

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**THE COMMON CUP OR INDIVIDUAL CUPS:  
DOES IT MATTER?**

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SPRING, 2004

TERM PAPER  
GRACE AND SACRAMENTS  
SYT 420  
PROF. NAOMICHI MASAKI

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## Introduction

As a frequent assistant in the Distribution of the Lord's Supper at the congregation I have been attending regularly for the past three years, I have noticed that it can get quite lonely holding the common cup. This is not because of low attendance. On the contrary, this particular congregation has several hundred communicants each week it offers the Holy Sacrament. So, why does it get lonely holding the common cup? Because the large majority of communicants choose to partake of the individual cups offered at other stations. In fact, partaking of the individual cup has become so popular at this congregation that it recently added two more stations where individual cups are offered. This means that there are now two stations that have the common cup and four stations that have individual cups. So what? What is the big deal? Does it matter whether we receive the Lord's Blood from a common cup (chalice) or from individual cups?

It is the purpose of this brief paper to explore this question. In order to formulate an answer, we shall consider the following: 1) Do we even need to discuss this issue? 2) When and why did the use of individual cups come into practice? 3) Does our Lord's mandate specify how we should receive His sacred Blood, or does it leave room for choice or preference? 4) Are there potential health risks involved that need to be considered? 5) What implications, if any, does the use of the common cup and/or individual cups have on the κοινωνία (communion/fellowship) of the communicants?

It is only after arriving at answers to these relevant questions that we can formulate an answer to the question posed above. It should also be noted, before we begin, that we will be answering these questions on the basis of Confessional Lutheran theology. In fact, the real

question we will be trying to answer here is, “Does it matter whether we, *in the LCMS*, receive the Lord’s Blood from a common cup (chalice) or from individual cups?”

### **I. Do We Even Need to Discuss this Issue?**

Rev. Marcus T. Zill states, “The topic of the use of the chalice and/or individual cups is often a thorny one. When someone dares to bring it up they are often accused of majoring in minors.”<sup>1</sup> Are we “majoring in minors” here? How one answers this question will be based upon his/her understanding of the Lord’s Supper itself. If one believes that the Lord’s Supper is the Holy Sacrament in which we receive the Lord’s very Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins and for the strengthening and preservation of our faith unto life everlasting, then he/she could hardly conclude that the way in which we receive this sacrament is a minor detail.

On the contrary, the holy and sacred nature of this Blessed Sacrament requires us to investigate the question of how we should receive it. Far from “majoring in minors” or being “nit-picky,” we should have the desire to know how the Lord would have us receive His precious Body and Blood. Even if this is not the most important issue of the day in our Church, it is of the utmost importance that we determine the proper way to administer and receive the Lord’s Supper. As Rev. Zill concludes, “While there are perhaps more important and pressing issues in the Church today, it doesn’t diminish the importance and relevance of how we administer Christ’s Sacrament in Christ’s Church to Christ’s people in accordance with Christ’s institution.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Marcus T. Zill, “Returning to the Chalice,” 1 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.standrewslcms.org/divineservice/chalicestudy.pdf>; Internet; accessed 14 April 2004. Rev. Zill is a pastor in the LCMS and wrote this article in April 2002 to the congregation he serves, St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church and Campus Center, in Laramie, WY.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, since the practice of using individual cups is becoming more and more commonplace within LCMS congregations, it behooves our pastors and laity alike to ascertain whether or not this is a proper practice to continue. Granted, the fact that so many of our congregations are employing this practice indicates that many of our pastors have already concluded that the use of individual cups is, at least, acceptable.<sup>3</sup> However, this does not excuse us from investigating the matter. We cannot sit idly by and just allow this to continue to be our practice if we do not know whether or not it is legitimate or beneficial for us to do so. In other words, just because we are already doing it does not necessarily mean that it is okay for us to continue doing it. So, should we be discussing this issue? Absolutely, for it is extremely important for us to determine the proper administration and reception of our Lord's sacred Blood in the Holy Supper.

## **II. When and Why Did the Use of Individual Cups Begin?**

Understanding when and why the use of individual cups in the Lord's Supper came into practice is of obvious importance. If this practice has a long history within Christendom and solid theological reasons to back it up, then we could hardly argue against its continuance in our Churches today. However, if this practice is a recent innovation and came about for practical, and not theological, reasons, then we have every right to be skeptical of it and to put it to the test to determine whether or not we should continue it today.

