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Master of Sacred Theology

by
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June 1964

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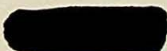
AN ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAPTISMAL
RITE OF THE LUTHERAN AGENDA

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND CONSIDERATIONS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

This thesis is intended to be a practical study of two closely related problems involved in the use of the baptismal rite of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America as it is found in The Lutheran Agenda, the conference's official guide to rites other than those most directly associated with the celebration of the Eucharist or with the observance of Matins and Vespers.¹ The first question to be studied is, "What does the rite itself mean?" The second question is, "How best may baptism be administered in an edifying manner in the congregations of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod?"

One reason for such a study rests in the criticism which is being mounted against the present rite. Some of the criticism is ill-founded. Its roots, however, are significant. On one side the criticism is raised that the rite no longer speaks effectively to men of our day. On the other side criticism suggests that the rite does not adequately reflect the tradition of the Church. Both are worthy of a hearing.

¹The Lutheran Agenda. Authorized by the Synods Constituting the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.).

Still another reason for such a study is to be found in a pastoral concern for the role baptism plays or fails to play in the life of a congregation. At this moment the Lutheran church is being greatly influenced by a renewal of appreciation of New Testament, patristic, Luther and confessional studies. These together with the ecumenical and liturgical movements have all served to shed new light on the centrality of baptism. Yet, Luther's statement in the Large Catechism, "In Baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and to practice all his life,"² is more likely to be met with amazement than comprehension. In many parishes this lack of appreciation is made evident by the indifferent manner in which the rite is administered. Baptismal reform is a need felt by many. The name of Ernest W. Southcott, a priest of the Church of England, is linked closely with such reform.³

The third reason such a study commends itself to us is the criticism coming from within the Church herself on her evident failure to have effectively captured the hearts of its membership. The names of Peter Berger, Martin Marty, and Gibson Winter immediately come to mind.⁴ It is

²The Book of Concord, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 441.

³Ernest W. Southcott, Receive This Child (London and Oxford: A. R. Mowbray and Company, 1951).

⁴Peter L. Berger, The Noise of Solemn Assemblies

all too painfully clear that the cost of discipleship is not being paid. The almost casual way in which men and women are permitted to enter the initiatory rite of the Church may well play a part in this state of affairs. The rite itself may contribute to it. What our rite means to say and what it is heard to say are not always the same.

A final factor also plays a part in the need for such a study. The vast numbers of people outside the Church, increasingly untouched by the Gospel, become more and more a fact of the life of the Church. Conditions seem to approach more and more those present at the time of the birth of our rite. As in the earliest days of the Church, the number of potential adult candidates for baptism is great. This shift makes a study of our rite, oriented around infant baptism, necessary.

It is, therefore, a pastoral concern which motivates this study. The goal is to open a way to the restoration of the sacrament and rite of baptism to their rightful place in the esteem and life of the Church.

This thesis, therefore, shall not primarily center on exegetical, theological, or historical questions. A historical survey is necessary to any effort to ascertain the

(Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1961).

Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion
(New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959).

Gibson Winter, The Suburban Captivity of the Churches
(New York: Macmillan, 1962).

meaning of our present rite. However, the historical study will be limited to those elements of the Western practice which lead most directly to our present rite.

This same concern underlies our decision to limit our study to the Order of Holy Baptism of infants with sponsors in the Agenda.⁵ This order represents most fully the tradition of the Church. It also provides the greatest number of resources for development and utilization. The other orders in the Agenda are derived from this rite and represent a certain impoverishment. This order, it is suggested, is appropriate also for adult baptisms if some minor adjustments are made. This rite for infants actually comes from the ancient rite for the baptism of adults. It is some sort of historical irony that that rite is not used for those for whom it was intended and for whom it is best suited. It is used instead for children for whom it was not originally intended and who can not, as best as we can tell, consciously participate in it. The adults for whom it was intended and who might profit most from it are offered instead an impoverished substitute.

The writer will offer no proposals for a radically new rite. He is not convinced by the arguments offered for such a radical action. He proposes to offer suggestions that can be useful in the immediate future and which are

⁵The Lutheran Agenda, op. cit., pp. 1-7.

in harmony with the Missouri Synod's constitutional objective of a measure of liturgical uniformity. The proposals for a revision of the adult rite might seem an exception to this basic decision. It will become apparent, however, that these proposals fit into the limits we have set ourselves.

The thesis will fall into two major parts. The first of these will consist in a series of studies on the rites which have led to our present rite. The first of these rites is that presented in The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus. This document is dated about A.D. 215 and offers an account of the practice of the Church at a time when adult baptisms predominated. The second stage of development will be represented by an examination of the very similar Gelasian Sacramentary and Ordo Romanus XI. These are both French in origin, dating from the eighth and ninth centuries, respectively. They represent a full and rich rite at a time when practices intended for adult catechumens had been just slightly changed to suit the baptism of infants. Adult conversions by this time had become rather scarce. The third stopping point will be the rites prepared by Luther. Here another step has been taken to modify the rites even more in the direction of suitability for infant baptisms. Our own rite will be studied in connection with Luther's. The rite of The Lutheran Agenda is in most respects similar to Luther's

rite of 1526.

The second major portion of the thesis will offer three practical sections. The first of these will be an evaluation of our present rite with suggestions for modifications which, it is felt, would make the rite more useful than it presently is. The second section will be an exposition of our present rite. It will be in the form of a commentary such as might be prepared for a congregation as an aid to its participation in the rite. The final section will consist of proposals for a reworking of the initiatory rites for adult candidates for baptism.

Because of the pastoral concern which rests behind this thesis and because of the writer's hope that others will be stimulated to undertake similar studies, the writer has chosen to make his citations, wherever a choice permitted, from a limited number of books so as to facilitate such study. Wherever possible, for the same reason, citations have been made to works written in English.

The writer has found the following works among the most useful and commends their study to others. Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy is by far the most useful of all books.⁶ This volume provides English translations of most of the significant orders and descriptions of the baptismal

⁶E. C. Whitaker, Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1960).

rite. In view of the impossibility of the student readily mastering all of the many languages translated, this book is an essential to all studying this material. Our citations from the rites of Hippolytus and of the Gelasian Sacramentary and of the Ordo Romanus XI are taken from this work. Equally valuable but much less accessible is the work Die Taufe by the Jesuit scholar, Alois Stenzel.⁷ The book is written in a torturous German but represents thorough and skilled scholarship. It traces the history of the present Roman rite from its beginnings. This work was used for the study of medieval baptismal rites since the vast majority of the rites themselves were unavailable to the writer. Third in the list of key volumes is Danielou's The Bible and the Liturgy.⁸ This volume excels in its commentary on patristic development of Biblical materials.

Of lesser importance, but nevertheless of considerable interest, the following two books deserve mention. For a study of Luther's rite, the Philadelphia Edition is still the most useful.⁹ Possibly the new Concordia-Fortress

⁷Alois Stenzel, S.J., Die Taufe: Eine Genetische Er-
klaerung der Tauf liturgie (Innsbruck: Verlag Felizian
Rauch, 1958).

⁸Jean Danielou, S.J., The Bible and the Liturgy (Notre
Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956).

⁹Martin Luther, Works of Martin Luther With Introduc-
tions and Notes (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), VI.

edition volume which contains these rites will replace it in the future. For the present it remains a most convenient and useful work. The introductions by P. Z. Strodach, although dated somewhat by the passage of time, are most helpful. For developments within German Lutheranism between the time of Luther and our own, the most interesting is Graff's monumental Geschichte der Aufloesung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands.¹⁰

¹⁰Paul Graff, Geschichte der Aufloesung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands. 2 vols. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1937 and 1939).

CHAPTER II

THE WESTERN BAPTISMAL RITE UP TO THE SIXTH CENTURY

Although the Gelasian Sacramentary provides the most complete picture of the Church's baptismal practice in the West, it is necessary first to examine the practice of the Church in the centuries prior to this Sacramentary. Such an examination makes it evident that the rites of the catechumenate and of baptism and confirmation presented in the Sacramentary had a long and varied history. Even though much of the material concerning these rites from earlier centuries is fragmentary and at times imprecise, one can see the roots of the practice described in the Sacramentary.

The imprecision and incompleteness which so aggravate the student are due, no doubt, in part to the hazards which befall ancient texts through the passage of the centuries. In all likelihood, many of the writers felt no need for greater thoroughness either because it was not their purpose to give a complete account of the baptismal practice or because they assumed a knowledge of the rite on the part of their readers. The disciplina arcani, the Church's deliberate attempt to protect herself from misunderstanding and distortion in times of persecution, must also have played a part in this.

One of the questions being seriously debated today is the problem of how early in the Church's life the rites became fixed. New material will have to be discovered, material which gives us more information than we now have, before this question can be settled. However, one does note in the earliest available documents intimations of a rather highly developed series of rites which they assume are the practice of the Church of that general locale. Nevertheless, it must also be said that there appears to have been a degree of flexibility in certain particulars which was lost in later centuries.

An example of this is to be found in what may be the earliest document outside of the New Testament itself which discusses baptism. This document is The Didache, variously dated but usually treated as written in the first portion of the second century after Christ. Three items can be drawn out of the brief discussion of baptism it contains. First, the permissive rule concerning the type of water to be used is interesting. Flowing water is given as the first choice; then cold (fresh and unpolluted?) standing water; then warm (stagnant?) standing water; and finally, water poured on the head. A second point is the use of the trinitarian formula rather than a baptism "in the name of Jesus." Thirdly, the instruction is given that the baptizer and the person to be baptized should fast

prior to the baptism.¹

The First Apology of Justin Martyr, a defense of the Christian faith made by Justin in Rome at about 160 A.D., also mentions the practice of fasting in connection with baptism. Justin describes the naming of the Triune God in a way that suggests a three-fold baptism, one washing at the naming of each Person. This practice was quite regular in later years. A practice which might reflect the beginnings of confirmation is also mentioned. After the person had been baptized, he was brought to the brethren, who made common prayer for him and the whole company, asking that they all might lead good and obedient lives and gain eternal life.²

A document dated about fifty years after that of Justin Martyr, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, purports to be an accurate description of the liturgical practices current in Rome. All indications seem to point to the acceptability of this claim. One editor of The Apostolic Tradition is convinced that the text presents the practice of the Roman church of some thirty or fifty years before

¹E. C. Whitaker, Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1960), p. 1.

²Ibid., pp. 1f.

its approximate date of 215 A.D.³ If this estimate is correct, it may very well be a description of the baptismal practice known to Justin Martyr. Harnack is quoted by Easton in regard to this document as follows:

Here is the richest source that we in any form possess for our knowledge of the polity of the Roman church in the oldest time, and this Roman polity may, in many regards, be accepted as the polity held everywhere.⁴

One must hasten to add that at least some of the material is of his own composition as in his day each officiant still felt free to compose prayers as he would and could. Even with this understanding, the text remains a rich source of material and of information concerning the baptismal practice of the early Church by a conservative churchman who had every reason to present an honest record.⁵

The practice of the Roman church was described in the following manner by Hippolytus.⁶ He discusses first the catechumenate. It must be remembered that he is writing in the days when adult converts rather than the children of Christians constituted the bulk of those coming to baptism.

³The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, translated and edited by Burton Scott Easton (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1962), p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁵Josef A. Jungmann, S.J., The Early Liturgy To the Time of Gregory the Great, translated by Francis A. Brunner, C.S.S.R. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), pp. 52-58.

⁶Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 2-7.

The catechumenate was to last for three years although in some instances it might be shortened. The catechumens were to be instructed in the forepart of the Mass (sometimes called the Mass of the Catechumens) and dismissed with a blessing accompanied with the laying on of hands. At the end of this three year period, the catechumen was examined as to the pattern of life he had established during the three years. It is interesting that moral behavior and evidence of sincerity were the basis of the Church's decision to admit the candidate to the final stages of preparation for initiation. During this final stage the catechumens were exorcised daily. This exorcism was accompanied again by the laying on of hands. This final stage generally took place during the season now known as Lent.

On "Thursday" the candidate received instruction, as he had all through this final period of preparation, and washed himself thoroughly. Although the text does not rule out the possibility that another Thursday is meant, the day mentioned is in all likelihood Maundy Thursday. Hippolytus' contemporary, Tertullian, describes Easter as "the most solemn occasion for baptism," although he acknowledges that "every moment is apt for baptism."⁷ On Friday and Saturday the candidates were required to fast. On Holy Saturday

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

they were assembled by the bishop for a final exorcism marked by the bishop's breathing on their faces and by his tracing the sign of the cross on their foreheads, ears, and noses. That entire night was spent in a vigil, the candidates being instructed from the Scriptures.

At cockcrow the baptisms commenced. A prayer was said over the water, which had to be flowing. The little children were baptized first. The "little children" included those who could not answer for themselves, in which case parents or other relatives were to make the responses for them. Then the adult men and finally the adult women were baptized, all sans clothing.

They were first asked to renounce Satan and his works among men. They were then anointed with a previously exorcised oil of exorcism. This anointing accompanied a final exorcism of the person to be baptized. They were then baptized thrice, once with a confession of faith in God the Father, once with a confession of faith in God the Son, and then again with a confession of faith in God the Holy Spirit. When the newly-baptized person arose from the font, he was anointed with the oil of thanksgiving. They all then donned their clothing and went to the church.

Their confirmation then took place. The bishop laid his hands on them and invoked the Holy Spirit on their behalf, asking that they might be filled with the Spirit and be given the grace to bear the fruits of the Spirit. A

final anointing and signing preceded the kiss of peace, given them then for the first time. They then joined in the Eucharist which for this their first communion included a chalice of water (in remembrance of their baptism) and a chalice of a mixture of milk and honey (as a token of their having reached the land of milk and honey established for them).

Clues provided by Tertullian, the one-time Catholic who departed to Montanism, give us information concerning the Roman practice at this time. They support the general accuracy of The Apostolic Tradition.⁸ Tertullian mentions among other things the prayers, fasts and all-night vigils prior to baptism, the renunciation of Satan, the public confession of the Christian faith according to the creedal statement, the three-fold baptism, the post-baptismal unction, and the final laying on of hands with the invocation of the Spirit. He also cites the practice of the use of the cup of milk and honey at the baptismal Eucharist. As mentioned earlier, Tertullian describes the Pascha as the most appropriate occasion for baptism.⁹ After Easter, Pentecost is to be preferred. He acknowledges also that each day is appropriate for baptism. His instruction concerning the rank of the person who performs the baptisms

⁸Ibid., pp. 7-9.

⁹Supra, pp. 11f.

is also open. The chief right to baptize belongs to the bishop; if none is present, the presbyters and deacons may baptize with the bishop's approval. Even laymen have the right to baptize, he concludes.

All in all, the rite of the churches of Rome was a full and expressive one, admirably suited both for the typical candidate and also for a statement of the Church's understanding of baptism. This is especially significant because of the early date, namely, the close of the second century and the beginning of the third. As one would expect, the baptismal practice provides in the catechumenate both a period of probation and a period of instruction. The exorcisms, layings on of hands, and the renunciations reflect the Church's sympathy with the Biblical teachings concerning the struggle for men that goes on between God and the forces arrayed against Him. The use of Easter as a baptismal date highlights the parallels between Christ's death and resurrection and the corresponding experience of the candidate in baptism.

Although the documentation for baptismal practice grows increasingly heavy for the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries in many locales of the Church, there is a sparsity of materials which shed light on the rite in Rome and in western Europe. These two places are of importance since it is from them that the rite we now use has come.

The so-called Leonine Sacramentary, variously dated

from the final half of the fourth century to the closing years of the sixth century, contributes little to the survey other than some propers for a baptismal mass for Pentecost, including a blessing for the cups of water and of milk and honey.¹⁰ The material also includes an admirable blessing of the font which commends itself for adaptation for use today.

The Letter to Senarius written by John the Deacon is the only bridge between the documents reviewed above and the Gelasian Sacramentary.¹¹ The letter is dated around 500 A.D. and was written in Rome. The author of the letter described interpretively the Roman baptismal practice of his time. He confides to Senarius that he is describing things which have been carefully guarded by that church through the years, even though much of what he discusses was not recorded in books.

A catechumenate was still the regular practice. During this time the candidate was instructed "by the blessing of one laying his hand, that he may know who he is and who he shall be," surely, an interesting comment on the Church's attitude toward teaching.¹² He also speaks of infants being "scrutinized" three times before the Paschal feast. This

¹⁰Whitaker, op. cit., p. 143.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 144-148.

¹²Ibid., p. 145.

is evidence of the decreasing number of adult catechumens in relation to that of infants. It also gives evidence of the manner in which the Church continued to use the old rites intended for adult converts with little modification for the baptism of the infant children of Christian parents. In addition to the laying on of hands, the catechumen received the breathing which represents the routing of the evil spirit and an exorcism. He received blessed salt and renounced the devil.

After these rites which were seemingly repeated several times during the first stage of preparation, the catechumen became one of the competents (the designation given in most areas of the Church), or, as they were known particularly in Rome, one of the elect. This designation set off the catechumens who had been admitted to the final stage of preparation. The elect then took part in a ceremony in which for the first time they heard the Creed. This ceremony bears the name of traditio symboli, the handing over of the Creed. The so-called scrutinies followed. As will be seen, this handing over of the Creed took place within the scrutinies in other rites. This leads one to suspect that the terminology was not quite fixed in definition at this time or that at later times it had become less precisely defined. At these scrutinies the candidates were examined for evidences of their faith and received an anointing on the ears and nose and a second anointing on

the breast. The baptism itself was performed with the three-fold immersion. All in all, John's description covers a baptismal practice which was still largely in the pattern of Hippolytus. It gives signs of having been slightly modified both by an enriching process and by the impact of the increasing number of infant baptisms.

The Sacramentary was written in the Paris area of France some time during the eighth century. Its baptismal sections are a mixture of Roman and Gallican traditions. Whittaker is of the opinion that the formularies and the rubrics are Roman in origin and that the Gallican influence is probably shown largely in the order and arrangement of the various parts.¹

The materials in the Sacramentary which are of significance to this study are listed below.² They will be discussed in detail during the course of this chapter.

1. Propers for the Mass of the Third Sunday in Lent for the scrutines.
2. Propers for the Mass of the Fourth Sunday in Lent, also for the scrutines.
3. Propers for the Mass for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, also for the scrutines.
4. A form for the announcement of the (first) scrutiny at which the enrollment of the candidates for baptism is to be made.

