
Martin Luther, Lutheran Theology, and Paedocommunion: History, Compatibility, and Appraisal

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“It was asked, did the Hussites well in administering the sacrament to young children, on the allegation that the graces of God apply equally to all human creatures? Dr. Luther replied: they were undoubtedly wrong, since young children need not the communion for their salvation; but still the innovation could not be regarded as a sin of the Hussites, since St Cyprian, long ago, set them the example.”¹

“When in I Corinthians 11:28 Paul said that a man should examine himself [and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup], he spoke only of adults because he was speaking about those who were quarreling among themselves. However, he doesn’t here forbid that the sacrament of the altar be given even to children.”²

Introduction

Perhaps the most volatile and schismatic debate raging across Reformed and confessional churches in the United States today is what has been called the Federal Vision Controversy,³ which is largely defined by its commitment to the New Perspective on Paul and adherence to infant communion (or paedocommunion).⁴ This is a debate with high stakes, as pastor and author Peter Leithart describes:

The paedocommunion debate raises questions not only concerning the character of the sacraments and the relationship of the two sacraments, but also touches on such major areas of theology as the doctrine of the Church, the meaning of the covenant, the relationship of the covenant to eternal election, the doctrines of perseverance

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and assurance, the relationship of faith and the sacraments, the relationship of faith and understanding, the relationship of faith and works, and other questions of great theological significance. Hermeneutical questions, including the meta-issue of relating the OT and NT, are also implicated. ... If true, paedocommunion requires the contemporary Reformed churches to undergo a far-reaching theological repentance⁵.

It is only right that the works and legacy of such a seminal figure of the Reformation as Martin Luther would impact and inform the historical and current debates on an issue as important as paedocommunion. Lutheran congregations and communities have not been unaffected by this ongoing debate, as the continued splintering and infighting over paedocommunion highlights the timely importance of this pressing issue to Lutheran laypeople, theologians, pastors, and parents.

The two opening quotes above show how Luther was inconsistent, or at the very least characteristically paradoxical, about this issue. While Martin Luther neither strongly opposed nor was willing to advocate the practice⁶, Lutherans and students of the

1. Martin Luther, *Table Talk* CCCXLVII, “Of Baptism.”

2. Luther, *Table Talk* CCCLXV, “Of Word of God and Sacraments.”

3. Melissa Morgan, “Federal Vision: The Issue for this Generation,” *ByFaith Magazine*, (October 2007) available at <http://byfaithonline.com/federal-vision-the-issue-for-this-generation/>.

4. Scott R. Clark, “Federal Vision and New Perspectives on Paul: Children at The Lord’s Table? A Review” available at <http://rscottclark.org/2016/01/children-at-the-lords-table-a-review/>

5. Peter J. Leithart, “Daddy Why Was I Excommunicated?” *Rite Reasons: Studies in Worship*, No. 20, (April 1992) available at <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/rite-reasons/no-20-daddy-why-was-i-excommunicated/>

6. Patrick S. Fodor, “Should Baptized Infants Be Communed? A Case for Infant Communion in the Lutheran Church (Missouri

paedocommunion idea remain inquisitive as to what a full-orbed Lutheran worldview says about this tricky issue. This paper is an attempt to answer this question using what else we know about Luther and confessional Lutheran theology.

Is the historical covenantal and confessional theology of Martin Luther compatible with a vibrant paedocommunion practice in today's Lutheran fellowship? What did Martin Luther have to say about the foundations of paedocommunion and what might we distill from this to shed light on this question today? Lutherans believe in the word being taught and the sacraments being properly administered. I contend that a proper historically and systematically based understanding of the implications of the teachings of Martin Luther do, in fact, support a theologically necessary and logical practice of infant communion.

I will attempt to make my argument based on the works of Martin Luther and devout Lutheran scholars and pastors, and from extrapolating the covenantal understandings of Martin Luther's clear teachings on the Eucharist, baptism, the family, the new covenant, election, and related theological items. This connection is not oblique—rather I will be contending that paedocommunion is a requisite continuity of doctrine that springs from the historical Lutheran covenantal and confessional understanding of the sacraments and Lutheran covenantal particulars.

