

6-1-1939

The Administration of the Sacraments

Th. Laetsch

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Laetsch, Th. (1939) "The Administration of the Sacraments," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 10 , Article 42.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol10/iss1/42>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Concordia

Theological Monthly

Vol. X

JUNE, 1939

No. 6

The Administration of the Sacraments

Our Lord Jesus Christ in the night in which He was betrayed instituted, and Himself administered, His Holy Supper. To this day this Sacrament remains *His Holy Supper*, a heavenly banquet which He Himself has spread and which He Himself serves to all attendants. Says Luther: "We know that it is and is called the Lord's Supper, not the supper of the Christians. For the Lord has not only instituted it, but also prepares and administers it Himself. He Himself is the cook and the waiter, food and drink." (XX, 884.) Invited by His boundless grace, we stand as guests before His face. As Host He spreads no common food; here is His body and His blood. Here He Himself, both Gift and Giver, with His own flesh and blood our souls doth nourish. He Himself, though now sitting at the right hand of God, still is the real Administrator of the Sacrament, though now He no longer visibly stands before us but dispenses the Sacrament by representation. The other Sacrament, Baptism, He already during His life on earth seems to have administered only in this manner. Compare John 3:22; 4:1 and the explanatory note: "though Jesus Himself baptized not but His disciples," John 4:2. That is now the Lord's manner of administering His Sacraments in His holy Church: by representatives, whom He has chosen, through whom He Himself baptizes and distributes the Lord's Supper just as truly as He preaches through His representatives, Luke 10:16. Who are these representatives? Christ Himself leaves no doubt as to the answer.

When Christ instituted His Holy Supper, there were assembled with Him "the twelve disciples," Matt. 26:20; "the apostles," Luke 22:14. The twelve apostles, however, did not receive the Eucharist because of their apostolic office, as an exclusive right and blessing to be granted only to apostles, or at least only to the members of the clergy. They were there assembled as disciples of Jesus, and to them as His disciples the Lord administered the

Sacrament, Matt. 26:26. Nor were the apostles in their official capacity at that time ordained or designated as the future exclusive dispensers or administrators of the Sacrament. The words "This do," addressed to those present, were spoken to them in their capacity as apostles as little as the words "Take, eat; take, drink," were addressed to them only as apostles. Christ instituted His Supper for His disciples. His disciples until the end of time are to do what He did on that memorable evening, are to dispense His body and His blood under the blessed bread and wine, till He come. Likewise, when the Lord instituted Holy Baptism shortly before His ascension, He did not address only the eleven disciples mentioned by Matthew, chap. 28:16 (cp. Mark 16:14-20) nor the five hundred brethren, 1 Cor. 15:6, if Paul is here speaking of the same appearance as Matthew. His words on that memorable occasion were directed to all with whom He shall be unto the end of the world, Matt. 28:20. He had in mind His congregation of saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, comprising all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus, 1 Cor. 1:2, to whom He announces by His Apostle Paul, "All things are yours," 1 Cor. 3:21, 22. He was thinking of that communion of elect strangers to whom Peter in the spirit of Christ wrote those significant words "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," etc., 1 Pet. 2:9. The administration of the Sacraments is but one of the choice gifts bestowed by the heavenly Bridegroom upon His bride, the Church, John 3:28, 29. Jerusalem above, the Holy Christian Church of the New Testament, is "the mother of us all," Gal. 4:26, and "therefore everything by which God's children are born belongs to the Church," as Walther splendidly puts it. (*Walther and the Church*, p. 60.) Says Luther: "The Church is truly Christ's body and member. If she is His body, she has the true Spirit, the Gospel, faith, Baptism, Sacrament, keys, the ministry, prayer, Holy Scripture, and all that Christendom must have." (XVII, 2187.) Nor is this marvelous privilege given to the Church only as a unit, as a totalitarian entity. Speaking at the institution of the Lord's Supper, and again at the institution of Holy Baptism, Christ commissions all the members of the Church of the New Testament, every individual member. He uses the plural, "Take, eat. Drink ye all of it. This do" (λάβετε, φάγετε, πίετε πάντες). "Go ye and teach, baptizing; I have commanded you. I am with you." There can be no doubt that the Sacraments and their administration are given to all Christians, young and old, man or woman, preacher or layman. Through His holy Church on earth, through His believing followers, Christ now administers His holy Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Christ, however, has not only transmitted to His Church the