¹E. C. Whittaker, *Documents of the Papal Sacramentary* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1900),

CHAPTER III

THE BAPTISMAL PRACTICE OF THE MIDDLE CENTURIES

The Gelasian Sacramentary is perhaps the most complete record available to us of baptismal practice which maintains the fullness of the tradition of the adult catechumenate. This document was written in the Paris area of France sometime during the eighth century. Its baptismal sections are a mixture of Roman and Gallican traditions. Whitaker is of the opinion that the formularies and the rubrics are Roman in origin and that the Gallican influence is probably shown largely in the order and arrangement of the various parts.¹

The materials in the Sacramentary which are of significance to this study are listed below.² They will be discussed in detail during the course of this chapter.

1. Propers for the Mass of the Third Sunday in Lent for the scrutinies.
2. Propers for the Mass of the Fourth Sunday in Lent, also for the scrutinies.
3. Propers for the Mass for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, also for the scrutinies.
4. A form for the announcement of the (first) scrutiny at which the enrollment of the candidates for baptism is to be made.

¹E. C. Whitaker, Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1960), p. 156.

²Ibid., pp. 156-186.

5. Three prayers for "the making of a catechumen" to be used at the first scrutiny. (The items marked six, seven, and eight are also for the first scrutiny.)
6. A blessing of the salt to be given to the catechumens and a formula to be used at its presentation.
7. A prayer for the catechumen after the salt is given.
8. An extended exorcism in which the saving actions of God recorded in the Scriptures are remembered and in which the devil is charged to depart from the catechumens.
9. A form for the traditio evangelii, that is, the formal transmission of the Gospels to the catechumens.
10. A form for the traditio symboli, that is, the formal transmission of the Creed to the catechumens.
11. A form for the traditio orationis, that is, the formal transmission of the Lord's Prayer to the catechumens.
12. Materials for the Maundy Thursday Mass of Chrism with prayers for the blessing of the oils.
13. Rubrics and formularies for Holy Saturday, including a catechization, an exorcism, the effeta ceremony, an anointing, the renunciations, a recital of the Creed, prayers and a dismissal.
14. The readings, canticles and collects for the Easter vigil.
15. The rites of baptism proper and confirmation, including blessings of the font, the baptismal formula, a signing with chrism, the bishop's sealing and the kiss of peace.
16. Propers for the Paschal night mass.
17. A number of prayers for catechumens and various abbreviated baptismal forms.

Items sixteen and seventeen are probably of a less

ancient date than the first fifteen.³

Because of its completeness and richness, this Sacramentary offers an excellent frame within which to study the baptismal practice of the Church in greater detail than has been done up to this point. For help in clarifying the procedures envisioned by the Sacramentary, the Ordo Romanus XI will be used.⁴ The Ordo is known to us from manuscripts of the ninth century. It reflects in general Roman usage of the seventh century. The Ordo usually gives only the first few words of the formulas themselves. What makes it useful is that it provides the rubrics which are largely missing in the Sacramentary.

There seems to be no doubt that the Sacramentary and the Ordo have points of contact and represent the same general tradition. The greatest difference between them is that the Sacramentary suggests only three scrutinies before Holy Saturday and the Ordo suggests six. The Sacramentary, however, does not exclude the double number of scrutinies; suspicion also rises as to whether the total of seven scrutinies of the Ordo (six plus the final one on Holy Saturday) were really observed. In addition to this difference, there is also a minor difference in the arrangements for the confirmation by the bishop after the baptism.

³Ibid., p. 156.

⁴Ibid., pp. 186-194.

We cannot assert with absolute confidence that the Sacramentary and the Ordo can be used in tandem (as this thesis proposes to do) without some possibility of error. Yet, the benefits far outweigh the possible hazards. The Sacramentary with its complete formulas remains a puzzle without the aid of the Ordo as a guide to the practice envisioned by it. Likewise, the value of the Ordo is greatly reduced unless the texts intended for use with it are supplied. That these texts are the ones included in the Sacramentary becomes obvious upon comparison of the two.

At the risk, therefore, of some slight historical error, the thesis will now discuss in detail the rites of the Gelasian Sacramentary, using the Ordo Romanus XI to illuminate some of its dark corners.

The Association of Baptism with Easter

Baptism has been linked to the Easter feast from earliest times. The custom prevalent in our own churches of performing baptisms at the discretion of the parents or on "the last Sunday of the month in the late service and after the early service on the second Sunday of the month" would have found little sympathy in the early Church. It, too, permitted baptism on dates other than Easter under certain circumstances such as sickness, but after the first two centuries the only day other than Easter regularly used was Pentecost, which itself is a part of the Easter

celebration.

As is well known, the Church saw the Lord's day as a weekly observance of the victory of Jesus Christ. The events of the three holy days known now as Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter were rightly seen as of the essence of the whole Christian faith and cultus. The Church's celebration of this great mystery was most intense on the annual celebration of the great Pascha, the feast of Easter.

Because the Church saw the significance of baptism as similar to that of Easter, the sacrament and feast became interwoven in the Church's life. Other factors were involved, including some comparisons between Easter and the spring equinox and the onset of spring which seem extremely obscure to us today.⁵

The points of contact between the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection and the Church's celebration of Easter with its baptisms are many. The following illustrate some of the more significant ones.

The early Church referred to Easter as the Christian Pascha or Passover. They were not just interested in establishing the priority of Easter by giving it the name of that feast which was primary in the Old Testament. Nor was

⁵Cf. Jean Danielou, S.J., The Bible and the Liturgy (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), pp. 287-302.

it given that name only because both feasts fell on the same date or approximate dates. The Church saw the death and resurrection of Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament feast. Jesus Himself related His own work with the Jewish feast in several ways. Not the least significant of these was His manner of introducing the Eucharist which is itself our Lord's interpretation of His work. St. Paul also witnesses to this idea of fulfillment with his reference to Christ as the Paschal Lamb in 1 Corinthians 5.

The Church developed this thought by its teaching that not only did God save Israel through a passover event, not only does Christ experience a passover, but each Christian undergoes this experience. The texts concerning the Exodus were regularly used in the liturgy and applied to the resurrection of Christ and to baptism.⁶ Louis Bouyer provides this summary:

The initiatory feast of Christians, which is the feast of Christ's Resurrection, is the feast of the Passover (or Pasch). This simple statement sums up the whole economy of the revelation and development of the Word of God in Scripture and in the preaching of the Church.

What in fact is the Passover? First of all, it is the event that created a people of God, in the old covenant: God's basic intervention, corresponding to the promise made to Abraham. God "passed" mysteriously through Egypt where his people were in bondage and enabled them to "pass" out of this bondage into freedom, out of the darkness of death into the light of life. This double etymological

⁶Ibid., pp. 70-85, 162-176.

interpretation of the word "Passover," in connection with the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, sums up all that Jewish, and afterwards Christian, tradition recognized in the ancient Passover.⁷

The following by Gregory Dix further develops this line of thinking:

By that acceptance (of Jesus as Lord and Messiah) they are members of the "new Israel." Baptized into His death and resurrection, in which and in the consequences of which they share sacramentally (i.e. really, but by grace not by racial descent), and being made partakers by Confirmation of His very "Spirit" (i.e. of that which constituted Him Messiah), the new "People" has passed with Him into the Messianic Kingdom. The Church is an eschatological fact. The darkness and terrors of Calvary were the new plagues of Egypt, the Resurrection and Ascension the new Exodus, the waters of the Paschal Baptism the new Red Sea, Confirmation the new Sinai (where the Law is given no more on tables of stone but written by the "new Spirit" in the "new Heart"), the Paschal Mass with the draught of milk and honey the entrance into the new Canaan. And the Paschal Lamb, whose death brought liberty, whose Blood avails for a token against "the destroyer," of which no stranger and none without the "seal of the covenant" in circumcision may eat, and whose flesh may not be borne outside the one household--this is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," whereof no heathen and none without the "seal of the covenant" in the Spirit (Confirmation) may eat, whose Flesh can never be distributed outside the one household of the Holy Church. All these identifications are made by Hippolytus. . . . The whole attitude they imply has to be borne in mind in considering the primitive liturgy.⁸

The italics are those of Dix.

⁷Louis Bouyer, Christian Initiation, translated by J. R. Foster (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 70f.

⁸Gregory Dix, O.S.B., "The Idea of 'The Church' in the Primitive Liturgies" in The Parish Communion, edited by A. G. Hebert (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1937), pp. 129f.

Our Lord Himself suggested the connection between death and baptism.⁹ St. Paul in Romans 6 applies this identification to the Christian. Jesus speaks of the necessity of a man's dying so the Father might give him life. St. Paul asserts that this becomes a reality in baptism where a man is sacramentally bound to the death and resurrection of Christ and in this way participates in Christ's own pass-over, a thought which Luther has developed in the fourth question in his treatment of baptism in the Small Catechism. The baptismal immersion is the act whereby the Christian begins the on-going dying and rising of faith and newness of life.¹⁰

Baptism is the entrance into the Christian redemptive experience. It was to be expected that the Church would seek to concentrate its celebration of the sacrament on the feast which celebrates most explicitly the significance of Christ's own fulfillment of the Old Testament type. This has left its imprint on the shape of the rite.

The Catechumenate

Another factor which played a large part in shaping the Church's baptismal rites was the establishment of the catechumenate. The Church's earliest missionary effort

⁹St. Luke 12:50.

¹⁰Cf. Danielou, op. cit., pp. 34-53.

was directed primarily toward adults. This required some sort of method for presenting the Christian message to interested persons. In the case of the Jewish person, this required mainly instruction in the fulfillment of the Messianic expectation of Israel by Christ. In the case of the Gentile, monotheism and the morality associated with Christianity had to be considered as well as the proclamation concerning Christ.

At the beginning this instruction was undertaken privately and informally. By the end of the second century group instruction replaced individual catechetical instruction. Catechetical schools and a special class of churchmen known as catechists arose.

In the third and fourth centuries, as the pattern is described by Hippolytus, the catechumenate began with a rigorous examination of the person professing an interest in the Faith. He was not admitted into the formal catechumenate until it was ascertained that his profession and mode of life was not incompatible with the Christian moral code. If the man was accepted, he began a three year period of instruction and probation. The chief subject of this instruction also concerned Christian behavior. According to Jungmann, Origin states that the following Biblical and apocryphal books were studied: Esther,

Judith, Tobit and the books of Wisdom.¹¹ These books all reflect an ethical concern. The catechist ended each period of instruction with prayer and the laying on of hands. This laying on of hands indicated the pressing down on the catechumen of the graces of the Church which she intended this new child of hers to possess. This form in later times seemed to overshadow the actual teaching.¹²

At the end of this probationary period, the catechumen was again examined as to his sincerity and as to his conduct. If this examination indicated he was ready to go on, he was enrolled as one of the competentes. They were known in Rome as the electi. He was now permitted to hear the distinctive doctrines of the Church. He received instruction concerning the sacraments, the Gospels, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

It is difficult to say with certainty how much of this instruction took place publicly in the midst of the gathered congregation and how much took place in special gatherings of the candidates. There probably was a variation in the practice of different locales and in different times. The competentes were permitted to attend the forepart of the Mass which for this reason is known as the

¹¹Josef A. Jungmann, S.J., Handing on the Faith: A Manual of Catechetics (London: Burns and Coates, 1959), p. 3.

¹²Supra, p. 17.

Mass of the Catechumens. The ceremonies of handing over the Gospels, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are the only parts of their instruction definitely known to have taken place in the congregation's public assemblies. The process of instruction ended on the night before Easter in the vigil service which consisted largely of Old Testament readings especially chosen for their applicability to baptism.

In the fourth and fifth centuries somewhat different circumstances prevailed. Large masses of people were becoming converts. However, due to the rigorous penitential system which the Church had developed by this time, many of these converts contented themselves with remaining catechumens for a long period of time, up to the end of their lives in some instances. In addition, there were those who wanted to reserve baptism until the end of their lives so they might face the judgment freshly washed, so to speak. Because of this, the Church felt constrained to make changes in its system of instruction.

The new shape of the catechetical procedure is seen chiefly in the opening rites. The rites which attended the enrollment of the catechumens were enlarged by the introduction of an extensive catechesis. This catechesis had previously been reserved for the closing days of Lent. This catechesis took the form of a long, extended narrative of the redemptive work of God, beginning with the fall into sin and on to the last judgment. In the mind

of the Church of that day, these rites marked the beginning of the catechumen's life in the Church.

At the same time, the usual signing and laying on of hands took place as well as reception of the blessed salt and insufflation. (Insufflation refers to a gentle breathing on the face of the candidate in imitation of Christ's act of bestowing the Holy Spirit.) The new Christian might remain in the catechumenate for many years thereafter, postponing his baptism and participation in the Eucharist as long as possible. The attitude of the theologians was somewhat ambiguous in regard to this less than desirable development.¹³

There are indications that there also was some form of briefer catechetical instruction concerning the sacraments after baptism during Easter week in addition to the longer period of instruction before baptism.

By the time the Gelasian Sacramentary had appeared, the whole catechumenate had undergone considerable change. The number of adults had decreased; it was assumed by the rites of this time that the catechumens were infants. Under this circumstance the catechumenate became largely symbolic. The three year probationary period and the intensive Lenten instruction were telescoped into the final four weeks of Lent. The instruction became ritualized;

¹³Cf. Jungmann, op. cit., pp. 1-6.

the sponsors, it was assumed, would undertake instruction of the child when he reached the maturity needed for such instruction.

Occasionally adult baptisms still took place. But these usually occurred in connection with the conversion of a tribe recently converted. More correctly, it usually was the king who was converted and who brought his tribe into Christianity with him. In these cases the catechumenate was also largely symbolic. It was usually shorter than the classic three years and often only the king's family was involved.

The Enrollment

When the candidate felt he was ready to undertake the final steps to baptism, his sponsors, the guarantors of his worthiness and his sincerity, took him to the bishop. He was then enrolled as a candidate for the Easter baptisms. This enrollment of the catechumens usually took place near the beginning of Lent, generally on the first Sunday in Lent. By the time of the Sacramentary, the catechumenate had been shortened and enrollment took place during the third week of Lent. The announcement of the enrollment and the first scrutiny was made on the Tuesday of that week. The Ordo indicates that the enrollment took place on the

following day; the Sacramentary leaves the day open.¹⁴

An acolyte (a member of the lowest rank of clergy, rather than our present day candle-lighting boy) recorded the names of the infants. It is more than likely that the names of the sponsors were also recorded at the same time.

The Bestowal of the Sign of the Cross

When the actual enrollment of names was completed, the acolyte called the infants into the church in the order in which they were enrolled. He placed the male children on the right side and the female children on the left.¹⁵

At this point, the priest (formerly, the bishop) made the sign of the cross with his thumb on the forehead of each, speaking the words of the trinitarian invocation. Then he laid his hand over their heads and prayed.¹⁶ This prayer established several themes which had a significant place throughout the rites: (1) the expulsion of Satan; (2) the sign of God's wisdom, that is, the cross; (3) the catechumens' turning from the works of the flesh to those

¹⁴Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 159, 186.

¹⁵An insufflation and exorcism may very well have taken place at this point although neither the Sacramentary or Ordo mention it. Cf. L. Duchesne, Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution, A Study of the Latin Liturgy Up to the Time of Charlemagne, translated by M. L. McClure (2nd edition; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1904), p. 296, n. 1.

¹⁶Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 159f, 187.

of the Spirit; (4) their rebirth in baptism; and (5) their place in the covenant people.

The bestowal of the sign of the cross might properly be discussed at several places. It appears over and over again throughout these ceremonies. Perhaps the most notable signing is that which occurs immediately after the baptism itself. Because of its repetition and constant use, it is best to discuss it at this place.

The technical term frequently used in regard to the bestowal of the sign of the cross is sphragis or seal. The word itself refers to the seal with which an imprintation was made in wax or another substance on documents or to seal a scroll. The word is also used of the imprintation itself. The Church used this term to describe baptism as a whole as well as the actual imposition of the sign of the cross. It was also used in connection with the confirmation which took place immediately after baptism. 1 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, and Ephesians 4:30 are frequently cited as evidence that already in the New Testament baptism is referred to as a sealing.

In the writings of the Fathers, the imposition of the sign of the cross carried with it several meanings, most of them inter-related. In one set of interpretations, the sphragis had the same function as the brand burned into the hide of a steer or sheep. The brand indicates ownership. The sign of the cross on the forehead indicates that the

candidate henceforth belongs to Christ rather than to his former master, Satan. Along with this goes the thought of protection; an unmarked steer is more readily stolen than one branded. The Lord looks after His property.

A second set of pictures is military in nature. Soldiers were tattooed with the name of their general. From this came the picture of the candidate as having enlisted in the army of Christ and that he is now engaged in the battle with the foe.

Perhaps the most Biblical of the images used is the description of the sign of the cross as a parallel to circumcision in the Old Testament. St. Paul states in Romans 4:11 that Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal (sphragis) of the righteousness he received by faith. Paul also describes the Christian as one who has been sealed.¹⁷ In view of the manner in which he draws a parallel in his writings between baptism and circumcision, it was only a matter of time before the bestowal of the sign of the cross assumed the position in the Church's thinking that circumcision had in the Old Testament. Circumcision was the "mark" put on the Israelite; the sphragis is the "mark" put on the new people of God who are made new through baptism. The sign of the cross becomes the bearer of the crucifixion-like character of baptism. Several other

¹⁷Ephesians 1:13, 4:30.

passages are also involved in this set of images. Ezekiel 9:4 describes those who have been faithful to the God of the covenant as having been marked on the forehead; so also the 144,000 in Revelation 7:4 that are sealed are sealed on the forehead. The sphragis, then, is the divine imprint on those who are members of the new covenant people.

In summary, the imposition of the sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate was regarded as a designation of the meaning and function of baptism and as the beginning of the process of renewal which is centered around baptism. The signing of the cross was for the Church not simply a casual ceremony but a statement of confidence in her ability to bear the Spirit to those given her by God and a definition of the meaning and purpose of all the rites attached to baptism.

The Salt Ceremony

The ritual of the enrollment of the catechumens continued with the presentation of the salt. The priest spoke a prayer of exorcism over the salt to be given the catechumens. The function of the salt is described in this fashion, "And therefore we ask thee, O Lord our God, that in the Name of the Trinity this creature of salt may be a saving sacrament to drive away the enemy."¹⁸ It should be

¹⁸Whitaker, op. cit., p. 160.

noted that the word sacrament here is not to be understood in our more limited sense of the word but in the more general sense of a sacred act. The theme of the ceremony is the struggle with Satan for the candidate. The priest then placed some of the salt in the mouths of the infants with the words, "N., receive the salt of wisdom, for a token of propitiation unto eternal life."¹⁹ Immediately thereafter, the Sacramentary indicates that a prayer of blessing for the catechumens was said as the final act before their dismissal.²⁰ The prayer follows:

O God of our fathers, O God who dost establish all truth, we humbly beseech thee to look favourably upon this thy servant, and grant that he who has taken this first morsel of salt may hunger only until he be satisfied with heavenly food: until then, Lord, may he ever be fervent in spirit, rejoicing in hope, and always serving thy Name. Lead him to the laver of the second birth that with thy faithful people he may be worthy to receive the eternal rewards of thy promises. Through the Lord . . .²¹

The italics are Whitaker's to indicate the citation of Romans 12:11.

