, also accomplishes them now."¹¹

The example of **Augustine** can also be added. We refer specifically to his work *Forgiveness and the Just Desserts of Sins and the Baptism of Infants (A.D. 412)*.

"Will anyone dare to say that this statement, ['Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood you shall have no life in you'] does not pertain to infants, and that without participating in his Body and Blood they can have life in themselves, on the grounds that He does not say: 'Whoever does not eat,' as when He says about Baptism: 'Whoever is not reborn,' but says instead: 'If you do not eat,' as if He were speaking to those who could hear and understand Him which, of course, infants cannot do? But anyone who says this is not attentive to the fact that unless the statement embrace all, so that without the Body and Blood of the Son of Man they cannot have life, it is in vain even for those of more advanced years to be concerned about it."¹²

In the same work, here translated as *On the Merits and Remission of Sins*, Augustine writes:

"Quite rightly do the Punic Christians call baptism nothing other than 'Salvation,' and the sacrament of the body of Christ nothing other than 'Life.' Why do they do so except, as I think, because of an ancient and apostolic tradition, on the basis of which they hold it to be an inherent principle of the church of Christ that without baptism and the sharing of the Lord's Table, a man is able to arrive neither to the Kingdom of God nor to salvation and eternal life? Scripture also bears witness to this, according to what we have already said. For what else are those who call baptism 'Salvation' maintaining, except what is written: 'He has saved us through the bath of regeneration' (Tt 3.50, and what Peter says: 'Thus has baptism saved you also, by a like pattern' (I P 3.21)? In addition, what are they maintaining who call the sacrament of the Lord's Table 'Life,' except the statements: 'I am the living bread who have come down from heaven' (Jn 6.5 1), and 'The bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world' (Jn 6.5 1), and 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will not have life in you (Jn 6.53)? If, then, as so many and such weighty divine testimonies agree, one can hope neither for salvation nor for eternal life without baptism and the body and blood of the Lord, in vain are these promised to children without them. Furthermore, if it is sin alone which separates man from salvation and eternal life, then it is the guilt of sin which is forgiven children through these sacraments. It is written that no one is free of this guilt, 'not even if his life be of one day's duration' (Jb 14.5). On this account, there is also the passage in the Psalms: 'For in sin was I conceived, and in sin did my

¹¹ Sheerin, 291.

¹² *The Faith of the Early Fathers* Vol. III, pages 90-9 1, section 1716.

mother nurture me in the womb' (Ps 50.7), for either this is said by human nature in general, or, if David said it as applying to his own person, he is not speaking of fornication, for he was born of lawful wedlock. And so, let us have no doubt that also for the baptizing of infants that blood was shed which, before it was shed, was given and handed on in a sacrament, in such a way that it could be said: 'This is my blood, which shall be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26.28)."¹³

What is significant for our immediate purposes is not Augustine's theological explanation but the fact that, again, the practice was accepted as standard during his lifetime.

Other sources affirm this practice as well. **Gennadius of Marseilles' *Liber siue definitio ecclesiasticorum dogmatum* (4th century A.D.)** says: "If there are little children or handicapped persons who cannot understand the teaching, those who are present are to answer for them like someone answering for himself at baptism; then, strengthened by the imposition of the hand and by the chrism they are to be admitted to the mysteries of the Eucharist."¹⁴ **Leo the Great (A.D. 450)** connects the witness of the received Sacrament in this oblique way:

[Ep. 59.2] "In what darkness of ignorance, in what torpor of sloth must they hitherto have lain, not to have learned from hearing, nor come to know from reading, something which in God's church is so unanimously in men's mouths that even the tongues of children do not keep silent about the truth of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament of Communion! For in that mystic distribution of spiritual nourishment, what is given and received is of such a nature that, receiving the virtue of the heavenly food, we pass into the flesh of Him who became our flesh."¹⁵

Sheerin comments about Leo's words, "Here we are not concerned with separation from the eucharist on account of heterodox belief or behavior [ie. that is not the immediate point] ... Rather these passages have been selected to portray the role of the eucharist as a rule of faith in the refutation of heretical teaching."¹⁶ It was heresy, not age or intellectual ability, which prevented one from attending the Eucharist.

We turn next to the **Carolingian Questionnaire (c. 800)**. Probably prepared by Alcuin for Charlamagne, this document was sent to all the bishops of the empire. A list of episcopal letters expressing agreement is extant. The Questionnaire, reading like a catechism, includes the question: "Why is an infant confirmed with the Lord's Body and Blood? One is confirmed with the Lord's Body and Blood so that he might be a member of that head, who suffered and rose for him." Canon law passed under the supervision of Charlamagne and dated about 809 likewise reads: "Concerning the Eucharist: that the

¹³ Quoted in Sheerin, 274-275.

¹⁴ Quoted in Martimort, III:63.

¹⁵ Quoted in Sheerin, 236.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 237.

priest always have the Eucharist ready, so that whenever someone becomes ill, or a child be ill, he may commune him immediately, lest he die without Communion."¹⁷

The Pontifical (12th century) likewise shows the continuing practice of communing infants. Even at this time, the newly baptized, regardless of age, were given Communion immediately in the same Service. The rubric in the Pontifical from this date gives the following instructions regarding the newly baptized:

"If the bishop is not present, they are to receive communion from the priest. Children not yet capable of eating and drinking are to receive communion by means of a leaf or a finger dipped in the blood of the Lord and placed in their mouths, while the priest says: '*Corpus cum sanguine Domini nostri Iesu Christ Custodiat te in vitam aeternam. Amen.*' [The Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in/unto eternal life'. We note the acknowledgment that the whole Christ is distributed under both kinds.] If they are older, they are to receive communion in the usual way."¹⁸

In summary, we see two things from the historical data. One, there was initially no special provision made for children, and two, when mention is made, the practice of communing infants is assumed as a long standing apostolic practice. The formula of Baptism/chrismation followed by Communion in the same Service was followed regardless of age.¹⁹ It should be noticed that the case against infant Communion, either on historical or theological grounds, is an argument against infant Baptism as well.²⁰ Lee offers this helpful summary:

"From the third century until the thirteenth century there is overwhelming evidence that the Western church regularly brought her infants and young children to participate in the Lord's Supper. This is evidenced by several primary sources and substantiated by numerous secondary sources."²¹

Before this time no delineation on the basis of age is mentioned, as is also true of Baptism itself. References to the common, accepted, and uncontested practice required no specific comment, as is manifestly true regarding many aspects of the early liturgical practices adopted and adapted from the synagogue or Temple, and protected against outside interference. References to the Eucharist of any kind in the pre-Nicene period are "relatively scattered, unsystematic, and allusive."²² When specific details are given, those details point to the communion of infants. Later comments are also made, and not contested, referring to infant Communion as "an ancient custom." Evagrius of Pontus, an early Church historian (c. 536-608), uses this terminology for example.²³

¹⁷ Quoted from *Lutheran Forum*, Christmas, 1996, 12.

¹⁸ Martimort, III:70.

¹⁹ For more detailed information see the two volumes by Finn.

²⁰ Scaer, 48, fnt. 20.

²¹ 20.

²² G.W.H. Lampe, "The Eucharist in the Thought of the Early Church," in *Eucharistic Theology Then and Now*, London, SPCK, 1968, 34, cited in Lee 5.