right to administer His sacred ordinances, He also has clearly defined the manner in which the Church is to put this precious privilege into operation. Since He is the Author not of confusion but of peace, who wants all things to be done decently and in order, 1 Cor. 14:33, 40, and since there would be disorder, strife, and schisms if every one were to exercise indiscriminately the common right of administering the Sacraments, He has in His wisdom commanded the Church to choose and call special ministers, who in the name and by the authority of the congregation are to administer the sacred ordinances of the house of God. These ministers are in a special sense of the term administrators of the Sacraments, or as Paul expresses it, ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4:1. As the great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ, made Peter His assistant shepherd when He told Him on the shore of Lake Tiberias, "Feed My sheep, feed My lambs," John 21:15-17, so Christ gave to His Church some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph. 4:11, 12. Cp. Acts 20:28.

It is, therefore, the will of Christ that the congregations to whom He has given His Word and Sacraments, His means of grace, choose and call special men who in the name of the congregation, as its representatives and spokesmen, as stewards of the mysteries of God, are to administer and dispense Word and Sacraments, which the heavenly Bridegroom has entrusted to His Church as His bridal gift. These men have been made rulers over His household by the Lord Himself in order that they as faithful and wise stewards of the mysteries of God give to all the members of the household their portion of meat in due season, Luke 12:42.

The relation of the pastor to the congregation, of the congregation to its pastor, and of both to God with regard to the administration of the Sacraments may be illustrated by the relation of Moses to Aaron and of both to God, Ex. 4:14-17. To Moses was given the office of delivering Israel, He was to do no more, no less, than God told him to do. Aaron was made the spokesman of Moses. Moses was to speak to Aaron, to put words into his mouth, was to be to him instead of God. Aaron was to speak only what Moses had commanded him to speak, while Moses was to put only those words into Aaron's mouth which God had told him. Aaron was responsible to Moses for the words he spoke, and both Moses and Aaron were responsible to God, who had placed them into their respective office. Similarly, to the congregation is given the Office of the Keys, delivering from the bondage of sin. The pastor is the spokesman, the representative of the congregation by divine

appointment. The congregation tells the pastor what he is to do and say, puts the words in his mouth, is to him instead of God. The pastor is to teach and do no more, no less, than the congregation tells him to teach and do, while the congregation is to tell him no more, no less, than God has given her the right to tell him. The pastor is responsible to the congregation whose representative he is, and both congregation and pastor are responsible to God, who has placed into their hands their respective rights and duties. The congregation has not the right to demand obedience on the part of the pastor if it changes the ordinances and words which God has given to it. And the pastor has not the right to obey the congregation if it makes such demands, since, while responsible to the congregation, he is primarily responsible to the Lord, who has called him into His service as His steward and representative. Only if both congregation and pastor speak and do what the Lord has told them to do and to speak, are they really Christ's representatives, the administrators of the manifold blessings of their Lord.

While Scripture very clearly teaches that the Sacraments ordinarily are to be administered by the called ministers of the Word, this does not mean that a Christian layman under no circumstance may administer the Sacraments. When God Himself has so shaped events that the steward is not available, *e. g.*, when there is no pastor in that particular territory, or when a child is at the point of death or an unbaptized adult who has professed his faith and has asked to be baptized is suddenly attacked by a mortal sickness, when, in other words, a case of emergency arises, then any one to whom the Sacraments belong by divine gift, any Christian, may administer what has been entrusted to him by God Himself to such as are in need of these means of grace. This applies to both Sacraments, to Baptism and to Holy Supper, though, as we shall see, not in the same measure. Baptism is the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5; John 3:5,6), one of the means of discipling the nations (Matt. 28:19; Gal. 3:27), the only means known to us that can engender saving faith in little children, a means, moreover, not to be despised by any adult (Luke 7:30; Acts 2:38-41). Baptism, therefore, the Sacrament ordained by Christ for the initiation into His kingdom, may and must in a case of emergency be administered by any Christian. That is not despising the divine institution of the ministry, which could not function in this case. The case may arise that even an unbeliever, who has not been given the Office of the Keys, may be pressed into service as the dispenser of Baptism, for example, if a Christian mother's new-born babe is in danger of death and she is too weak to perform the baptism and the only person available should

