

The Pastor's Communion in Scania in the Seventeenth Century

New information from a collection of Latin letters

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Introduction

In seventeenth-century Denmark and Sweden, religion and everyday life were closely integrated. The Church was a State Church, and the King was head of both secular and religious matters. In this world of Lutheran orthodoxy, communion and the confession of sins which had to precede it were enormously important features. Every adult person had to confess his sins in the so called *skriftermål* and partake of communion regularly to remain a member of the congregation. The well regulated process concerning the parishioners' communion was managed by the parish minister, whose duty it was not only to teach his parishioners, but also to judge whether they were worthy of receiving communion or not. But the pastor was not only a teacher and a spiritual judge, he was also an individual, an ordinary Christian, who had the same needs as his parishioners. Concerning confession and communion, there was a risk that the different roles of the pastor would clash. The clergymen too had to go to communion, but the questions *how*, *when* and *where* posed serious problems, which had to be solved in a way that was satisfactory to the pastors themselves as well as to authorities and parishioners.

Information about how, when and where Swedish and Danish clergymen actually did receive communion in the seventeenth century is, unfortunately, scarce, but a hitherto quite neglected collection of copies of Latin letters could

perhaps shed at least some light on the problem.¹ The senders and recipients of the letters were, for the most part, country vicars from north-western Scania, and the majority of the original letters were probably written between 1659 and 1680. The original letters are lost today, but a collection of copies was made by one of the correspondents, Frans Leche, who was the vicar of the small village of Barkåkra (near Ängelholm) 1645–1685. The collection contains many interesting letters, but of most importance for us in this particular context are the fourteen letters concerning pastors who go to colleagues to give them and their families communion.

In this article, I will provide some background information, firstly concerning the history of confession and communion and their role in the seventeenth-century Lutheran Church², secondly

¹ The collection is to be found at the Letter Collection of the Manuscript Department of Lund University Library, where it is catalogued as "Bref, latinska, skrivelser, intyg m.m. från 1600-talet, samlade och afskrifna af en samtida". I am presently working on a critical edition and English translation of the collection, which will become a part of my doctoral thesis. For more information on the collection, see Johanna Svensson, "Brev i orostid", pp. 85–98 in *Kyrkohistorisk årskrift* 109 (2009).

² Several scholars have investigated the role of communion and confession in seventeenth-century Lutheran orthodoxy from a Nordic perspective, for example Åke Andrén, *Högmässa och nattvardsgång i reformationstidens svenska kyrkoliv* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans diakonisty., 1954), Christer Pahlm-

concerning the times of services, which are important for the understanding of when and how the clergymen's communion could take place. I will then give a short survey of a few earlier reports from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on pastors' communion in Scania and Denmark. Finally, I will relate and discuss the information on the pastors' communion that I have found in Frans Leche's collection.

It is important to keep in mind that Danish Law was still applied in Scania at the time when the letters of the collection were written. Scania became a Swedish province in 1658, but the integration of Scanian and Swedish Church practice was not imposed until 1681.³ The background chapters will, accordingly, primarily deal with Danish circumstances. The situation in Sweden will, however, be mentioned for comparison.

Background: Communion

In the Middle Ages there was, for people in general, a clear distinction between Mass and communion. Mass was celebrated daily with the priest as the only communicant, while the parishioners communicated about once a year, usually at Easter.⁴ This annual communion was regarded as compulsory.⁵ The Reformation brought about a change in theory, but less of change in practice. Luther and the other reform-

ers strongly emphasized that the communion should be a real *communio*, the sacrament of community, and that the members of the congregation should partake of it together.⁶ The celebration of masses without communicants or without other communicants than the clergyman (by the reformers deridingly called *Winckelmesen*) was prohibited.⁷ Communion was also made optional.⁸ The reformers had thought that the fact that people were now free to partake of communion as often as they wished would lead to an increased communion frequency, but their expectations proved unfounded.⁹ In the times of Lutheran orthodoxy, the normal communion frequency was (in Denmark) twice, perhaps thrice a year. People often went to communion at Christmas, Easter or Michaelmas, or in connection with important events such as marriage or childbirth.¹⁰ In King Christian IV's decree of 1643, communion once a year was an absolute minimum.¹¹ Vicars kept records of the communion of their parishioners, and people who kept away from communion for too long got a stern reprimand.¹² To be *excluded* from communion was a dreaded punishment, which fell upon people who repeatedly committed grave sins without repenting.¹³

Fasting was not a compulsory preparation for communion in the Lutheran church, but it was strongly recommended in the times of Lutheran

blad, *Mässa på svenska* (Lund: Arcus, 1998), David Lindquist, *Nattvarden i svenskt kultliv. En liturgihistorisk studie* (Lund: Gleerups, 1947), Halvor Bergan, *Skriftemål og skriftestol: skriftemålet i den norske kirke fra reformasjonstiden til idag* (Oslo: Univ. forl., 1982), and Lars Eckerdal, *Skriftermål som nattvardsberedelse. Allmänt skriftermål i svenska kyrkans gudstjänstliv från 1811 års till 1942 års kyrkohandbok* (Lund: Gleerups, 1970). Thorough treatments of the pastor's own communion have been presented by Helge Nyman in his book *Kyrkotjänarens nattvardsgång i lutherskt gudstjänstliv* (Åbo: Åbo akademi, 1955), and in his article "Liturgens kommunion" in *Svenskt Gudstjänstliv* 32 (1957).