²³ See "Infant Communion" in W. Smith, S. Cheetham, John Murray, eds. *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, London, 1896.

B. The Delay of First Communion:

First Communion was apparently only delayed after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. This council "ordered the faithful to receive the Eucharist at least at Easter, once they had reached the 'age of discretion' (*annos discretionis*). From this point on, a delay in first Communion was to be found throughout the Western Church. The words used by the council were, however, interpreted in different ways: some thought that the age of discretion was seven years,²⁴ but many others quickly began to speak of eleven or twelve and sometimes even a later age. Confirmation, meanwhile, was still celebrated on the first occasion of the bishop's presence, without regard to the age of the children."²⁵ Other factors also worked against infant Communion: Lateran IV also formalized the withdrawal of the chalice from the laity on the grounds of concomitance (that all of Christ is present in every particle of both kinds). While this is true, and Lutherans have always agreed that we receive the whole Christ and not simply "pieces" of Him, and while the request for withdrawal seems to have come (at least initially) from the laity, it is nevertheless true that Christ's command to "drink of it all of you" was being set aside. Since the usual practice by the 12th century was to commune infants under one kind, either using a rolled up fig leaf or the priest's finger which was dipped into the chalice and then placed in the child's mouth,²⁶ this removal of the chalice meant the consequent cessation of infant Communion. Communion had become firmly associated with Confession and Penance rather than with Baptism.

The quick change, which was generally successful because of the dominant influence of scholasticism (and of Aquinas in particular²⁷), was, however, not without its opponents. The fight for infant Communion (in the West) continued until the Council of Trent, when it was explicitly rejected and forbidden as current practice!²⁸ They were careful not to condemn the earlier practice, but simply indicate that the Church must have communed infants for good reasons which simply no longer applied.²⁹ We can see an example of this change also in a synodical prescription from Paris from the early years of the thirteenth century: "We formally forbid priests to give even unconsecrated hosts to children." Yet "infants continued to be admitted to communion in Milan until the end of the fifteenth century; and infant communion in the Church of Amiens is attested in a Pontifical of this Church belonging to the fourteenth century, while even later the Council of Augsburg in

²⁴ Luther used age seven as the general rule, as also did most Lutheran Churches until the period of Rationalism in the 17th century.

²⁵ Martimort, 111:74-75.

²⁶ Though some continued to distribute in both kinds, the bread/Body being dipped into the chalice and saturated before being placed into the child's mouth. See Schaff, V:724. Also Lee, 15 for various quotes from the sources.

²⁷ The section in the *Summa* (iii.80.9, p. 2490-2491) should sound familiar. Compare it to the explanation section in the LCMS "blue catechism!" Fr. Thomas Hopko calls this the "triumph of a decadent scholastic theology" (*All the Fullness*, 129).

²⁸ The Tridentine text is quoted in Chemnitz's *Examination of the Council of Trent*, II:435.

²⁹ See Lee, page 16, footnote 62.

1548 found it necessary to forbid the giving of communion to infants, showing that the practice persisted there even at that late date.”³⁰

The communion of infants continued in Germany among the Hussites, about which much has been written.³¹ Luther was aware of the Hussite practice and refused to condemn them for it, though he did not advocate such a practice in Wittenburg.³² Luther was also aware of the words of Cyprian and, like Trent later, indicated that the older practice had “now passed away for its own reason,” though he was never able to articulate what this reason was. Chemnitz’s response was much the same, as is evident from his comments in his evaluation of the Council of Trent.³³ As a Western Christian, Luther simply accepted the inheritance he had received, apparently not seeing its full implications. After all, he had enough to worry about. He was, however, sufficiently jealous of the Gospel as to not condemn those who did otherwise. The implications of Luther’s own teaching can, however, help us to a more positive evaluation of the practice of communing infants.

C. A Footnote from Martin Luther: What Makes One "Worthy?"

The *Small* and *Large Catechisms* are here instructive. In the *Small Catechism* Luther writes: "He is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these Words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.' But anyone who does not believe these Words, or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the Words "for you" require truly believing hearts." In *The Large Catechism's* section on the Sacrament of the Altar (sections 85-87) Luther writes:

"Let this, then, be said for exhortation, not only for those of us who are old and grown, but also for the young people, who ought to be brought up in the Christian doctrine and understanding Therefore let every father of a family know that it is his duty, by the injunction and command of God, to teach these things to his children, or have them learn what they ought to know. For since they are baptized and received into the Christian Church, they should also enjoy this communion of the Sacrament, in order that they may serve us and be useful to us; for they must all indeed help us to believe, love, pray and fight against the devil."³⁴

Luther sees the connection between Baptism and Communion and encourages Communion as soon as possible, yet he retains the practice of leaving Communion to the “age of reason” which he considers about age seven. While the above quotations are thus the important foundations Luther did indeed have more to say. Further comments by Luther on infant Communion can be found in *AE*. 35:111; 36:25, 38:208-209; (41:152?); and 54:58. Luther neither opposes nor is willing to advocate the practice.

³⁰ J.D.C. Fischer, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West*. Alcuin Club Collections, No. XLVII, SPCK, 1965, quoted in Gehlbach, p. 1. For an historical sketch from an older source, see “Infant Communion” in *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, II:1078-1079.

³¹ E.g. Lee, Gehlbach, Marincic, and Fudge.

³² See *Lutheran Forum*, Winter 1996, p. 13 for a collection of quotes from Luther. Note also *AE*. 35:111; 36:25, 38:208-209; (41:152?); and 54:58.

³³ *Examination of the Council of Trent*, II:435.

³⁴ *Concordia Triglotta*, 772-773.

D. Later Developments

We have already noted that Luther's own ambivalence toward infant Communion was shared by Chemnitz. The Lutheran theologians of Tübingen took a less irenic approach, as can be seen from their correspondence with the Patriarch of Constantinople in the 1570s. Their discussion included infant Communion as one of the practices of the Orthodox to which they objected.³⁵ Lucas Osiander, Jacob Andreae, and Martin Crucius wrote:

We often exhort our people who have repented to partake frequently of the Lord's Supper. However, we do not commune the infants, for Paul says: 'Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the Lord's body, eats and drinks judgment upon himself' [1 Cor 11:28-29]. And since the children are not able to examine themselves and, thus, cannot discern the Lord's body, we think that the ceremony of the baptism is sufficient for their salvation, and also the hidden faith with which the Lord has endowed them. For through this faith they spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, even if they do not, in the communion of the supper, physically eat it.³⁶

By the time of Gerhard, the scholasticism of Aquinas had returned to Lutheranism full throttle, and any reasonable chance of infant Communion returning was gone.³⁷ Gerhard's argument against infant Communion was based on the accepted rationalistic understanding of "examination" in 1 Corinthians 11, and upon the argument that eating Christ spiritually was sufficient for salvation.³⁸ Only in this century has the issue again been raised, as a new interest in history, theological inquiry, and the philosophical presuppositions of Church teaching have again provided fertile ground for real growth and analysis. The Lutheran Church in Finland has been particularly active, especially as a result of contact and dialogues with the Russian Orthodox and a realization that much German Luther research has been mistakenly read through the eyes of rationalism. This came to its culmination in the seeming opponent of rationalism, Karl Barth (who denied infant Baptism). Any real union between God and humanity was denied. There could be no such union of persons. It was replaced with a moral union or a union of wills between us and the Creator. This anti-incarnational (and really neo-platonic) approach has now

³⁵ These dialogues have been translated by Greek Orthodox scholar George Mastrantonis as *Augsburg and Constantinople*. Mastrantonis studied in Leipzig before doing this translation work at the St. Louis seminary.