be an unbeliever, a Jewish doctor, a Unitarian nurse. The unbelieving person serves in this case only as the agent for the believing mother, as a dispenser of that Baptism which by divine gift belongs to her. Such a baptism would be a valid and legitimate baptism, provided, of course, that it is performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Calvin teaches that no layman has this right. "Christ has not commanded women nor all men to baptize, but He gave this commandment to those whom He constituted His apostles." (Inst. IV:15, 20.) The Presbyterian confessions agree with Calvin. The Westminster Confession declares: "There be only two Sacraments ordained of Christ, . . . neither of which may be dispensed by any but a minister of the Word lawfully ordained" (XXVII, 4).

In this practise the Calvinists follow the hierarchical error of Rome. In fact, in denying the right of baptism to the laity, they out-Rome Rome, for Rome concedes at least this right to the layman. According to the *Catechismus Romanus* a threefold order of degree is to be observed in the administration of Baptism. Bishops and priests baptize by divine right (*de iure*), because they have been given the commandment, Go, baptize, in the person of the apostles. The second order is that of the deacons, who may administer Baptism only by permission of the bishop or priest. The last order includes all men, no matter which religion they profess, even Jews. All belonging to this class may baptize without solemn ceremonies, as long as they intend to do what the Church does in baptism. This is in agreement with Canon IV on Baptism, Session VII, Trent. "If any one saith that the baptism which is even given by heretics in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost with the intention of doing what the Church doth is not true baptism; let him be anathema." (Waterworth, p. 56.) Of course, even in this distinction the Roman error is in evidence. Rome condescends to grant the layman a privilege which according to its doctrine belongs by divine right only to the bishop and priest; Christ, on the contrary, gave this Sacrament and its administration to His believing disciples, to all of them, to them alone.

May, then, a layman administer also the Lord's Supper? The Church of Rome denies *in toto* this right to any unordained person. According to the doctrine of Rome the Eucharist is a Sacrament, and none but an ordained priest may celebrate Mass or administer the Holy Supper. The Council of Trent anathematizes all who deny that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice is offered to God for the sins, pains, satisfactions, and other necessities of the dying and the dead and that Christ ordained that the apostles and other priests should offer His own body and blood. On the Sacrament

of the Mass. Canon I, II, III. (Waterworth, pp. 158, 159.) In strict keeping with these Canons the *Catechismus Romanus* instructs its readers: "It must be taught that only to the priest the power is given to perform the Eucharist and to distribute it to the believers. . . . The Church has by a law forbidden that any one who is not consecrated should be permitted to handle or touch the holy vessel, the clothes, or other instruments necessary for its administration, unless a grave need should arise." (*Catechismus Romanus*, Part II, Question 65. Smets, p. 253.)

The Council of Trent, Session VII, Of Sacraments in General, Canon X, vociferates: "If any one saith that all Christians have power to administer the Word and all the Sacraments, let him be anathema." This anathema is directed against Luther and his doctrine of the general priesthood of all believers. Answering this charge, Chemnitz calls attention to the fact that it is a gross and glaring misrepresentation of Luther's doctrine and then continues: "If any are of the opinion that the power to take over and exercise the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Church has been granted to any Christian indiscriminately without a special and legitimate call, they are justly and deservedly condemned. For they oppose the well-known divine rule 'How shall they preach except they be sent' (Rom. 10:15) and 'I have not sent these prophets; yet they ran' and Paul's rule 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (1 Cor. 14:40). The Church, however, has always excepted the case of necessity, as Jerome and Augustine testify." (*Examen*, Pars II, Sectio IX.)