³ Stig Alenäs, *Lojaliteten, prostarna, språket: studier i den kyrkliga "försvenskningen" i Lunds stift under 1680-talet* (Lund: Lunds kyrkohist. arkiv, 2003) p. 31.

⁴ Lindquist 1947 p. 7, Pahlmblad 1998 p. 184.

⁵ André 1954 p. 43.

⁶ Lindquist 1947 p. 11.

⁷ Lindquist 1947 p. 13.

⁸ André 1954 p. 55.

⁹ André 1954 p. 57.

¹⁰ Bergan 1982 p. 191.

¹¹ *Christian den fjerdes recess 1643* (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt: 1981) p. 149. The decree is in accordance with the text of Luther's foreword to his Small Catechism, where he wrote that it was to be feared that a person who did not seek or desire the sacrament at least once or four times a year despised the sacrament and was no Christian. (Luther, M., *Der Kleine Katechismus* (1529) in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, 30. Band, Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger (1910) pp. 276–279.

¹² See for example the decree of 1629 in *Danske kirkelove* vol. 3, ed. Holger Rørdam (Kjøbenhavn: 1889) p. 146).

¹³ See for example the decree of 1629 in *Danske kirkelove* vol. 3, ed. Holger Rørdam (Kjøbenhavn: 1889) p. 147).

orthodoxy.¹⁴ It seems very likely that there is a connection between the recommended fast and the tendency in the course of the seventeenth century (at least in Sweden) to move communion from its normal place within the High Mass to the morning sermons of Sundays and holidays.¹⁵

Communion in the morning instead of at High Mass was, however, not the only anomaly that existed in the apparently so well-regulated orthodox Lutheran church. A controversial but tenacious custom, causing many hard feelings, was private communion. Both in Denmark and in Sweden many people (especially members of noble families) chose to go to communion in splendid isolation in their homes (with a house chaplain), in the vestry or in the church on weekdays instead of doing it publicly in front of the congregation at High Mass on Sundays.¹⁶ Though strongly condemned by the leading men of the church, the custom of private communion prevailed.¹⁷ According to a letter written by the governor-general of Scania Jakob Burensköld in the beginning of the eighteenth century, "abuse" of private communion was more common in Scania than in other parts of Sweden, which indicates that the custom had been more deeply rooted in Denmark than in Sweden.¹⁸ In an attempt to come to grips with at least part of the problem, communion in private houses was forbidden in Denmark first in a decree of 1629, then in the Danish Law of 1683.¹⁹ The Swedish Church Law of 1686 adhered to the same policy, stating that people should only partake of communion in church.²⁰

¹⁴ Andrén 1954 p. 344.

¹⁵ Andrén 1954 pp. 344–345.

¹⁶ Lindquist 1947 pp. 32–33.

¹⁷ Lindquist 1947 pp. 33, 68–79.

¹⁸ Lunds landsarkiv: Lunds domkyrkoarkiv; Ämbetsmäns brev, 31/10 1715, B I Brevkoncept 19/6 1715. Kungl. Brev 10/10 1715 (quoted in Lindquist 1947 p. 37).

¹⁹ See *Danske Lov 1683* book 2 chapter 5 article 2. The decree of 1629 (March 27) is almost identical. For the entire text of the decree see *Danske Kirkelove* ed. Rørdam vol. 3 (1889) pp. 165–166.

²⁰ *1686 års kyrkolag* (Stockholm; Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelse, 1936) p. 36.

Confession

In the Middle Ages, it was an established practice to make confession to the priest before going to communion.²¹ Before the confession, the priest questioned the penitent on his knowledge about the Christian faith.²² Luther was strongly opposed to what he regarded as the abuse of confession and penance, but regarded the custom as such as very important (though not obligatory).²³ Even though confession was not regarded as a sacrament in the Lutheran churches, it certainly did not disappear at the Reformation. In the course of the seventeenth century, the role of confession became stronger. The somewhat obscure wording of the Danish decree of 1629 makes it difficult to settle the question whether confession and absolution were to be regarded as a prerequisite of communion already in the early seventeenth century, but the Church Ritual of 1685 made it absolutely clear that no one could come to the communion table if he had not confessed his sins beforehand.²⁴ Compulsory or not, confession and absolution play an important role in the decree of 1629 as well as in a decree of 1643. The confession practiced in Danish churches in the times of Lutheran orthodoxy was individual.²⁵ The penitent should, as we can see in the text from 1629, go to confession the day before communion or in the morning of the same day. It later became customary for people in towns to go to confession on Saturday evening, while people in the countryside (who perhaps lived far from the church) went to confession on

²¹ Bergan 1982 p. 65, *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* vol. 2 (Köbenhavn: Roskilde og Bagger, 1980) p. 183.