³⁶ Mastrantonis, 143.

³⁷ *A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper (1610)*, 430-431, 434-435. Gerhard's *Loci* are also quoted in *Lutheran Forum*, Winter 1996, 14-15.

³⁸ This presupposition involves a view of John 6 which has been widely accepted in Lutheranism, but which is severely open to question, and is now widely disputed. The structure of John's Gospel (with John 3 and 6 showing in precisely the same way the necessity of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar) and the history of the Church's understanding of Jesus' Words in John 6 show us that we should understand the Words of our Lord sacramentally. While we would clarify by saying that in neither case is the Sacrament in question absolutely necessary, they are surely ordinarily necessary.

been recognized and attempt made to get back behind rationalism to see what Luther meant by what he said about faith and Baptism.

Of late, the Roman Catholic church has likewise been wresting, in its own way, with this issue. The Uniate, or Eastern Rite Churches in Communion with Rome, have recently been allowed to follow historic Eastern practice and commune infants. Such infants are then to be admitted to Western/Latin Rite altars as well.³⁹ In the 18th and early 19th centuries the age of reason was considered to be about 12. Pope [St.] Pius X (1835-1914) championed the cause of giving Communion to younger children and had the age lowered again to about seven. What he did not intend, but which happened through misunderstanding, was a rearranging of the traditional order of (1) Baptism, (2) Chrismation/Confirmation, and (3) Communion to (1) Baptism, (2) Communion, (3) Confirmation. This situation still remains to be remedied, though it has been copied by many who follow Rome's lead in matters liturgical.⁴⁰

The Anglican communion, it should be mentioned, has allowed for infant Communion in places where the bishop is sympathetic. The practice has now been formally accepted by the ELCA and its daughter body the ELCIC (Canada). Discussion however continues on the practice since the state of liturgical practice in these Church bodies allows for wide variance without unanimity or any necessary consensus in Christian doctrine.

II. Theological Reasons to Commune Infants: Understanding Grace, Faith, and Baptism

If we understand grace, faith, and Baptism properly there should be no barriers to communing infants. Holy Baptism both requires and engenders faith in infants through Baptism.⁴¹ Such faith is not of some inferior kind but to the same faith possessed by adults. The focus of faith is indeed not on itself but on Christ, to Whom faith clings. It is to this faith that we therefore turn.

A. Theology of Faith

To have Christian faith is to possess Christ. *In ipsa fide Christus adest*: in faith Christ is present.⁴² This does not mean we possess a "piece of Jesus"⁴³ but rather that we cling to

³⁹ See *Catholic Digest*, Sept. 1996, 130, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Section 1244, p. 318. Also note the article by Barbour.

⁴⁰ Fr. Peter Stravinskas, a leading Roman Catholic sacramental theologian, decries this confusing rearrangement and hopes for a change to the original order with Confirmation being given at a much earlier age. In a private phone conversation he indicated that he thought this "almost inevitable." See *Understanding the Sacraments*, pp. 20ff. as well as Barbour's article and Harmless, 12, fnnt. 39.

⁴¹ This much assaulted point is nevertheless historic Christian dogma. Baptism is the means by which God regenerates and purifies from sin. See Schmid, 537-555; Chemnitz's *Loci*, II:728-729; and Gerhard's *A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, Vol. I, especially 194-195. For a recent article see Spinks.

⁴² See the faith and baptismal language of Ephesians 3: "14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from Whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. 16 I pray that, according to the riches of His glory, He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through His Spirit, 17 and that Christ may dwell in your hearts

the whole Christ. Such possession is not based on cognitive ability, IQ, or education, but upon God's grace: His giving Himself to us through the Gospel. The infant has faith "poured into him" in Baptism. As Luther rightly says: [S]o the little child is changed, cleansed, and renewed through poured-in-faith [*fides infusa*], by means of the prayer of the Church that brings to Baptism and believes."⁴⁴ The *fides infusa* is a defense of the Gospel as gift, and is part of Luther's great insight into the meaning of faith, an understanding which is distinctively Lutheran.⁴⁵ To quote Mannermaa:

Central in Luther's theology is that in faith the human being *really* participates by faith in the person of Christ and in the divine life and the victory that is in it. Or, to say it the other way around: Christ gives his person to the human being through the faith by which we grasp it. "Faith" involves participation in Christ, in whom there is no sin, death, or curse. Luther quotes John: "'For this,' as John says, 'is our victory, faith.'" And, from Luther's point of view, faith is a victory precisely because it unites the believer with the person of Christ, who is in himself the victory.

According to the Reformer justifying faith does not merely signify a reception of the forgiveness imputed to a human being for the sake of the merit of Christ, which is the aspect emphasized by the Formula of Concord. Being a real sharing (participation) in Christ, "faith" stands also for participation in the institution of "blessing, righteousness and life" that has taken place in Christ. Christ himself is life, righteousness, and blessing, because God is all of this "by nature and in substance" (*naturaliter et substantialiter*). Therefore, justifying faith means participation in God in Christ's person.

The core of Luther's concept of participation finds expression in the notion of the "happy exchange," according to which Christ takes upon himself the sinful person of the human being and bestows his own righteous person upon that humanity. What takes place here between Christ and the believer is a communication of attributes or properties: Christ, the divine righteousness, truth, peace, joy, love, power, and life gives himself to the believer. At the same time, Christ "absorbs" the sin, death, and curse of

through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. 18 I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him Who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21 to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. "

⁴³ Parallel to this, we do not receive little bits of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar either. We receive the whole Jesus, Body, Blood, soul and Divinity, not parts of Him dropped down to us on some kind of celestial divine parachute.

⁴⁴ *AE*: 36:73. Even Roman Catholics tend to speak of children being baptized on the basis of the faith of others rather than speaking of faith as God's gift to the infant in Baptism.

⁴⁵ For contrast and discussion of infant faith see Dulles, especially pages 239-242.

the believer into himself.⁴⁶ Because faith involves a real union with Christ and because Christ is the divine person, the believer does indeed participate in God. That is what Luther means when he speaks of Christ as a "gift." Christ is not only the favor of God, that is, forgiveness, but also a "gift" (*donum*), God himself as present.⁴⁷

Speaking about the Roman formula for the requirements of salvation, "faith formed by love," Luther writes:

We substitute that love with faith. And while they say that faith is the mere monogram (= ornamental letters), but love is its living colors and fullness itself, we say in opposition that faith takes hold of Christ and that He is the form that adorns and informs faith as color does the wall. Therefore Christian faith is not an idle quality or an empty husk in the heart, which may exist in a state of mortal sin until love comes along to make it alive. But if it is true faith, it is a sure trust of the heart and firm assent through which Christ is taken hold of. Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, in the faith itself Christ is present. Thus faith is a sort of knowledge or darkness that nothing can see. Yet the Christ of whom faith takes hold is sitting in this darkness as God sat in the midst of darkness on Sinai and in the temple. Therefore our formal (= real) righteousness is not love that informs faith; but it is faith itself and the cloud of our hearts, that is, trust in a thing we do not see, in Christ, who cannot in any way be seen (*ut maxime non videatur*), but, nevertheless, is present.