Chemnitz clearly and truthfully presents Luther's doctrine. On the one hand, Luther insists on the Scriptural doctrine that all Christians are priests before God and that, therefore, to them primarily belongs the administration of the Lord's Supper. In 1523 he wrote: "The third office is to consecrate and administer the sacred bread and wine. . . . Here they glory and boast that no one else has this power, neither the angels nor the Virgin Mother of God. But we pass over their foolishness and say that this office also is common to all Christians, even as the priesthood. . . . A woman baptizes and proclaims the Word of life, whereby sin is canceled, eternal death removed, the prince of this world expelled, heaven made our own. If the greater is given to all, that is Word and Baptism, then the lesser cannot justly be refused to them, the consecration of the Sacrament." (X, 1577.) "The keys belong to the entire Christian congregation of all Christians and to every one that is a member of that congregation. And this comprises not only the power but also the use and every mode that there can be; else the words of Christ, Matt. 18:15-20, would be violated. In this passage the right in its highest perfection and the use in

its fullest completeness is granted and sealed that they [the Christians] might bind and loose; else we should deny to Christ Himself the right and use of the keys when He dwells in the midst of two." (X:1581.) And in 1533 Luther writes: "Our faith and Sacrament must not be based on the person, be he pious or consecrated, ordained or unordained, called or intruder, the devil or his mother, but on Christ, on His Word, on His office, on His commandments and ordinances. Where these are established, all is clearly established and administered, no matter who or what the person may be." (XIV:1272.)

But as clearly as Luther taught that the Office of the Keys, Word and Sacraments, were a bridal gift given to the entire Church by the heavenly Bridegroom, just so clearly he taught that the actual administration of the Sacraments was entrusted to the called ministers of Christ. In response to a question whether a house-father might serve Holy Communion to his family Luther writes: "He has not the duty to establish the custom of communing himself and his family. It is also unnecessary, since he has neither the call nor the command to do this. If ministers, whose duty it is to administer the Sacrament, refuse to give it to him and his, he may well be saved through his faith by the Word. To administer the Sacrament in the individual homes will cause great offense and in the end serve no good purpose but create schisms and sects. . . . It is right and a duty that a housefather teaches the Word of God to his family, for God has commanded that we should teach our children and household, and the Word is committed to every one. But the Sacrament is a public confession and must have public administrators." (X:2224 f. Cp. also X:2226, 2228 f.; XX:1759.)

Hartmann writes: "May a layman consecrate and administer the Holy Supper? We answer negatively. Though a layman may in case of necessity administer Baptism, the same right is not to be conceded to him with respect to the administration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The reason for the difference is this. There is not the same necessity of the Lord's Supper as of Baptism, which as the washing of regeneration must of necessity be granted to the children. But we can do without the Lord's Supper, both in case of emergency and in case of lack of an elemental matter, without endangering our salvation. Here the word of Augustine is in place: 'Believe and thou hast eaten.' Baptism confers faith, without which no one can be saved. The Lord's Supper does not confer faith but strengthens and seals the faith already conferred. This strengthening and sealing in a case of necessity, as above mentioned, may be effected by the promises of the Gospel, so that there is no danger to salvation to be feared because of the lack of the Lord's Supper." Hartmann, *Pastorale*, pp. 763, 764.

While, however, Luther, Hartmann, and many other theologians deny that a layman may ever legitimately administer the Sacrament, (while not denying the validity of the Lord's Supper administered by the layman) other Lutheran theologians hold that it is right and legitimate if a layman in cases of extreme emergency serves the Lord's Supper. Cotta in his edition of Gerhard's *Dogmatics* names the following: John Gallus, Heshusius, Bidembach, Chemnitz, Dannhauer, Hunnius, Calixt, Fecht, Spener. Walther in his *Pastorale* names also Corvinus, Deyling, Brochmand, and Grapius. We feel that because of the danger of creating disorder and because there is not that extreme necessity for the Lord's Supper as there is for Baptism, that the layman should be discouraged from administering the Sacrament excepting in very extreme cases. It is quite a different matter, of course, if in the absence of an ordained pastor a layman is authorized by the congregation to administer the Sacrament as their representative. A congregation has the right to do that.