Lutheran covenantal theology

Lutheran children historically took communion at an age that in our present era would seem quite young. In his work *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*, Lutheran church leader Arthur Repp provides the following description of the practices among Lutherans in the sixteenth century:

[T]he usual age of the catechumen who partook of his first Communion was quite early when compared to present-day [1964] practice. Indeed, age was not regarded an important criterion. The major criterion was the catechumen's readiness to partake of the Sacrament. Almost invariably the church orders used an expression such as "when the children have come of age." According to German law, this was at the age 12; according to Roman canon law, it could be interpreted variously as from 7 to 12⁷.

As discussed at length by the Lutheran Council of Theology and Church Relations⁸, the first *Constitution of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States* includes a very detailed description of the requirements for confirmation, although

Synod),” 8, available at <https://www.scribd.com/doc/18759332/A-Case-for-Infant-Communion-in-the-Lutheran-Church-Missouri-Synod>

7. Arthur C. Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 56–57.

8. Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod CTCR, “Knowing What We Seek and Why We Come,” available at <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3087>.

Like so many other issues Martin Luther operated in a paradox here and personally only administered the Lord's supper to those who had reached the operative “age of reason” that he personally believed started around the age of seven.

no age (minimum or average) was given. The Constitution did state: “If possible, up to 100 hours are to be used in confirmation instruction.”⁹ In his work *Pastoraltheologie*, C.F.W. Walther wrote that “the completion of the twelfth year” is the earliest age at which a child should be confirmed.¹⁰ Additionally, during and after the Reformation, Lutherans admitted children to the Lord's supper only after catechism training.¹¹

Infant baptism is a hallmark of Lutheranism and serves a number of crucial theological and covenantal functions as part of the greater framework of Martin Luther's thought and practice. The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod refers to the topic at hand as “infant communion.” It has been said that this would be more accurately defined in terms of Lutheran covenantal theology as a “communion of the baptized” because the eucharist is not given because of the age of the communicant, but rather because of their status as being fully incorporated into the Christian church by means of holy baptism.¹² Luther himself noted:

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.¹³

Like so many other issues Martin Luther operated in a paradox here and personally only administered the Lord's supper to those who had reached the operative “age of reason” that he personally believed started around the age of seven.¹⁴ However, Martin Luther did not favor any age-based rite of confirmation and never considered admittance to the Lord's church based on any strict

9. *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, “Our First Synodical Constitution,” (16:1), 13–14.

10. C.F.W. Walther, *Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, (Charleston, S.C.: Nabu Press, 2011), 265.

11. Scott R. Clark, “Federal Vision and New Perspectives on Paul.

12. Gregory Hogg, “Infant Communion, Revisited,” available at <https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/orthodoxyandheterodoxy/2015/01/20/infant-communion-revisited/>

Note that Fr. Gregory Hogg is a university professor and former Lutheran minister now ordained as a priest in the Orthodox tradition.

13. Martin Luther, as noted in *Concordia Triglotta*, 772–773.

14. Fodor, “Should Baptized Infants Be Communed? 8.

formalized age requirement.¹⁵

In relation to baptism and participating in the faith life of the church, Martin Luther himself stated that:

Infants are aided by faith of others, namely, those who bring them for baptism. For the Word of God is powerful enough, when uttered, to change even a godless heart, which is no less unresponsive and helpless than any infant. So through the prayer of the believing church which presents it, a prayer to which all things are possible (Mark 9:23), the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by the pouring in of faith.¹⁶

Lutheran scholar Elton Bickel elaborates on this historic confessional connection between infant baptism and receiving the benefits and promises of Christ as a church member:

But the question of an infant's faith, in Luther's estimation, must also be addressed to the Christian church as the sponsoring body. Historically the church had not only followed the practice of infant baptism, but by its testimony had demonstrated that it believed this article. Despite the absence of explicit Scripture passages, the church by a special miracle of God had continued to make this confession: by baptism "children also participate in the benefits and promises of Christ." The confession of this article was the mark of the true church.¹⁷

While we should clarify by saying that for Luther in neither case is the sacrament in question "absolutely" necessary, they are surely "ordinarily" necessary, as for Luther the faithful Christian participates fully in the sacraments and is equipped to participate fully in them by the visible, faithful church.¹⁸

Scripture gives examples of people brought into the covenant by another acting in faith (as in Acts 16:31), and this is a school of thought that Luther later preached on in his sermons¹⁹ including the idea of sponsorship faith. In 1526, Martin Luther issued revisions to the infant baptismal practice and wrote new directions along the lines of sponsorship faith:

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive

the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:14-16).

Then the priest shall lay his hands on the head of the child and pray the Our Father together with the sponsors kneeling.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen (Matthew 6:9-13).

Thereupon the little child shall be brought to the font, and the priest shall say:

The Lord preserve thy coming in and going out now and for evermore.

Then the priest shall have the child, through his sponsors, renounce the devil and say:

(Name), dost thou renounce the devil?

Response: *Yes.*

And all his works?

Response: *Yes.*

And all his ways?

Response: *Yes.*

Then he shall ask:

Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?

Response: *Yes.*

Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was born and suffered?

Response: *Yes.*

Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, one holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and after death an eternal life?

Response: *Yes.*

Dost thou desire to be baptized?

Response: *Yes.*

Then shall he take the child, dip it in the font, and say:

And I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Then the sponsors shall hold the little child in the font, and the priest shall say, while he puts the christening robe on the child...²⁰

15. James A. Frey, "Infant Communion: A Look at Lutheran Liturgical Practice," available at http://hopelutheranfreemont.org/motley/v2n3_a3.htm

16. Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church 1520: The Annotated Luther, Study Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 76.

17. Elton R. Bickel, "Baptism Customs and How They Have Influenced Our Baptism Practices," Ohio Conference; Trinity Lutheran Church; Jenera, Ohio; January 16, 1995, citing Arnold Koelpin, "On Baptism: The Challenge of Anabaptist Baptism and The Lutheran Confession," *No Other Gospel*, 270.

18. Fodor, "Should Baptized Infants Be Communed?" 3.

19. Arnold Koelpin, "On Baptism," 270.

20. Martin Luther, "The Order of Baptism Newly Revised," 1526.

Thus, Martin Luther taught in this specific way that the infant Christian solemnly and officially enters into the new, public covenant of the visible communion of the saints. As per the terms of the new covenant in Lutheran theology, this infant Christian person is entitled to all attendant celebrations and sacraments of the church including the taking of the Lord's Supper.

The Lutheran Council of Theology and Church Relations again argues for this logical and symmetrical relationship between baptism and the Lord's table:

In the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions, Baptism is not an event in a series of "rites of initiation" that is left incomplete without participation in the sacrament [of the altar]. Instead Baptism bestows the "entire Christ" and encompasses the whole life of the believer. Not only is it foundational, but it is also enduring in the life of [the] Christian. The teaching that our Lord attaches to Baptism (see Matt. 28:16–20) surely leads the baptized to eat and drink his body and blood...²¹

Paedocommunion as a logical and necessary part of the Lutheran covenant

Martin Luther saw his work as the continuity of a historical, faithful Christian doctrine. A great many of the Lutheran practices were seen as reviving rather than reforming ancient Christian practices. Among these classical Christian practices was infant communion, which has a legacy dating back to the earliest of church times.²² Saint Augustine of Hippo spoke to this directly in a passage that Martin Luther would have been well aware of:

Those who say that infancy has nothing in it for Jesus to save, are denying that Christ is Jesus for all believing infants. Those, I repeat, who say that infancy has nothing in it for Jesus to save, are saying nothing else than that for believing infants, infants that is who have been baptized in Christ, Christ the Lord is not Jesus. After all, what is Jesus? Jesus means Savior. Jesus is the Savior. Those whom he doesn't save, having nothing to save in them, well for them he isn't Jesus. Well now, if you can tolerate the idea that Christ is not Jesus for some persons who have been baptized, then I'm not sure your faith can be recognized as according with the sound rule. Yes, they're infants, but they are his members. They're infants, but they receive his sacraments. They are infants, but they share in his table, in order to have life in themselves.²³

21. Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod CTCR, "Knowing what we seek and why we come" (available at LCMS.org)

22. Rich Lusk, *Paedofaith: A Primer on the Mystery of Infant Salvation and a Handbook for Covenant Parents* (Monroe, La.: Athanasius Press, 2015) 79.

23. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 174, 7.

Historic Lutheranism is clear that salvation is the work of God alone, justifying the sinner without any merit or effort belonging to themselves.

Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession*—which Martin Luther wholeheartedly approved of²⁴—defines the church as a holy institution designed to continue forever. So, Lutherans, then and now, would be perpetuating an ancient rite (here being infant communion) perfectly in-line with the Lutheran theological understanding of the new covenant. Additionally, the Lutheran church fathers did not view the events happening to them and around them in terms of "Lutheran history" but rather as Christian history as the church grew in purity and righteousness.²⁵

Westminster divine John Wallis would later defend the right of Christian children to be treated as members of the historical and growing visible Protestant Church:

...the children of Christians now, have as well a right to be reputed members of the Christian Church, as the children of the Jews of the Jewish Church; and consequently to be solemnly received into it: that is, into God's visible Church, both of them; and both a like obligation to be offered and dedicated to the service of the True God.²⁶

If infant communion was the historically accurate manner of allowing young Christians to participate and flourish in the Lord, and if Martin Luther's movement was essentially one dedicated to casting off error and regaining the more pure ancient ways of worship and living, and if Lutheran theology regarding baptism and the new covenant requires the young Christian his or her space at the Lord's table then it follows that a Lutheran commitment to infant communion is a logical and necessary theological step in both historic and current Lutheranism.

Predestined to a seat at the Lord's table

A consistent understanding of Martin Luther and the historical Lutheran church's view of predestination would strongly imply that a predestined young person has the duty and privilege to partake in the Lord's supper. The implicit predestination of Martin Luther is a self-evident, self-referencing concept of validating an elected baby as being worthy at the table. Historic Lutheranism is clear that salvation is the work of God alone, justifying the sinner without any merit or effort belonging to themselves. The *Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord* speaks to predestination in Article 11:

24. St. L. 16, 657.

25. Hogg, "Infant Communion, Revisited," 2015, note 5 in the Works Cited page.

26. John Wallis, "A Defense of Infant-Baptism," 12.

Thus far is the mystery of predestination revealed to us in God's Word, and if we abide thereby and cleave thereto, it is a very useful, salutary, consolatory doctrine; for it establishes very effectually the article that we are justified and saved without all works and merits of ours, purely out of grace alone, for Christ's sake. For before the time of the world, before we existed, yea, before the foundation of the world was laid, when, of course, we could do nothing good, we were according to God's purpose chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, Rom. 9:11; 2 Tim. 1:9. Moreover, all opinions and erroneous doctrines concerning the powers of our natural will are thereby overthrown, because God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by the power of His Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, everything that pertains to our conversion... Our election to eternal life does not rest upon our righteousness or virtues but solely on Christ's merit and the gracious will of his Father, who cannot deny himself... Therefore, it is false and incorrect to teach that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ but also something in us is a cause of God's election, and for this reason God chose us for eternal life.²⁷

And, Luther himself speaking strongly in his hallmark style on the subject in a well-known passage of his seminal work *Bondage of the Will*:

I frankly confess that, for myself, even if it could be, I should not want 'free-will' to be given me, nor anything to be left in my own hands to enable me to endeavor after salvation; not merely because in face of so many dangers, and adversities, and assaults of devils, I could not stand my ground and hold fast my 'free-will'...; but because, even were there no dangers, adversities, or devils, I should still be forced to labor with no guarantee of success, and to beat my fists at the air. If I lived and worked to all eternity, my conscience would never reach comfortable certainty as to how much it must do to satisfy God. Whatever work I had done, there would still be a nagging doubt as to whether it pleased God, or whether he required something more. The experience of all who seek righteousness by works proves that; and I learned it well enough myself over a period of many years, to my own great hurt. But now that God has taken my salvation out of the control of my own will, and put it under the control of his, and promised to save me, not according to my working or running, but according to his own grace and mercy, I have the comfortable certainty that he is faithful and will not lie to me, and that he is also great and powerful, so that no devils or opposition

If one is predestined to heaven, then one is most certainly predestined to partake in the taste of heaven that is the Lord's supper. If one is predestined to heaven, then one is duty-bound to obey the biblical command to celebrate at the Lord's table. This logic is Lutheran in its biblically based, sacramentally developed approach.

can break him or pluck me from him... Thus it is that, if not all, yet some, indeed many, are saved; whereas, by the power of 'free-will' none at all could be saved, but every one of us would perish.²⁸

If one is predestined to heaven, then one is most certainly predestined to partake in the taste of heaven that is the Lord's supper. If one is predestined to heaven, then one is duty-bound to obey the biblical command to celebrate at the Lord's table. This logic is Lutheran in its biblically based, sacramentally developed approach. Like all Lutheran thought it is focused on the doctrine of graceful justification (meaning among other things an inclusion into the new visible and invisible church), which includes the counsel of God grafting in his own including through the means of the family and baptism.

Dutch theologian Herman Witsius (himself no doubt a reader of Luther) succinctly and elegantly ties up the notions of election and the new covenant of believers in the thought of Reformational theology:

The beginning and first source of [the covenant of grace] is Election, both of Christ the Saviour and of those to be saved by Christ. For even Christ was chosen of God, and, by an eternal and immutable decree, given to be our Saviour; and therefore he is said to be foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20). And they whom Christ was to save were given to him by the same decree. They are therefore said to be chosen in Christ (John 17:6). That is, not only by Christ as God and consequently the elector of them, but also in Christ as Mediator... to be saved by his merit and power and to enjoy communion with him... We thus describe it: Election is the eternal, free, and immutable counsel of God about revealing the glory of his grace in the eternal salvation of some certain persons [cites Eph. 1:4-6].²⁹

27. Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, ch. 11 section 43.

28. Martin Luther, "Bondage of the Will," 1525, 7.18.

29. Herman Witsius, "Economy of the Covenants," Book 3,

As Lutherans historically believe that newborn Christians are presumed faithful in order to receive baptism,³⁰ it is then this solidified, systematic approach to election and the new covenant (including the attendant sacraments and sacramental participation) that beg for confessional Lutheranism to allow young Christians (and elected believers of all ages) to partake of the Lord's supper.

In Martin Luther's theology we would all be considered as helpless as infants before the mighty and graceful God that elects believers to himself. A small, scared child would be like Luther himself in that thunderstorm where God illuminated Luther's soul and mind. Much as the empowered Luther was called to great and important works when the lightning storm stopped, so are infants and Christians of all ages and abilities called to the table of the Lord and the work of the church. In this, Lutheran theology and paedocommunion are in perfect sync and should be seen as consistent and compatible.