This custom of giving salt was apparently limited to the churches of the western empire; it is not found in the rites of the Eastern churches. The earliest reference to salt in relation to the catechumens may be Canon 5 of the

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 160, 187.

²¹Ibid., p. 160.

Third Council of Carthage, 256 A.D., which reads, "It was agreed that no sacrament should be given to catechumens, even during the most solemn Paschal season, except the usual salt."²² Augustine may have referred to it; however, his comments may refer to some other usage. The Letter to Senarius (c. 500 A.D.) seems to be the first Roman reference to the ceremony.

Just how this ceremony was administered is a matter for conjecture. On the mode of administration hangs at least some of the meaning of the rite. Stenzel proposes that at first a highly salted bread was offered rather than salt itself.²³ The parallels that are drawn between the salt ceremony and the Eucharist in which the eating of the salt is described as the "sacramentum catechumenorum" seem to imply an eating of the substance given. The use of a salted bread would strengthen such a parallel. There is also some evidence that salt in a pure form was not readily available to persons of the time when the ceremony was developed.

The significance of the use of the salt is also less precisely defined than one might wish. Stenzel offers two possible streams of thought. The first of these comes

²²Ibid., p. 212.

²³Alois Stenzel, S.J., Die Taufe: Eine Genetische Erklärung der Tauf liturgie (Innsbruck: Verlag Felizian Rauch, 1958), p. 172.

from the Semitic custom that when a man eats another's "salt" he comes under that person's protection. This is another form of the old house guest rule. A sin on the part of the guest against the host and vice versa are equally scandalous. Salt is an element in the entering into of covenants. Leviticus 2:13, Numbers 18:19, and 2 Chronicles 13:5 are an indication of this. If this is the background of the custom, it becomes evidence then of the new covenant into which the candidates enter through baptism and a parallel to the various instances where God breaks bread with men as an indication of the reconciliation made possible by His covenant grace. The Eucharist is, of course, a part of this tradition.²⁴

Still another stream of thought is introduced by the preservative and cleansing qualities of salt. In Ezekiel 43:24 reference is made to sacrifices of meat on which salt is sprinkled. This makes the meat "clean," meat which is untainted with decay. Salt is a purifying element; therefore, reception of the salt might be a sign of the purifying action that is at work in the recipient. This is a point in the present rite where the bestowal of salt is closely linked to the exorcisms.

John the Deacon states:

The catechumen receives blessed salt also, to signify that just as all flesh is kept healthy by salt,

²⁴Ibid., p. 173.

so the mind which is drenched and weakened by the waves of this world is held steady by the salt of wisdom and of the preaching of the word of God: so that it might come to stability and permanence, after the distemper of corruption is thoroughly settled by the gentle action of the divine salt.²⁵

St. Isadore of Seville (d. 636) explains the custom in this way:

The giving of salt in our ministration to the catechumens was instituted by our forefathers, so that by tasting it they receive a seasoning of wisdom, and may not stray in folly from the flavour of Christ; that they may not be foolish and look backward as did Lot's wife, lest giving a bad example they may themselves remain to infect others.²⁶

The play on the words "seasoning" and "flavour" is obvious. The interest in wisdom and folly parallels the formula for bestowing the salt in the Sacramentary, "Receive the salt of wisdom."²⁷ Wisdom refers to the wisdom of God, the saving work He performs among His people and proclaims to them. Wisdom is in the streets and speaks of God's covenant with Israel. Of interest is the allusion to Lot's wife and looking back (to heathenism, to the devil's pomps which they must renounce?).

The Gelasian Sacramentary formulas describe salt as a safeguard for the human race, an allusion to its hygienic powers. It is described as a saving sacrament, a reminder

²⁵Whitaker, op. cit., p. 145.

²⁶Ibid., p. 100.

²⁷Ibid., p. 160.

perhaps of the time conjectured by Stenzel when it served as a parallel to the Eucharist. It is to drive away the enemy. It is to be medicine for those who receive it. The morsel of salt is to increase an appetite for heavenly food.

This rather wide variety of emphases plus the variety found in the form of the formula accompanying the giving of the salt may support the theory that the ceremony came into the baptismal practice of the Church somewhat tardily and did not have universal support. For example, St. Hildephon-
sus of Toledo (d. 669) wrote:

In some places, so it is reported, they receive salt, signifying as it were the seasoning of wisdom. Possibly the custom is permissible: ancient custom alone commends it: it has no other grounds. For by no document of holy scripture can it be shown that salt was given to catechumens as they attained the sacraments of faith: and where that is absent there can be no obligation.²⁸

It is noteworthy that he died thirty-three years after his fellow Spaniard, Isadore, who accepted the ceremony.

The Scrutinies

Later on the same day, the catechumens were once again assembled at the church. They had been enrolled as catechumens; they had symbolically undergone the three year period of testing and preparation. They returned as

²⁸Ibid., p. 103.

competents, as elect, those who have been admitted to the final preparations for baptism. Obviously these terms were by then symbolic because all the catechumens were infants.

They assembled for the first of a series of scrutinies. This term covered gatherings of the candidates which were largely given over to exorcisms. Examination of the candidates does not seem to have been the main purpose of the scrutinies despite the name. John the Deacon in the Letter to Senarius does suggest that in Rome the elect were examined in respect to the manner in which they had responded to their instruction.²⁹ The wording, however, leaves the meaning uncertain. The probable meaning of his words is that this examination referred to the normal responses of the candidates by way of the renunciations, confession of the Creed, and the like. In this case John's words do not indicate an exception to the rule. The term scrutiny finally came to designate any meeting for persons being prepared for baptism.

The Gelasian Sacramentary gives propers for three Sundays in Lent, the third, fourth and fifth, for scrutinies.³⁰ The Ordo Romanus XI calls for seven such scrutinies: the first two being held on Wednesday and Saturday

²⁹Ibid., p. 146.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 156-159.

of the third week in Lent; the third (the "Great") scrutiny on an unspecified date during the fourth week in Lent; the fourth and fifth on undesignated days during the fifth week; the sixth scrutiny during the sixth week on an undesignated day; and the seventh on Holy Saturday.³¹ The number seven was chosen because of the seven gifts of the Spirit.³² As far as form and content are concerned, the scrutinies are all of a piece with the exception of the "Great" scrutiny and the scrutiny held on Holy Saturday.

The scrutiny takes place in the setting of the Mass between the collect and the Gospel, the epistle being in effect a closing lesson for the scrutiny. The collect for the first scrutiny reads as follows:

We beseech thee O Lord, bestow upon these elect right hearts and wise minds as they come to confess thy praise: so that man's ancient dignity, which once by sin they had lost, by thy grace may be restored in them. Through . . .³³

The deacon then calls the catechumens forward. They probably were carried by their sponsors. They were separated again by sex. They were then bid to pray. Since infants do not readily "bow the knee," one can only conjecture that the godparents prayed in their stead. Then the godfathers and godmothers signed the infants on the forehead

³¹Ibid., pp. 187-192.

³²Cf. supra, p. 22.

³³Whitaker, op. cit., p. 157.

with their thumbs, saying, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," repeating the priest's action earlier that day.³⁴

The role of the sponsors reflects something of the stress on the rites of the catechumenate as the shift was made from adult catechumens to infants. Although already in Hippolytus adults answer for children not able to speak for themselves, the normal role of sponsors had to do with adult converts. Sponsors brought the candidates-to-be to the bishop for enrollment and bore testimony to their suitability. They were questioned as to the behavior of the catechumens during their three year period of probation. In short, they represented the candidate before the Church. In the present rite they seem to represent the Church to the elect. They joined in the process of exorcism, the expulsion of Satan, the imposition of the seal of salvation and the bestowal of the Spirit. That there were evidences of this in earlier days is not to be denied; the significant thing is that in these catechetical rites the original obligations of sponsors other than their action at the enrollment have been set aside.

Then an acolyte (again, a member of the lesser clergy) signed the male children, placed his hand over them, and spoke the first prayer of exorcism, "God of

³⁴Ibid., p. 187.

Abraham." The prayer recollects that God in delivering Israel from Egypt had guarded her by an angel of His goodness (the pillar of cloud and fire?). The Church asks that God send an angel to guard these candidates and to lead them to the font (as He once led Israel to Canaan). The devil is commanded to leave these persons on whom the sign of the cross has been made. Then the female elect were signed by the acolyte. Placing his hand on them, he prayed that these, too, might be led to the font. An exorcism was spoken over them, too.³⁵

The deacon again called the elect to bow the knee; the sponsors thereupon made the sign of the cross over the children. A second acolyte now made the sign of the cross on the male infants, laid his hand on their heads, and spoke an exorcism. Satan is told to give place to the Holy Spirit who will cleanse them at the font. He then signed the female children and exorcised them, mentioning Susanna's delivery from false accusation.³⁶

A third time the deacon called them to prayer. A third acolyte signed the boys and with the imposition of his hand exorcised them a third time. In this exorcism, Jesus' walking on the sea and His rescue of Peter as he was sinking in the sea are recalled. The girls were then

³⁵Ibid., pp. 160f., 187.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 161f., 188.

exorcised, this time with an invoking of the Name of Him who opened the eyes of the man born blind and who raised Lazarus.³⁷

A fourth time they were called to prayer by the deacon. The sponsors again signed the children. This time, however, it was the priest who signed them on the forehead rather than an acolyte. He placed his hand on their heads, first the males and then the females, asking God to enlighten them and to cleanse and sanctify them as preparation for their baptism.³⁸

Again the deacon issued the bidding to prayer. The godparents signed the children still another time. Then the epistle was read. On this day it was Ezekiel 36:25-29a. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, . . . I will put my spirit within you. . . . You shall be my people, and I will be your God. . . ." After the responsory, Leviticus 26:9, the catechumens were dismissed. The Mass continued with the Gospel, St. Matthew 11:25-30. "I thank thee, Father, . . . that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; . . . Come to me, . . . you will find rest. . . ." The Mass was said for the catechumens, their names and those of their sponsors being read during the Canon. The

³⁷Ibid., pp. 162, 188.

³⁸Ibid.

oblations were made by their parents and godparents. At its close the next scrutiny was announced.³⁹ In this way a rather lively witness was given to the priestly nature of the Church, each person having a share and a responsibility in the doing of the Eucharist.

All of this clearly shows that the main purpose of the scrutinies was the exorcisms. Although at the height of the adult catechumenate instruction was a large part of the gatherings which correspond to these scrutinies, this had fallen away, now that infants made up the majority (probably in most instances the total number) of the candidates for baptism. The teaching of the Gospels, the Symbol and the Our Father during the third scrutiny and the reading of the lessons during the Easter vigil were all that remained of the great catechetical system. Now the exorcisms which had always played a major role in the purpose of the scrutinies stood out all the more clearly because the instructional part has fallen away.

The exorcisms were based on the certainty of the Gospels that man is always under the control of some superior force, either the spirit of evil or the Spirit of the Holy God. This was even more vivid for the early Christians since they lived in a world inundated by idols and pagan rituals which would certainly have looked satanic in some

³⁹Ibid., pp. 157, 188f.

cases even to us. At a time when the candidates were all children of Christian parents, the more than a dozen and a half exorcisms administered before baptism might seem excessive to us, of course. How much this was due to tradition and how much to superstition is hard to say.

At any rate, the exorcisms reflected the Lord's teaching that Satan does not readily let his prize fall into the hands of the Enemy. His words, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer," were remembered.⁴⁰ The exorcisms had as their purpose the gradual freeing of the soul from the power the devil exercised over it.

The following quotation from the Procatechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem is something of a classic interpretation of the exorcisms.

Let thy feet hasten to the catechizings, receive with earnestness the exorcisms; for whether thou art breathed upon, or exorcised, the Ordinance is to thee salvation. . . . Without exorcisms, the soul cannot be cleansed; and they are divine, collected from the divine scriptures. . . . For as the goldsmith, conveying the blast upon the fire through delicate instruments, and as it were breathing on the gold which is hid in the hollow of the forge, stimulates the flame it acts upon, and so obtains what he is seeking; so also, exorcisers, infusing fear by a divine breath, and setting the soul on fire in the crucible of the body, make the evil spirit flee, who is our enemy, and salvation and hope of eternal life abide: and henceforth the soul, cleansed from its sins, hath salvation.⁴¹

⁴⁰St. Mark 9:29; cf. St. Matthew 17:21.

⁴¹Whitaker, op. cit., p. 22.

The final goal of the exorcisms, ritually speaking, was the personal renunciation of Satan on Holy Saturday, something which no man can do unaided by the Spirit. First the power of Satan must be broken; the Holy Spirit must replace the evil one; then and then only can a man call Jesus Lord.

The Traditiones

The second and third scrutinies followed the pattern described for the first except for a notable addition to the third scrutiny. This addition occurred following the Epistle at the point where the other scrutinies customarily ended. The addition consists of the traditio evangelii, the traditio symboli, and the traditio orationis; that is, the ceremonies whereby the elect were taught an exposition of the Gospels, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Because of the dignity and importance of these ceremonies, this third scrutiny became known as the "Great Scrutiny."

These "handing overs" of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer were products of the shape of the catechetical system of the early Church. Due to the disciplina arcani, these were not of common knowledge. It was necessary, therefore, that they taught to the candidates who would be expected to make use of them during the night of the Easter vigil. The handing over of the Gospels seems to have been a later ceremony, a ceremonialized enactment of

the catechetical instruction given adult converts during Lent.⁴²

The Ordo states that a Lesson and an Epistle were read. The first of these was Isaiah 52:2b-7 which tells of the covenant God makes with those who hear His voice. The responsory was Psalm 34:11 which reads, "Come, O sons, listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord." The Epistle was a reading which began with Colossians 3:9b and ended with Romans 10:18! What was read between them, we do not know. The Colossians passage speaks of the Christian as having put off the old man and having put on the new nature. The Romans verse is the conclusion of St. Paul's statement on the salvation which has gone out to all the ends of the earth through the preaching of the Gospel. A responsory followed.⁴³ No Gospel is given; very probably the presentation of the four Gospels which followed was understood as the Gospel of the Mass.

The Sacramentary and the Ordo describe the action which followed.⁴⁴ Four deacons came from the sacristy, each of them carrying the book of one of the four Gospels. Going before them were two candlebearers and censers. The deacons placed the four books on the altar, one in each of

⁴²Stenzel, op. cit., p. 190.

⁴³Whitaker, op. cit., p. 189.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 162-164, 189f.

the corners. A priest then spoke a formula which states that the Church will open up the Gospels, the story of divine life, to the catechumens. It mentions that "gospel" means glad tidings, that there were four Evangelists who wrote gospels, and that each of them is represented in Ezekiel 1:10 where the prophet describes the four beasts with the four-fold heads.

The first deacon then read St. Matthew 1:1-21. A sub-deacon returned the book to the sacristy. The priest then commented on these words. He explained the Church's identification of the symbol of a man with St. Matthew. The second deacon then read St. Mark 1:1-8. This Gospel was also returned to the sacristy. Once again the priest commented; this time on the identification of the symbol of a lion with St. Mark. Then the third deacon read St. Luke 1:1-17. The priest explained the connection between the ox symbol and St. Luke. In the same manner St. John 1:1-14a was read and the connection between the symbol of the eagle and St. John expounded.

As was mentioned above, this ceremony seems to represent a ritualization of the catechetical instruction previously given to adult converts during the catechumenate. It could have no actual teaching value in the case of the children now being presented. It did, however, serve to remind the Church of its past practice and also to remind the godparents of their obligations to expound

the Gospel to their godchildren when they reached an appropriate age. Although there does not seem to be any direct evidence from France itself that sponsors had a role to play in the catechetical instruction of converts, there is such evidence from Rome, the first home of the rites we are studying here. However, there are numerous statements recorded, statements dating from the same time as these two rites, in which sponsors are admonished to teach their godchildren the catholic faith. This usually meant teaching them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.⁴⁵ Even if the Church found it impossible to teach the Gospel to the elect by this ceremony, she reminded herself that the Church lives and has her being in the Gospel.

Immediately after the presentation of the four Gospels followed the traditio symboli, the presentation and exposition of the Nicene Creed.⁴⁶ The priest begins with an introduction in which he instructs them not to write down this confession, given by the Holy Spirit, but to memorize it. Being under the ancient discipline, it could not be written down in such a way that the enemies of the Church might obtain it lest it be profaned. It had to be

⁴⁵Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Sponsors at Baptism and Confirmation: An Historical Introduction To Anglican Practice (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1952), p. 47.

⁴⁶Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 164-167, 191.

committed to memory, furthermore, because the candidate would have to repeat it later on as his own personal confession, usually on Palm Sunday. This, of course, was in the older days.

The acolyte then took one boy from the group of male children and held him in his left arm with his right hand on the boy's head. The priest inquired of the acolyte concerning the language in which the boy would confess his faith. The answer was "Greek." At the priest's direction, the acolyte (still holding the boy in his left arm and with his right hand on the boy's head!) chanted the Nicene Creed in Greek. According to the Ordo the same procedure was followed with one of the girls. Then the same procedure was followed a second time, this time in Latin. Again, the Ordo has the rite said both for a boy and a girl.

The priest then expounded the Creed. His exposition included an instruction that by baptism the catechumens will be transformed from old men into new and that baptism is a kind of death and resurrection. In part the formula reads:

A sinner goes into the waters and comes out justified. He is thrown out who draws you to death, and he is received who leads you back to life, through whose grace it is given you to become sons of God, not brought forth by the will of the flesh. . . . The devil, who never ceases to tempt mankind, must always find you protected by this Creed: so that with the enemy whom you renounce cast down, and by the protection of him whom you confess, you may preserve the grace of the Lord pure and spotless unto

the end, so that wherein you receive remission of sins, you may also have the glory of the resurrection. Therefore, dearly beloved, you have heard the symbol of the catholic faith: you go now and receive entire instruction in what you have heard. Powerful is the mercy of God, which is both able to lead you who seek after the faith of baptism to the end of your search, and to bring us who deliver these mysteries to you, together with you, to the heavenly kingdom. Through . . .⁴⁷

The exposition makes plain the ancestry of the rite. It is a formalization of the practice of the Church to reveal the Creed at a point just before the candidates' baptism. The instruction to go and receive entire instruction, of course, fits into this pattern. The catechetical instruction of the Church was the birthplace of the Creed. Opportunity had to be given for the catechumen's confession of faith; that implied that he had to be taught how to confess that faith.