Since the Sacraments are God's ordinances and not man's, and since no man can institute an efficacious means of grace, the Sacraments must be administered in full keeping with the divine institution, whether administered by a pastor or a layman. In order to be a valid means of grace no essential factor of the Sacrament may be changed. In other words, no other elements may be substituted for those ordained by Christ, nor may the sense of the words which Christ spoke in connection with the institution of the Sacrament be changed or other words conveying a meaning essentially different from the words used by the Lord be substituted. Beza permitted the use of other liquids in baptism, if water should not be available. Schleiermacher, who held that Jesus had used wine mixed with water, on his death-bed told his family to drink the wine while he would drink water, since the physician had forbidden him to drink wine. (*Lehre und Wehre*, 47:236.) English missions in South Africa used banana juice in the Lord's Supper, and the inspector of the Bielefeld Mission regarded that as perfectly proper. (*Lehre und Wehre*, 60:142.) Substituting a different element for that ordained by Christ is not celebrating the Lord's Sacrament, but a blasphemous perversion of a divine ordinance.

The Reformed churches deny the real presence of the body and blood in the Holy Supper. They force upon the clear words of Christ a sense which is the exact opposite of what they actually say. Therefore the Reformed churches are not celebrating the Lord's Supper, but a man-made substitute. Whatever benefit the Reformed Christian may derive from his celebration is not effected by the Lord's Supper, — that was not celebrated, — but it is either

a self-delusion, an emotional exaltation based on imaginary grounds without any foundation in Scripture, or it is wrought by the word of the Gospel, the precious promises spoken in connection with the Reformed perversion of the Holy Supper. A Sacrament must be God's Sacrament, or it is not a valid Sacrament, not a divine institution, but a human counterfeit.

Unitarians deny the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. Though they still use the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, they connect with these terms a sense contradictory to the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. In a rationalistic agenda published 1808 in Germany the author, C. F. Sintenis, "Consistorialrat und Pastor zu Zerbst," offers no fewer than fifteen formulas for baptism, all of which, with one exception, omit the Trinitarian formula, substituting for it some reference to God, virtue, and immortality. The tenth formula, to be used at the baptism of an illegitimate child, offers the well-known form, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But already in the preface the author had given the direction that, whenever the Trinitarian formula is used, the pastor must give the proper explanation, viz., that it is "a baptism into the faith that God the Father of all has sent Jesus who by His doctrine is to fill the world with holy spirit, with wisdom and virtue." The God of all Unitarians is an idol, and therefore their baptism, even if they use the Trinitarian formula, is not a baptism in the name of the Triune God, but a baptism in the name of an idol, an invalid baptism, a baptism not recognized by the true God, who will not give His glory to another nor His praise to idols.

In the year 1880 the pastoral conference of Baltimore asked the faculty of Concordia Seminary for an opinion on the validity of the baptism administered by Pastor Scheib, a Neo-Protestant pastor, who had for many years served the old Zion Ev. Luth. Church of Baltimore. When Scheib publicly denied the doctrine of the Trinity, many of his members left his church and later formed part of the main stock of our congregations. Some of them or their children were baptized by Scheib. Many unchurched parents had their children baptized by him. In the course of lengthy and very thorough discussions of the whole matter, the conference had asked Zion Congregation whether they still were willing to be regarded as a Lutheran congregation adhering to the Lutheran Confessions or whether, together with their pastor, they denied the doctrine of the Trinity. The congregation replied that the conference had no right to demand a confession of this sort. Two questions were proposed to the faculty. The one, Are the children of unchurched parents baptized by Scheib validly baptized? the faculty answered in the negative, since "there was no