Therefore, faith justifies because it takes hold of and possesses this treasure, the present Christ. But the mode in which He is present cannot be thought, for there is darkness, as I have said. Therefore, where true confidence of the heart is present, there Christ is present, in that very cloud and faith. This is the formal (= real) righteousness on account of which a man is justified; it is not on account of love, as the sophists say. In short, just as the sophists say that love forms and makes faith perfect, so we say that it is Christ who forms and fulfils faith or who is the form (= reality) of faith (*formam esse fidei*). Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and gives us eternal life as gift. Here there is no work of the Law, no love; but there is an entirely different kind of righteousness, a new world above and beyond the Law. For Christ or faith is neither the Law nor the work of the Law.⁴⁸

It is the failure to retain this thinking and language about faith that has caused us to concede the field to Reformed, sectarian Rationalism or warmed over Roman scholasticism. To have faith is to have Christ, to fully possess Him, to dwell in Him and to

⁴⁶ *Lectures on Romans 1515-1516*. AE 25, 332. WA 56, 343, 16-21.

⁴⁷ Braaten/Jenson, 32.

⁴⁸ *Lectures on Galatians 1535*. AE 26: 29-130. Quoted with notes by Mannermaa from Braaten/Jenson, 38.

be indwelt by Him.⁴⁹ Such faith recognizes Him at the only level that ultimately matters for the question at issue. This union with Christ in faith is brought about in Baptism.⁵⁰ Mannermaa clarifies this point when he comments:

It is Luther's conviction that everything which comes into existence through baptism is totally God's work. Christ is given to the baptized as well as the personal faith through which she receives Christ. Both are God's gratuitous gifts.⁵¹

The essential idea in Luther's theology of baptism is that baptism is a merciful and consoling union in which God joins himself with the sinner and becomes one with him or her. Thus, baptism is not just a covenant or an agreement between two partners bound together to function or act for the same purpose, the salvation of the baptized. It is much more: through the sacramental act of baptism God binds himself ontologically to a sinner and is one with him through his whole earthly life, if he adheres to Christ in faith.⁵²

After long discussion about Baptism and faith,⁵³ Mannermaa notes:

...our being in Christ (*esse in Christo*) means that a Christian has become one with Christ, and that Christ's righteousness protects him. Therefore Luther goes on to argue that a Christian is provided with two firm and immensely strong foundations or supports, namely grace and gift. Because of them the still remaining and real sin is not able to bring damnation to a Christian.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ See also Bayer's article.

⁵⁰ Braaten/Jenson, 53-56. Footnotes included in this text are from the original quotation though the numbers have been changed to fit the present text. See Mannermaa's footnote, p. 21: "Cf. Luther's *Great Catechism* and his baptismal sermons in the 1530s (WA 37, 627-72). The *unio cum Deo* comes into being when Christ is proclaimed. Luther's view of the word of God is a sacramental one. The words of Christ or the words preached by Christ do not refer only to their object, which is external to the words, but they also include the object. This is why the words are able to give in themselves the Christ proclaimed. See WA 9, 439-42. (The sacrament of eucharist is in a specific sense *unio cum Christo*. See WA 33, 181-242.)"

⁵¹ See in detail Eero Huovinen, *Fides infantium* (Helsinki, 1991).

⁵² "Das hilfft dir das hochwirdig sacrament der tauff/das sich gott daselbs mit dyr vorpindet und mit dyr eyens wird eyens gnedigen trostlichens bunds." StA 1, 262,27-29 (= Am 35, 33). Hans-Ulrich Delius, the editor of the sermon, makes the following note to the concept of *vorpindet*: "Für Luther war das Verbinden gleich Einswerden wie etwa WA 37, 642, 22-30." See also StA 1, 266, 18-20; 269, 1-3 (= Am 35, 38-39, 42).

⁵³ Further clarification about the union between the believer and Christ through Baptism are included as **Appendix A**.

⁵⁴ "Deinde non ambulat secundum peccatum seu carnem. peccati, id est, non consentiunt peccato, quod reuera habent. Deus enim eis prouidit duo robustissima munitissimaque firmamenta, ne hoc peccatum eis sit in damna StA 2, 502, 7-10 (= Am 32, 239).

In sum, Luther's understanding that God the Father is favorable to a sinner (*favor Dei*) and that Christ renews a sinner (*donum Dei*) is based on the idea of *unio cum Christo*.

Finally, we should be reminded that it is the faith of infants, the implicit trust of the heart which knows the One in Whom salvation and life consists, which is consistently held up by Christ as a model for all His people (Matt. 18:4; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:16-17).

B. Theology of Baptism (Continued)

In dealing with the theology of Baptism, certain questions are especially significant. What/Who is received in Holy Baptism? Is it/He received only in part, or whole? If faith apprehends the whole Christ, what then is needed beyond such faith? If we respond "confession of this faith," what then is our understanding of such confession, and what does this say about our understanding of the Gospel? And if our Lord tells us that "Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants" He brings forth "perfect praise," (Matthew 21:16; Psalm 8:2) is not all perfect praise, worship, adoration by nature confession?

What happens when we apply all the objections to infant Baptism, and the answers we give from the Scripture, to infant Communion? They are questions about a child's ability to believe, understand, examine himself, confess the faith, etc. When they are answered in the controversy over infant Baptism (really the controversy over the whole Gospel) they are answered with regard to infant Communion as well. Note the following from Andrew Das' excellent little book on Baptism:

"People like to speak of an 'age of accountability' when the child is able to understand the things of the faith. Consider I Corinthians 2:14: 'The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit, for they are folly to him, and he is *not able to understand* them because they are spiritually discerned.' The Scripture says that mankind, by nature, whether infant or adult, *is unable* to 'accept' or welcome the things of God. Man, of himself, is even unable to *understand* the things of God" (page 30). Again, "The Gospels abound in proof that even babies can believe. In Luke 10:21, Christ says: 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will.' The Greek word '*nepios*' here refers to babies and very, very small children, those 'not speaking' yet. This passage surely strains the present day concept of an 'age of accountability.' *Nepios* can also be used figuratively in the sense of the 'simple-minded.' Such are those to whom the Father reveals his truth. Faith is not dependent on human wisdom or intelligence. Faith would then be a human action when the Word says that it is a work of God. ...God reveals the truth of his gospel to whomever he will, including the little children, by His Spirit (I Corinthians 2:14-16). God miraculously reveals his truth to even the little baby. Faith does not depend on an age when one can 'understand' the words of the gospel."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Das, 38-39.

This is all well said; but what does this then mean about the child's discernment of the Lord's Body in the Sacrament of the Altar? Does such discernment come as a result of intellect or as a result of the work of God's Spirit? It is to this that we now turn.