Fortunately, we have little trouble determining when and why the use of individual cups came into practice. There is widespread agreement that places its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, becoming popularized in the early twentieth century. Rev. J. D. Krout, in a 1906 article reprinted in the *United Brethren Review* from *Lutheran Quarterly*, states:

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, I have yet to speak with an LCMS pastor who is happy that this practice exists among us. Even those pastors of a more "liberal" stripe seem to be dissatisfied with this practice. I am convinced that most of our pastors simply tolerate this practice and would love to see it eliminated among us.

We find that the use of individual cups, *in modern times*, was first suggested by Mr. A. Van Derwerken, of Brooklyn, N. Y., in the year 1882. In 1887 he wrote an article advocating the use of individual cups in the communion service; but being opposed by his pastor, he did not publish the article until a year later, when it appeared in the *Annals of Hygiene*, of Philadelphia. One year passed ere any one braved the idea of putting Mr. Van Derwerken's suggestion into practical use. In November, 1893, the Psi Upsilon fraternity, of Rochester, N.Y., celebrated the Lord's Supper with individual cups. The news spread like wild-fire; like a river gathering new volume as it goes to sea, so this question has gathered new volume as it wends its way into the sympathies of Christian hearts. There are to be found many good people who are always on the alert, ready for any advance thought, and it is for us to determine whether these are justified in defending and advancing the individual cup (emphasis original).<sup>4</sup>

While this article was written for the purpose of justifying the use of individual cups, even making the spurious claim that individual cups were used at the Last Supper, it nevertheless acknowledges that, “in modern times,” this practice originated in the late nineteenth century. We should also note that this article also reveals why this practice came into being, namely for hygienic purposes. Mr. A. Van Derwerken, who is given credit for originally suggesting the use of individual cups, put forth his suggestion in an article he wrote for “the *Annals of Hygiene*, of Philadelphia.” We shall discuss the hygienic issues in Section V below. For now, it is enough for us to realize that the practice of using individual cups began in the late nineteenth century and was introduced for hygienic and practical, not theological, reasons.

As stated above, the fact that this practice is a recent innovation should cause us to be skeptical and to put it to the test, especially since “for 19 centuries the Church catholic (i.e. universal) had always employed the use of the chalice, with very little reflection or thought on using anything else.”<sup>5</sup> If we are going to abandon the unanimous way the Church had

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<sup>4</sup> Rev. J. D. Krout, “The Individual Communion Cup,” *United Brethren Review* 17, no. 2 (March-April 1906): 101-105.

<sup>5</sup> Zill, “Returning to the Chalice,” 3.

administered and received the Lord's Blood until the implementation of individual cups in the late nineteenth century, we better have a good reason for doing so.

Furthermore, the fact that the use of individual cups originated among the Reformed branches of Christendom in America should cause further skepticism among Confessional Lutherans. Carroll Herman Little, "a long-serving teacher of New Testament and systematics at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary," put it well:

The change of the container from the one cup to the many individual cups has been ever more widely adopted in our Lutheran Churches. This innovation first found favor with the Reformed, and entered into our Lutheran Churches through Reformed influence. In the case of the Reformed, as they were dealing only with earthly elements of a symbolic nature, they had not much to lose. It came in their case also after they had long substituted grape juice for wine. Without the alcoholic content, which was antiseptic, they felt that there was real danger of infection. Consequently they made the change without any scruples in the matter. But why should Lutheran Churches take up with this Reformed innovation and depart so radically from the Lord's institution, which in every instance speaks of the cup as one? How can we face the Reformed and charge them with changing the word "is" into "signifies," when we just as perversely change the word "cup" into "individual cups"?<sup>6</sup>

Little's questions are given more weight when we also consider that it has been the historic practice of Confessional Lutherans to avoid following Reformed innovations even when the matter falls in the realm of *adiaphora* (i.e., things neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture). As Rev. Zill adequately states, "Moreover, the witness of historic Lutheran practice has been to choose *not* to follow Reformed practice where a matter is nonetheless considered unessential (i.e., the breaking of the host)."<sup>7</sup>

What has been said thus far should at least raise some red flags for Confessional Lutherans when considering the use of individual cups. However, while the historical genesis of

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<sup>6</sup> C. H. Little, *Disputed Doctrine: A Study in Biblical and Dogmatic Theology*, (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1933), 92 f. Quoted in John R. Stephenson, "Reflections on the Appropriate Vessels for Consecrating and Distributing the Precious Blood of Christ," in *A Reader in Pastoral Theology: Articles from LOGIA, A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2002), 116.