reason to assume that these parents had demanded a Christian baptism." The second question was, Shall we create doubts as to the validity of their baptism in all members of our congregations formerly baptized by Scheib? We quote the closing paragraph of the faculty's answer. "Our answer is, The response of the church council leaves no doubt that the adherents of Scheib now have accepted his viewpoint, that, therefore, no true Baptism exists among them, and that such as have been seemingly baptized by him, must be validly baptized. If, however, you can establish a definite time until which his 'congregation' did not publicly side with him, but still adhered to the mystery of the holy Trinity, you would have to regard all those baptized up to that time as having been baptized validly. Quenstedt writes: 'A baptism administered according to Christ's institution by the minister of a congregation who is either secretly or publicly infested with the Photinian error, is efficacious and need not be repeated if his congregation does not agree with him but openly professes the opposite and adheres to the right faith.' It will hardly be possible exactly to establish such a period, but you would have to try to establish it at least approximately and then always keep in mind that the most advisable course is to prefer certainty to uncertainty. In a certain sense the principle applies here also, What is not known to have been done cannot fall under the charge of repetition." The opinion is signed by C. F. W. Walther, M. Guenther, G. Schaller, F. Pieper, R. Lange, and dated March 4, 1880. (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 26:330-342.)

When Christ instituted His Supper, He did not only distribute bread and wine, nor did He only tell His disciples that they were now eating His body and drinking His blood. We are told that He gave thanks and blessed, consecrated, the elements. Such consecration is essential. If this blessing of the Sacrament, the consecration of the elements, were omitted, we should not be doing what Christ did and what He told His disciples to do in remembrance of Him. On the manner of consecration let us hear Chemnitz. In his *Examen*, Pars II, Loc. IV, Sec. 1, § 7, he writes:

"The benediction, or consecration, is not to be divided between the Word of God and the words of human tradition. For not every word is sufficient to constitute a Sacrament, but the Word of God is required. And in order that the Word of God be proved by fire (i. e., reliable), nothing is to be added thereto, Prov. 30:6. Above all, nothing is to be superadded to the testament of the Son of God, Gal. 3:15. In brief, Christ has commanded us to do in the administration of the Eucharist what He had done. He, however, did not perform a silent act but spoke. And what He said is recorded in Scripture to the extent that the Holy Spirit has judged needful for us.

"Therefore the ancient Church, although she has made use also of other exhortations and prayers, has in simplicity, yet correctly, felt that by the speech of Christ, that is, by the words of divine institution the benediction or consecration of the Eucharist is effected.

"The clearest passage of all is found in Ambrosius, *De Sacramento*, l. 4, c. 4. After he had said that the bread is the body of Christ by virtue of consecration, he at once asks, By which words and by whose speech is this benediction effected? He answers, By the words and speech of the Lord Jesus, and adds that there is a difference between this and the other speeches in this act, which are either prayers or praises. These, he says, do not pertain to the consecration or blessing of the Eucharist. But at the point where the Sacrament is to be consecrated and consummated, there the priest no longer uses his words but Christ's. And in chap. 5 he definitely states which are these words of Christ by quoting the words of institution." Cp. also *C. T. M.*, X, p. 264—267.

The Church of Rome consecrates the elements not only in the Lord's Supper, but consecrates also the water to be used in ceremonial baptism, baptism by the priest or bishop. "In administering solemn baptism, however, the Church prescribes that the water used should have been consecrated on Holy Saturday [Saturday before Easter Sunday] or on the eve of Pentecost. For the liceity (not validity) of the Sacrament, therefore, the priest is obliged to use consecrated water." (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, p. 272, col. B.) The manner of consecrating the water is then described as follows. "This custom is so ancient that we cannot discover its origin. It is found in the most ancient liturgies of the Latin and Greek churches and is mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (VII, 43). The ceremony of its consecration is striking and symbolic. After signing the water with the cross, the priest divides it with his hand and casts it to the four corners of the earth. This signifies the baptizing of all nations. Then he breathes upon the water and immerses the paschal candle in it. Next he pours into the water, first, the oil of catechumens and then the sacred chrism, and lastly both holy oils together, pronouncing appropriate prayers. But what if during the year, the supply of consecrated water should be insufficient? In that case, the ritual declares that the priest may add common water to what remains, only in less quantity. . . . In the United States the Holy See has sanctioned a short formula for the consecration of baptismal water. (*Conc. Plen., Balt., II.*)"

Recognition of the simple truth that the pastor is the representative of the congregation and of God, that he is dispensing not his own goods and gifts but the mysteries of God, will influence

both his inward attitude and his outward behavior in the administration of these ordinances. It is true, the validity of the Sacrament is not affected or influenced by the personal faith and piety of the administrator, by his intention to do what Christ has commanded, or by lack of such intention. Quenstedt calls attention to this fact and to its underlying principle when he writes: "The Sacraments are not the person's who dispenses them but God's, in whose name they are being dispensed, and therefore the gracious power and effect of the Sacrament is of God alone and depends on Him alone (1 Cor. 3:5, 7), not on the qualities of the minister. . . . In the outer act (of administering the Sacrament) the minister's inner intention to do what the congregation does is by no means necessary."