²² *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder* vol. 2 (1980) p. 184.

²³ Bergan 1982 p. 65.

²⁴ *Danmarks og Norgis Kirke-Ritual 1685–1985* (Köpenhamn: Udvalget for Konvent for Kirke og Theologi, 1985) p. 54. The question *when* confession became a prerequisite of communion in Denmark has caused debate among scholars. While Faehn (*Ritualspørsmålet i Norge 1785–1813*, Oslo: Land og kirke, 1956) avoids settling the question by writing "iallafall etter 1685" ["at least after 1685"] (p. 178), Bergan (1982) seems to regard 1629 as the year when confession became a prerequisite (pp. 82–87).

²⁵ Bergan 1982 p. 82.

Sunday morning immediately before High Mass.²⁶ Confession took place in a confessional, which had its place in the choir at the northern side of the altar.²⁷ The clergyman sat in the confessional while he listened to the confession of the kneeling confessant, examined him on the catechism and gave a comforting speech, the so called *skriftetal*. Finally, the clergyman gave the penitent absolution, laying his hand on his head.²⁸

Confession played a very important role as a preparation for communion in Sweden as well, but individual confession disappeared much earlier than in Denmark, and had by the seventeenth century been replaced by a communal service of preaching, general confession and general absolution (*allmänt skriftermål*). The times for confession, Saturday evening or Sunday morning, were the same as in Denmark, however.²⁹ According to Eckerdal, individual confession was still practiced in Scania in 1698, a custom which was regarded as a problem by the Swedish authorities.³⁰

The pastor's own communion

As long as we only consider the parishioners' communion, there seems to be a strong continuity between the Catholic Middle Ages and the Lutheran orthodoxy of the seventeenth century. Concerning the clergymen's communion there was, however, a complete change. In Catholic times, the clergyman had normally been the only person who received communion during Mass. In the times of Lutheran orthodoxy, he was the only person who did not receive communion.

To begin with the Catholic practice, the priest's self-communion was, as we have already seen, not only permitted, but an indispensable part of the normal liturgy. Luther himself did not express any desire to restrain the clergymen from practicing self-communion while administering communion to their parishioners. Since

the pastor's self-communion was so closely associated with the *Winckelmessen* (which were, on the other hand, strongly condemned), self-communion became, however, a vexed question.³¹ While the initial skepticism was mostly due to the fact that Lutheran theologians wanted to dissociate themselves from the Catholic practice, the orthodox Lutheran conception of the clergyman's office was to become a stumbling block at a later stage.³² In Lutheran orthodoxy, the clergyman was the teacher, official and, in some cases, judge, whose duty it was to decide whether or not his parishioners were worthy of receiving communion. The judge could hardly judge himself.³³ A related problem was the above-mentioned confession (*skriftermål*), which soon became compulsory. Since the clergyman could not absolve himself, he was also prevented from giving himself the bread and wine of the Eucharist.³⁴ It was even regarded as improper for a clergyman to give his own wife and children the Eucharist.³⁵

The increasing antipathy against clergymen's self-communion seems to have been very similar, not to say identical, in all Lutheran countries.³⁶ In some countries, such as Denmark, clergymen's self-communion was eventually explicitly forbidden, while in other countries, such as Sweden, there was no legal prohibition, but a very deep-rooted custom of avoiding it.³⁷ With or without actual prohibition, it was clear that self-communion was a highly controversial act in the Lutheran world of the seventeenth century. A clergyman and his family who wanted to

²⁶ Bergan 1982 p. 188.

²⁷ See the decree from 1629 in *Danske Kirkelove* (1889), vol III, p. 166.

²⁸ Bergan 1982 p. 215.

²⁹ *1686 års kyrkolag* (1936) p. 26.

³⁰ Eckerdal 1970 p. 18.

³¹ Nyman 1957 p. 13.

³² Nyman 1957 p. 13, 16–17.

³³ Nyman 1957 p. 17.

³⁴ Nyman 1955 p. 95.

³⁵ Nyman 1955 p. 98–99. Nyman gives examples from, among others, the Swedish diocese of Kalmar (early seventeenth century). It was, according to Nyman, generally considered important that married people should go to communion together.

