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## The Archeology of the Sacraments

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## The Archeology of the Sacraments

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The boundary between history and archeology is somewhat indefinite, but for the purpose of this short discussion the following distinction may be of value. History is a more or less orderly narration of events, either in the form of a chronicle which notes down occurrences from day to day or week to week, like a diary, or in a logical arrangement, presenting events in units as the historian understands the incidents which he presents. Archeology, on the other hand, and, in this instance, Christian archeology, is the science of Christian antiquity, an orderly presentation not so much of historical events as of information pertaining to cities, houses, furniture, appointments, customs, and other interesting data, many of which have historical significance without being an integral part of history. The sources of archeology are found chiefly on monuments, in inscriptions on stones, papyri, sherds, walls of houses, jewelry, articles of clothing, and other objects. Archeology, for the most part, does not depend upon connected accounts, but upon diversified sources, whose reading and interpretation frequently require special scientific training. The present discussion is based upon material offered in recognized books on Christian archeology, and the purpose is not merely to offer interesting data on extraneous topics connected with the Sacraments but to indicate also the doctrinal considerations and implications which are associated with the points as presented in the primary and secondary sources.

### The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

It is significant that the onomatology of Holy Baptism is treated at such great length in the various books on archeology, chiefly because of certain doctrinal implications. In the Bible we have both βάπτισμα and the corresponding masculine noun, about twenty-three times in the New Testament alone. The apostle also uses the noun λουτρόν as a designation of the *sacramentum initiationis*,

but more in a descriptive way than as a designation, Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5. In the Church Fathers we find a long list of names for Holy Baptism. Stromberg (*Theorie und Praxis der Taufe*) devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of "Der Taufterminus σφραγίς," chiefly on the basis of Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30, and the many passages in the Apostolic and in the Church Fathers.<sup>1)</sup> Other designations for the Sacrament are τὸ ὕδωρ or the Latin *aqua*; ἡ πηγὴ, the Latin *fons*; χρίσμα, the Latin *unctio*; φωτισμός, the Latin *illuminatio*; μυστήριον, the Latin *arcanum* or *sacramentum*; τελείωσις, the Latin *perfectio*; μύησις, the Latin *initiatio*; μυσταγωγία, σύμβολον, and at least a dozen additional designations.<sup>2)</sup> Many of these names are treated at length in various histories of dogma, since they give the doctrinal understanding held by the various teachers of the Church who chose these terms. This subject is so comprehensive that it would really require a complete article in itself.

As to the place where the Sacrament was administered, the sources of information are again numerous and the accounts very comprehensive. As in the days of the apostles, the Sacrament was administered in practically any convenient place, in private homes, in the place where the public meeting of the congregation was held, later, especially in times of persecution, in the chapels of the catacombs of Rome and elsewhere. In the *Clementine Homilies* reference is made to rivers, fountains, and the sea, and in the *First Apology* of Justin Martyr the words occur: ἔπειτα ἄγονται (namely, the candidates for Holy Baptism) ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἐνθα ὕδωρ ἐστὶ, which certainly does not confine the rite to separate places of any particular dignity or holiness. A wide latitude in places is indicated also in the well-known passage from the *Didache*, chapter VII. And Tertullian remarks: "Ideoque nulla distinctio est, mari quis, an stagno, flumine, an fonte, lacu, an alveo diluatur." (*De Baptismo*, c. 4.) The monumental evidence in this connection is likewise conclusive.

After the recognition of Christianity by the state, of course, Baptism, like other church rites, was celebrated with greater pomp and ceremony. It was not long before separate baptisteries were erected, in which conveniences were provided for the observance of a more careful prescribed ritual. Though apparently at first known as *exedrae*, as in Tyre and Antioch, these separate buildings, modeled after the large baths of that period, were soon known as βαπτιστήρια, *loca baptismi sive lavacri*, also *ecclesiae baptismales*,

1) Cf. Daniel, *Codex liturgicus*, IV:506 f.; Hoefling, *Das Sakrament der Taufe*, I:469.