The pastor is merely the spokesman of the congregation. The congregation, in turn, puts into the pastor's mouth the very words that Christ has spoken, and the Sacrament is what that word makes it, irrespective of the inner attitude or intention of the dispenser, unless the congregation deliberately changes the meaning and import of the words of institution. A pardon remains a pardon, whether the messenger announcing it to the prisoner regards it as a valid pardon or as a crying injustice, whether he rejoices in the privilege of announcing the message or does it merely as a matter of routine or inwardly even resents the duty imposed upon him.

While it is true that the attitude or intention of the pastor does not affect the validity of the Sacrament, God does not look upon the attitude and behavior of the administrator as a matter of little or no importance. Christ does not want unbelieving pastors, indifferent ministers, in His service. If the administrator of Christ's Sacraments does not believe what He says, if he has no intention of doing what the Lord, whose spokesman the pastor is, commands His Church to do, the pastor ought not to dispense the mysteries of God, he ought never to have entered the ministry, he ought to resign. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?" Ps. 50:16. Every administration of the Sacraments would be counted against him as wickedness, as shameful, damnable hypocrisy, as a *crimen laesae majestatis*; though unclean, he presumptuously bore the vessels of the Lord, Is. 52:11. And the believing pastor must never forget that the administration of the Sacraments is not merely part of a profession, not merely a duty which he must perform in order to be worthy of his hire. Whenever he baptizes, whenever he administers Holy Communion, he is dispensing the mysteries of God, he is serving those Sacraments which cost God His own Son, and cost this Son of God His own

life's blood. In Baptism he is applying that water whereby the Holy Spirit regenerates a person born in iniquity and sin, spiritually dead, and makes him a child of God, and heir of eternal salvation. In Holy Communion he gives to the weary and troubled child of God that body and blood whereby the Son of God strengthens him whom He has redeemed by sacrificing His body and shedding His blood on the cross. Let the pastor never regard these heavenly mysteries as matters of mere routine. He is acting here as the spokesman of Christ's bride, yea, as the mouthpiece of the Bridegroom, wooing, winning, comforting, strengthening, His own beloved ones. If ever, then at the administration of the Sacraments the pastor should keep in mind the words of the apostle "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen," 1 Pet. 4:11. The whole bearing of the pastor should be in keeping with his holy calling. Let all his movements be unhurried. The words of institution, the prayers spoken during the administration of the Sacraments, are matters of too great importance to be rushed through with hurricane speed. Just as reprehensible is the other extreme, that of unduly drawing and dragging out the words. Let them be spoken in a natural manner, solemnly, in keeping with the dignity of the occasion, without becoming guilty of that unctuous sanctimoniousness so closely approaching cant. Above all, let the pastor before every administration of the Sacrament ask God to fill his heart with true reverence for these divine institutions and to grant grace that his speech and his actions may reflect that holy joy, that humble veneration, that unaffected consecration, which characterizes the faithful servant of Christ and His Church.

In this connection it is not out of place to call attention to another custom prescribed by the Church of Rome in consecrating the Eucharist. The *Tridentinum*, Sess. 22, On the Sacrifice of the Mass, chap. IX, Canon IX, anathematizes all who say that the rite of the Roman Church, according to which a part of the canon and the words of the consecration are pronounced in a low tone, is to be condemned, or that the Mass ought to be celebrated in the vulgar tongue only. (Waterworth, p. 159.) These rites of the Church of Rome and these anathemas are the logical consequence of their denial of the Scriptural principle that the Sacrament belongs primarily not to the priest, but to the congregation. In direct opposition to these rites and in full keeping with the principle taught in Holy Writ the Lutheran Church insists that the words of the institution are to be spoken or chanted in a language which the people understand and in a loud and distinct manner, so that