³⁶ Nyman 1955 p. 95–101. It is important to stress the fact that the antipathy against clergymen's self-communion is a purely Lutheran phenomenon, which does not exist in Anglican (Nyman 1957 p. 12) or Calvinist (Nyman 1955 p. 64) communities.

³⁷ Nyman 1957 p. 18. The Danish prohibition came in 1685.

be on the safe side ought to seek the help of another clergyman.³⁸ This was, of course, also the advice normally given by church authorities.³⁹

This advice was, however, bound to create new difficulties. For purely practical reasons, a vicar without a curate could hardly leave his own congregations while visiting the Sunday service in another parish. He could, of course, go to see a colleague privately on a weekday, but in that case there was another stumbling block: the opposition against private communion. What the clergyman needed was a time when he was not absolutely obliged to perform his own official duties, but which was still included in the ordinary “schedule” for (at least possible) times for worship. Luckily, such times did exist.

Times of services in the orthodox Lutheran church

In the times of Lutheran orthodoxy, church services were very frequent. Sunday was certainly the most important, but far from the only day for worship. In King Christian V's Danish Law from 1683, we read that there should be church service(s) 1) on all Sundays, 2) on religious holidays, 3) on ordinary days of prayer, 4) on all Wednesdays and Thursdays of Lent until Holy Week in the villages (but only where that was the custom) and 5) on the times in the towns “that have been customary until now”.⁴⁰

The days of prayer need further explanation. That every Friday in the towns and the first Wednesday (or Thursday) of every month in the countryside should be a day of prayer (*bededag*), with (morning) service(s) offering sermon, prayer, song, litany etc., was first announced in a

royal decree on 26 September 1626.⁴¹ Extraordinary days of prayer were announced in times of war and hardship.⁴² A surprisingly large number of royal decrees dealing with the importance of the days of prayer indicates that they were, perhaps, not always as highly respected as the authorities would have liked.⁴³

While the services of the days of prayer were in fact compulsory both for clergyman and congregation (even if there were people who neglected them), points 4–5 indicate that church services could (but did not have to) be held on other days too, where there was such a custom. It is quite natural that the frequency of services was higher in the towns and cities, especially in cathedral cities. Sermons on days of prayer, Wednesdays and Fridays were, however, not enough. Both in the towns and in the countryside there was a tradition of morning prayers on weekdays when there was no sermon.⁴⁴ From the diocese of Lund, we know that Bishop Peder Winstrup thought that the daily morning prayers in the churches were so important, that they should be conducted by the precentor (in Danish *degn*) or one of the children preparing for their first communion when the vicar could, for some reason, not be present.⁴⁵ The situation in Sweden seems to have been similar to that in Denmark, even though the official days of prayer (*böndagar*) were not as numerous as in Denmark (only 3–4 each year).⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Danske kirkelove* vol. 3 ed. Rørdam 1889 pp. 119–125.

⁴² See for example the decrees of 7 January 1655, 12 February 1657 and 23 June 1659 (*Danske Kirkelove* vol. 3 ed. Rørdam 1889 pp. 381, 399 and 412).

⁴³ See for example the decrees of 9 November 1638 and 2 February 1644 (*Danske Kirkelove* vol. 3 ed. Rørdam 1889 pp. 272 and 316).

⁴⁴ *Danske Kirkelove* vol. 3, ed. Rørdam 1889 pp. 189–90.

⁴⁵ *Synodalia Lundensia 1655* in *Historisk Tidskrift för Skåneland* 2 (1904–08) p. 319.

⁴⁶ For services on Wednesdays and Fridays and morning and evening prayers, see for example *1686 års kyrkolag* (Stockholm: Svenska Diakonistyrelsens bokförlag 1936) pp. 11–13. For the Swedish days of prayer, see Gustaf Lindberg, *Kyrkans heliga år* (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelsens bokförlag 1937 pp. 480–493).

³⁸ Nyman 1955 p. 88.

³⁹ For example the Bishop of Strängnäs in Sweden, Laurentius Paulinus Gothus, who in 1624 gave the clergymen of his diocese the advice to seek the help of a colleague (Nyman 1955 p. 98).

⁴⁰ *Danske Lov* 1683 pp. 217–219. The choice to use the Danish Law of 1683 as a source may seem surprising, since the letters in Leche's collection were clearly written prior to the creation of the law. The Church Law of 1683 was, however, not created *ex nihilo*, but was based on earlier law and practice.

It is probably possible to see the Danish list of days when church services should (or could) be held as an illustration of the importance of the different days. Most important are Sundays and religious holidays. After that follow the days of prayer, when the service was compulsory but (apparently) neglected by many parishioners. The Wednesday and Friday services were not held everywhere, and can hardly have been regarded as compulsory for parishioners. Finally we have the morning prayers, which were encouraged but not compulsory (even for the vicar!). It is easy to see that seventeenth-century Lutheran orthodoxy offered a great variety of times for worship.