<sup>7</sup> Zill, "Returning to the Chalice," 3.

this practice along with the identification of the group responsible for bringing it in may be enough for some Confessional Lutherans to conclude that it should be avoided, it behooves us to further investigate the Lord's mandate, any potential health risks, and the implications this practice has on the κοινωνία (communion/fellowship) of the communicants before reaching our conclusion.

### III. The Lord's Mandate

The words our Lord spoke to institute this Holy Supper are recorded for us four times in the New Testament (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). There is no need here to analyze each of these occurrences separately. For our purposes, we need only note two things: 1) All four of these accounts speak of a single cup (ποτήριον - neuter, singular, accusative), not multiple cups, that Jesus blessed and gave to His disciples from which to drink; 2) The accounts found in Matthew and Mark assure us, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the disciples drank from the single cup Jesus gave to them.<sup>8</sup>

What this means is that our Lord mandated the use of a common cup during the Lord's Supper. All of the creative and imaginative arguments employed by those who would advocate that the disciples drank from their own individual cups during the Last Supper<sup>9</sup> are put to rest by the texts recorded for us in Scripture. Clearly, the Lord blessed *one cup* and gave that *one cup* to His disciples from which to drink. We should also note the words of the Blessed Reformer, Martin Luther, on this matter:

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<sup>8</sup> Matt. 26:27 has πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες (“drink of *it*, all of you”); Mark 14:23 has καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες (“and they all drank of *it*”). The αὐτοῦ in both cases has ποτήριον as its antecedent, proving that the disciples drank from a single cup.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Krout, “The Individual Communion Cup,” where “a cup” is magically transformed into “a drinking period” within the Passover Meal, in which each disciple drank from his own individual cup. There is absolutely no justification for this argument as can be seen from Luther's quote above.

In reference to this particular cup, then, Matthew and Mark may be understood as saying that each of the apostles had a cup before him on the table, or at least that there were more cups than one. *But now, when Christ gives a new, special drink of his blood, he commands them all to drink out of this single cup.* Thus, in proffering it and with a special gesture, Christ takes his own cup and lets them all drink of it, in distinction from all the other ordinary cups on the table, in order that they might better observe that it was a special drink in distinction from the other draughts which had been given them during the meal. The bread he could readily—indeed, he must—have so distributed that each received a piece for himself. But the wine he could not have distributed in this manner, but had to serve it in a cup for them all, indicating verbally that it was to be a drink in common for them all, not offered to and drunk by only one or two or three, as the other cups on the table were available to each as he wished (emphasis mine).<sup>10</sup>

What Luther rightly indicates is that there were certainly other cups on the table during the Passover Meal, but when Christ gave His disciples to drink of His precious Blood, they shared a single cup.

If we are going to be truly faithful to the Lord’s mandate, then we should administer and receive His precious Blood in the Lord’s Supper in the way that He administered it and the disciples received it via a common, single cup. Does this mean that when we employ more than one common cup or many individual cups we do not receive the Lord’s Blood? Absolutely not, for it is the Word of Christ, not the faithfulness of the pastor who repeats Christ’s words nor the vessels in which the elements are contained, that establishes the Lord’s Supper:

For the true and almighty words of Jesus Christ, which he spoke in the first institution of the Supper, were not only effective in the first Supper; they remain so. They retain their validity and power and are still effective, so that in all places in which the Supper is observed according to Christ’s institution and his words are used, the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed and received on the basis of the power and might of the very same words that Christ spoke in the first Supper. For wherever what Christ instituted is observed and his words are spoken over the bread and cup and wherever the consecrated bread and cup are distributed, Christ himself exercises his power through the spoken words, which are still his Word, by virtue of the power of the first institution.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Martin Luther, “Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper,” 1528, in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 37*, J.J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann, editors. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 311.

<sup>11</sup> “Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VII: Holy Supper” in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, editors, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 606.