Martin Luther on fathers and families

The Reformation drastically changed traditional attitudes toward the institutions of marriage and family.³¹ With the Reformation came a re-focusing on the family unit; there is strong evidence that children were considered special and were loved.³² The primary social function of the Protestant family was to create good, Christian citizens;³³ this could only be accomplished by viewing children as covenant members of the Christian church and Christian society at large. Steven Ozment, in his book *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* discusses the nature of the Protestant household in regard to the spiritual duties and expectations of Christian fathers: "Parenthood was a conditional trust, not an absolute right, and the home was a model of benevolent and just rule..."³⁴

In stark contrast to the prevailing attitudes of his time, Luther prized marriage and children.³⁵ Interestingly, Luther was in such high demand as a marriage counselor that he frequently complained of the pressure it imposed on him.³⁶ Luther loved children and the role of the father as theologian, the reflection of the character of God, and the elect therein. In citing Luther, Professor Carter

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Lindberg writes:

For Luther the love of God could not be more emphatically expressed than by saying we are his children (WA 20: 694, 27-33). "But you say: The sins which we daily do offend God; thus we are not holy. I answer: Mother-love is much stronger than the excrement and scabs of the child. So is God's love stronger than our filth" (WA TR 1: 189, Nr. 437).³⁷

With such a loving, warm, serious, and covenantally relevant understanding of what the Christian family is and who baptized children are in the eyes of fathers and Father God, it follows that a consistent confessional Lutheran view of the family (being an important smaller unit of the larger Christian family) means that baptized Christian children deserve access to holy communion along with their older sisters and brothers in Christ.

Conclusion

There is an additional important question to answer in the discussion above: Why did Luther not get the question of paedocommunion unequivocally and clearly spelled out the first times he was asked about it? There are a few reasons to consider. It has been said that Martin Luther avoided putting a defining mark on his opinion of "new covenant theology" partly due to his objection to the Franciscans using this verbiage so often in their works.³⁸ However, tying together the themes of the covenant theology of the Reformation, it is not difficult to understand what ramifications the Lutheran doctrines of baptism, predestination, justification and the work of Christ mean for a Lutheran covenantal approach to life and theology, and what these ideas mean for an appraisal and inclusion of paedocommunion into this important covenantal framework.

In keeping with the opinions of more than one of the Lutheran scholars quoted in this paper, Luther most likely did not clarify his position on paedocommunion because under the circumstances

Chapter 4.

30. The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, "Doctrinal Questions: Baptism," available at <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine#baptism>

31. Steven E. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), 49.

32. *Ibid.*, 162.

33. Thomas Max Safley, "Book Review: When Fathers Ruled," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring, 1984), 126–128.

34. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 177.

35. Gerta Scharffenorth, "Martin Luther zur Rolle von Mann und Frau," in Hans Süßmuth, ed. *Das Luther-Erbe in Deutschland*. Vermittlung zwischen Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit, 112, English translation as referenced in Trevor O'Reggio, *Martin Luther on Marriage and Family* (Faculty Publications, 2012), Paper 20.

36. Eberhard Winkler, "Luther als Seelsorger und Prediger" in Junghans, *Leben und Werk*, 1: 231–233, English translation as referenced in O'Reggio, *Martin Luther on Marriage and Family*.

37. Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 97.

38. Scott R. Clark, *A Brief History of Covenant Theology*, available at <http://spindleworks.com/library/CR/clark.htm>

at that time he quite frankly had better things to do. History was in tumult all around him and he was being pulled in all directions by issues of the most severe importance. Additionally, the people who felt that they could not serve communion to their children or were even thinking about this issue at all were probably very rare. I feel that had Luther taken the time and energy to think through this issue with his trademark insight and vigor, in the end he would have landed firmly on the side of paedocommunion as so many of his followers after him in the Lutheran tradition and church patriarchs before him did.

The church would be well-served to look to the work and thought of Luther now in this age just as so many clung to him in the past, as the church seeks truth in times of confusion and conflict. As a flashlight in the dark or a sickle to the chaff, there is rarely a more useful tool than the thought of Martin Luther for one to use when seeking to dissect an issue worth knowing. Luther has left us with such a powerful and relevant body of work that I feel confidently justified in stating that a historically accurate, confessional Lutheran doctrine on paedocommunion would mean that baptized Christians of all ages would be welcomed and indeed encouraged to approach the table of the Lord boldly. This represents a fluid continuity of the Lutheran doctrine of baptism, eucharist, predestination, the covenant, marriage, and family.

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