The communion of the clergy of Scania (and Denmark): some earlier reports of practice

Apart from Leche's collection, we have very little information on how the Scanian clergy actually solved the problem of the pastor's communion. The testimonies that we have are, besides, quite ambiguous, and can be read in different ways.

One very interesting source of information on everyday life in seventeenth-century Scania is a report on a journey in Denmark and Sweden in 1663 written by an anonymous Frenchman. The manuscript was recently discovered in the municipal library of Orléans and translated into Swedish by Mari Bacquin and Ingemar Oscarsson.⁴⁷ The Frenchman describes, among other things, how he attended a High Mass at the church of Börringe in southern Scania. According to his account, the celebrating minister *gave himself* communion ("Le prêtre se communique sur les deux espèces"). The vicar of Börringe practiced, in other words, self-communion. We must, however, keep in mind that the anonymous Frenchman did not write down the description of his travels until many years later, so the possibility that he had a slip of memory cannot be excluded.

⁴⁷ *Den franske kammartjänarens resa: minnen från länderna i norr på 1660-talet*, ed. Ingemar Oscarsson (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2013).

It is perhaps still more interesting to know how Bishop Winstrup thought that the clergymen should solve the problem. In the *Admonitiones* of the above-mentioned Synodalia Lundensia, Winstrup mentions the clergymen's communion twice, in 1650 and in 1655. In the *Admonitiones* from 30 April 1650, we read the following passage:

At presterna skald gaa til alters offuentlig j kircken enten om söndagene eller bededagene oc icke vdi enrum eller hiemme j deris husse.

[That the pastors shall go to the altar publicly in the church either on Sundays or on days of prayer and not privately or at home in their houses.]⁴⁸

And in the *Admonitiones* from 1 May 1655, we read:

Presterna skald lade dem betiene i deris saligheds sag om söndage eller bededage, at de kand verre deris tilhörere it godt exempell, och icke i morgnbön.

[The pastors shall let themselves be served in the matter of their salvation on Sundays or on days of prayer, so that they can be a good example for their listeners, and not during morning prayer.]⁴⁹

From the text we understand a) that Winstrup was clearly opposed to private communion and wanted his clergymen to communicate in front of a large congregation (not during morning prayer, when there were probably quite few people in the church), b) that there were, indeed, clergymen who chose to communicate in an (at least almost) empty church or even in their own homes. But does the bishop mean that a clergyman should practise self-communion? His modern biographer Karl P. Hansson clearly thinks so, but adds that it must have been a prerequisite that the clergyman let a colleague listen to his confession first.⁵⁰ The wording of the text of the

⁴⁸ Synodalia Lundensia 30 April 1650 in *Historisk tidskrift för Skåneland* 2 1904–08.

⁴⁹ Synodalia Lundensia 1 May 1655 in *Historisk tidskrift för Skåneland* 2 1904–08.

⁵⁰ Karl P. Hansson, *Lundabiskopen Peder Winstrup före 1658* (Lund: Gleerups, 1950) p. 209.

Synodalia is, however, not absolutely clear. The words “gaa til alters” [“go to the altar”] and (especially) “lade dem betiene i deris saligheds sag” [“let themselves be served in the matter of their salvation”] strongly suggest that the bishop envisaged the clergyman as receiving communion from someone else. In that case, Winstrup would simply mean that a clergyman should *receive communion from the hands of a colleague* in front of the congregation (even if that could, of course, cause practical problems to a country vicar without a colleague).⁵¹

A source of information that must not be neglected (though it originates neither from Scania nor from the seventeenth century) is *Kirkeforfatningen i de Kongelige Danske Stater, med dens vigtigste Fordele og Mangler samt muelige Forbedringer*, written in 1789 by the obnoxious and headstrong Danish clergyman Heinrich Ussing.⁵² Ussing’s six voluminous volumes deal with the state of the Church of Denmark in his own time and the ameliorations which ought, according to him, to be brought about. Ussing reacted strongly against the private character of clergymen’s communion in some places, where the pastor, with or without his family, was given the Lord’s supper by a pastor from the neighbourhood on a weekday or a monthly day of prayer, when very few people were present in the church.⁵³ The country vicar’s communion was, according to Ussing, generally followed by a party, which sometimes became unruly. Even if guests or host did not actually misbehave, the

party and the preparations for it made the pastor and (still more) his wife unable to concentrate on confession and communion. It is possible that the pugnacious Ussing, himself an outspoken advocate of the pastor’s self-communion, tended to find faults with a situation that was by most people regarded as unproblematic.⁵⁴ There is, however, no doubt that Ussing related what was the actual practice in his own time. The report of Ussing and the letters of Leche’s collection are more than a hundred years apart, but there are, as we will see, very obvious similarities between the practice described by Ussing in 1789 and the information on the Scanian clergymen’s communion in the seventeenth century that emerges from the letters.