Thus, it is Christ's Word alone that establishes the sacrament. However, this fact does not negate our responsibility to observe the Supper "according to Christ's institution," which, as has been adequately proven above, includes the administration and reception of His precious Blood by means of a common cup. As Rev. Zill appropriately states:

Obviously, and again, the wine being joined to the Word is what makes the Sacrament the Sacrament. We don't take into our bodies the metal from the cup after all, but the wine it contains. But that doesn't render the Chalice completely unimportant. How can something be rendered unessential when it is clearly spoken of by Christ as part of His express command, in addition to His action concerning it?<sup>12</sup>

Thus, while it is true that the use of individual cups does not render the Sacrament invalid, it is also equally true that Lord's mandate calls for the use of a common cup. The question we are seeking to answer is not whether or not we *can* use the individual cups, but whether or not we *should*. According to our Lord's mandate, the answer to that question is no.

#### **IV. Are There Potential Health Risks that We Must Consider?**

There have been numerous scientific studies conducted regarding the possibility of spreading germs and diseases by means of the common cup in the Lord's Supper.<sup>13</sup> They all reach the same conclusion: The possibility is extremely minute - almost nonexistent. Furthermore, these same studies show that the use of individual cups does not lessen the already nearly nonexistent threat to contract germs and diseases. In fact, the opposite is true. The use of individual cups actually poses a greater threat, albeit still a very minute threat, than the use of the common cup.

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<sup>12</sup> Zill, "Returning to the Chalice," 6.

<sup>13</sup> For a listing of several of these studies along with their conclusions, see Zill, "Returning to the Chalice," 10-12.

This often comes as a shock to many Christians when they hear it. They assume that partaking of the individual cups is safer than drinking after others from the chalice when, in reality, the opposite is true. It is much safer to drink from the chalice since the combination of noble metal with high-content alcohol provides a powerful antiseptic which kills germs on contact. Plastic or glass individual cups do not offer the same protection. The high-content alcohol still serves as a powerful antiseptic on its own, but not as powerful as when it is combined with noble metal. Furthermore, the way in which the chalice is prepared makes it even safer when compared to how individual cups are prepared since one of the most common ways germs are transmitted is via the hands. When the chalice is prepared, there is no contact made by human hands with the drinking surface, but when individual cups are prepared, they are taken out of their package and placed in the tray by grabbing the lip of each with human fingers.

The bottom line in this matter is that we could never make the claim that there is absolutely no chance that germs could be passed on via either the chalice or the individual cups, but we can say with absolute certainty that the chance of that happening is astronomically low and we can also say with absolute certainty that the chance is even lower with the chalice. Rev. Zill, after listing six reasons why using individual cups is “riskier” than using the common cup, rightly concludes, “Again, the point is that you ultimately have no assurance that germs will never enter the equation, but second, and given that fact, you are actually better off by receiving the chalice than individual cups.”<sup>14</sup>

Christians who receive the Lord’s Blood from the common cup can rest assured that there are virtually no potential health risks involved and that it is actually a safer alternative to the individual cups. It is, indeed, ironic that those who introduced the individual cups into practice did so for hygienic concerns and actually created more hygienic concerns than existed before. In

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<sup>14</sup> Zill, “Returning to the Chalice,” 13.

fact, it is these Protestants who employ grape juice in individual cups who are at the greatest risk, for the lack of alcohol and noble metal greatly increases the possibility of spreading germs.

In sum, the oft used argument that individual cups are preferred to avoid health risks is completely unfounded and cannot possibly be used as a basis for our continuation of this practice. Besides the overwhelming evidence from science on this issue, there is also the promise of our Lord Himself, who assures us that our reception of His sacred Blood via the chalice during the Holy Supper will be a tremendous blessing to us who receive it in faith. If Christians do not want to listen to the evidence provided by science, they should at least listen to their Lord and come to His Table without fear to receive from Him what He desires to give. In other words, at the end of the day, it boils down to a matter of faith and Christians have no need to fear receiving the Blessed Sacrament in the manner in which it was instituted by the Lord Himself – via the common cup.