2) Cf. Augusti, *Handbuch d. christl. Archaeologie*, II:314 ff.; Bingham, *Antiquities*, III:399 ff.

although other names are found, such as φωτιστήριον, *illuminatorium*, *aula baptismatis*; κολυμβήθρα, *fons*, *piscina*. These facts emphasize the importance that was attached to the Sacrament, just as the fact that there was usually *one* baptistery in a diocese points to the peculiarity of the early Church that the bishop usually administered Baptism.<sup>3)</sup>

A somewhat strange phenomenon associated with the archeological history of Holy Baptism is that of special *baptismal times* or seasons in the church year. We must remember at once that this selection of seasons for the administration of the Sacrament is connected with the special circumstances which prevailed in the early Church, particularly that of the preponderance of adult baptism for a century or more. Justin Martyr indeed seems to indicate that all seasons of the year may be used for the sacred act. But as early as the days of Tertullian Easter and Pentecost are named as the most fitting seasons for the administration of the *sacramentum initiationis*. (*De Baptismo*, c. 19.) Somewhat later Leo the Great adds the Epiphany season in connection with the celebration of the Lord's baptism. It was not long before synodical decrees officially designated these seasons as those set apart for the administration of the baptismal rite, and it soon became the rule to celebrate with a great deal of pomp, especially in Asia Minor (Cappadocia), as the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa show. In a few sections of the Church, indeed, Baptism was administered also on the festival days of apostles and martyrs and on anniversary days of the dedication of churches.<sup>4)</sup> Reference may here, incidentally, be made to the strange custom followed in some parts of the Church, namely, that of postponing baptism until death was imminent. Of this custom Bingham says: "Another sort of men put off their baptism to the end of their lives, upon a sort of Novatian principle, because they pretended to be afraid of falling into sin after baptism, and there was no second baptism allowed to regenerate men again to the kingdom of heaven; whereas, if they were baptized at the hour of death, heaven would be immediately open to them, and they might go pure and undefiled into it." (P. 508.) It is evident, therefore, that also with respect to the time of Holy Baptism liturgical rites and church customs reflect doctrinal tenets. The special seasons of the church-year were, as a matter of fact, connected with the custom of preparing adults for membership in the Church during the Lenten season or of having their preparation

3) Cp. Augusti, *loc. cit.*, 383 ff.; Bennett, *Christian Archeology*, 454 f.; Bingham, *Christian Antiquities*, III: 525 ff.

4) Cf. Augusti, 372 ff.; Bingham, 514 ff.

find its culmination during the celebrations which emphasized the benefits of the work of Christ.

In this connection we take note also of the significant ceremonies which were associated with the preparation of catechumens for membership and their reception into the fellowship of the Church. The most complete information on this subject is contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Essential in the preparation of the candidates for membership in the Church was the instruction in the truths of the Christian religion, as we see from the *Didache*, the *Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem, and other documents. The special ceremonies or symbolical usages which were observed in most parts of the Church were the signing of the cross (*signum crucis*), the laying on of hands (*impositio manuum*), the exorcism (small and great), and the giving of salt (*gustus salis*). Toward the end of their instruction period the catechumens were taught the actual text of the Creed (*traditio symboli*), after which they were ready to make a confession of their faith (*redditio symboli*), the day for this ceremony in the Easter cycle being Palm Sunday. At this time the candidates were also given the explanation of the word "Gospel" and of the cherubs in the prophecy of Ezekiel. The ceremonies connected with the administration of Baptism itself were the anointing with oil (later associated with confirmation) and the vesting in white; the neophytes wore these white garments from the vigil of Easter till the Sunday after Easter (*Quasimodogeniti*, *Dominica in albis*). In the case of children this white garment (*vestis*) later was known as the *Westerhemd*. Another ceremony which was generally observed was the use of lighted candles, given into the hands of adult candidates for baptism, and into those of the sponsors when children were christened. The giving of a taste of honey and milk, in token of the new birth, and the kiss of peace were included in the ritual of the Sacrament practically everywhere. That all these usages were connected with statements of Scripture is obvious.<sup>5)</sup>

As to the *celebrants*, or *officiants*, of the Sacrament, testimonies beginning with the second century indicate that only the bishop of the diocese was regarded as the legal administrator of Holy Baptism. Even in the *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans* this authority is assigned to the bishop, although it is not yet made an exclusive function of his office: Οὐκ ἔξόν ἐστι χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου οὔτε βαπτίζειν οὔτε προσφέρειν. Tertullian expresses himself with the same definiteness: "*Baptismus dandi habet ius summus sacerdos, qui est episcopus.*" The same rule is found in the *Apostolic Con-*

5) Cf. Hoefling, *Das Sakrament der Taufe*; Augusti, 423 ff.; 451 ff.; Bingham, III: 529 ff.; IV: 43 ff.

stitutions. In some cases the presbyters were placed on a level with the bishops, or identified with them, but the deacons were expressly excluded. These regulations seem to have been inspired by the appreciation of the great solemnity of the Sacrament in its relation to the communion of saints.<sup>6)</sup>