C. Understanding 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

The usual reason for rejecting infant Communion has been the argument that infants cannot fulfill the Scripture's demand that they examine themselves or discern the Lord's Body. The passage in question, with the offending words in bold print, is listed below (from *Nestle 27*, the *NASB*, 1995 revision, and the *NRSV*). We will take the offending words one at a time.

27 {Wste o|j a'n evsqi,h| to.n a;rtou h' pi,nh| to. poth,rion tou/ kuri,ou
avnaxi,wj(e;nocoj e;stai tou/ sw,matoj kai. tou/ ai[matoj tou/ kuri,ou^Å 28
dokimaze,tw de. a;nqrwpoj e`auto,n kai. ou[twj evk tou/ a;rtou evsqie,tw
kai. evk tou/ pothri,ou pine,tw\ 29 o` ga.r evsqi,wn kai. pi,nwn kri,ma
e`autw/| evsqi,ei kai. pi,nei mh. **diakri,nwn** to. sw/ma^Å

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner**, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.
28 But a man must **examine** himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not **judge** the body rightly.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.
28 **Examine** yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without **discerning** the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.

Verse 27: avnaxi,wj

The Louw-Nida Greek Greek-English Lexicon Based On Semantic Domains, has the following entry.⁵⁶

(a) unworthily 65.19 (b) improperly 66.7

65.19 avna,xioj, on ; avnaxi,wj: pertaining to not corresponding to a comparable merit or worth - 'not being worthy, not meriting, unworthily.'
avnaxi,wj: eiv evn u`mi/n kri,netai o` ko,smoj, avna,xioi, evste krithri,wn evlaci,stwn 'if you are to judge the world, are you not worthy to judge small matters?' 1 Cor 6.2. avnaxi,wj: o|j a'n evsqi,h| to.n a;rtou h' pi,nh| to. poth,rion tou/ kuri,ou avnaxi,wj 'anyone who eats the Lord's bread and

⁵⁶ Entry #00402.

drinks from his cup without being worthy' 1 Cor 11.27. For another interpretation of avnaxi,wj in 1 Cor 11.27, see 66.7.

66.7 avnaxi,wj: pertaining to being proper in not corresponding to what should happen - 'improperly, in an improper manner.' o|j a'n evsqi,h| to.n a;rtou h' pi,nh| to. poth,rion tou/ kuri,ou avnaxi,wj 'anyone who eats the Lord's bread and drinks from his cup in an improper manner' 1 Cor 11.27.

All Paul is talking about is the eating and drinking appropriate to the meal in question. Other more specific aspects of worthiness are not in discussion. The meaning here will obviously be determined by the context, including the next two verses, though the cry of the early liturgies: "the holy things for the holy ones"⁵⁷ presents the points of connection quite well. The faithful/saints receive (in/with faith) the Holy One in His Gifts.⁵⁸

Verse 28: dokima,zw

The entry from the Louw-Nida Lexicon is as follows:⁵⁹

(a) test 27.45 (b) regard as worthwhile 30.98 (c) judge as good 30.114

27.45 dokima,zw ; dokimh,, h/j f ; doki,mion, ou n ; dokimasi,a, aj f: to try to learn the genuineness of something by examination and testing, often through actual use - 'to test, to examine, to try to determine the genuineness of, testing.' dokima,zw: zeu,gh bow/n hvgo,rasa pe,nte kai. poreu,omai dokima,sai auvta, 'I bought five pairs of oxen and am on my way to test them out' Lk 14.19; dokimaze,tw de. a;nqrwpoj e`auto,n, kai. ou[twj evk tou/ a;rtou evsqie,tw kai. evk tou/ pothri,ou pine,tw 'everyone should examine himself, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup' 1 Cor 11.28. dokimh,: evn pollh/ dokimh/ qli,yewj 'being tested severely by the troubles' 2 Cor 8.2. doki,mion: to. doki,mion u`mw/n th/j pi,stewj katerga,zetai u`pomoh,n 'the testing of your faith produces endurance' Jas 1.3. dokimasi,a: ou- evpei,rasan oi` pate,rej u`mw/n evn dokimasi,a| 'when your fathers tested and tried (me)' He 3.9.

Various words are used to translate dokima,zw,, which occurs 22 times (in 20 passages) in the New Testament. Words used include test, approve, prove, examine, discern, "find out what is acceptable," and so forth. Marincic summarizes:

Going over the passages using dokima,zein we see that the examination or testing involved can cover anything including: the face of the sky and earth; this time; oxen; God; the Law; man's works; oneself, one chosen for a task; sincerity of love; diligence; one's faith or lack thereof, gospel preachers; deacons; and the spirits. This wide array of objects for the verb

⁵⁷ For example in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Part III cited in Deiss, 237.

⁵⁸ The words of the *Small Catechism* of course also apply.

⁵⁹ Entry #01739.

would indicate a general meaning, rather than a narrow, specialized meaning.

When one takes in all the different uses of dokima,zein the following definition seems best: “to ascertain the worthiness, suitability or genuineness of a person or thing.” Dokima,zein is always a pass/fail, + or - kind of test. It is not an evaluation of something along a scale. but a determination: is it, or is it not worthy, suitable or genuine. To conduct a pregnancy test is *dokimazein*. Either you are or you aren't. The weather is either good or bad. The time is either right or wrong. Oxen are either fit for plowing or not. God is either good or not. The Law is either right or wrong. My works are either sinful or holy. I am either in the faith or in unbelief. A man is either suitable or unsuitable for a task, or for preaching, or for the office of deacon. There is no middle ground with dokima,zein. It never tests how much; only it is, or it is not.⁶⁰

Testing whether this definition is sufficient is possible by inserting this translation of dokima,zein (As “to ascertain the worthiness, suitability, or genuineness of a person or thing”) into all twenty two places where dokima,zein occurs. This has been done in Appendix B,⁶¹ which serves to very clearly justify this understanding of dokima,zein. Marincic finally notes:

...dokima,zein does not indicate any particular kind of testing. The type of test is determined by the object of the test and the characteristic being looked for. Oxen pass or fail due to a physical test. Men nominated for an office or task pass or fail on a test of intellect, faithfulness and other qualities. Faith is tested by the effect of the Gospel on one. The range of testing techniques is limited only by the range of objects and characteristics to be tested. Some tests are very deliberate and involved, others are more automatic, even unthinking. When I step into the pool, I do not stop and contemplate the water temperature, reflecting on the sensation. If it is cold, I jump back immediately, as I would if I touched a hot stove.⁶²

By the way, it is interesting to note Luther's comment on verse 28: “Paul in Corinthians - ‘A person should examine himself’- speaks only about adults, because he speaks only about those who were quarreling among themselves. But he does not set an obstacle in the way as to why it would not be possible to give the Sacrament of the Altar even to children.”⁶³

Verse 29: diakri,nw

⁶⁰ *Truly Worthy and Well Prepared*, 14.

⁶¹ This appendix is also Appendix A in Marincic's *Truly Worthy and Well Prepared*.

⁶² *Truly Worthy and Well Prepared*, 14.

⁶³ *AE* 54:58.