The Scanian clergymen’s communion as reflected in Leche’s collection

Let us now turn to Frans Leche’s collection of letters to see what information we can get on this matter. Out of the fourteen letters dealing with the question of the pastor’s communion⁵⁵ twelve are letters of invitation while two (letters 3 and 49) are replies. In a typical letter of invitation, the sender asks a colleague (a neighbour and/or relative) to come to him on a special day (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday) together with his wife and children and give the sacraments to him and his family.

(table on next page)

⁵¹ Winstrup has, to my knowledge, never clearly stated his own position on the question concerning the clergyman’s self-communion. During his years of study in Jena he was, however (according to Hansson 1950 p. 42) greatly influenced by Gerhard, who was strongly opposed to self-communion (Nyman 1955 pp. 73–74).

⁵² For information on Ussing see *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* vol. 15, København 1984 pp. 200–201. Nyman (1955) mentions and quotes Ussing, for example on p. 104.

⁵³ “(...) paa andre steder er det ogsaa en virkelig Uorden, naar Praesten, med eller uden sin Familie, en Søgnedag, oftest i en ganske tom Kirke, eller i det høieste en Maaned-Bededag, hvor fire til sex Mennesker kun er naervaerende, lader sig af en Naboe-Praest betiene med Nadveren” (Ussing 1789 vol. IV pp. 342–343).

⁵⁴ For Ussing’s general opinion on the pastor’s self-communion, see Ussing 1789 vol. IV pp. 343–344.

⁵⁵ In fact 15 letters, but since 65 and 68 are identical (it is obvious that the same letter has been copied twice by mistake) I treat them as one single letter.

Letter/sender	recipient	year and date	day of communion	time of day
2/Leche	Salomonsøn (M. S)	1657, 16 Nov.	Wednesday	08.00
3/Salomonsøn	Leche	1657, Nov.	Wednesday	08.00
4/?	?	1658, 31 Dec.	Wednesday	?
25/?	? (N)	?, July	Wednesday	?
33/?	? (N)	?	Tuesday	?
44:II/Taagelycke	?	before 1702	Wednesday	13.00
47/Salomonsøn(M. S)	? (N) Leche	before 1677, 6 Nov.	Friday	10.00
49/Salomonsøn(M.S)	? (N) Leche	before 1677, Nov.	Friday	10.00
56/?	?	1664	Wednesday	10.00
60/Taagelycke	Leche	before 1685	Friday	09.00
65=68/Taagelycke	?	1666, 28 Apr.	Wednesday	A.M.
73/Taagelycke	?	before 1702	Thursday	?
75/Salomonsøn	Leche?	1666, 10 Dec.	Thursday	09.00
79/?	?	?, April	Wednesday	A.M.

(Above: Letter 3 is an answer to letter number 2. Letter 49 is an answer to a letter which has not been copied in Leche's collection.)

Who received communion from whom?

One set of initials, M. S., and two names, Laurentius Andraeae and Frans Leche, appear in the letters. The fact that M. S. appears together with *Forsl.* (i.e. *Forsloviae*) (letter 75) and the word *affinis* (brother-in-law) (letters 2, 3, 47, 49 and 75) makes it possible to identify M. S. as Mogens Salomonsøn, vicar of Förslöv and Grevie. Salomonsøn was Frans Leche's brother-in-law, and it seems very likely that also the letters 4 and 25 (which do not mention sender or receiver but address an *affinis*) were sent by him to Frans Leche. Laurentius Andraeae Taage-lycke, vicar of Hjærnap and Tåstarp, was not related to Leche but a close neighbour. The distance between Barkåkra and Hjærnap is 6 kilometers and the distance between Barkåkra and Förslöv is 8 kilometers (as the crow flies). Since Hjærnap and Förslöv are the two parishes that are at the shortest distance from Barkåkra, it is very probable that Frans Leche regularly helped and got help from the vicars of these two parishes. It is, of course, also possible (even if we have no evi-

dence) that Taagelycke and Salomonsøn sometimes helped each other.

An important aspect is that the clergymen who wrote the letters did not seek assistance only for themselves, but also for their families. Since it was regarded as improper for a clergyman to give communion to the members of his own family, the visiting clergyman is asked to give communion both to his colleague and to the colleague's wife and (grown-up) children. The letters asking for help are, with the exception of number 33, never written in first person singular (I), but in first person plural (we). The wife of the sender is mentioned explicitly in letters 25, 44:II, 56 and 65=68. The visiting clergymen are not invited alone, but together with their wives, children and, in letters 25, 60, 73 and 75, the children's tutor.

When did the clergymen receive communion?