There can be no doubt, on the basis of historical as well as archeological evidence, that baptism of *both children and adults* was practised since the time of the apostles. The very fact that Tertullian opposed paedobaptism points to its prevalence during the third century, and Cyprian felt no hesitancy in advocating the baptism of children. When the African bishop Fidus submitted his problem on paedobaptism, it was not with reference to the abolition of the usage, but with regard to the misgivings of some that the rite should not be administered before the eighth day, since Baptism had taken the place of circumcision. That paedobaptism was the rule in Spain and in Africa appears from the resolutions of the synods of Elvira, of Mileve, and of Girona and from the writings of Origen. The conclusion of Augusti is undoubtedly correct: "Die Alten hatten daher gewiss recht, wenn sie behaupteten, dass die Kindertaufe in der orthodoxen Kirche zu keiner Zeit ausser Gebrauch gewesen sei." (P. 334.) Reference may here incidentally be made to the fact that the Church never sanctioned the baptizing of animals or inanimate objects, and Charlemagne especially prohibited the christening of bells.

The earthly *element* in Holy Baptism in agreement with Scripture (John 3:5; Eph. 5:26) was ever water, and no substitutes were permitted, not even in cases of emergency. When, on a journey through the desert, a Christian used sand in christening a Jewish companion, whom he had converted, the rite was declared ineffectual and the baptism had to be performed with water. Christening with wine was likewise not permitted, although a question seems to have been raised with regard to the mixture of wine and water known as *καῖμα*. During the period of scholasticism the question was raised whether baptizing with milk, wine, beer, meat-broth, fat, snow, hoarfrost, earth, sand, etc., were permissible, and in every instance the orthodox teachers decided negatively. It was clear to them that the Sacrament could be administered properly only when water was used.

This, naturally, leads to the question as to the *form*, or *manner*, of baptizing. It seems quite evident that the customary manner of administering the Sacrament in the ancient Church was by immersion, in the case of both adults and children. In the *Sacramentarium Gregorianum* the words occur: "*Baptizat sacerdos sub*

6) Cf. Augusti, 362 ff.; Bennett, *Christian Archeology*, 450.

*trina mersione.*" Yet even the Church of Milan declared in the rubric *De Modo Administrandi Baptismi*: "*Ministratur baptismus triplici modo: immersione, infusione aquae, et aspersione.*" Because complete immersion was the customary form of baptism for centuries, the baptisteries were divided into separate rooms for the use of the two sexes, and deaconesses assisted in the christening of women, after the words of the ritual had been pronounced by the ministrant. Yet the teachers of the Church were evidently conscious of the fact that the form of christening was not essential for the validity of the Sacrament. In this they were supported particularly by pictorial and monumental evidence, which shows almost exclusively the act of aspersion by the ministrant. This is true in the case of frescoes from San Calisto in Rome, in a scene and inscription from Aquileia, on a fragment of a glass cup found on the Esquiline, in Rome, and in pictures from Ravenna. A fresco in Santa Pudenziana, in Rome, shows two candidates in a font too small for immersion, and the suggestion of the picture is that of sprinkling or pouring. Thus considerations of an objective exegesis and of historical evidence are further strengthened by archeological evidence, and the mode of baptism is demonstrated to be an *adiaphoron*.

#### The Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper

With reference to the *sacramentum confirmationis*, as distinguished from the *sacramentum initiationis* (namely, in the sense of strengthening the faith wrought through Holy Baptism), we again find much significance in the designations employed throughout the centuries. We find the names *δείπνον κυριακόν*, *sacra coena*, *coena Domini*; *τράπεζα Κυρίου*, *mensa Dei*; *κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου*, breaking of bread, *communio*, *communicatio*; *εὐχαριστία*, also *εὐλογία*; *προσφορά*, *oblatio*; *θυσία*, *sacrificium*; *συναξίς*, *congregatio* or *conventus*; *missa*, *sacramentum altaris*, *corpus Christi*, *cibus Dei*, *cibus angelorum*, *manna coelestis*, *panis Dei*, *panis vitae*, *panis supersubstantialis* (Matt. 6:11), and many others. It is easy to draw conclusions concerning the doctrinal tenets of the men who chose the various names for the Holy Supper. In fact, by arranging the designations chronologically or according to the various divisions of the Church, one can almost trace the development of erroneous doctrines.<sup>7)</sup>

Although the Lord instituted the Eucharist in a private home and had only His apostles present for the first celebration, the character of the Sacrament, as indicated in the words of institution and in the First Letter to the Corinthians, caused the Church to insist upon the common meeting-place of the congregation as the

7) Cf. Augusti, 527 ff., 543 ff.