In final comments on this traditio, it may be noted that according to the Ordo, the earlier of the two, both girls and boys are singled out for instruction in the Creed. In the Sacramentary only the boys are mentioned. The use of both Latin and Greek is probably an anachronism.

The third of the traditiones was the handing over of the Lord's Prayer.⁴⁸ The opening formula consists of instruction concerning the nature of prayer and its role in

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 166f.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 167-169, 191.

the Christian's life. It continues with a petition by petition exposition of the prayer. The thoughts expressed are amazingly similar to those Lutherans have learned from the Small Catechism. It becomes apparent that in his comments on the Lord's Prayer Luther was heavily indebted to the traditions of the Church.

Two useful purposes were served by the exposition of the Lord's Prayer. First of all, the Lord's Prayer was a part of the Mass of the Faithful and would be used in the Paschal baptismal eucharist. Adult converts could be expected to memorize it for use that night. But more than this, the Lord's Prayer represents the intimate Father-child relationship which becomes a part of the inheritance of the candidate with his baptism. He now comes into the most intimate of relationships with the Father, being privileged to use even the very words which his newly-confessed Lord, Jesus Christ, taught. Now he will also be a son of God, one able to speak and commune with the God of gods. It is expressive also of the new brother-to-brother relationship which is his with his fellow Christians when he is adopted by the heavenly Father. When the family gathers to eat at its Father's table, all say grace with this prayer.

As commentary on these three ceremonies there is perhaps nothing more clear than the following statement by Bouyer. Bouyer discusses Christian initiation movingly

not only in his slim volume Christian Initiation but also in Liturgical Piety from which we quote.

In one of the final scrutinies, the initiation reaches a climax with the traditio evangelii, the "handing over of the gospel," in which the deacons solemnly carry in the books of the four Gospels and begin the reading of them, which is explained to the catechumen by the homily of the bishop. And from this "handing over" of the Gospel springs the traditio symboli, the "transmission of the Creed," in which the unity and the wholeness of God's design in the Scriptures will be revealed to the catechumen in Christ, and the traditio orationis, that is, the transmission of the Lord's Prayer, in which through faith the perfect filial answer is to be given to that Fatherly love which the Gospel has disclosed.

Until he has received these "traditiones," as the Fathers say in very characteristic sentences, the catechumen cannot truly pray any more than he can truly believe, that is, accept the Gospel in the living way in which a Christian accepts it. In order to be able to do so, the catechumen must be born again. He must have undergone death to this world and to the life of alienation from God which he has led in it, and afterwards have been reborn to the life of a child of God through the resurrection of Christ. Only the man who is no more a child of the fallen Adam--but who in the second Adam comes down from heaven as a child of the Heavenly Father--can truly say the "Our Father."⁴⁹

Interestingly enough, Naples had an additional traditio, namely, of Psalm 23. This psalm with its reference to the Shepherd who leads His sheep to running waters, who anoints their heads with oil and gives them a cup of wine and the table spread before them was used during the Easter vigil in Naples.

⁴⁹Louis Bouyer, Liturgical Piety (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), p. 165.

A final exhortation to the elect concluded the ceremonies for the catechumens.⁵⁰ The Mass continued. The next scrutiny was announced.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth scrutinies were repetitions of the first.

The Scrutiny of Holy Saturday

The final scrutiny took place early on Holy Saturday. This scrutiny, like the third, had a special series of ceremonies. Whereas the ceremonies of the third scrutiny were based on the catechetical instruction of the older, adult catechumens, the ceremonies of this last scrutiny were given their unique form by its proximity to the baptisms themselves. They represent the final preparation for baptism.

The candidates were instructed at the sixth scrutiny to gather at nine o'clock in the morning of Holy Saturday. The children were divided according to sex again. The rubric which follows is indicative of the Church's understanding of the relation between instruction and exorcism. The rubric reads, "Early in the morning the infants make their return of the Creed. First you catechize them, laying a hand on their heads, and saying: . . . ," followed by

⁵⁰Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 168f., 191.

an exorcism.⁵¹ The meaning of instruction is the exorcism of Satan and the bestowal of the Spirit. This is a remarkable parallel to the words of John the Deacon which have already been noted, namely, that by the laying on of hands the candidate learns who he is and who he shall be.⁵² The bestowal of life rather than the bestowal of the Church's dogma was seen as the way to admission to the fellowship of the saints.

The Ordo specifies that the priest sign the candidates on their foreheads and place his hand on their heads as he speaks this exorcism.

The so-called Effeta now took place. This ceremony is a reflection of St. Mark 7:31ff. Christ, taking aside the man without hearing and with an impediment in his speech, put His fingers in his ears, spat and touched his tongue and said, "Ephphatha," that is, be opened. In this way He restored plain speech and hearing to the man. In the Effeta ceremony the priest touches the candidate's nostrils (not the tongue) and ears with spittle and says into his ear, "Effeta, that is, be opened, unto an odour of sweetness. But thou, O devil, take flight, for the judgement of God has drawn near."⁵³ The nostrils were chosen because

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 173, 192f.

⁵²Supra, p. 15.

⁵³Whitaker, loc. cit.

of the Spirit who must be breathed into the candidate.

The renunciations followed.⁵⁴ The Ordo makes no mention of them. It is almost impossible to believe that the renunciations were actually omitted by the churches using the rites of the Ordo. They are a part of all baptismal rites from the earliest times. For them to have been actually omitted would have meant that the response to all the exorcisms would have been missing. It is this denial of Satan, and the corresponding confession of Christ, for which the Church had been exorcizing, praying, teaching and laying on hands. The renunciations are, so to speak, the candidate's first faltering steps, still carefully attended by the Church in the person of his sponsors. The vagaries of ritual being what they are, one can not exclude the possibility of an omission of the renunciations. It would have been most strange, however.

Accompanying the renunciations is the first anointing prescribed by the Sacramentary.⁵⁵ In this case the anointing was done with the so-called oil of exorcism which was especially prepared for this occasion at the Maundy Thursday Mass of Chrism. In this case, the candidate was anointed on his breast and between the shoulder blades. The name of the oil, the oil of exorcism, indicates this anointing

⁵⁴Loc. cit.

⁵⁵Loc. cit.

was a continuation of the process of exorcism. It was one final attempt to endow the catechumen with the strength to throw off the chains of Satan and to make his renunciation and confession of faith. It should be noted that these two are separated in the Sacramentary, the renunciation taking place in the morning and the confession of faith taking place during the vigil. It was not always so. Hippolytus described the renunciation as taking place just prior to the confession and baptism. They are the opposite sides of the same coin.

There were varying practices in regard to anointing in the various baptismal rites of the Church, but anointing was a part of each. The oil that was used was generally olive oil; quite commonly a fragrant substance was added to the oil. Commentators on the anointings frequently pointed out the parallel between this chrism and Christ (the Anointed One) and Christians (the anointed people). A part of this understanding of the meaning of the ceremony depends also on the role of the Spirit who was "poured over" Christ, so to speak, at His baptism.

The practice described by Hippolytus prescribed an anointing with the "oil of exorcism" immediately after the renunciations, an anointing with the "oil of thanksgiving" immediately after the three-fold immersion, and an anointing accompanying the bishop's confirmation. The Gelasian Sacramentary prescribes the anointing with the oil of

exorcism just before the renunciations. The other anointings are similar to those of Hippolytus. The Ordo, which does not mention the renunciations, likewise mentions no anointing at this point. The baptismal anointing appears to be covered by a ceremony of pouring oil into the baptismal waters. The anointing with confirmation is also recorded. Similar variations in practice are to be found in other rites also.

The practice of anointing is rooted in secular and sacred practices. The athletes and gladiators of the Roman Empire were anointed with oil (much as channel swimmers today) both as a conditioning agent and also for protection. An oil wrestler makes an elusive opponent. People were regularly anointed also when taking a bath to remedy the dryness of skin caused by a protracted stay in the baths. It was also used as a cosmetic for the skin and hair. It was used for the sick as we know from James 5:14. Olive oil was used for the anointing of kings and priests in the Old Testament. The use of oil for various purposes, then, was both a regular part of life and also had special significance in Jewish and Christian thought.

In the oil of exorcism, the healing qualities of oil and the association of oil with the Spirit were the leading thoughts. The blessing of the exorcized oil which appears in the propers for the Chrismal Mass for Maundy Thursday

makes this clear.⁵⁶ In this prayer the power of the Name of the Trinity is invoked to enable this oil to drive Satan out of the candidates so they might receive the forgiveness of sins. Sin is the great disease of man; it is the symbol of the satanic possession of men who are not in fellowship with the Father through Christ. Baptism is the divine medicine which restores men to health through the death of Christ. The formula also makes an interesting reference to the olive branch brought to Noah by the dove as a token of the liberation of the world from the destructive flood. It is by the Holy Spirit and by the oil of the olive that men escape the death-dealing waters. By them baptism is made a saving flood.

After being anointed with the oil of exorcism, the candidate made his renunciation of the devil, a renunciation he was able to make because the power of Satan had gradually been loosened by the repeated exorcisms. Three questions were put to him. Do you renounce Satan? Do you renounce his works? Do you renounce his pomps? The first two are obvious; the last not so obvious. The devil's pompa were the festive heathen processions and spectacles conducted in honor of the deities involved. The devil is, as it were, conducting a triumphal procession in the world with all those serving him running after. By the renunciation

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 172.

the candidate indicates he is dropping out of Satan's procession and joining the procession of God's elect. In the days of the adult catechumenate the word pomp could be taken quite literally. By the time of the Sacramentary all such heathen processions had been declared illegal; in fact, the heathen religions were largely a thing of the past. The three-fold renunciation is a reflection of the three-fold confession of the Trinity which was to come.

After the anointing and the renunciation, the redditio symboli took place. The catechumens were traditionally called upon to demonstrate their knowledge of the Creed. In the case of infants the sponsors had been called upon to repeat the Creed. The fact that it is the priest who speaks the Creed rather than the sponsor in the rite described by the Sacramentary says much about the low estate of the role of sponsor at that time. It is at this time that the emphasis began to shift from sponsoring a catechumen to serving as his godparent, the one who assumed the task of teaching the child the elements of faith as he grew in years.

Finally, the archdeacon bid them to pray and then dismissed them all with the instruction to return that night for the vigil.

The Easter Vigil

The Easter vigil has its roots in the Old Testament,

especially in the Passover. Israel waited through the night for the deliverance promised by God through the angel of death. The Jewish day began on the evening before the day itself, as our reckoning would have it. Thus the observance of the Sabbath and the Passover and all the other feasts which celebrated God's acts of deliverance always began in the evening. These evenings began with prayers of thanksgiving for this deliverance and became times for the expression of requests for the fulfillment of the hope of Israel, the coming of the messianic age.

The lighting of candles was associated with these night rituals of thanksgiving and expectation. The Jewish cultus included prayers which attended the lighting of the candles. Christians adopted the custom and lighted candles on the evening before Sunday. In time the custom fell away except for the night before Easter, which night, it was felt, would be the time of the expected Parousia of Christ. The coming of light into a darkened world was a common Biblical picture of the coming of God's new age. A ceremonial lighting of a candle at the Easter vigil readily became invested with much symbolic baggage, especially in view of the pillar of fire which played so large a role in the Exodus.

When the catechumens regathered at the church that evening, the service began with the blessing of the candle

for the vigil.⁵⁷ Then came a course of ten lessons followed in the case of three of the readings by a canticle and in each case by a collect.⁵⁸ The lessons chosen were texts which had been drawn upon by the catechists for the instruction of the catechumens. The texts chosen were interpreted as prophecies concerning baptism and the role of the Spirit in the new age.

An opening collect is given in the Sacramentary on behalf of all the participants in the vigil. The first of the lessons began with Genesis 1:1. No indication is given of the length of the portion read. It is likely that it included all of chapter one at least and gave a complete account of creation. The collect which followed the lesson provided the liturgical purpose for the lesson. Baptism is seen as the continuation of God's creating activity, making things which have grown old new again. The catechesis of the early Church made much of the fact that it was from water that the world was newly created and that the Church is created out of the water of baptism.⁵⁹ Another picture set forth in the Genesis account is that of the Spirit hovering over the water. The prayer for the consecration of the font in the Sacramentary develops the

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 193.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 174f.

⁵⁹Cf. Danielou, op. cit., pp. 71-75; St. John 3.

theme of the Spirit creatively at work in the font. The descent of the Dove after Jesus left the waters of the Jordan after His baptism was also frequently remarked upon.

The second reading was about Noah. It is fairly certain that the lesson dealt with the flood rather than any other event in Noah's life. 1 Peter 3:18-22 recalls that by the waters of the flood eight were saved even while the world of sin was being destroyed. The waters of the flood, like those of baptism, both destroy and save.⁶⁰ Baptism is both judgment and grace. The dove which went out over the waters and returned with the olive branch of peace figured in the Church's use of this text as did also the figure of the ark as representative of the new saving ark, the Church.⁶¹ The collect which followed the reading recalled that the creation of the world was no more wonderful than the redemptive, creating work of the new age.

The third reading was about Abraham. The lesson probably was about the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham is the father of all those who believe because of his obedience. He, the father, is prepared to sacrifice his son, something which he finally does not have to do. Only the Father in heaven fulfills this sacrifice of His only Son. The collect which follows the reading suggests that it is through

⁶⁰Cf. 2 Peter 2:4-5; 3:5-6.

⁶¹Cf. Danielou, op. cit., pp. 75-85.

the baptism of the nations that Abraham becomes the father of nations as God had promised to Abraham. Isaac, spared by grace, is the forerunner of the countless sons of promise.⁶²

The fourth reading is taken from Exodus. The account of the Exodus itself is undoubtedly intended. Not only was this a traditional reading at the vigil but the canticle which follows this reading is that of Moses, Cantemus Domino. This canticle appears in Exodus immediately after the account of the passing through the Red Sea. The account of the whole Passover sequence loomed large in the thinking of the Church. Christ's death and resurrection are described as Christ's passover; He Himself is described as the Paschal Lamb.⁶³

Much of the imagery which surrounds the Eucharist is drawn from the Passover meal. The main point of contact between these events and baptism, however, is the water of the Red Sea. Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea and was thereby baptized into Moses, passed from slavery to freedom, from death to life, from darkness to light. They who once were no people became a people of God. The new people of God who are baptized into Christ in the waters

⁶²Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 55.

⁶³Cf. supra, pp. 23ff.

of the font experience the eschatological fulfillment of all that the Exodus meant to Israel.⁶⁴ The collect which follows this lesson speaks of the waters of baptism which brought the Gentiles to the freedom given Israel and asks that all men may pass over to become the sons of Abraham.

The fifth lesson is taken from Isaiah. Isaiah 55 is probably the text intended. Included in this chapter are these significant sentences. "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; . . . Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; . . ." This chapter, too, is traditional. The promises given by the mouth of the Prophet are uniquely fulfilled in the New Israel which has flocked to the waters and which is fed with wine (the Eucharist) and milk (the mixed cup of the baptismal mass) without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1). The collect which follows the reading asks God to fulfill the promises made to the fathers and to increase the number of his adopted sons.

The sixth lesson is designated as coming from Ezekiel. Again, the specific text is not indicated. The collect, which asks God to give those who receive his present favors a firm hope of His future blessings, might be taken as evidence that the traditional reading concerning the Valley of Dry Bones called to life by the Spirit of God is

⁶⁴Cf. Danielou, op. cit., pp. 86-98.

the lesson that was used. All through the catechumenate the evil spirit who brought death into the world has been exorcised. The Holy Spirit has been invoked. This lesson portrayed that Spirit as the Lord and Giver of Life. It held before the catechumens the fulfillment of the Christian hope, the resurrection from the dead which had already been fulfilled in their Lord on Easter, which resurrection would be theirs through baptism.

The seventh lesson is described as being from Isaiah again. Common practice and the identification of the canticle following it as being that of the vineyard of the Lord point rather strongly to Isaiah 4 as the lesson. This also was commonly interpreted and expounded to the catechumens. The passage speaks of the desperate times which will come to rebellious Israel. However, God Himself will restore the purged remnant and will Himself dwell in the midst of Jerusalem as in the days of the Exodus. The daughters of Zion will be cleansed of their filth and will be called holy. The canticle, Isaiah 5, even more easily can be related to baptism. The vineyard is the Church; the newly planted vines the newly-baptized; all nourished by the loving care of the Lord of the vineyard.⁶⁵ The collect which follows urges God to cut away all the

⁶⁵St. Zeno of Verona, quoted by Jean Gaillard, Holy Week and Easter, translated by William Busch (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1957), pp. 128f.

undergrowth in the vineyard so that it may produce much fruit.

Exodus is the source of the eighth lesson. Traditionally, this lesson is the account of the Passover meal in Exodus 12. The reading of this passage completes the set of Passover images initiated in the earlier lesson from Exodus. The previous lesson brings to the fore the blood of the Lamb by which the Israelites were saved as the elect will be saved by the blood of the Lamb of God. Specifically, it is the anointing of the posts and lintels of the doors which protect the Israelites; baptism is the anointing of the elect with the blood of the Lamb which protects the new Israel. The lesson served also to interpret the significance of the paschal eucharist which would follow. At that time the neophytes would partake for the first time in the messianic banquet foreshadowed by the passover meal.⁶⁶

The ninth lesson is taken from Deuteronomy. It is followed by a canticle. From the collect it is possible to determine that the reading and canticle are from chapters thirty-one and thirty-two. God gives Joshua the promise that he shall lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Moses calls Israel together and teaches them the canticle, Audite, Coeli. God is faithful; He has given Israel the

⁶⁶Cf. Danielou, op. cit., pp. 162-176.

fulness of His love; let Israel not forsake the God who made them His people. The collect calls on God to give the catechumens joy by blotting out their sins against His law. The baptismal implications are quite obvious. Through baptism the catechumens will be brought to the Promised Land. The terrors of the law are removed by Christ's death into which they are to be baptized. The newly-baptized Christian seeks to delight God by doing His will.

The tenth lesson is the final one in this series. Twelve lessons were more customary. Daniel is the source of this lesson. It is probably the account of Meshack, Shadrach and Abednego.⁶⁷ Through this lesson the candidates are reminded that allegiance to Christ means the refusal to bow the knee to any god but the Triune God in whose Name they have been signed. The catechumens of earlier days might well have heard these words and thought of the persecution of an antagonistic Roman Empire. The collect asks that these lessons increase the devotion of God's people.

At the conclusion of the lessons Psalm 42 was sung. The psalm begins with the classic baptismal verse, "As the hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God." The final collect reads:

⁶⁷Shepherd, loc. cit.