It would have been very interesting to know how often the pastors went to communion, but there is no possibility of inferring that from the material. It is not possible to see a pattern whereby the clergymen received communion at a special time of the year, for example Christmas or Easter. The letters that mention a date were written in November (numbers 2 and 3, 47), December

(4, 75), July (25) and April (65=68 and 79), which gives the impression that the clergymen's communions were well distributed over the year.

All of the letters clearly show that the communion is to take place on a weekday. In one case (letter 47) the day is a Friday, in another case (33) a Tuesday and in two cases (73, 75) a Thursday, but the most common day is, without comparison, Wednesday (2 and 3, 4, 25, 44:II, 56, 65=68, 79). It is difficult not to see a connection with the days of prayer, which, as we have seen, were on the first Wednesday of every month in the countryside. At least in the cases of letters 4 and 65=68, it is clear from the dates that the day intended for the communion must have been a day of prayer.

In all cases where a time is given (except for one), it is a time in the morning: an unspecified time A. M. (65, 79), 08.00 (2 and 3), 09.00 (60, 75) or 10.00 (47 and 49). In 47, 56 and 79 morning prayers are mentioned explicitly (*precatione matutina, precibus matutinis, preces matutinae*). Prayers (*preces, precatone*) are also mentioned in 60 and 75. It seems clear that the clergymen have quite often (despite their bishop's admonition) combined their communion with the traditional morning prayers. Letter 44:II differs from the others in this respect, since the sender (Taagelycke) wants his neighbour to come and perform the ceremony at 13:00.

If we compare the information on the times for the clergymen's communions given in Leche's collection of letters with Bishop Winstrup's admonitions (see above), we come to the somewhat puzzling conclusion that the clergymen of Hjárnarp, Förslöv and Barkåkra obeyed their bishop in some respects, but not in all. The clergymen favoured (perfectly in accordance with Winstrup's guidelines) days of prayer for their communions, but they seem to have been persistent in communicating in or after morning prayers instead of doing it in the main service. We can only speculate in their reasons for doing so. One possibility is that the reason was purely practical. The visiting clergyman could "skip" the (not so important) morning prayers in his own church to be able to receive communion from his neighbour, but then he had to leave to perform the main service at home. Another reason could be social. Winstrup's words of warn-

ing indicate that private communion was, indeed, quite popular even among clergymen. The clergymen's and their families' communions during or after morning prayers may have had a tempting resemblance to private communions. A third and somewhat different possibility is that there was in fact only one service on days of prayer, and that this service was (at least sometimes) held so early in the morning that it could be called "morning prayers".

Where did the clergymen receive communion?

It might seem self-evident that the clergymen's communion took place in church, but since Bishop Winstrup found it necessary to remind his clergy that they should not receive communion in their homes, it is important to pay attention to the fact that there were actually clergymen in Scania who did exactly that. Since the correspondents, no doubt, followed a long-established custom and were well acquainted with the whole procedure, they were not so very specific in their letters as to where the ceremony was going to take place. Phrases such as *fumum de vestris focis surgentem videbo* [I will see the smoke rising from your hearth] (3) and *lares nostros invisere* [visit our home](44:II, 47, 56) together with the frequent use of *ad nos, apud nos* etc. are slightly confusing, and makes the modern reader wonder whether the clergymen and their families in fact received communion in their own homes. The church building is mentioned in letters 25, 47, 60 and 75, even though it is not explicitly written that the communion is going to take place there. There is, accordingly, an at least theoretical possibility that the clergymen and their families, even in cases where they first attended a sermon or morning prayer in church, then returned to the vicarage for the communion (cf. letter 47: ... *rogamus, ut dicto die (...) lares nostros invisere digneris et conatus nostros sacros precatone tantum matutina in aede nostra sacra praemissâ juvare velis* [we pray, that you will deign to visit our home and be good enough to help us in our holy undertakings after a morning prayer in our sacred building]). The most probable is, however, that the

correspondents actually obeyed their bishop in this respect and received communion in church (at least on most occasions).

What happened during the ceremony?

For natural reasons (but unfortunately for us), the correspondents did not find it necessary to describe in detail what was actually going to happen at their meetings. Morning prayers are, however, mentioned in three letters (47, 56, and 79) and prayers are mentioned in letters 60 and 75, where the time for the ceremony is given as 09.00 in the morning. We can probably assume that the normal procedure of the ceremony (on an ordinary weekday) was the following:

- 1) Morning prayers in church, possibly conducted from the pulpit. (*È suggestu* is only mentioned in number 75).
- 2) The visiting vicar heard his colleague's and his family's confession. Confession is only mentioned in number 44:II (*auditâ meâ et amantissimae meae confessione* [having listened to my and my dear one's confession]), 65=68 (*audita nostra confessione* [having listened to my confession]) and, perhaps, in number 2 (*Deo nostro (...) reconciliari* [be reconciled with our God]), but it seems most unlikely that this very important element was neglected or that the confession was heard at another time.⁵⁶ Leche's *melliflua, consolatoria et salutaria (...) verba* [mellifluous, consoling and saving words], which Taagelycke claims to be longing for in 65=68, must refer to the initial admonition and the words of absolution spoken by the confessor.
- 3) The visiting vicar gave the colleague and his family communion.