#### **V. The Implications on the κοινωνία of the Communicants**

Our Lutheran Confessions speak of participation in the Lord's Supper as “a true bond and union of Christians with Christ their head and with one another” (FC-SD VII:44). Through participation in Christ's very Body and Blood, a vertical κοινωνία (communion/fellowship) exists between the individual communicant and Christ and a horizontal κοινωνία exists between all who partake from the same altar (1 Cor. 10:16-17). In other words, in the Lord's Supper we become one body with Christ and with one another. This is the teaching of Scripture and, as Werner Elert reveals, of the early church: “The Eucharist makes us bodily one. It unites all with Christ but also all with one another.”<sup>15</sup> It is for this reason that the LCMS has always maintained

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<sup>15</sup> Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, Translated from the German by N. E. Nagel, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), 30.

the official position of close(d) communion, which requires complete confessional agreement for admission to the Lord's Supper in our congregations.

Given our doctrinal position on fellowship in the Lord's Supper, it goes without saying that the practice of using the common cup to administer and receive the Lord's blood best symbolizes the *κοινωνία* that takes place at the Lord's Table. In contrast, the practice of using individual cups not only fails to symbolize this *κοινωνία*, but actually serves to take away from it. Rev. Zill states:

The sense of Holy Communion being a true communion of participation is perhaps only fully grasped in the mutual sharing of the one chalice. While it is impossible to completely gauge the effect that moving from the chalice to the individual cup has had on the unity of the church, it certainly has not helped. If there is one place where we who confess the same truths should be as one it is at this most Holy Meal. We are one body – the Communion of Saints, just as we share and confess one faith. Receiving from the chalice not only fulfills Christ's command, but brings the blessing of oneness with other Christians living and dead to our lips . . . At the altar, we are one!<sup>16</sup>

C. H. Little took a much stronger approach in condemning the use of individual cups. At a time when this innovation was first being embraced by Lutheran congregations, he wrote:

Besides this, the innovation utterly destroys the symbolism of the Lord's Supper as the Sacrament of union with one another and of brotherly love. It also goes against the whole history of the Church, displays a lack of faith in our gracious Lord, and diminishes the solemnity of the sacramental administration. May the time soon come when this modern innovation is done away with!<sup>17</sup>

Little is right and we would have been wise to listen to him (and many others) long ago when individual cups were first being considered among us Lutherans.

The use of individual cups does indeed “utterly destroy the symbolism of the Lord's Supper as the Sacrament of union with one another” (what I have described as the horizontal *κοινωνία*). The vertical *κοινωνία* between Christ and the individual communicant may still exist

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<sup>16</sup> Zill, “Returning to the Chalice,” 13.

<sup>17</sup> C. H. Little, *Disputed Doctrine*, 92 f. Quoted in Stephenson, “Reflections . . .,” in *A Reader*, 116.

with the use of individual cups, but even it is compromised, for our fellowship with Christ is diminished if we fail to acknowledge, at the same time, our fellowship with one another.

The use of individual cups also “goes against the whole history of the Church,” as Little rightly claims. As I have shown above, this practice was first introduced in the late nineteenth century and was unheard of in the Christian Church from the days of the Apostles until then. The fact that it was introduced by those who do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Supper also goes against the history of the Church and “displays a lack of faith in our gracious Lord.”

And, as if these points were not significant enough, Little is also right in his claim that using individual cups “diminishes the solemnity of the sacramental administration.” For those who do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Supper this is of no concern, but for we who believe that in, with, and under the bread and wine we are given the very Body and Blood of Christ to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins, the solemnity of this Blessed Sacrament should be of utmost concern. It should go without saying that placing the sacred Blood of our Savior into plastic, throw away, individual cups greatly diminishes the solemnity of the Sacrament. How can we treat our Lord so irreverently? It is truly mind-boggling!

I firmly believe that the use of individual cups has grave implications on the community of the Christian congregation for all of the reasons cited above, but mostly because it supports the so-called “Evangelical” brand of Christianity so prominent in America today, which fails miserably to recognize the importance of the *κοινωνία* (fellowship) Christians share with one another. Instead, it promotes “individualism” by emphasizing one’s “personal relationship with Jesus” that each individual establishes by means of a “personal decision” to make Jesus his/her

Lord. This goes against everything we believe as confessional Lutherans and we ought to avoid it like the plague!