Almighty everlasting God, look favourably on the devotion of thy people at their second birth, who like as the hart await the fountain of waters: and of thy favour grant that in the mystery of baptism their thirst for the faith may sanctify their souls and bodies. Through . . .⁶⁸

The pervading influence of these lessons and the psalm is felt all the more strongly when the paintings and mosaics of the baptistries built by the Church are examined. In addition to the words, the visible images crowded the consciousness of all those participating in the baptisms.⁶⁹

The Baptisms

At the conclusion of the lessons the Litany was sung while the bishop, his clergy, the catechumens and their sponsors processed to the baptistry. Men bearing candles and censers accompanied the procession.⁷⁰

When they arrived at the font, the bishop spoke the salutation. The people responded in the usual manner. The bishop then offered two prayers, the first one a collect for the presence of the Spirit, the second a long, extended consecration of the font.⁷¹ This second prayer

⁶⁸Whitaker, loc. cit.

⁶⁹F. van der Meer and Christine Mohrmann, Atlas of the Early Christian World, translated and edited by Mary F. Hedlund and H. H. Rowley (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1958), especially pp. 125-131.

⁷⁰Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 176, 193.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 176-178, 193.

mentions the Spirit hovering over the waters at creation and the judgmental and redemptive character of the flood. A request that God disperse Satan from that place concludes the first section of the prayer. The Sacramentary then directed a signing of the water. The prayer continues with the formal blessing of the water with references to the water at creation, the water which came forth from the rock in the wilderness to give life to Israel, the water turned into wine at Cana, the water of the Jordan in which Christ was baptized, the water which issued from Christ's side, and the water included in the dominical command to baptize! The prayer concludes with a plea that the Holy Spirit might descend into the font so that it might regenerate the elect.

Although it is the later rite, the Sacramentary makes no mention of the customs associated with this prayer in the Ordo. According to the Ordo, the bishop poured chrism into the font, tracing the form of the cross. The bishop stirred this mixture and then sprinkled the font and the people gathered by it. The Ordo also mentions the practice of all present having the opportunity to take some of the water to sprinkle their homes and fields.⁷²

The bishop then baptized a few of the infants. A deacon completed the baptisms. The Sacramentary gives the

⁷²Ibid., p. 193.

baptismal formula as follows:

Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty? *R.* I believe.

And dost thou believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was born and suffered? *R.* I believe. And dost thou believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Church; the remission of sins; the resurrection of the flesh? *R.* I believe.⁷³

The baptism was a three-fold immersion. The old man goes down into the water. He is submerged. The new man emerges. He is now dead with Christ to the rule of sin. Washed from his sins, he lives the new life of the people of God.

The post-baptismal anointing by the priest then took place. The child was signed on the head with chrism which also was blessed on Maundy Thursday. The text accompanying this exorcism follows.

The Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has made thee to be regenerated of water and the Holy Spirit and has given thee remission of all thy sins, himself anoints thee with the chrism of salvation in Christ Jesus unto eternal life.⁷⁴

This chrism was customarily interpreted in the light of 1 Peter 2:9 where the Apostle describes his readers as a royal priesthood. The newly baptized are the new kings and priests of Israel, the chosen and anointed servants of God.

According to the Ordo, the children were then dried

⁷³Ibid., p. 178.

⁷⁴Ibid.

by their sponsors. The baptismal procession then returned to the church the bishop had chosen for the closing of the rite and for the celebration of the Eucharist. He there mounted his throne. The infants then were given a stole, a chasuble, a chrismal cloth and ten coins. They were then robed in their baptismal garments.⁷⁵ No mention is made of these rites in the Sacramentary. The garments represent the white robes given the newly-baptized upon their emergence from the font. They had become stylized; nevertheless, the meaning is clear. They have been given the wedding garment spoken of in St. Matthew 22. They have been covered by the purity of Jesus Christ, a purity they are to maintain for the rest of their lives.

The Confirmation

The bishop then spoke the prayer of confirmation over the gathered infants. He placed his hands on them as he prayed.

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast made thy servants to be regenerated of water and the Holy Spirit, and hast given them remission of all their sins, do thou, Lord, pour upon them thy Holy Spirit the Paraclete, and give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, and fill them with the spirit of fear of God, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ with whom thou livest

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 193f.

and reignest ever God with the Holy Spirit, throughout all ages of ages. Amen.⁷⁶

After the prayer they were signed with chrism on the forehead. The formula which accompanied this varies between the two rites. The Pax was then given them for the first time.

The rubric in the Ordo which follows this ceremony is most interesting.

Great care must be taken that this is not neglected, because it is at that point that every baptism is confirmed and justification made for the name of Christianity.⁷⁷

The easiest understanding of this would seem to be that the Ordo understands confirmation as the means for the bestowal of such gifts as enable the neophyte to produce those works which vindicate Christianity as the religion of the true God. Without these works the name of Christianity is shamed.

The practice of the two rites this chapter has discussed does not support the distinction which is sometimes made between baptism and confirmation; namely, that baptism bestows the forgiveness of sins and confirmation the gifts of the Spirit. According to them the Spirit is bestowed in baptism as well as by the confirmation. Nor do they support the contention that confirmation "completes" baptism

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 178.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 194.

as though baptism is in some sense unfinished without confirmation.

Confirmation is described as sealing a person, to clearly mark and identify that person as belonging to God, as being both the recipient of His gifts and as one placed in His service. The prayer for the seven-fold Spirit is, then, a prayer that the expectation of the Church will be fulfilled, that this baptism will indeed work in the neophyte not only a superficial encounter with Life but an involvement with Life of the most profound sense.

The two, baptism and confirmation, certainly are not seen here as two distinct and separate rites of initiation. The act of baptism is central; the confirmation of the newly-baptized persons by the bishop is an extension of the same care shown during the earlier catechumenate that all those admitted to baptism should prove to be of the sort which would bear fruit a hundred-fold rather than of the sort unproductive of good works and thus betrayers of the Christ in whom they had been buried and raised again.

After the confirmation a pause took place. Then the Easter mass was begun with the singing of the Litany (the complete Kyrie of older times) and then the Gloria. For the ancient Church participation in the Eucharist was the purpose for initiation into the Church. The first communion of the candidates along with all the preliminary rites was included in the term baptism. Men were baptized

so they could participate in the fellowship which broke bread with God in thanksgiving and joy. That is, indeed, the definition of the Church.

For the rest of Easter week the catechumens attended the Eucharist daily, robed in their baptismal garb.

Thus, this study has come forward some five hundred years from the classic definition of the Roman rite as given by Hippolytus. The rite has remained the same in its basic shape even though changes have been made to fit the change in the age of the typical catechumen. A three-year catechumenate has been reduced to a four-week period. The catechetical instruction has become formalized. The accompanying rites have undoubtedly been amplified. The additions in some cases were profitable, but in others they blur the sharp outline of the baptismal rite. By this time the rite is full-blown, perhaps already past maturity and in a process of degeneration.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LUTHERAN RITE

The process of change reflected in the Sacramentary continued. The scrutinies, something of an anachronism in an age of infant baptisms, fell into disuse. Charles the Great had already inquired about the scrutinies during his massive effort to organize the Church in his Frankish empire. Only two of the bishops consulted felt obliged to defend the scrutinies.¹ As was noted earlier, it is possible that even the churches using the Gelasian Sacramentary no longer observed the traditional number of seven scrutinies. Stenzel is of the opinion that the number of scrutinies declined from seven to one by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This one was probably held sometime during Holy week. By the fifteenth century the scrutinies had disappeared completely.²

Characteristic of the years between the Sacramentary and Luther was the telescoping of the rite. However, one additional rite was added during this period. This was the reading of a portion of a Gospel immediately after the

¹Alois Stenzel, S.J., Die Taufe: Eine Genetische Er-
klaerung der Tauf liturgie (Innsbruck: Verlag Felizian
Rauch, 1957), pp. 247ff.

²Ibid., pp. 255ff.

last exorcism. The most frequently chosen text was St. Matthew 11:25ff. This passage presents Christ as giving thanks to His Father for revealing the mystery of redemption to "babes" rather than to the wise. Later this text fell into disuse and was replaced by St. Matthew 19:13ff. and St. Mark 10:13ff., parallel passages recording the blessing of children by Christ. Possibly this practice is a development of the traditio evangelii.³ Also frequently appended to the rites during this period were exhortations to the sponsors that they teach their godchildren the rudiments of the Church's teaching. Added to the earlier list of required items to be taught, that is, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, was the Ave Maria in many instances.⁴ A traditio of the Ave was added to the rite in several instances.

The separation between the rites observed in the morning of Holy Saturday and those at the vigil disappeared. All of the rites, now that the scrutinies had disappeared, were thus collapsed into one extended ceremony.⁵ This was accompanied by the tendency to observe the vigil itself in the morning.

By the fifteenth century baptism was no longer

³Ibid., pp. 258f., especially footnote 38; 276.

⁴Ibid., p. 276.

⁵Ibid., p. 257.

reserved for Easter and Pentecost.⁶ The high rate of mortality among infants made it appear imperative that infants be baptized as soon after birth as possible. At least two councils issued rulings to this effect. The council which met in Milan in 1565 decreed that baptisms should be performed within eight days of birth. The council of Marbonne of 1609 cut this down to three days.⁷ Only those children born a few days before Holy Saturday were baptized on the traditional date. This later, in the opinion of Stenzel, was already the case by the thirteenth century.⁸

Baptism by immersion (except for the head) remained the practice into the fifteenth century. Thereafter, however, it began to be replaced by baptism by pouring.⁹ The communion of infants after their baptism remained general until the twelfth century. The chief reason given for withholding the communion from the infants was the fear that they might spit up the wine, thus profaning the Lord's blood. In some cases a chalice was offered the infants that was not in the strict sense a eucharistic cup. The communion of infants is ended by the close of

⁶Ibid., p. 275.

⁷Ibid., p. 265, footnote 59.

⁸Ibid., p. 264.

⁹Ibid., p. 279.

the fourteenth century.¹⁰

During the course of the centuries intervening between the Sacramentary and Luther the number of rites multiplied. Freedom in ritual matters was much in evidence during this time. Within the limits of the area which is the center of concern for the development of the Lutheran rite, there was, however, a general consensus among the rites. This consensus can be found present in the rite which Luther prepared in 1523, which, upon examination, is found to be largely a translation of a very typical rite of his day.

Luther's Rites

The first document which bears the name of Luther and which serves as a description of the baptismal rite is the brief work with the title, Wie Man Recht Und Verstaendlich Einen Menschen Zum Christenglauben Taufen Soll.¹¹ It appears to be a summary of the order of baptism in use in that part of Germany. There appears to be more than some question concerning the authenticity of the document. In any event, the document does not have much importance. If it is by Luther, it nevertheless plays no role in the development of the characteristic Lutheran rite with which

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 279f.

¹¹ Martin Luther, Works of Martin Luther With Introductions and Notes (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), VI, 210f.

this thesis is concerned.

This is definitely not the case with Das Tauff Buchlin Verdeutsch of 1523.¹² There is no question about its being by Luther or of its importance. While the exact text which Luther translated is not known to be in existence, his rite of 1523 is apparently a translation of the ritual Luther had been using with but a few changes.¹³

According to Graff-Rietschl the following changes are those likely to have been made by Luther:

1. The extended exorcisms are abbreviated somewhat.
2. The use of the Creed in remembrance of the traditio and redditio symboli is omitted.
3. The return of the Lord's Prayer is changed from an evidence on the part of the sponsors that they will be able to teach their godchildren this prayer into an actual prayer on behalf of the child.
4. The formula used in giving the salt was changed so that it was clear that it was Wisdom Itself rather than the salt which gave eternal life.
5. The prayer traditionally spoken after the bestowal of salt was dropped. In its place was inserted the famous Sindflutgebet.¹⁴

¹²Ibid., 197-201.

¹³Georg Rietschel, Lehrbuch der Liturgik, zweite neu-bearbeitete Auflage von Paul Graff (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1951), pp. 556, 561.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 562f.; cf. infra, p. 86.

All in all, Luther's first attempt at an evangelical baptismal rite is a conservative statement of current practice with abbreviation being the major concern in the changes. The Sindflutgebet may or may not be an exception to this. If Luther composed this prayer himself, he surely lengthened the rite. It may be that Luther had a model for this prayer also.¹⁵

The second complete baptismal order coming from Luther's hand is Das Taufbuechlein aufs Neue Zugerchtet, dated 1526.¹⁶ In it Luther has simplified the baptismal rite, removing much of the ceremony and some of the text also. In later years it was the second rather than the first order which was represented in Lutheran agendas. It was incorporated into the Small Catechism and as such printed in many editions of the Book of Concord.¹⁷ The specific differences between the rites of 1523 and 1526 will be noted below.

Luther's Rites Compared

To review Luther's rites, it is most convenient to use the rite of 1523 as the pattern and to note in passing

¹⁵Infra, p. 86.

¹⁶Luther, op. cit., VI, 207-209.

¹⁷Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, 4. durchgesehene Auflage (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1959).

the changes made in the rite of 1526.

The order of 1523 begins with an exsufflation and exorcism in which the priest blows three times under the child's eyes and commands, "Depart thou unclean spirit and give room to the Holy Spirit." The rite of 1526 keeps the text but not the action.¹⁸ The distinction between an exsufflation and an insufflation, although not always precisely observed, is a significant one. An exsufflation was a sign of contempt for the devil, hence, a more vigorous blowing. A more gentle breathing into the face of the candidate, an insufflation was a symbol of the imparting of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ This ceremony partook of the nature of an exorcism.

Both orders call next for a signation on the forehead and on the breast with the words, "Receive the sign of the holy cross both on thy forehead and breast."²⁰

The rite of 1523 then prescribes two prayers. The first of these is a prayer of exorcism; the second is a prayer asking God to grant the grace of baptism to the candidate. The later order collapses these two prayers into one. The note of exorcism is the chief casualty.²¹

¹⁸Luther, op. cit., pp. 197, 207.

¹⁹Cf. St. John 20:22.

²⁰Luther, op. cit., pp. 197, 207.

²¹Ibid., pp. 197f., 207.

The 1523 rite next directs the giving of salt. No form for the blessing of the salt is given. The formula used is, "N., receive the salt of wisdom: may it (wisdom) aid thee to eternal life. Amen. Peace to thee."²² In the German Luther made it clear that wisdom, not the salt, is the active agent. As stated before, the 1526 rite omits this ceremony.

Then follows in both rites the Sindflutgebet.²³ It cites the condemnatory and saving aspects of the flood, the two-fold character of the crossing of the Red Sea and the baptism of Christ in the Jordan. It requests that the candidate be received into the Church.

Rietschel-Graff is of the opinion that Luther did not create this prayer but that he took over from rites known to him a prayer which was based on the prayer for the consecration of the font found in the baptismal rites of the middle ages. Luther's model was, according to this suggestion, a prayer built from this material into a prayer related to the salt ceremony.²⁴ This is a most plausible theory. It accounts for Luther's inserting the Sindflutgebet at this particular place. In any event, the prayer has no novelties in it.

²²Ibid., p. 198.

²³Ibid., pp. 198, 207f.

²⁴Rietschel, op. cit., pp. 563f.

Thus far, this order presents a greatly abbreviated yet recognizable parallel to the Gelasian Sacramentary's opening rites for the enrollment of a catechumen. The scrutinies, which were primarily concerned with the exorcism of the candidates, it should be remembered, had fallen away as specially appointed gatherings. An echo of them remains in Luther's rite of 1523 in the exorcisms which follow. In fact, Luther's rite contains almost the whole course of exorcisms given in the Sacramentary to be said over the male children and also the priest's final prayer. (The formulas spoken over the girls are absent.) In the 1526 rite all of this is lost except for the adjuration of Satan.²⁵

Of the presentation and exposition of the Gospels, only the reading of St. Mark 10:13ff., which is next prescribed by both of Luther's rites, remains. Nothing remains of the traditio or redditio symboli. Luther probably felt that two readings of the Creed in a rite which encompasses but a few minutes of one day were unnecessary. The presentation or return of the Lord's Prayer keeps a foothold in Luther's rites. After the reading of the Gospel, the Lord's Prayer is to be spoken by the priest, laying his hands on the child's head, and the sponsors.²⁶

²⁵Luther, op. cit., pp. 198f., 208.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 200, 208.

Luther's rite of 1523 then prescribes the Effeta ceremony formerly performed on the morning of Holy Saturday. Luther directs the priest to take spittal on his finger and to touch the right ear of the infant, saying, "Ephthan, that is, Be thou opened!" Then the nose and left ear are to be touched with the words, "But thou, devil, flee, for God's judgment cometh speedily."²⁷ This is not a part of the second rite.

All of the rites up to this point have been said outside the nave or baptistry. The child is led into the church with the words, "The Lord preserve thy coming in and thy going out from now on to eternity."²⁸

The renunciations follow in both rites. The third renunciation substitutes the word ways for the older usage of pomps. Then the confession of faith takes place. However, the Creed used is the Apostles' rather than the Nicene.²⁹ It was at this point in the rite of the Sacramentary that the catechumens had been sent back to their homes to wait for nightfall. For Luther, the action continued. Except for the absence of an exorcism and the anointing before the renunciations, the parallel between Luther's rite and the morning rites of the Sacramentary is

²⁷Ibid., p. 200.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 200, 208f.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 200f., 209.

complete.

Nothing remains of the vigil. The lessons, canticles, and prayers and the blessing of the font are all lacking as one might expect upon the separation of the baptismal rite from Easter.

Luther's rite of 1523 continues with a pre-baptismal anointing which is omitted in the second rite. This anointing is traditional. Then follows the question, "Dost thou desire to be baptized?" It appears in both versions.³⁰

The baptism which follows is by immersion, not specifically three-fold. Immediately after the baptismal act, the priest signs the child on the head with chrism. The prayers spoken are those of the Sacramentary.³¹ In the 1526 rite the anointing is omitted and the prayer is changed slightly to avoid reference to the anointing. The confirmation which followed in the older texts is now missing, having been separated from baptism because of the practice of the western Church to delay confirmation. The Pax which followed the confirmation is kept in both of Luther's rites.³²

Luther's order then calls for the priest to put on

³⁰Ibid., pp. 201, 209.

³¹Supra, p. 74.

³²Luther, op. cit., pp. 201, 209.

the child a baptismal garment with an accompanying formula which describes the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness given through baptism. The 1526 version omits the formula and instructs the priest to robe the child at the point where the 1523 rite calls for the post-baptismal anointing. The ceremony which closes the 1523 rite, the presentation of a lighted candle with an interpretative formula is completely missing in the second of Luther's two versions which closes with the Pax.³³

Despite the passage of time and the radical changes in the baptismal process in the period between the Sacramentary and Luther, the ancient pattern is still discernible in Luther's rites, that is, of enrollment in the catechumenate, the exorcisms and instruction during the catechumenate, the Holy Saturday morning rites, and the baptismal rite itself.