the congregation, which, after all, is the real celebrant of the Sacrament, may know and be sure that the proper words of consecration have indeed been spoken over the elements. Says Luther, referring to this rite of the Roman Church: "No one can be sure whether or not they speak the words; therefore no one can be obligated to believe their secret whisperings." (St. L., XIX:1281.) And in beautiful language he describes a Lutheran celebration of Holy Communion: "God be praised, in our churches we can show a Christian a true Christian Mass according to the ordinance and institution of Christ and the real intention of Christ and the Church. Our pastor, bishop, or minister in the pastoral office, legitimately and honestly and publicly called, having been consecrated, anointed, and born a priest of Christ, steps before the altar. In the hearing of all he distinctly chants the words of the institution of the Holy Supper, takes the bread, gives thanks, distributes it, and by virtue of the word of Christ 'This is My body; this is My blood; this do' he gives it to us who are present and wish to receive it. We, especially those who would commune, kneel beside, behind, around him, man and woman, young and old, master and servant, mistress and maid, parents and children, just as God has brought us together here, all of us true, holy priests together with him, sanctified by the blood of Christ, anointed by the Holy Ghost, consecrated in Baptism. Because of this our native, inherited priestly honor and beauty . . . we do not let our pastor speak the words of Christ for himself, as though he were speaking them for his own person, but he is our mouth, and we all speak the words with him from our very hearts and with firm faith in the Lamb of God, who is there for us and with us and feeds us, according to His ordinance, with His body and blood. That is our Mass, and the true Mass, which will not deceive us. . . . If the pastor does not believe or doubts, we believe. If he should make a mistake or become confused or forget whether he has spoken the words, we are there, listen to him, hold fast to the words and are sure that they have been spoken; therefore we cannot be deceived." (St. L., XIX:1279 f.)

One more thought before we bring this paper to its close. Since the pastor is the servant of the congregation also when he is administering the Sacraments, he should not change the congregational customs needlessly, particularly if they have been long established and have on that account acquired a certain veneration among the members of the congregation. Under no circumstances ought he to make any changes in these customs without the sanction of the congregation. If a change seems advisable to him, he ought to broach the matter carefully and tactfully with due respect to the rights of the congregation and only after having

assured himself by prayerful consideration that his proposal will not cause dissatisfaction, strife, bitterness, schisms, within the congregation. Undue hastiness, insistence on his own personal preference, an inordinate hankering for innovations, the itch to change merely for the sake of changing, is certainly not compatible with the office of a servant of that God who is not the author of confusion but of peace, nor with his position as the minister of Christ's congregation, to whom, after all, the administration of the Sacraments is primarily entrusted and whose is the right to decide what customs are to be adopted, or changed, or retained, as long as such action does not conflict with God's will and Word. TH. LAETSCH

The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions

A Translation of Dr. C. F. W. Walther's Article Entitled "Die falschen Stuetzen der modernen Theorie von den offenen Fragen,"
Lehre und Wehre, XIV (1868)

(Continued)

A further argument for this theory is the view that evidently for ecclesiastical unity not more is required than agreement in the teachings laid down in the public confession of the Church; that these are the only ones fixed by the Church itself; that on these only the Church has made pronouncements and decisions; and that everything else has to be considered as belonging to the category of open questions.

This view was voiced, for instance, by the pastors of the Iowa Synod when they in 1859 published the following "Declaration" in their synodical organ: "We treat the teaching pertaining to the 'last things' as an open question, that is, as a question in which there may be a difference of opinion without disturbance of church-fellowship and concerning which in the symbols of our Church no confessional decision has been laid down, *for which reason* both views may exist in the Church alongside each other."

In its synodical report of 1858 the same synod had made this declaration: "Accordingly we dare not deny that beside the teachings which are symbolically fixed there is found a sphere of theological knowledge containing open questions which have not as yet been answered by the Church and symbolically defined because the Church cannot symbolically fix anything unless it has passed through controversy and hence become a vital question for the Church" (pp. 14, 15). Asking German theologians for their opinion, the Iowa Synod stated in 1866: "Since concerning these