### **Conclusion**

We set out to answer the following question: Does it matter whether we receive the Lord's Blood from a common cup (chalice) or from individual cups? Based on what we have discovered in this short investigation, our answer must be a resounding "Yes!" To be faithful to our Lord's mandate, to adhere to the historic practice of the Church, to maintain the symbolism of both the vertical *κοινωνία* and the horizontal *κοινωνία*, to avoid the false theology of "popular" Christianity today, and to retain the solemnity of this Blessed Sacrament, we should administer and receive the precious Blood of our Lord by means of a common cup.

We have shown that the use of the individual cup was instituted by the Reformed in America for hygienic reasons, does not follow the Lord's mandate, and promotes individualism, utterly destroying the horizontal *κοινωνία* that takes place at the Lord's Table. We have also proven that concerns over potential health risks in using the common cup are completely unfounded. Given all of these reasons, we are left to wonder why in the world confessional Lutherans would continue this practice.

In my limited experience, I have come to the conclusion that the reason our congregations continue to use individual cups is because this practice has gone on unchecked for so long that many pastors believe it would be exhausting and burdensome to attempt to remove it now. People are used to it and, besides, many of them like it. Using individual cups fits well with the individualized, "have it your way," American principles permeating our society. Many pastors fear that they might lose members if they take away the individual cups.

However, I have also become convinced that the fears many pastors have about removing the individual cups are greatly exaggerated, even unfounded. If pastors would just take the time to properly catechize their parishioners regarding this issue, the great majority of them would have no problem giving up the individual cups. Sure, there would inevitably be some who would rebel against the idea, but most of them would readily make the switch to the common cup, even with great desire, once they understand why they are making the switch.

How can I be so sure about this? I have seen it firsthand. In my three years at the congregation I have been attending while at the seminary, I have had the opportunity, especially during my Field Work duties, to talk with dozens of members about this issue. I found out that they were partaking of the individual cups simply because they were being offered to them, not because they feared potential health risks or had a particular theological position. After explaining to them why the common cup is more appropriate, *every one of them* switched over to the common cup. It was as simple as that! They just needed to be catechized.

Also, besides my own personal experience, there are numerous examples of faithful pastors who have taken the time to catechize their congregation on this issue and have met with little or no resistance. Rev. Zill, whom I have quoted frequently throughout this paper, is such a pastor. In a very short time, he was able to completely discontinue the use of individual cups in the congregation he serves with virtually no resistance. Why? Because he took the time to catechize them. He offers the following very insightful conclusion:

Faithful preaching and catechesis is always the key! I do not believe it is ironic that I have never found an individual who has chosen to continue to receive the Lord's Supper through individual cups when they have been open to being catechized about the issues involved. In short, in every instance, with such catechesis, they have always desired the chalice.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Zill, "Returning to the Chalice," 15.

As noted above, my experience has been the same. People just need to be catechized!

While this issue may not be the most pressing issue in our beloved synod today, it is nevertheless one that deserves our attention. Perhaps I am overly optimistic, but I believe that removing the practice of using individual cups within our congregations could be accomplished. However, I am not so optimistic that I believe it will be accomplished. How can we remove this practice when our own Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) provides the following answer to the question, “Does it matter whether a congregation uses individual glasses or the common cup to distribute the consecrated wine?”:

In the absence of a specific Scriptural mandate, either method of distribution, when performed in a reverent manner, is acceptable. Many Christians prefer the use of the common cup because of its symbolism as representative of the oneness of the body of Christ – the church – and because there is reason to believe that Christ used this method of distribution. Any decision in this area is to be marked by Christian liberty and charity.<sup>19</sup>

This answer was put forth in the spirit of accommodation, not on the basis of Scripture, for, as we have shown, there is a specific Scriptural mandate given to us in this matter. It is a sad day, indeed, when our own CTCR allows “political correctness” to influence its findings. When reading the CTCR document from which the above quote is taken, it is clear that the theologians who participated in its publication would like to come out and say that the common cup should be used. Even in the above quote, one can see this. But, to make such a statement in our day and age when the practice of using individual cups has become commonplace might upset people, so they stop short. For this reason, with C. H. Little and many other faithful pastors and theologians throughout the years, we who long for the removal of this practice within our synod will, sadly, probably never see our wish granted.

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<sup>19</sup> *Theology and Practice of The Lord’s Supper: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations* (The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1983), 31.

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