Whatever virtue the evangelical Christian may find in the elimination of ceremonies and the shortening of the rite, it is regrettable that Luther's orders contribute little of a positive nature to provide the Church with a rite suited for the baptism of infants. Seen in perspective, Luther's rites largely continue the process of deterioration in the ancient baptismal rites.

This is not to say that his contribution is not of

³³Loc. cit.

value. Anything which makes baptism stand out more clearly and which removes unnecessary or useless gingerbread is likely to serve a good purpose. However, except for his expressed desire for baptism by immersion, he makes no positive contribution to the task of making the rite more expressive of its meaning. In view of the fact that immersion never was widely accepted by the evangelical churches, we do not have this gain. Thus, even though we may thank Luther for simplifying the rite and for removing anachronisms and encumbrances, we may also have to acknowledge that the rite became less expressive of the Church's understanding of the meaning of baptism.

The richness of the heritage he gave to the churches which bear his name by his discussions on baptism in the Small Catechism and in the Large Catechism as well as in his Treatise on Baptism of 1519 makes one all the more regret that this piety and theology left so little imprint on his rites.

From the Reformation to the Present

For the Roman Catholic church, the multiplicity of baptismal rites which marked the middle ages was brought to an end by the issuing of the Rituale Romanum in 1614. Lutheranism, however, continued the tradition of a multiplicity of rites in the period following the reformation. Their similarities, nevertheless, outweighed their

dissimilarities. The 1526 rite of Luther was the dominant one, influencing not only the Lutheran churches but also those influenced by Calvin's theology. Luther's own rite, in turn, was influenced by the impact of Calvinism, rationalism and pietism.

One of the earliest additions to Luther's rite were certain addresses which were felt necessary from a pastoral or pedagogical point of view. The first of these appeared in Brandenburg in 1526 and 1533. These were introductory addresses which sought to lay before the sponsors the necessity of baptism, beginning naturally with the fall of Adam. They presented something of an understanding of the Lutheran doctrine of baptism. Their style was generally sermonic.³⁴

Another addition was the exhortation of the sponsors. Such exhortations had appeared during the Middle Ages and were commonly appended to the end of the baptismal rite. In some of the Lutheran rites they kept this position but in general they appeared somewhere prior to the baptismal act, frequently after the Gospel of Jesus blessing the children.³⁵

³⁴Paul Graff, Geschichte der Aufloesung der altergottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands. 2 vols. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1937 and 1939), I, 292f.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 287ff., 293f.

These two additions appear in the Synodical Conference rite. A frequent addition not retained in this rite is the formal inquiry concerning the child's name prior to the baptism. This appeared regularly in the Lutheran agendas. Another addition, one our rite does have, was the use of a prayer of thanksgiving at the conclusion of the rite.³⁶

Of the subtractions made from the rite in the years that followed, the loss of the exorcisms is the most noticeable. A number of influences were responsible for their loss. Chief among the arguments that was pressed prior to the Enlightenment was that they encouraged the people to superstition. The claim was made that the exorcisms gave the impression that all children were demoniacs and that the exorcisms were viewed as some sort of magic, overshadowing the baptismal act itself.³⁷ Although some attempts were made to interpret the exorcisms properly, it was felt that the results were not worth the effort. Under the onslaught of rationalism, the exorcisms fell completely into disuse.

The same problem of the "superstition" of the people also arose in regard to the making of the sign of the cross. This escaped complete rejection. It was, however, dislocated from its place at the head of the rite and it was

³⁶Ibid., pp. 289, 306.

³⁷Ibid., p. 296.

usually accompanied by formulae which changed the significance of the act.³⁸

On the next page a table appears in which are presented in column form a numbered outline of the two rites of Luther and the rite of The Lutheran Agenda. The actual texts must be consulted for minor variations. From the table it is obvious that the rite of The Lutheran Agenda is typical of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' development of Luther's rite of 1526. It carries with it both the weaknesses and strengths of that rite with a gain through the addition of the two addresses and with a loss through the removal of the exorcisms and the falling away of the presentation of the baptismal robe and candle.

³⁸Ibid., I, 294; II, 229f.

A COMPARISON OF LUTHER'S RITES AND THE
RITE OF THE LUTHERAN AGENDA

	1523	1526	Syn. Conf.
1a. Opening Address			X
1. Shorter Exorcism	X	X	
2. Signing	X	X	X
3. Prayers	X	X*	X*
4. Salt Ceremony	X		
5. "Sindflutgebet"	X	X	X
6. Greater Exorcism	X	X*	
7. Gospel: St. Mark 10:13ff.	X	X	X
7a. Exhortation of Sponsors			X
8. Lord's Prayer	X	X	X
9. Effeta	X		
10. Entrance Blessing	X	X	X
11. Renunciations	X	X	X
12. Confession of Creed	X	X	X
13. Pre-baptismal Anointing	X		
14. "Do you wish to be baptized?"	X	X	X
15. Baptism	X	X	X
16. Post-baptismal Anointing and Blessing	X	X*	X*
17. Pax	X	X	X
18. Bestowal of Robe	X	X*	
19. Presentation of Candle	X		
19a. Prayer of Thanksgiving			X

*indicates a significant change from the rite of 1523.

CHAPTER V

PROPOSALS TOWARD A REWORKING OF THE LUTHERAN AGENDA'S RITE OF INFANT BAPTISM

A study of the history behind the Agenda's rite of infant baptism prepares the way not only for an understanding of its constituent parts but also for a reaction to that rite. Two questions come to mind. First, does the rite serve The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as well as it might in its designated purpose, namely, the baptism of infants? Second, does the rite do justice to the heritage which produced it?

The best way to make such a study is to compare the rite with its pattern, Luther's rites of 1523 and 1526. They were, for us at least, the end product of the western Church's attempt to create a rite for infant baptism which would incorporate the most useful and significant parts of the heritage. In the study which follows the numbers in parentheses correspond to the numbers in the table of comparison on page 95.

(1a) Opening Address

In view of the rubric¹ which suggests that baptism

¹The Lutheran Liturgy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 419.

be administered after the opening hymn of the Service, it would be well for the Agenda to specify that the baptismal rite begin with the formula of invocation, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The congregation should be directed to respond with the Amen. When a baptism opens the Service, this formula should be omitted just before the opening versicles of the Service. The incorporation of the rite into the Service in this way would serve to make baptism a normal even if not regularly administered portion of the Service.

An opening address of some sort serves the need for a smoothing of the way into the baptismal rite. The opportunity which such an address gives to remind the participants of the teaching of Christ concerning baptism is also to be prized. The address which the Agenda presently provides, however, appears excessively long and overly sermonic in tone. Such detailed instruction should be reserved for the regular homiletical and catechetical work of the pastor. Pre-baptismal counseling also provides a more fitting (and useful) opportunity for such teaching. As an example of a shorter, yet fitting, introduction to the baptismal rite, the following preamble to the American Book of Common Prayer is given.

Dearly beloved, forasmuch as our Saviour Christ saith, None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of Water and of the Holy Ghost; I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of

his bounteous mercy he will grant to this Child (this person) that which by nature he cannot have; that he may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy Church and be made a living member of the same.²

This text has the virtue of brevity and clearly defines the purpose of the action to follow and the role the participants are asked to play.

An alternative to this suggestion would be to permit the officiant the option of preparing his own addresses, either applying the mystery being celebrated on that date to the baptisms or providing the congregation with a course of instructions concerning the sacrament.

(1) Shorter Exorcism

Both of Luther's orders have the shorter exorcism at their head. There are strong arguments for the restoration of some form of exorcism in our rite. At least two difficulties standing in the way of such restoration are evident. The concern about superstition and the possible confusion about demonic possession which post-reformation Lutheranism cited as a reason for dropping the exorcisms might still be raised today. The modern world's disinclination to believe in a spirit world and the problems thrust upon us by the current attempts at demythologizing

²The Book of Common Prayer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), pp. 273f. Hereafter referred to as BCP.

also would seem to argue against such restoration.

Yet, these arguments are not conclusive. In the first place, our age needs reminding of the Biblical teaching that all men are either in the house of God or in that of His opposition. Secondly, the profound nature of evil needs to be clearly presented. Men do not like to think of themselves as beholden to anyone. Yet apart from the gracious action of God there is no deliverance from our bondage to sin. However much modern man might be offended by exorcism, exorcism represents a truth which dare not be forgotten.³

To avoid the danger that uninformed persons might regard the use of the traditional formula as evidence of the demonic possession of the person to be baptized (how many people do still believe in demonic possession?), the insertion of the name of Satan either before or after the phrase "thou unclean spirit" is suggested. The exorcism would then read either as "Depart, thou unclean spirit, Satan, and give room to the Holy Spirit" or as "Depart, Satan, thou unclean spirit, and give room to the Holy Spirit."

In this way the unclean spirit would be clearly defined as that evil spirit who is the enemy of all men

³Louis Bouyer, Christian Initiation (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 54-58.

rather than one who afflicts a particular person in a particular way. This might be made even more clear by reversing the order of the two clauses. It would then read, "Give way to the Holy Spirit and depart, Satan, thou unclean spirit." In this way priority would be given to the activity of the Spirit rather than to the exorcistic work of the pastor.

It would not appear that the exsufflation which accompanied these words should be recommended in this germ-conscious age.

The exorcism probably would best be given as a permitted rather than as a required portion of the rite.

(2) Signing

The addition of the interpretative words "in token that thou has been redeemed by Christ the Crucified" by our rite is all to the good. The Service Book and Hymnal offers this interesting formula:

Receive the sign of the holy Cross, in token that henceforth thou shalt know the Lord, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.⁴

⁴Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America. Authorized by the Churches cooperating in The Commission on the Liturgy and The Commission on the Hymnal (Music Edition; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House; Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern; Blair, Nebraska: Lutheran Publishing House; Hancock, Michigan: Finnish Lutheran Book Concern; Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House; Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1958), p. 242. Hereafter referred to as SBH.

(3) Prayers

The three prayers given in our rite as alternate choices pose a problem. Each of the prayers has its own virtues, but what purpose is served by offering a choice? It is unlikely that many will avail themselves of the freedom to use more than one of them at any one baptism.

The first prayer is the 1526 combination of the two prayers offered after the short exorcism in the 1523 rite. The opening of the first (an exorcistic prayer and thus related to what has just taken place) and the petitions of the second (a reference to the baptism to come) are joined together to form the new prayer. The Service Book and Hymnal gives this as the one prescribed prayer at this point.⁵ The Book of Common Prayer prescribes the original form of the second of the two prayers combined by Luther in 1526.⁶

The second prayer parallels the prayer given in Luther's 1523 rite after the adjuration in the greater exorcism with certain changes having been made.

Our third prayer is the Sindflutgebet which really belongs with the Salt Ceremony of the 1523 rite. Despite its fascinating typology, its length and its combining of three types make it cumbersome and inelegant. One wonders

⁵Ibid.

⁶BCP, p. 274.

how frequently this, the longest of the three, is chosen by pastors.

It is not a matter of major import, but the number of prayers given might well be reduced to one. Of the three, the second, following Luther's form more closely, has the most to commend it. It might, however, be fitting that a new prayer be given, one that is related more directly to the bestowal of the sign of the cross which takes place immediately before this.

The following collect is one of those given by the Gelasian Sacramentary for the making of a catechumen, spoken after the bestowal of the sign of the cross. The opening phrases are particularly felicitous.

O Lord, we beseech thee, of thy goodness hear our prayers, and protect these thine elect with the power of the Lord's Cross, with which we sign them, that from this first beginning of the worship of thy majesty, being ever set about by thy commandments, they may attain to the glory of the second birth.
Through . . .⁷

The following prayer, based on the previous one, might serve as a collect especially suited to follow the bestowal of the sign of the cross.

O Lord, we beseech Thee, of Thy goodness hear our prayers and protect this Thy child with the power of the Lord's cross with which he has been signed, so that from this day he may, by the help of Thy Spirit, be delivered from the enemy and be brought to eternal life. Through . . .

⁷E. C. Whitaker, Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1960), pp. 159f.

A prayer of this kind would be a fitting climax to the opening action of the baptismal rite, one paralleling the "making of a catechumen" of the past.

(4) Salt Ceremony

The loss of this ceremony does not represent a significant loss to the rite. Salt long ago lost most of the significance it had in the ancient world.

(5) "Sindflutgebet"

This prayer, discussed under number three, the prayers, was a replacement for a prayer which referred to the salt ceremony. Despite its typology and historical significance, it might best be omitted. The prayer is clumsy, the salt ceremony which went before it is missing and so is the greater exorcism which it introduced.

(6) Greater Exorcism

The greater exorcism was a remnant of the scrutinies, ceremonies no longer maintained. If the shorter exorcism is restored, the need for an exorcism would be met. There appears no reason, other than an historical one, for the restoration of this exorcism in a rite for infant baptism.

The prayer associated with the greater exorcism is in the Agenda as the second of the prayers given under number three, the prayers. It is worthy of retention at its

present location.

(7) Gospel

The presence of a reading establishing the Church's authority for administering baptism or as an interpretation of the rite is an asset. Whether or not this particular text is the best one for use at this particular point is open to question.

The passage is subject to a number of misunderstandings. It lends itself somewhat too readily to the common belief in the innocence of children. In many people's minds, it is the sinlessness of the children rather than the grace of Christ which is the point of the lesson. The phrase concerning the necessity of entering the kingdom as a child poses some problems for the uninformed listener. There is also a problem involved in the case of those baptisms which involve a child older than the "little children" and yet not of the years which would warrant use of the rite for adults.

It has been argued that this text is appropriate whether an infant or an adult might be baptized. The basis of this argument is that the passage concerns the saving quality of faith rather than the virtues of childhood. This is correct, yet there can be no question but that this particular passage was selected by the Church because of its mention of little children. In any event, it is commonly

interpreted as a defense of the practice of infant baptism. If the weight of tradition and the admitted values of the faith-centered nature of the text outweigh the difficulties caused by its use, instruction concerning its true meaning is incumbent upon all our clergy.

Other texts which commend themselves for use include the dominical institution of the sacrament, St. Matthew 28:18-20; St. Matthew 11:25-30, used frequently in the Middle Ages; and the great Johannine passage, St. John 3:1-8. A Lutheran may be forgiven for suggesting Romans 6:1-11 as a reading. Since it does not come from a Gospel it may be considered too much of a departure from the traditio evangelii, but the scrutinies and the traditiones are for all intents and purposes dead anyway.

(7a) Exhortation of Sponsors

The exhortation may under certain circumstances serve a useful function. It carries with it the weight of much tradition within Lutheranism. It would be a mistake to regard this exhortation as a satisfactory substitute for thorough instruction on the obligations of the sponsors and the parents in respect to the Christian training of the young. The temptation to the sponsors is to see in their role only a symbolic function. Parents also are prone to shift their responsibilities to the church school.

Pre-baptismal counseling is imperative.⁸ The rubrics should clearly indicate that the Church expects such instruction. Where such instruction takes place, the exhortation could be omitted or at least be abbreviated.

In any event, the formula needs modification. Under present circumstances the (optional) instruction that the sponsors are to give counsel and aid if the child should lose his parents is almost meaningless. Our society has changed too much since this function of the sponsors was introduced.

Should our rite really encourage sponsors to bring up their godchildren in the knowledge of God according to the teachings of the Lutheran Church? What is meant, of course, is "according to the Word of God." There is no good reason for not making this more explicit, especially in this day of ecumenical concern. Sponsors should not have their consciences troubled needlessly in the event their godchild is compelled to grow up in a community without a Lutheran church. This alternate might well be dropped in favor of the more traditional second form.

The second form carries with it the traditional enumeration of the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The additional requirement that the sponsors place

⁸Cf. Ernest W. Southcott, Receive This Child: Constructive Thinking on Baptism (London and Oxford: A. R. Mowbray and Company, 1951).

the Scriptures in the hands of their godchildren is of dubious merit. This may be a good custom, but should it be a requirement?

In view of the striking changes in the social order of our communities, including the increased mobility of our population, a thorough review of the role of the sponsor should be made. Such a study would undoubtedly affect the text of the exhortation.

(8) Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer continues to find a place in the baptismal rite. Luther was probably correct in emphasizing the communal character of this prayer. It is significant that the Book of Common Prayer places this prayer after the baptism itself which is followed by the formula, "We receive this Child (Person) into the congregation of Christ's flock, . . ." ⁹ This completes the process begun by Luther of disassociating the Lord's Prayer from the traditiones, but it is a logical change in location if the familial aspect of the prayer is to be stressed. Its present location in the Agenda's rite interrupts the dialogue between pastor and sponsors.

⁹BCP, p. 280.

(9) Effeta

There is no significant reason for restoring the Effeta ceremony.

(10) Entrance Blessing

In those relatively rare churches where the old practice of conducting the opening portion of the baptismal rite in the narthex is followed, the use of the entrance benediction just before the party goes to the font is useful. In those churches, however, where the whole rite is performed at the front of the nave, it does not seem to be overly useful.

A custom which has much tradition behind it might be inserted at this point, that is, the inquiry concerning the child's name. To be sure, children are named before they leave the hospital so as to satisfy legal requirements and the printed bulletin generally suffices to acquaint all with the child's name. Nevertheless, this custom may serve well by reinforcing the teaching that the name by which we are known to God is given us in baptism.

(11) Renunciations

The renunciations remain as a most useful testimony to the passing over of the child from slavery to freedom made possible by the crucifixion and the work of the Holy Spirit.

They also remind those present of the conscious rejection of the works of the flesh which Christian discipleship requires of all those who have been buried with Christ.

The opening words of address to the sponsors ought to be revised. A simple "Dearly beloved" or some similar phrase would suffice. It should not limit those answering so as to exclude all but the sponsors. With the ever-increasing mobility of the population, this may well be the last time the sponsors see their godchild. The parents of the child should be present and should offer the same responses as the sponsors. It should be noted that in the first centuries of the Church's life the children of Christian parents were excused from the catechumenate and were brought to baptism during their infancy. It was assumed that the parents of the child would provide the necessary instruction at the proper times. Parents ought, therefore, be called upon to take an active role in the rite of baptism and should give public acknowledgement of their readiness to insure the Christian nurture of their child who is being received into the Christian fellowship.

This would also eliminate the necessity for a separate rite of infant baptism without sponsors. In the event sponsors are lacking or witnesses are used in the absence of sponsors, the formula would permit the witnesses and parents to respond without incongruity.