Once again, here is the Louw-Nida entry:⁶⁴

(a) evaluate carefully 30.109 (b) prefer 30.99 (c) make a distinction 30.113

30.109 avnakri,nw ; diakri,nw: to make a judgment on the basis of careful and detailed information - 'to judge carefully, to evaluate carefully.' avnakri,nw: o` de. pneumatiko.j avnakri,nei ta. pa,nta 'the spiritual person makes careful judgments about all things' 1 Cor 2.15. diakri,nw: profh/tai de. du,o h' trei/j lalei,twsan, kai. oi` a;lloi diakrine,twsan 'two or three who are given God's message should speak, while the others evaluate carefully (what is said)' 1 Cor 14.29; to. me.n pro,swpon tou/ ouvranou/ ginw,skete diakri,nein 'you know how to judge the appearance of the sky' Mt 16.3.

The Friberg Lexicon defines **diakri,nw** this way:

(1) as evaluating the difference betw. things *discern, distinguish, differentiate* (MT 16.3); (2) as making a distinction betw. pers. by evaluation *make a difference, decide between, pass judgment on* (AC 15.9); (3) as a legal t.t. for arbitration *judge a dispute, settle a difference* (1C 6.5); (4) mid. forms have pass. aor., (a) as debating an issue *dispute, contend, argue* (AC 11.2); (b) as being undecided within oneself *doubt, hesitate, waver* (JA 1.6).⁶⁵

Jonathan Cholcher, in his thorough analysis, writes:⁶⁶

The root meaning of this word group [diakrinw(diakrisij(adia-kritoj)] is etymologically based on the krinvw verb stem, meaning "to put," "to sift," leading to the sense, "to divide out," "to select," and finally "to value," "to decide," "to assess, or judge." Thus diakrinw (originally a stronger form of krinvw) means **"to part, or sift between"** something, **"to separate, or divide," "to distinguish," "to discern,"** a reflection of the Old Testament usage of the *shaphat* word group (cf. LXX Exodus 18:16; Psalm 81:1 [English 82:1]; Ezekiel 20:35- 34:17,20). The middle form, diakrinomai (with the Aorist passive), means **"to be separated, or divided," or "to separate, or divide, oneself,"** resulting in the sense **"to doubt"** (see TDNT III, 921-954). Following are the instances where this word group is used in its bare, or simple, sense, noting the object(s) of discernment (voice of verb indicated):

Matthew 16:3 (act.)

sky/weather

Acts 10:20 (mid.)

ritually clean or unclean persons

⁶⁴ # 01561.

⁶⁵ # 01312.

⁶⁶ 9-10, emphasis in original. Cholcher's final treatment runs to 73 pages.

Acts 11:2 (mid.)	Jew or Gentile
Acts 11: 12 (act.)	ritually clean or unclean persons
I Corinthians 4:7 (act.)	Corinthian individuals
1 Corinthians 6:5 (act.)	civil disputes between Christians
I Corinthians 11:29 (act.)	Christ's body in Communion (,to swma)
I Corinthians 11:31 (act.)	Corinthian Christians at Communion
I Corinthians 12: 10	spirits (pnuematwn)
I Corinthians 14:29 (act.)	prophets/prophecy
Hebrews 5:14.	good and evil (kalou te kai kakou)
James 2:4 (Aor. pass.)	rich and poor at worship
James 3:17	the wisdom from above ('h anwqen sofia)
Jude 9 (mid.)	archangel Michael/the devil
Jude 22 (mid.)	Christians

As was the case with the dokimazw word-group (1.3.), the concept of **discernment** (diakrinw) likewise assumes a certain result, or outcome. In all the instances above, someone, or something, is **separated out, distinguished,** from something else according to previously established criteria.

For Christians, the process, or activity, denoted by diakri,nw (both the active and middle/passive voices) has its basis in faith. What makes **discernment** (proper division) of matters under consideration possible is faith in Christ as delivered in the promises of God in Christ Jesus (faith is the means of discernment). Note the following uses of the diakri,nw (a word group with its correlative concept "faith," or "lack of faith" (unbelief):

Matthew 21:21 (Aor. pass.)	eva.n e;chte pi,stin kai. mh. diakriqh/te "if you have faith and do not doubt"
Mark 11:23 (Aor. pass.)	kai. mh. diakriqh/ evn th/ kardi,a auvtou/ avlla. pisteu,h "and does not doubt in his heart but believes"
Acts 15:9 (act.)	kai. ouvqe.n die,krinen metaxu. h`mw/n te kai. kaqari,saj ta,j kardi,aj auvtw/nÅ "and He was distinguishing nothing between us and them, having cleansed their hearts in faith"
Romans 4:20 (Aor. pass.)	eivj de. th.n evpaggeli,an tou/ qeou/ ouv diekri,qh th/ avpisti,a avllV evnedunamw,qh th/ pi,stei "In the promise of God he was not divided in unbelief, but was enabled in faith"

Romans 14:1 mh. eivj diakri,seij	To.n de. avsqenou/nta th/ pi,stei proslamba,nesqe(dialogismw/nÅ "welcome the person who is weak in the faith, not into divisions of opinions"
Romans 14:23 (mid.) ouvk evk pi,stewj\ condemned,	o` de. diakrino,menoj eva.n fa,gh katake,kritai(o[ti pa/n de. o] ouvk evk pi,stewj "If the one who doubts should eat, he stands because [his eating is] not from faith"
James 1:6 (mid.)	aivtei,tw de. evn pi,stei mhde.n diakrino,menoj "let a person ask in faith doubting nothing"

The person with faith is given to (capable of) proper **discernment**, both actively and passively, that is, able to make proper distinctions and avoid doubt. **Discernment** (diakri,nw) proceeds from faith and the things of faith. As was reiterated with the matter of **attestation** (I.3.), faith is given through the hearing of Christ to all believers (Rom. 1: 16-17; 10: 17). The same **monergistic operation of faith** is the basis for the matter of **discernment**, specifically as it is operative through the Word of God and the means of grace (i.e., the Sacraments). In other words, God is the one **distinguishing, and discerning** in and through the believers through faith in Christ Jesus.

Especially in the letter of First Corinthians, the whole concept of judgment (including diakri,nw) is founded upon the revealed Word of God and the means of grace (Baptism, the Lord's Supper and the Keys) given to all believers. The dependence of the judicial process upon the revealed Word is related by the use of several kri,nw verbs as defined here:

<u>Compound</u>	<u>Root translation</u>	<u>Common translation</u>
krinw	to sift	Judge
anakinw	to sift again	investigate
diakrinw	to sift between	discern (distinguish)
katakinw	to sift down(ward)	condemn
sugkinw	to sift together	compare

The lexical evidence is abundantly clear.⁶⁷ The criterion for “judging” and “examining one’s self,” even if they are applied to infants, do not preclude infants receiving Christ

⁶⁷ It is worth noting that Gregory Lockwood, in his discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:28, does not deal with the issue. Without lexical reference he simply asserts that “such testing would not be possible for infants or very young children,” even while he admits that infant Communion “falls outside Paul’s immediate purview” in the passage. At the end of the discussion he

in His Holy Supper. It is faith which clings to Christ which makes one worthy. Christ even uses infant faith as an example for all believers.⁶⁸

Putting it Together

Ultimately, none of the vocabulary used in these verses necessitates a strictly cognitive activity of which infants or young children are incapable. The judgment or discernment which consists of faith (diakri,nw) does not require such. The context for worthy reception is the context of faith. The examination required by dokima,zw necessitates certain cognitive skills as little as the discernment of his mother by an infant. The infant trusts his mother implicitly without being able to reflect or question the situation in a developed adult way. It is this lack of dependence upon reason which makes infant faith praiseworthy and admirable as a pattern for all believers. As Luther says in a sermon on Matthew 18-24:

Again they argue: how can children believe, since they do not yet have reason? (And so they add reason to faith). To this Christ answers: This is why children can do this and believe all the better. They cannot reason. For reason is directly opposed to faith. Therefore we must let reason go. It must be buried and killed in believers. But the Anabaptists make a light of faith out of reason, so that reason might enlighten faith wherever one goes. Yes, I think it does shine forth- as smudge in a lantern. Christ wants us to become veritable children if we want to come into the kingdom of heaven. That is, as all reasoning and understanding is, so to speak, still buried in children, so reason is also to be killed in all Christian believers.⁶⁹ Otherwise faith has no place in them. For reason opposes faith...