place where the Sacrament should be administered. So strong was this feeling for centuries that private communions of any kind were unknown, and even the sick members of the congregation and the shut-ins received the Eucharist with the other members, since the deacons and subdeacons, after the consecration of the elements, conveyed the latter to the homes of those who could not be present in church, at the altar of the Lord. As Augusti states: "That in times of stress and persecution the Lord's Supper was frequently celebrated in remote places, in huts, caves, etc., was a matter of necessity and emergency, not of a principle." The insistence upon the church as the place for the celebration of the Eucharist was associated with the emphasis upon the Eucharist as a common meal, in which the entire congregation joined in fellowship, the members partaking together of the body and the blood of their Lord. Hence the later developments in the Church in the matter of private masses is not in harmony with the earlier doctrine and usage. For example, the period of liturgical and doctrinal deterioration and decay attached the Mass also to the marriage ceremony, and there it remains in the Roman Catholic Church to this day. The same usage is found in the Anglican Church, where, as Hooker writes, "the public solemnity of marriage is ended with receiving the blessed Sacrament," and the Scottish Church has provided a special collect, Epistle, and Gospel for a marriage Eucharist.<sup>8)</sup> Luther, on the other hand, was definitely opposed to this form of private Communion, even if it was celebrated in the church. Kliefoth writes: "Luther legte seine ordnende Hand an die Formen der Eheschliessung in seinem bekannten Traubuechlein. Er schliesst sich dabei durchaus demjenigen an, was er geschichtlich vorfand; aber er veraenderte es auch nicht bloss darin, dass er statt der lateinischen Brautmesse die deutsche Sprache einfuehrte, sondern auch in sehr wesentlichen Punkten. Zuerst nahm er die Benediktion aus der Verbindung mit der Messe heraus, denn die Messe ist Gemeindegottesdienst und nicht Eheschliessung, und die Eheschliessung wiederum ist kein Sakrament. Er machte also aus der Einsegnung der Ehe einen wirklich selbststaendigen Akt." (*Liturgische Abhandlungen*, I:86 f.) All the Lutheran church orders and service books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries followed Luther in this correct understanding of the distinction obtaining between the Eucharist as a communion and marriage as a rite.

The question of the *elements* in the Lord's Supper caused even more discussion than in the case of Holy Baptism. The chief difficulty was with regard to the contents of the cup, to which the

8) Gwynne, *Primitive Worship and the Prayer-book*, 339 f.



expression γένημα τῆς ἀμπέλου is applied. Now, there never was any doubt in the minds of the teachers of the Church as to the meaning of the expression. And for this reason they resented the use of any substitute for wine, though they consented to the employment of the mixture of wine and water which was known as κρᾶμα. The Council of Carthage in the year 397 passed the resolution: "*Ut in sacramentis corporis et sanguinis Domini nihil amplius offeratur, quam ipse Dominus tradidit, hoc est, panis et vinum aqua mixtum.*" Augusti lists five other councils which passed almost the same resolutions. When the Encratites, to whom also the Kataphrygii, or Ultramontanists, belonged, used water instead of wine, the Church immediately registered its protest. Augustine is emphatic in condemning this error. Other groups that used substitutes for wine were the Aquarii and the Hydroparastatae. When certain congregations in the Orient used a form of brandy, called σίκερα or μέθυσμα, made of dates, fruit, grain, and other ingredients, this action was decidedly condemned. It was chiefly on account of this practise that one of the early councils passed the resolution: "*Non licet in sacrificio divino MELLITUM, quod mulsum appellatur, nec ullum aliud proculum extra vinum cum aqua mixtum offerre.*" The situation within the orthodox Church is brought out by the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which forbid "strong drink" (σίκερα) and all substitutes (ἐπιθήθεντα) in the oblation. Among the less flagrant offenders against the accepted usage were the Syrian Jacobites and the Nestorians, who used the juice of either fresh or of dried grapes and sought therein a special significance and an extraordinary perfection. But their practise was also condemned by the Church.<sup>9)</sup>

The question of the second element also caused some trouble, in the so-called Azymite Controversy. In 1053 Michael Caerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople, attacked the practise of the Western Church, declaring their Eucharist worthless because the unleavened bread used in the West was lifeless and powerless. The Latins retorted by designating their opponents as *fermentarii* or *fermentacei*, and the difference caused a somewhat bitter quarrel. Finally, in 1439, the Council of Florence decreed that each church must follow its own custom, in other words, that the kind of bread used was an *adiaphoron*.<sup>10)</sup>

Of far greater importance, because of the doctrinal implications, was the question of the *sub utraque*, but this belongs into the field of dogmatics rather than into that of archeology, although it is treated also in the latter branch, as by Bingham (V:213 ff.).