The embarrassing phrase in the address to the sponsors

about the questions which are addressed to him, the infant, should be excised. The child is not being addressed; the sponsors (and parents) are.

The formula might take on this form:

Dearly beloved: I now ask you to answer, in the name and in the stead of this child, these questions to signify thereby what God in and through Baptism works in him.

(12) Confession of Faith

Although there are good reasons for keeping the shape of the questions in precise harmony with the Apostles' Creed, for reasons of style the shorter form of the question concerning the Second Person as used by Luther might well be readopted. The seven lines of the second article make for difficult reading in question form. The form, "Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born and suffered?," commends itself.

(13) Pre-baptismal Anointing

Oil no longer has either the secular or religious significance it once had. This would weigh against the re-introduction of this practice. Perhaps the contemporary practice of "anointing" infants with baby oil does provide for some point of contact. If anointing were to be reintroduced, the post-baptismal anointing should be revived rather than this one.

(14) "Do you wish to be baptized?"

From one point of view, this question is meaningless in the case of infant baptism. On the other hand, this willingness to be baptized may be construed as a part of that which God in and through baptism works in the infant.

The question substituted for this one in the Service Book and Hymnal, "Do you present this Child to be baptized into this Christian Faith?" is an interesting solution to the problem.¹⁰

(15) Baptism

The direction that water be applied three times upon the head of the child is valuable. Perhaps the word "generously" might be added to it. The arguments in favor of immersion still appear valid, however. It would take great determination (perhaps fanatic zeal!) for a congregation to undertake the changes necessary for its re-adoption.

(16) Post-baptismal Anointing and Blessing

If this ceremony is interpreted as a remnant of the post-baptismal confirmation by the bishop, the weight of argument would tend to support the present practice of a laying on of hands rather than an anointing. Scriptural

¹⁰ SBH, p. 244.

evidence for anointing in regard to baptism is uncertain. The earliest western practice appears to have made use of the laying on of hands rather than of anointing. (As early as the third century, however, anointing had been connected with the laying on of hands.)

Anointing does not appear to be a ceremony likely to be restored in our churches. In addition to this, the relation of confirmation to baptism in our churches is such that this question is not likely to trouble many. Under the circumstances, the present revised text is adequate.

The restoration of confirmation to its intimate relation to baptism might be desirable, but the problems involved are numerous. If the ecumenical movement produces a consensus on the episcopal polity of the Church, some day this act might once again be reserved to the bishop. The Lutheran tradition of first communion only after extended catechetical instruction climaxed by "confirmation" is involved also.

(17) Pax

The usefulness of this rite would be heightened by a revival of some form of kiss of peace ceremony in the Eucharist. Even without this, the Pax is a useful reminder in the baptismal rite of the peace promised by the Christmas angels through the Son of David in whose Name baptism is performed.

(18) Bestowal of Robe

The custom of the bestowal of some form of baptismal robe or cloth in the manner prescribed by the rite of 1526 seems to have died only recently in the Missouri Synod. Dr. John H. C. Fritz's Pastoral Theology, first published in 1932 and reprinted in 1945, describes this practice as "quite customary in our Church."¹¹ As recently as 1961, the practice has again been commended to the Synod.¹²

The practice of the rite of 1523 is preferable to that of 1526. It ought to be made permissive in the rite. The traditional text, as it appears in Luther, follows.

Receive the white, holy, and spotless robe which thou shalt bring without spot before the judgment seat of Christ so that thou mayest receive eternal life.¹³

(19) Presentation of Candle

Today even non-liturgical church goods suppliers are featuring baptismal candles, sometimes of a rather tawdry character, to be sure. The presentation of a proper baptismal candle in the rite would be an encouragement for

¹¹John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), p. 90.

¹²Harry N. Huxhold, Magnificat (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), pp. 42f.

¹³Martin Luther, Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), VI, 201.

parents and sponsors to use such a candle in a yearly remembrance of the child's baptism. This also should be made a permitted practice. Luther's text follows.

Receive this burning torch and preserve thy baptism blameless, so that when the Lord cometh to the wedding thou mayest go to meet Him and enter with the saints into the heavenly mansion and receive eternal life. Amen.¹⁴

(19a) Prayer of Thanksgiving

The closing prayer of thanksgiving is most appropriate, especially in those instances where baptism is administered apart from the Eucharist. In those parishes where baptism is administered at the beginning of the Service, the prayer might be dropped, as the rubrics permit, in favor of a petition on behalf of the child during the General Prayer.

The Consecration of the Font

A ceremony which is not a part of either of Luther's rites nor of our own is the consecration of the font. It is one which ought to be given considerable thought. During the Middle Ages the consecration involved a long, extended series of ceremonies and prayers. Partly because of the separation of baptism from the Easter vigil, the consecration of the water is not a part of our rite. It became customary for the consecration of the font on Easter

¹⁴Ibid.

Eve to cover the baptismal waters for the entire year.¹⁵ The Easter vigil, having lost its particular significance, was not preserved by the Lutheran churches, so the consecration of the font has not been a part of our tradition.

In addition, Luther opposed the consecration of the font on several grounds. He argued that while the Lord blessed the elements of the Eucharist there is no evidence that the waters of the Jordan were blessed. He also cited the people's superstitious regard of consecrated objects.¹⁶ His concern for the word as the active force in baptism no doubt played a role also. The same concern resulted in the stripping of the consecratory prayer in the Eucharist so that the words of institution might show in bold relief.

Against this, the following points may be offered.

First, despite the weight of Luther's opinion, not all evangelicals were convinced. Bugenhagen preferred the retention of the rite of consecration.¹⁷ Even in the seventeenth century some Lutheran rites contained such consecrations.¹⁸

¹⁵Alois Stenzel, S.J., Die Taufe: Eine Genetische Erklärung der Tauf liturgie (Innsbruck: Verlag Felizian Rauch, 1957), pp. 257f.

¹⁶Paul Graff, Geschichte der Aufloesung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands. 2 vols. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1937 and 1939), I, 291.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 305.

Second, although Luther might with justification be concerned with the multiplicity of ceremonies and with the superstition of the people, such has the change been in the years since Luther that the same concerns have very little significance today. Today the Church is turning back to the practices of the past in an effort to fill the void caused by the indifference of the intervening centuries.

Third, Luther lived in an age which might be described as overly-sacramental. Today our churches are faced with a marked anti-sacramental attitude, present both in those Protestant churches outside of the Lutheran tradition and even within Lutheranism itself. It is unlikely that the restoration of the consecration of the font would lead to any abuses but might rather serve as a corrective in our own churches.

Fourth, Luther's objection that the waters of the Jordan were not blessed is not a sound one. The attempt to do only those things the Bible prescribes or describes is not only impossible but also harmful.

Fifth, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has fallen upon lean days with us. In a certain sense, the Easter vigil was a feast of the Holy Spirit, and baptism as a rite gave praise and glory to His Name. Our own rite, however, reflects almost nothing of this. Normally, the Name of the Spirit is mentioned only twice during the administration

of the sacrament other than its appearance in trinitarian formulations and in the Creed. A consecration of the font would provide an excellent opportunity for an emphasis on the role of the Spirit in baptism.

Three examples of such prayers of consecration are given below. The first of these is the prayer proposed by a committee studying a revision of the rite of baptism for the Episcopal church in our country. It takes the form of a preface.

(Minister). The Lord be with you.
 People. And with thy spirit.
 Minister. Lift up your hearts.
 People. We lift them up unto the Lord.
 Minister. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.
 People. It is meet and right so to do.

Then shall the Minister say,

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God, for that thy dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of our sins, did suffer death upon the Cross, and was buried, and did rise again the third day, that we might live unto thee in newness of life by the power of his Resurrection; and gave commandment to his disciples to go teach all nations, and baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Hear, we beseech thee, the prayers of thy people; Sanctify this Water by thy Spirit for the mystical washing away of sin; that this Child (this thy Servant), now to be baptized therein, may be numbered among thy faithful children, and may grow in thy grace and favour until he come unto thine everlasting kingdom; through . . .¹⁹

¹⁹Prayer Book Studies: I and II, "Baptism and Confirmation" and "The Liturgical Lectionary." Authorized by The Standing Liturgical Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (New York: The

The following is an excerpt from the consecration of the font from the Gelasian Sacramentary. It is approximately one-third of the entire prayer.

God, who by thine invisible power dost wonderfully effect thy sacraments: although we are not worthy to perform so great mysteries, yet do thou not forsake the gifts of thy grace, but incline the ears of thy goodness to our prayers. God whose Spirit at the beginning of the world was borne upon the waters, that even the nature of water might conceive the power of sanctification: God who by the outpouring of the flood didst signify a type of regeneration, when thou by water didst wash away the sins of a wicked world, so that by the mystery of one and the same element there should be both an end of sin and a beginning of virtue: look down, O Lord, upon thy Church and multiply in her thy generations, thou who dost make glad thy city with the rush of the flood of thy grace: open the fount of baptism for the renewal of all nations of the world, that by the command of thy majesty it may receive the grace of thy Only-Begotten by the Holy Spirit: let thy Holy Spirit by the secret admixture of his light give fecundity to this water prepared for man's regeneration, so that, sanctification being conceived therein, there may come forth from the unspotted womb of the divine font a heavenly offspring, reborn unto a new creature: that grace may be a mother to people of every age and sex, who are brought forth into a common infancy.²⁰

A shorter, older prayer from the Leonine Sacramentary is the final example.

We offer thee (this) prayer, O Lord, the eternal begetter of (all) things, Almighty God, whose Spirit was borne upon the waters, whose eyes looked down from on high upon Jordan's stream when John was baptizing those who in penitence confessed their sins: and therefore we pray thy holy glory that thy hand

Church Pension Fund, 1950), p. 28. Hereafter referred to as Prayer Book Studies.

²⁰Whitaker, op. cit., pp. 176-177.

may be laid upon this water that thou mayest cleanse and purify the lesser man who shall be baptized therefrom: and that he, putting aside all that is death, may be reborn and brought to life again through the new man reborn in Christ Jesus, with whom thou livest and reignest in the unity of the Holy Spirit, unto the ages of ages.²¹

The consecration of the font would find its natural place immediately before the baptismal act. Such a prayer would be offered at those baptisms where the font has been freshly supplied with water. Where a font is of the sort in which water can be held for a longer period of time, the prayer would not need to be used with each baptism.

Final Proposals

Some advocate the restoration of the baptismal font to the entrance to the church so that the introductory nature of the sacrament might be emphasized. This practice is better suited to private baptism than to the public administration of the sacrament. Until architects find a solution to the problem of a congregation penned in by fixed pews in relation to the narthex location of the font, the practice of locating the font at the front of the nave, in the midst of the nave, or in a baptistry in view of the congregation is still to be preferred.²² If the symbolism

²¹Ibid., p. 144.

²²Cf. Martin E. Marty, Baptism (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), p. 59.

in the narthex location is lost, the gain in permitting the whole congregation to participate in the administration of baptism more than makes up for it.

In this connection, the rubrics of the Service Book and Hymnal and the study on the Book of Common Prayer rite deserve noting.

The Service Book and Hymnal directs:

Baptism shall ordinarily be administered in the Church at any of the stated services, or at a specially appointed service. . . . When circumstances demand, baptism may be administered privately. . . .²³

The Prayer Book study recommends these rubrics:

The Minister of every Parish shall often admonish the People, that they defer not the Baptism of their Children, and that it should be administered upon Sundays and other Holy Days, when the most number of people come together: as well for that the Congregation there present may testify the receiving of them that be newly baptized into the number of Christ's Church, as also because in the Baptism of infants every man present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his Baptism.

If necessity so require, Baptism may be administered upon any other day; but except for urgent cause, Baptism shall always be administered in the Church.²⁴

The mortality of infants has been remarkably reduced.

This encourages the suggestion that the number of times the sacrament is administered each year be limited. Designation of specific Sundays and feasts would be a step in that direction. Included in a list of occasions which

²³SBH, p. 242.

²⁴Prayer Book Studies, p. 24.

might be especially appropriate for baptismal services are Easter and White Sunday, Pentecost, the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, Michaelmas and the Sunday in its octave, and Epiphany and the Sunday in its octave. These carry the benefit of tradition or a special appropriateness in the propers. There is no overwhelming reason why other dates might not be designated by local parishes as the need arises.

On such days, either at the Eucharist or at a specially appointed service, the baptisms would be the main concern of the congregation. At such services baptism might well be administered after the sermon. The fore-part of the Eucharist has as one of its names the mass of the catechumens because it provided the setting for the instruction not only of the Church but also of those seeking admission. A baptismal service could capitalize on this. The service might be modified by the removal of the Preparation if time is a problem. The Creed also might fall aside. On days which are not feasts, where it is felt helpful, lessons might be chosen which are particularly applicable to baptism. The sermon should, in any event, be applied to some aspect of the mystery of baptism. Four such services a year would provide adequate opportunity for most of the baptisms in the congregation and would also give the pastor an opportunity to make the most of the sacrament.

CHAPTER VI

A SAMPLE MANUAL FOR THE RITE OF INFANT BAPTISM

The Service Book and Hymnal has taken the wise step of providing each worshiper with the rite of baptism in the body of the pew copy of this worship manual. This gives the worshiper help in intelligent and active participation in the rite. This is something to be desired in any future edition of The Lutheran Hymnal.

For pastoral reasons it would be well if from time to time the congregation would also be given help by way of a baptismal manual which could be read by the congregation before the administration of baptism and which could be glanced at while the rite is in progress. Such a manual could be of hymnal page size and left in hymnal for use at the appropriate time. For most effective use, such a manual would present a commentary on the rite on the left hand page and the portion of the rite being commented upon on the facing right hand page. A manual meeting these requirements can be prepared by a congregation through the use of the letter size bulletin stencil most duplication supply firms prepare for mimeograph machine use.

Such a manual of necessity would have to devote relatively few words of comment on each action or formula in the rite. This means an arbitrary selection of themes

rather than an attempt to cover the rite thoroughly. The commentary offered below is not presented as the final word. Others might with good reason select other themes for emphasis. The commentary offered attempts to utilize significant points of reference with the classic baptismal catechesis without falling into the dangers of too much dependence on typology or of perpetuating anachronisms. The present rite of infant baptisms in The Lutheran Agenda is the intended parallel to the commentary.¹

The "Introduction" would constitute pages one, two, and three of the manual. The text of the commentary would begin on page four and continue on pages six, eight, ten, etc. The matching text of the rite would begin on page five and continue on pages seven, nine, eleven, etc.

The quotations from Martin Luther's Small Catechism are taken from the new inter-synodical text.² The prayer referred to on page 126 is the second of the three offered by the Agenda.

¹The Lutheran Agenda. Authorized by the Synods Constituting the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 1-7.

²Martin Luther, The Small Catechism (Experimental Edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963).

A BAPTISMAL MANUAL

Introduction

Baptism, as Scripture teaches, is God's way of reaching into men's lives to give them Life. Baptism is more than a ceremony. It is both the way Life begins and the beginning of a way of life. Baptism means that something dies in a man and that Something better comes into being in him. Jesus called His death and resurrection His baptism. St. Paul says that in baptism we are joined together with Christ in His dying and rising. Our Lord has told us that the man who seeks to save his old, self-centered sort of life will not live with God but those who give up their life into His hands will live forever.

Baptism, then, is both our entrance into Life and a description of our whole life as Christians. Luther writes of it in this way:

Baptism means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.

The Sacrament of Baptism utilizes water as the material God used to bring life into this world by the power of His word and in the presence of the Holy Spirit. In Baptism God utilizes water as the material which He uses to bring life into the emptiness of man's existence apart from

God. This He does with the power of His Word, Christ, and through the Holy Spirit.

Thus Luther could write:

The sacrament of Baptism is not water only, but it is water used together with God's word and by His command.

Indeed:

It is not water that does these things, but God's word with the water and our trust in this word. Water by itself is only water, but with this word it is a life-giving water which by grace gives a new birth through the Holy Spirit.

We come to the font because:

In Baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what He has promised.

Part One

At the Chancel Steps

The Opening Address

Jesus Christ came into the world to press home to us God's judgment on our failure to be His useful, obedient children. By His life and words, Jesus displayed to all men the meaning of true holiness. The perfection of His obedience led Him to the Cross. This obedience makes our own sinfulness stand out all the more clearly.

On the other hand, Jesus, who calls us to repentance, also makes forgiveness available to us. His death shattered not only our pretensions to holiness but also the power of sin over us. His death and resurrection proclaim

the salvation God has made available to us. Through them He calls us into fellowship with Himself, for those who are in fellowship with Him through faith become participants, sharers, in His victory over death. Baptism, as the opening address makes plain, is God's way of bringing us into full fellowship with Him and into full participation with Him in sharing the mercies of God.

The Bestowal of the Sign of the Cross

Jesus' love is seen best in the Cross. Those who bear the sign of that Cross on them and in their hearts are forever blessed. The Church marks us with the sign of the Cross to indicate that by our Baptism we are redeemed and that under the protection of the Cross we rest in safety. Led by the Good Shepherd, we pass out of the valley of the shadow of death into the green pastures of God to be refreshed by the life-giving waters of Baptism.

The Pastor makes this sign on our forehead and on our breast to show that our entire being has been claimed for His own by God.

The Prayer

We now pray that God would bring to completion in the person being baptized all that which we desire for him, that is, his full redemption.

The Gospel: St. Mark 10:13-16

The disciples of Jesus apparently thought that the Messiah in His zeal for the redemption of Israel, should be concerned only with those who could be of some service to His cause. Infants, they felt, obviously could be of no help. Jesus, however, seeks in men the true righteousness which comes not by the efforts of men on His behalf but by acceptance of His labors on their behalf. Jesus, as He embraces with His love the children of these believing mothers, teaches His disciples (in all centuries) how necessary it is to put aside one's own righteousness and to be covered by His. This is what God begins for us in Baptism.

The Exhortation to the Sponsors

The Church has always asked spiritually mature Christians to serve her in the care of those brought into her fellowship. Sponsors (godparents) are called to be representatives--

- Representatives of God who asks them to serve the needs of His younger children.
- Representatives of the Church who asks them to act out her concern for all those brought to her.
- Representatives of the parents who desire strong and faithful co-laborers in their stewardship over their child, entrusted into their hands by God.

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is the family prayer of all the people of God. We jointly address our Father and ask Him to satisfy the needs of this person who today joins the family through the life-giving waters of Baptism. This is the sign of our acceptance of this person as one whom we shall, with the help of the Spirit of God, build up into Christian maturity.