But in this matter, you, O Christian, must become a child and say: Indeed, I cannot make rhyme or reason out of this: but I must become a child, let myself be carried, touched, and blessed by Christ, and believe it. I must close the eyes of reason and not see how this is possible or impossible. Rather I believe and accept the pure, simple Word. ...

Reason cannot comprehend the articles of faith, including the doctrine concerning the Sacrament of Baptism and the Supper.⁷⁰

III. Pastoral Concerns

Finally we should touch on a few pastoral concerns: the question of catechesis in the Church, concerns over fellowship or closed Communion, and the implications of understanding the Holy Communion as pure Gospel.

attempts to be more even handed, but he has already given himself away. Lockwood, 407-408.

⁶⁸ Mark 10:15; 9:42.

⁶⁹ We should carefully note that Luther is not speaking against all reason, but only of using reason as the tool to explain or define God's Words from below in an arbitrary way. See the classic work, *Grace and Reason*, by Gerrish.

⁷⁰ Cited in *Lutheran Forum*, Christmass/Winter 1996, p. 13.

A. What about catechesis? The concern that catechesis will be abandoned if we commune infants is common among those who object to the practice of infant Communion.⁷¹ To put it briefly, catechesis that depends upon threats and rewards apart from the purpose of the catechesis itself is, at best, a confusing endeavor. If the only way children and parents will be involved in Christian education is to be coerced into doing so, then the purpose of such instruction has already been missed. While we have not dealt with the history and theology of confirmation here, much of the problem has revolved around heretical ideas about confirmation as “graduation” or “the beginning of Church membership.” Our children are already full members of God’s Church when they are baptized. The fact that we deny them the right to vote is hardly relevant, especially since such “rights” were not exercised throughout most of the Church’s history by adults either. The purpose of catechesis, either for children or for adults, is to learn more about and to draw closer to God and one another in His Mystical Body. It is its own reward or it is not worth doing. Otherwise we could coerce the poor to memorize and recite for their supper or force conversions at the end of the sword and it would be no different.

B. What about matters of fellowship? Again, putting it briefly, whatever principles apply to the communion of adults who hold membership in congregations of other professions of faith also hold true for infants, and for the same reasons. The doctrine of fellowship is not being examined here, but the application of such and answering questions of worthiness does not depend on age or intellectual ability any more in the case of infants than it does in the case of adults. Worthiness does not depend on intellectual comprehension of the mysteries, it depends on right faith. Integrity in closed Communion practices is no different for infants than for adults, since formal, public membership in churches of different confessions is just as plain a matter for adults as for their children.

C. Concern for the Gospel. If we want our people to see Christ’s Supper as He intends, namely as pure Gospel rather than the administration of the Law, and if we want our children, surrounded by mortal dangers to both body and soul, to be strengthened and sustained with all the resources God provides, we can hardly refuse to give Jesus to our infants and small children. The thinking that says “they have the Word, that is enough” can (and is) being used to say the same thing about Communion for adults. If our Lord’s Supper is a mere appendage for our children, an unnecessary thing, why should it be any more for us? Then we ourselves do not esteem Christ in His Sacrament as He deserves. As Luther reminds us: “the whole Gospel and the article of the Creed, ‘I believe in the holy Christian church, the forgiveness of sins,’ are embodied in this sacrament...”⁷² As David Scaer notes, the argument against infant Communion that the benefits of the Lord’s Supper are available in Baptism “Fails to note the unique character of each sacrament, and, if pressed too far, this argument might be used by adults to avoid receiving Communion.”⁷³

Conclusion

Ultimately there seem to be no adequate reasons for denying the Sacrament of our Lord’s Body and Blood to our infants or young children. The arguments used against communing infants are the same arguments used against baptizing them.⁷⁴ By Baptism

⁷¹ See Lockwood, 407-408.

⁷² *Large Catechism* V:32, Tappert p. 450.

⁷³ Scaer, p. 48, fnt. 20.

⁷⁴ Scaer, 48, fnt. 20.

they have been made full members of His Church, partakers of His Gifts, indeed through faith joined to God Himself in Christ. Are we not compelled to give them the fullness of God's Gifts, in keeping with the historic practice of the Christian Church until it was interrupted by the very scholasticism which Luther roundly criticized? Should we keep from them this source of life, this medicine of immortality? Is this not to ourselves to be guilty of a grave injustice against Christ in His Sacrament and against those who belong to His Mystical Body, the Church? The Words of our Lord, which we have rightly applied to the Baptism of infants in the Lutheran rites, seem to apply here also:

“And they were bringing children to Him, that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, ‘Let the children come to Me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God.’”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Mark 10:13-14

Appendix A⁷⁶ Union With Christ in Baptism

Mannermaa writes:

Since the idea that baptism means union with Christ is not commonly accepted in Luther research, we should note another passage in which Luther points to the role of union for his understanding of baptism. According to Luther, baptism does not just guarantee the death of sin and the Christian's resurrection on the first day of eternal life (*der Jungste Tag*). Its meaning is realized through a firm faith already in this life. Baptism initiates through faith the realization of death and resurrection, joins us with God, and empowers us to struggle against sin.⁷⁷

The core of the matter is that the *meaning* of baptism, the death of sin and the resurrection of the new person, becomes effective in the baptized person because God unites himself with the sinner both through the sacramental act and through faith. This most important standpoint of Luther must be brought into the discussion, since his view of grace and gift in his *Antilatamus* relies on it. Luther explains his understanding of the relation between grace and gift from the point of view that even though all sins are forgiven in baptism (*favor*), real sin must be expelled by gift in the baptized person. Therefore the real presence of Christ and union with God are necessary for the Christian.

In his *Antilatamus* Luther unfolds the idea of *unio cum Christo* with the help of different metaphors.⁷⁸ In each of these we see Luther's characteristic emphasis that grace and gift belong to each other. But at the same time he underlines that the Christian, though favored by God, can be renewed (gift) only on the condition that he "is in Christ" and that he "is with Christ."

The most important metaphor is that of the mother hen who protects her baby chicks and lets them get well or recover under her wing. According to Luther, faith hides the Christian under the protection of Christ (Mal. 4:2). The Christian then hangs onto Christ and trusts him to be righteous in respect to him. This union with Christ is the basis of the Christian's salvation. As Luther says, it is the gift of faith that acquires God's mercy (*favor*) as well as expels sin from him.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ From *Union With Christ*, 32.