⁵⁶ The expression *Deo reconciliari* was used by Johann Gerhard in the chapter "Poenitentia" in his *Loci Theologici* (1657): "... homines verè poenitentes & in CHRISTUM credentes peccati remissionem consequuntur, & Deo reconciliantur" (p. 213).

It is very probable that there was a difference between the cases when the clergyman's communion took place on a day of prayer and the cases when it took place on an ordinary weekday. We know that (at least) letters 4 and 65=68 refer to a day of prayer, and probably number 25 (where the recipient is asked to come on 6 July, which was a Wednesday) as well. Letter 25 is the only one that clearly mentions a *concio* (sermon), but it is quite likely that sermons were held on the (other) days of prayer as well.

A very important question is, of course, whether the congregation was present in the church. Since the congregation or the parishioners are nowhere mentioned, the text of the letters offers little help. A possible answer would perhaps be "in some cases yes, in some cases no". It is quite unlikely (though not impossible) that the clergymen and their families were alone in the church at the sermons of the days of prayer, but it is quite as unlikely that there was a (large) congregation at the morning prayers on an ordinary Tuesday or Thursday. The fact that Taagelycke asks his colleague to "settle a time in the morning" (*horam quendam antemeridianam (...) statuas*) in number 65=68 suggests that he thought that the clergymen's communion was a matter for the clergymen alone, which was not important to communicate to the parishioners (who would, otherwise, perhaps have liked to know the exact time of the service beforehand). Wednesday 2 May 1666 (suggested by Taagelycke) was, however, a day of prayer, which makes matters still more complicated.

An important aspect that must not be forgotten is that the very fact that the clergymen's communion seems to have been coordinated with the ordinary morning prayers or sermons made it at least theoretically possible for the congregation to be present. This may have been important, in any case in the eyes of the Bishop, since it made it difficult to accuse the clergymen of practicing private communion. That the bishop would, in fact, have wanted his clergymen to receive communion on Sundays in front of the entire congregation is another matter. It is also important to stress that the clergymen were never alone when they took communion: they were accompanied by their wives and children and, sometimes, even the children's tutors. The cler-

gymen and their families formed a congregation in their own right.

Conclusions

Lutheran clergymen's communion in the seventeenth century is a complicated question. While self-communion was regarded as highly suspicious, there was also a strong opposition to private communion. Though it is difficult to ascertain Bishop Winstrup's own opinion, it is probable that he was opposed to self-communion. He stressed, nevertheless, that the clergymen of his diocese should communicate publicly in front of their congregations, a procedure which could, for practical reasons, be quite difficult in small parishes.

The fourteen letters in Leche's collection that treat the question of the clergyman's own communion give evidence that (at least) the vicars of Barkåkra, Hjärnarp and Förslöv did not practice self-communion (or gave communion to their families), but asked a fellow clergyman in the neighbourhood to come to their aid. The visiting clergyman's family was asked to come and visit as well. The communion always took place on weekdays, mostly on Wednesdays and Fri-

days, and, as far as we can ascertain, almost always in the morning. Confession is only explicitly mentioned in two letters (both written by the same person), but it seems very unlikely that this ceremony, so important in Lutheran orthodoxy, was neglected. There seems to be a connection between the clergymen's communions and the ordinary morning prayers, especially on days of prayer (= the first Wednesday of every month). The fact that the church building is mentioned in several letters seems, in connection with the coordination between the clergymen's communion and the ordinary times for worship, to indicate that the clergymen took communion in church, but we cannot be absolutely sure. None of the letters mention the parishioners, so we cannot know whether there was a congregation in the church or not. Probably there was a congregation at least on the days of prayer. Since the clergymen were not alone, but accompanied by their wives, children and, sometimes, the children's tutors, the clergymen and their families constituted a congregation of their own. The clergymen's visits to each other to give each other communion can be seen as an important social event, which probably helped to strengthen feelings of kinship and solidarity within the clergy.

Summary

The pastor's communion was, for various reasons, a problematic question in Denmark and Sweden in the seventeenth century. Information about how, when and where the Swedish and Danish clergymen actually received communion is scarce. A hitherto neglected collection of Latin letters written by clergymen from the northwestern part of Scania shed some light on the problem. The letters give evidence that these vicars did not practice self-communion or give communion to their families, but asked a fellow clergyman in the neighbourhood to come to their aid. The communion always took place on weekdays and almost always in the morning.