The Blessing

At the conclusion of the first part of the Rite of Baptism, we give to this new companion on the road to eternal life the knowledge and assurance of Christ's promise, "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." The Pastor makes the sign of the Cross to signify the guarantee God has given us that this promise is trustworthy.

Part Two

At the Font

The Renunciations

The Church's confidence in the certainty of God's grace is so complete that she speaks now, through the Pastor and the sponsors, as though the future were already present. And through Baptism it is! Through Baptism men are brought out of the service of the Enemy into the service of the Father. The sons and daughters who have squandered the

Father's riches on themselves must surrender this self-centeredness. They must acknowledge that they have been serving the wrong master. This is the beginning of the road back to the Father's house, a beginning Baptism makes possible.

The Confession of Faith

Baptism brings one into fellowship with the Father. Our previous master deceived us into thinking it is God and not he himself who is harmful to our best interests. Baptism shows us God as He really is, as the One who is our Maker and Savior, as the One who binds us into fellowship with all His saints forever. The Father reaches out after all of us long before we are aware of it. Today He reaches out to the child we will baptize, long before he is conscious of His love. This experience of God's saving love will continue to surround this child (it is God's command to us that it must!) until one day he will become aware of that love and salvation without ever having known a day when he did not have it.

The Baptism

For over one thousand years the Church immersed all those who sought salvation. By plunging the candidates under water three times, it gave a dramatic testimony to the Biblical teaching that in Baptism the old nature is put to death and that a new man is born. Today we testify

to the same belief by pouring water generously three times over the head of the candidate.

The sign of the Cross made by the Pastor at this point reminds us that it is by the Cross of Christ that this Sacrament receives its power to wash away the stain of sin and to make our robes spotless and without blemish.

The Laying on of Hands

The laying on of hands is our sign language for the communication of the Holy Spirit. He alone can make us good citizens in God's kingdom. In this prayer we ask God to give this new-born Christian throughout his life the spiritual gifts needed if he is to fulfill his calling as God's royal priest. His priestly task (and ours) is to serve God and His people and to make known to all men God's saving work.

The Peace of God

Peace, the Biblical word for the reconciliation between God and man promised by the angels at the birth of Christ, has come to this child with whom God is pleased. He will hear this same benediction over and over again at the Eucharist when he and the rest of the people of God come to the table of the Lord. This peace was won at the cost of the blood and body of Christ, who was broken for us all. Through the Holy Communion the blessings of the Cross and Resurrection remain ours forever.

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Our final act is to thank God for His grace to all who have been baptized, especially the newly-born son or daughter who this day has become an heir of all God's promises. May God bless him for ever!

Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God!

It is meet and right so to do!

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CHAPTER VII

PROPOSALS TOWARD A RITE FOR AN ADULT

CATECHUMENATE AND BAPTISM

The rite for adult baptism in The Lutheran Agenda¹ represents an impoverishment of the rite for infant baptism. This is all the more regrettable since the forebear of our rite for infant baptism is the fully developed and ancient initiatory rite for adults. This rite was simplified and adapted for infant baptism. One might expect that in preparing a rite for adult baptism an effort would be made to have such a rite be at least equal to if not superior to a rite of infant baptism in reflecting the Church's tradition.

There is little advantage in having a separate rite for adult baptism if the rite for adults is poorer than that for infants. The Book of Common Prayer has followed the sound practice of providing for only one rite to be used for both infants and adults. This is made possible by the provision of two formulae for the renunciations and for the confession of faith. One is suitable for use in

¹The Lutheran Agenda. Authorized by the Synods Constituting the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 17-20.

infant baptisms and the other for adult baptisms. This practice is to be commended for our own Agenda.

There are good reasons, however, for a re-consideration of the ancient practice of an initiatory rite which is performed over a period of time. Conditions in many parishes are rapidly returning to a state which resembles in some ways the days when the adult catechumenate was formed. Our age is being called a "post-Christian" age. One may or may not agree with all that is implied in this term. However, while there may not be a higher percentage of non-Christian people in our country, the number of those within the Church and outside it who are theologically illiterate is growing. The illiteracy outside the Church imposes strains on the Church as she attempts to assimilate the large number of converts which the current, intense evangelistic effort is producing. It was this sort of condition caused by a steady number of converts coming from a society which was not in touch with the Christian world view that made the adult catechumenate necessary. And this arrangement served the Church well until the legalization of Christianity caused the Church to be overwhelmed by the number of converts.

Still another consideration concerns the esteem with which baptism is held by the Church. It presently does not have the high regard of the Church it should have. Any revival in appreciation will have to be based on

theological growth, to be sure, but such growth will have to be reflected in the rite for baptism. This is even more true in the case of adult baptism. The most direct influence in the thinking of the convert about Christian initiation will be the process of initiation itself.

The proposed rite for the adult catechumenate and for adult baptism is offered in response to these considerations. The proposal involves distributing the rite over a period of four to six weeks. The rite is broken into three parts corresponding roughly to the making of a catechumen, the catechumenate itself with its extensive catechesis, and the administration of baptism itself.²

Among the advantages of such a process are these:

First, the extension of the initiatory rite would emphasize the importance the Church places on commitment and discipleship.

Second, it would offer the Church additional opportunity to demonstrate its own willingness to assume its responsibilities over against the catechumen.

Third, it would offer additional time for the instruction of the catechumen beyond that normally given in the Pastor's class.

Fourth, it would offer the Church additional opportunity

²Cf. Johannes Hofinger, S.J., and others, Worship: the Life of the Missions, translated by Mary Perkins Ryan (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), pp. 211-220.

to embrace the catechumen into its fellowship.

Fifth, it would provide the catechumen with a gradual introduction into the life of the Church.

Sixth, it would assure the catechumen of the importance the Church places on him as a person.

Seventh, it would add further dignity and importance to the rite of baptism.

The suggested rite assumes the following conditions:

First, the person entering the catechumen has completed a course of instruction in Christian teaching.

Second, he has been moved by the Holy Spirit to seek admission to the Church and is ready to embark on a life of discipleship.

Third, further instruction will be given the catechumen during the catechumenate, especially concerning discipleship, the inner life, worship, and the sacraments.

Fourth, each of the catechumens will be represented by sponsors.

Fifth, the congregation will be present and will participate in the service.

Lent and Easter Eve are the traditional times for the preparation and baptism of the catechumens. The use of these rites would not have to be restricted to these times. Congregations using pre-Lenten evangelism programs would find Pentecost a good time for adult baptisms. Lent would serve as the time for the Pastor's class and the Paschal

season for the final preparation. Congregations which have adult classes in the fall might find Epiphany or the Sunday in its octave a good time for the baptisms.

Parts one and two are envisioned as taking place during the Eucharist between the collect and the lesson (or epistle) in the Service. Part three is envisioned as taking place before the Introit. They should be observed either at a regular Sunday Service, or, in the case of a congregation where size or zeal or piety will permit a relatively full nave at a special service, a special Service held for the purpose of observing these rites.

The first part corresponds roughly to the making of a catechumen. An introductory dialogue confirms the intention of the catechumen to seek baptism. The rite continues with a ceremony for the acceptance of the catechumen, a form of the traditio evangelii, a Gospel, the bestowal of the sign of the cross and the laying on of hands.

The second part represents the process of instruction during the catechumenate. It includes a traditio symboli, a traditio orationis, and a laying on of hands.

The third part consists of the baptism itself and contains an exorcism, the renunciations, the consecration of the font, the confession of faith, the baptism, the laying on of hands, the presentation of the robe and candle and the confirmation.

A RITE FOR THE ADULT CATECHUMENATE
AND ADULT BAPTISM

Part One

When the Collect of the Day is ended, the minister goes to the entrance to the nave. There, awaiting him, are the candidates and their sponsors.

Minister: Whom have you brought with you?

Sponsors: John Smith, etc.

Minister: What do they desire?

Sponsors: The forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Minister: Do they know that those who seek salvation in the Cross must take up their own cross?

Sponsors: They do.

Minister: Come, then; from this hour you shall follow Christ.

They follow the minister and proceed into the nave. If circumstances permit, they halt in the midst of the congregation. If not, they halt at the front of the nave.

The minister and sponsors exchange a solemn handclasp with the candidates.³ As this is done, the minister says,

But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For He is

³Such a handclasp could consist of the usual handclasp with each of the two persons also placing their left hand over the clasped right hand of the other.

our peace and reconciles us all to God in one body through the Cross.⁴

The sponsors place the Scriptures into the hand of the candidates. As this is done, the minister says, "What we have, we give to you."

If the group has gathered in the midst of the congregation, they now proceed to the front of the nave.

The minister and candidates enter the chancel.

The minister shall read St. John 3:3-6:

Jesus answered Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

The minister then signs each of the candidates on the forehead and on the breast, saying,

Receive the sign of the holy Cross, both upon the forehead and upon the breast in token that thou hast been redeemed by Christ the Crucified.

The candidates kneel. The minister lays his hands on

⁴Ephesians 2:13, 14a, 16b.

them firmly and says over each of the candidates,

O Lord, we beseech Thee, of Thy goodness hear our prayers and protect this Thy servant with the power of the Lord's Cross with which he has been signed, so that from this day on he may receive the light of Thy Word and so be brought to eternal life. Through . . .

Go in peace.

They rise. They and their sponsors resume their seats.

The Service continues with the Lesson (or Epistle).

Part Two

When the Collect for the Day is ended, the catechumens and their sponsors come to the foot of the chancel.

The minister says,

Beloved, you desire the Sacrament of Baptism so you may be born again by water and the Spirit. At your Baptism you will be asked to confess the Creed as a sign of your adherence to the faith and life which is fitting for one who has been reborn. Hear the Creed now as it is read and explained to you.

An elder (or another representative of the congregation) shall read the Apostles' Creed. At the completion of each article, another elder (or representative of the congregation) may read Martin Luther's explanation of that article in the following fashion:

After the first article,

Martin Luther, a servant of the Holy Spirit and a teacher of the Church, taught the faith of the Church concerning this article in this manner: I believe that God has created me . . .

After the second article,

Concerning this article, Martin Luther taught: I believe that Jesus Christ--true God . . .

After the third article,

Concerning this article, Martin Luther taught: I believe that I cannot by my own understanding . . .⁵

The minister then says,

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, when His disciples asked how they ought to pray, taught them the prayer which is known as the Lord's Prayer. Hear this prayer (and how Martin Luther taught the faith of the Church concerning it).

An elder (or another representative of the congregation) shall read the Lord's Prayer. After each portion of the prayer, another elder (or representative of the congregation) may read Martin Luther's explanation of that portion, omitting the questions in the reading.⁶

⁵Martin Luther, The Small Catechism (Experimental Edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 13-15.

⁶Ibid., pp. 19-24.

The candidates enter the chancel. The minister says,
Receive the blessing of God.

They kneel. The minister lays his hands on them and
says over each of them,

O Lord, holy Father, everlasting God of light and
truth, we call upon Thy eternal goodness for this Thy
servant, that Thou wouldest enlighten him with the light
of Thy knowledge. Cleanse and sanctify him. Give him
true knowledge that he may come worthily to the grace of
Thy baptism. Let him hold a firm hope, right counsel,
and holy doctrine, that he may be fitted to receive Thy
grace. Through . . . ?

Go in peace.

They rise. They and their sponsors resume their
seats.

The Service continues with the Lesson (or Epistle).

Part Three

Before the Introit (or Preparation, if it is to be
used), the candidates and their sponsors come to the font.

The minister says,

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the
Holy Ghost.

⁷Cf. E. C. Whitaker, Baptismal Documents of the Bap-
tismal Liturgy (London: Society for Promoting Christian
Knowledge, 1960), p. 162.

All say,

Amen.

The minister makes the sign of the Cross and says,
The Lord preserve your coming in and your going out
from this time forth and even forevermore.

The minister then signs each of the candidates on the
forehead, saying,

Depart, Satan, and give room to the Holy Spirit.

The minister then inquires of the candidates:

Minister: Do you renounce the devil?

Candidates: I do renounce him.

Minister: Do you renounce all his works?

Candidate: I do renounce them.

Minister: Do you renounce all his ways?

Candidate: I do renounce them.

The minister then pours water into the font and says,
Minister: The Lord be with you.

All: And with thy spirit.

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up unto the Lord.

Minister: Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.

All: It is meet and right so to do.

The minister then says,

It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should
at all times and in all places give thanks to Thee, O Lord,
holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, who through Thy

only Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, hast given us this sacrament, who at the beginning of the world didst send Thy Holy Spirit upon the waters to make them fruitful, who by the Baptism of Thy Son didst sanctify the Jordan and all waters; look down, O Lord, upon these waters which are made ready to blot out men's sins; pour down from on high Thy Holy Spirit the Counselor, so that all who are washed by these waters in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit shall be counted worthy to receive the forgiveness of their sins and life and salvation according to Thy promise. Through Jesus Christ . . .⁸

The minister then addresses the candidates:

Minister: Do you believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth?

Candidates: I do believe.

Minister: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son,
our Lord, who was born and suffered?

Candidates: I do believe.

Minister: Do you believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy
Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, the
forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the
body, and the life everlasting?

Candidates: I do believe.

Minister: Do you wish to be baptized into this Christian

⁸Ibid., p. 151.

faith?

Candidates: I do.

Then the minister shall pour water in a liberal amount over the head of each candidate three times, as the minister says,

John, I baptize you in the Name of the Father + and of the Son + and of the Holy Ghost. + Amen.

When all of the candidates have been baptized, they shall kneel. Laying his right hand upon their heads, the minister shall say over each,

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten you again of water and of the Spirit and hath forgiven you all your sins, strengthen you with His grace unto life everlasting. Amen.

The sponsors of each candidate may place the white robe on him as the minister says,

Receive this white robe and bring it unspotted to the judgment seat of Christ so that you may receive eternal life.

All say,

Amen.

Then the sponsors of each candidate may place a lighted candle in his hand as the minister says,

Receive this lighted candle and keep your baptism above reproach, so that when the Lord comes to the wedding feast you may meet Him and enter with the saints into the

heavenly dwellings and receive eternal life.

All say,

Amen.

The minister and the newly-baptized persons enter the chancel. The minister shall lay his hands on each of them as they kneel. He shall say,

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast made Thy servants to be regenerated of water and the Holy Spirit, and hast given them remission of their sins, do Thou, Lord, pour upon them Thy Holy Spirit the Counselor, and give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, and fill them with the spirit of fear of God, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ with whom Thou livest and reignest ever God with the Holy Spirit, throughout all ages. Amen.

Then shall the minister say:

The peace of the Lord be with you always. +

They shall answer,

And with your spirit.

They and their sponsors return to their places. All make ready for the Eucharist.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

The first five centuries of the Church's history produced what must be called a high point in the rites of initiation. The missionary situation produced a well-defined and highly expressive rite well suited to the times. The adult catechumenate met its purpose of preparing men and women for incorporation into the Church. It was a rite that was built upon the Scriptures and one that gave expression to a proper understanding of the role of the Spirit.

During the period, roughly covering the sixth to the ninth centuries the Church underwent a marked change. The number of adult converts was reduced to a trickle. The candidates for baptism were largely the children of Christians. The Church's response to the changing circumstances as far as the baptismal rite is concerned consisted largely in an attempt to hold on to the tradition of the past, making only those adjustments to the new circumstances as appeared most necessary.

As the tenth to the sixteenth centuries passed, a process of decay was very evident. The rite lost much of its richness and became prone to emphasize the less important aspects of the tradition. But during these years

the rite was shaped in a rather practical way to suit infant baptism. And this was an age when infant baptisms were indeed the almost unbroken rule.

Since then for all intents and purposes our rite has remained unchanged. With but a few changes our present rite for infant baptism is typical of the late sixteenth century development of Luther's rite of 1526. For years, centuries in fact, this caused no great distress in the Lutheran Church.

Today, however, the winds of change are blowing fiercely. The missionary situation has returned. Adult converts are again increasing in number. Baptismal services frequently administer the Sacrament on behalf of more adults than infants. The revival of Biblical studies, the ecumenical movement, and the liturgical movement all are pressing home on the Church the need for re-examination and renewal in all facets of her life.

In fact, it may well be that the Church is on the threshold of a great renewal in every aspect of her life. It is well that this stirring is taking place in the Church, for this time is likely to be the prelude to an era which will test the Church more severely than it has been in centuries, more severely perhaps than it has ever been before. Communism, the new nationalism, the debasement of popular Christianity, the desacralization of life, the revolt against a seemingly sterile faith and the

descent upon the world of what has been called the new Dark Age all challenge the Church to prove herself worthy of the title, the servant of God.

The Biblical movement has produced a new respect for theology and a new understanding of the character of the Church's nature. It has also questioned the accuracy of the Church's tradition. It requires us to examine our own rite of initiation with a view to determining whether or not the rite is faithful to the Biblical understanding of baptism and entry into the life of the Church.

The ecumenical movement has made us increasingly aware of the past which simultaneously binds the churches together and separates them. It has made us aware of the necessity to re-examine our denominational life to see if it is parochial and narrow or if it embraces the fullness of the Christian tradition. Our baptismal rite falls under this scrutiny.

The liturgical movement with its emphasis on wholeness has also contributed to the movement of renewal. It has sought after the re-integration of life and the restoration of the praise of God to the center of the faith and life of the Church. It has also brought a much profounder understanding of the Church's rites than has been present for many centuries. It also forces a re-evaluation of our rites.

The next generation or the generation after that may

be the one which harvests the benefits of the maturity of this movement of renewal. These generations may look back on our own age as a period of infancy. They may produce new liturgies and rites which are both more traditional than ours and yet more contemporary than ours. Whatever they produce, however, will have to be based on the beginning steps of the present. The process of re-examination always comes before sound reconstruction.

The examination represented by this thesis leads to these conclusions.

First, the rite of infant baptism needs at least a minimum of restoration if it is to be as meaningful and useful as it could be. This is perhaps all that should be attempted for the present.

Second, steps must be taken to acquaint congregations with the centrality of baptism both theologically and liturgically in the life of the Church. A process of re-education is necessary, one which utilizes to the fullest the results of current studies in all related fields.

Third, the adult rite should be lifted from its present second-class status. At the very least it ought to be made to conform more nearly to the pattern of the rite for infant baptism which, despite its title, reflects the ancient usage for adult baptism more nearly than the present rite for adults.

Fourth, a serious study should be made of the wisdom

of distributing the rite for the initiation of adults over a period of time. The restoration of a formal adult catechumenate might be a step in the right direction.

What the future may bring is hard to say. However, the Church has resources men have long underestimated. The Spirit is still able to move the Church. If the Church succeeds by the Spirit's help in recapturing the joy of Life present in the Church of the New Testament, she will surely make that joy a part of her rite of baptism to a degree which is now beyond our grasp.

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