⁷⁷ "Hie ist nu das dritte stuck/des sacraments zu handeln/das ist der glaub/das ist/das man diB alles festiglich glaub/das das sacrament/nit allein be- todt vnnd aufferseeung am Jungsten tag/durch wilche der mensch new werd ewiglich an Sund zu leben/Bondern das es auch gewiBlich dasselb anhebe vnd wirck/vnd vnB mitt gott vorpyndet/das wit wollen biB ynn den tod/die Sund todten vnd widder sie streyten." StA 1, 264, 12-17 (= Am 35, 35).

⁷⁸ 26. E.g., leaven and three measures of meal (StA 2, 496, 11-14; 493, 33-494, 2), the good Samaritan and the half-dead wayfarer (StA 2, 496, 16-20; see also WA 56, 272, 11-273, 2 and WA 2, 413, 30-36), Christ washing the feet of his disciples (StA 2, 496, 20-22; 430, 5-18), the vine and its branches (StA 2, 496, 22-27), and the occupation of Canaan and the Jebusites (StA 2, 497, 7-12; 470, 17). See for all Am 32, 232-33.

⁷⁹ "Quid istis vult Apostolus, nisi Quod non satis est illa fides vaga sophistarum, quae accepto dono putatur operari? sed ea demum fides est, quae te pullastrum Christum gallinam facit, ut sub pennis eius speres. Nam salus in pennis eius, ait Malachias, ut scilicet non in fide accepta nitaris, hoc est enim fornicari, sed fidem esse scias, si ei adhaereris, de ipso praesumpseris, quod tibi sanctus iustusque sit. Ecce haec fides est donum dei, quae gratiam dei nobis obtinet, et peccatum illud expurgat, et saluos certosque facit, non nostris sed Christi operibus, ut subsistere et permanere in aeternum possimus, sicut scriptum est, Iustitia eius manet in seculum seculi." StA 2, 499, 25-34 (= Am 32, 236).

This sequence of claims is understandable only on the basis of real union with Christ. Christ is on the one hand the favor that protects the sinner against the wrath of God, and on the other hand he is the gift who begins to drive sin away and make a sinner truly righteous.

Moreover, Luther argues that the metaphor of the mother hen describes our being in Christ (*esse in Christo*). For those who are in Christ, there is no damnation despite the fact that they still are more or less sinful (Rom. 8:1). Luther says: "The reason why there is no condemnation is not that men do not sin, as Latomus in lying fashion suggests, but because - as Paul says - they are in Jesus Christ; that is, they repose under the shadow of his righteousness as do chicks under a hen. Or as is said more clearly in Rom. 5, they have grace and the gift through his grace."⁸⁰

⁸⁰28. "Nihil esse damnationis, licet nonnihil sit peccati, quia tot de peccato praemiserat, sed ideo nihil est damnationis, non quia non sit ibi peccatum, vt Latomus mentitur, sed quia sunt in Christo Ihesu, dicit Paulus, id est pullastri sub gallina et sub umbra iustitiae illius pausant, seu ut Ro. v. clarius dicit. Gratiam et donum in gratia illius habent." StA 2, 502, 2-7; Am 32, 239.

Appendix B

New Testament Uses of Dokimazeinv

Below are all twenty-two uses of Dokimazeinv in the New Testament. The New King James Version is first, followed by a rough revision using the following definition of Dokimazeinv to ascertain the *worthiness, suitability, or genuineness of a person or thing*. In each case, the word or words translating Dokimazeinv are in bold italic.

Luke 12:56

Hypocrites! You can *discern* the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not *discern* this time?
Hypocrites! You can *ascertain the suitability of* the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not *ascertain the suitability of* this time?

Luke 14:19

And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to *test* them.
And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to *ascertain their worthiness*."

Romans 1:28

And even as they did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.
And even as they did not *ascertain it worthy* to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.

Romans 2:17-18

Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and *approve* things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law.
Indeed you are called a Jew, and test on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and *ascertain as worthy* things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may *prove* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may *ascertain as worthy* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 14:22

Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Blessed is he who does not condemn himself in what he *approves*.
Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Blessed is he who does not condemn himself in what he *ascertains worthy*.

I Corinthians 3:13

Each one's work will become Clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will *test* each one's work, of what sort it is.
Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will *ascertain the worthiness of* each one's work, of what sort it is.

I Corinthians 11:28

But let a man *examine* himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
But let a man *ascertain himself worthy*, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

I Corinthians 16:3

And when I come, whomever you *approve* by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

And when I come, whomever you *ascertain as worthy* by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

II Corinthians 8:8

I speak not by commandment, but I am *testing* the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

I speak not by commandment, but I am *ascertaining for genuineness* the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

II Corinthians 8:22

And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often *proved* diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.

And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often *ascertained as genuinely* diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you.

II Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. *Test* yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus is in you? -unless indeed you are disqualified.

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. *Ascertain* yourselves *genuine*. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus is in you? -unless indeed you are disqualified.

Galatians 6:3-4

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one *examine* his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one *ascertain the worthiness of* his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Ephesians 5:8-10

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), *finding out what is acceptable* to the Lord.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), *ascertaining what is suitable to* the Lord.

Philippians 1:9-10

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may *approve* the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may *ascertain as worthy* the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.

I Thessalonians 2:4

But as we have been *approved* by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

But as we have been *ascertained worthy* by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who ascertains the worthiness of our hearts.

I Thessalonians 5:21-22

Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

Ascertain the worthiness of all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

I Timothy 3:10

But let these also first be *tested*; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

But let these also first be *ascertained worthy* then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

I Peter 1:7

That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is **tested** by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is **ascertained genuine** by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I John 4-1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but *test* the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but *ascertain the genuineness* of the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

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Infant baptism is the practice of baptising infants or young children. In theological discussions, the practice is sometimes referred to as paedobaptism, or pedobaptism, from the Greek pais meaning "child". This can be contrasted with what is called "believer's baptism" (or credobaptism, from the Latin word credo meaning "I believe"), which is the religious practice of baptising only individuals who personally confess faith in Jesus, therefore excluding underage children. Opposition to infant baptism Is infant baptism a Biblically endorsed ceremony? How old is this practice and who originated it? Question: Is the practice of infant baptism, performed by the Roman Catholic Church, found in the Bible? Does God's word teach that repentance and accepting Jesus as your Savior MUST occur before a person can receive salvation? Answer: First, we need to discuss where this infant baptism ceremony originated before delving into what the Bible says about it. Evidence suggests this ceremony was introduced by church 'fathers' in what would become the Catholics. The first known reference to the baptism of an infant is found in the writings of Irenaeus, a late 2nd century Bishop who th Baptism must necessarily follow one's repentance and faith in Jesus, which is impossible in the case of infant baptism. Many people doubt that the early Church used to baptize children. They say that the New Testament evidence is unclear. There is no direct mention of infant baptism in the Bible. We mustn't baptize children against their will and without their being aware of it. It violates human freedom. One must deliberately choose to be baptized or not. These and other arguments are serious and reasonable enough. Why do the Orthodox, along with Catholics, Oriental Orthodox, Anglicans, Luth