9) Cf. Augusti, 560 ff.; Bingham, V:40 ff.

10) Cp. Augusti, 662 f.; Bingham, V:40 ff.

With reference to the time of celebrating the Lord's Supper, the Quartodecimanian Controversy had some influence on account of the annual anniversary of the institution. Naturally Maundy Thursday was regarded as the day for the most solemn celebration of the Eucharist. Easter Sunday and the vigils of Easter also received special consideration. But as early as the beginning of the second century we find the Lord's Supper celebrated every Sunday. This seems to appear even from the statement by Pliny and from a passage in the letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians, and is clearly evident from Justin Martyr, who names Sunday as the day for the solemnization of the Eucharist. (*First Apology*, c. 67.) It was expected of all the faithful that they attend the Sacrament regularly, which clearly meant every Sunday, for we read in the *Apostolic Canons*: "If any of the faithful come to church to hear the Scriptures read and stay not to join in the prayers and receive the Communion, let them be excommunicated as the authors of disorder in the Church." And the Council of Antioch issued the decree "Let all those be cast out of the church who come to hear the Scriptures read in the church but do not communicate with the people in prayer or, disorderly, turn away from the participation of the Eucharist."<sup>11</sup>)

Although we are accustomed to think of the distribution of the Holy Communion entirely in connection with the office of the ministry, there was at least one occasion when it was necessary to state that women were not permitted to consecrate the elements for use in the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, the special solemnity associated with the Eucharist is shown in the regulations concerning the ministers of the Sacrament. Thus the rule that the consecration should never be undertaken by any one but a bishop or a presbyter, never by a deacon, was generally observed. Justin Martyr speaks of the *προεστῶς τῶν ἀδελφῶν* as administering the Eucharist, the *Apostolic Constitutions* name the *ἀρχιερεὺς* or the *ἐπίσκοπος*. Later the bishops officiated only on special occasions and in particular at High Mass. In this connection reference must be made to the development of the Eucharistic vestments, which became more and more elaborate as time went on, the *casula*, or cope, receiving special attention as the one significant garment in the celebration of the Holy Communion.

The discussion of the many ceremonies introduced into the liturgy of the Mass would lead us far beyond the scope of this article. But one significant fact should be noted, namely, that there was no elevation of the host for divine adoration in the ancient Church until the rise of transubstantiation and that there

11) See Bingham, V:355 f.

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is no evidence of the adoration of the host before the twelfth or the thirteenth century, that is, about the time when the doctrine of transubstantiation was fully established in the Church.

As to the *communicants*, or those who were admitted to the Lord's Supper, one strange phenomenon must be noted, namely, the fact that children and even infants should partake of the Eucharist, the argument being that salvation was not possible without the Sacrament. This view was based, for the most part, on a false exposition of John 6, especially of verse 53. Cyprian expressly states that the children received *cibum et poculum Domini*. The *Apostolic Constitutions* and Augustine also refer to the custom, and the Oriental Church has retained the usage till the present time, while the evangelical churches, mindful of 1 Cor. 11:28, 29, have insisted upon greater maturity in the communicants.<sup>12)</sup>

P. E. KRETZMANN

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### **The Christian Congregation: Its Rights and Duties According to God's Word and Our Lutheran Confessions**

Essay read at the Centennial Convention of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio,  
and Other States, St. Louis, Mo., June, 1938

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#### **Introduction**

In my two brief addresses I shall endeavor to present to you, in their essential features, the paramount Biblical truths which Dr. Walther has propounded in his immortal book *Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staat unabhaengigen ev.-luth. Ortsgemeinde. Eine Sammlung von Zeugnissen aus den Bekenntnisschriften der evang.-luth. Kirche und aus den Privatschriften rechtglaebiger Lehrer derselben*; which means, in literal translation: *The Correct Form of a Local Ev. Luth. Congregation which Is Independent of the State. A Collection of Testimonies from the Confessions of the Ev. Luth. Church and the Private Writings of Its Orthodox Teachers*. This book was published by Dr. Walther, upon the request of the Pastoral Conference of St. Louis, in 1863, sixteen years after the organization of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Originally it was composed as an essay to be read at the convention of the Western District of the Missouri Synod, in session at Crete, Ill., beginning May 15, 1862. Since, however, at this convention the treatise for lack of time could not be given adequate consideration, the author was asked to publish it in book form.

In his Foreword, Dr. Walther first calls attention to a work which he had published eleven years before the *Rechte Gestalt*,

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12) Cf. Augusti, 339, 580, 635 ff.; Bingham, V:154 ff., 178.