

# THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

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## Vale atque Ave.

Our readers, we are sure, will indulge us as we are employing the ancient *Ave atque Vale* in inverted order. Owing to the decision arrived at by the last convention of our synodical body, the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY is now bidding its readers farewell, but it is a farewell which includes a cheerful, cordial *Auf Wiedersehen!* The resolution of Synod reads: "*Resolved, That Lehre und Wehre, the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, and the Homiletisches Magazin be merged into one monthly.*" In keeping with this resolution of the organization to which the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY belongs and which primarily it has sought to serve, our journal will now cease to have a separate existence; but it is hoped that, when the new journal appears next January, embodying the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY and its older sisters, it will be found to have a wider range of usefulness than any one of the three magazines mentioned had in the past. *Unitis viribus!* was the motto in the minds of the delegates when they voted for the resolution merging our three theological magazines. May, under the kind dispensation of God, the fond hope which inspired the action of Synod be fully realized! That the policy of the new journal will be the same as that of our papers in the past, that the earnest endeavor of the editors will be to set forth and defend the teachings of the Word of God as promulgated in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, does not need any special emphasis. It will not be amiss to state here the conviction that the splendid work done by the two men who gave most generously of their time and talents for the success of the MONTHLY and its predecessor, the *Theological Quarterly*, Dr. W. H. T. Dau and Dr. A. L. Gracbner, will not be forgotten. The new journal will bear the title *Concordia Theological Monthly* and will cost \$3.50 a year. In conclusion, journals such as ours come and go, but *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum.*

A.

## The Means of Grace.

With Special Reference to Modernism.

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(Conclusion.)

### 5.

It is strange, but true, that the devil's arguments always seem the most plausible to men in general, just as they carry great weight with the natural inclination of even the Christians, whether they be incumbents of the ministerial office or not. Luther had the habit of calling this tendency *Meister Kluegel* and *Frau Naerrin*, and he was particularly provoked because he had to fight this inclination both in himself and in others. The only way in which the heart may be established in the truth is by grace, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says in chap. 13, 9, and by taking our reason captive daily under the obedience of Christ, as St. Paul has it in 2 Cor. 10, 5. In order that we also may do this, each one in his own station and within his own circle, it may be well, in connection with the facts which have been brought to our attention with regard to the Modernists of all times, in their attempts to take away the power and the comfort of the means of grace, to discuss at least some of the practical questions and difficulties which come up from time to time and tend to cause confusion in our own ranks.

Such a confusion crops up from time to time with regard to set forms of preaching and teaching, the contention being that a true preacher should depend upon the promise of Christ: "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." Matt. 10, 19. True enough, that was Christ's promise to His disciples, to whom He also gave many other special promises concerning the immediate

imparting of His Spirit. But the successors of the apostles in the ministerial office have no such absolute promise; they are not in possession of inspiration as were the Twelve and St. Paul. If the charge is made that sermons are dogmatical, with formal phraseology and treatment, as though an address, also in the pulpit, prepared according to the laws of logic and in keeping with certain standards of public speaking, cannot become the vehicle of the Holy Ghost and His power, such a position is untenable in the light of Scriptures. It is by no means a necessary conclusion that a sermon or a lesson in the Catechism is cold, formal, or more or less mechanical just because it is prepared. One of the fundamental requirements of the holy office is that the incumbent be "apt to teach," 1 Tim. 3, 2, "able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," Titus 1, 9; and St. Paul writes to his beloved son in the faith: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. 2, 2. Even the most cursory examination of the speeches contained in the Book of Acts will show that the various speakers, not only Paul, but also Peter, built up their sermons according to the rules of logic and with due attention to style and vocabulary.

And again, to say that teaching in the religious field is not chiefly and essentially the imparting of knowledge in some form is to differ from Scriptures, which admonish us to teach the truths revealed by God "diligently to our children." Deut. 6, 7. Our Lord Jesus Himself taught in the Temple and in the synagogues, powerfully indeed and not like the scribes, but yet according to the manner of teaching which set forth truths in a connected manner, in keeping with the laws of speech and of logic. St. Paul admonishes Timothy: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to teaching." 1 Tim. 4, 13. Of course, all preaching and teaching is to be the expression of a personal, joyful conviction, so that every minister and every other person working in the Word and in the doctrine will teach the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, as it is stated of Paul, Acts 28, 31; but the absence of this "parrhesia," of this wonderful confidence and certainty, is not to be blamed on set forms of teaching and preaching, but on the lack of faith or of courage of one's convictions. Let us not forget what we heard above about false enthusiasts.

Of the questions which agitate the minds from time to time with regard to certain points connected with Baptism the follow-

ing occur most frequently. As far as the baptism of children is concerned, we find a number of people, not only of such as have come to us from sectarian circles, but also such as have been brought up within the Lutheran Church, who insist that little children are innocent. To them infant baptism is merely a rite of initiation, an act of reception into the membership of the Church. They resent the idea that the children receive forgiveness of sins in baptism. Evidently such people have a wrong conception of conscious sinning as distinguished from original or inherited sin. Because the actions of children in the early days and weeks of their lives cannot be construed as volitional, it does not follow that sin can in no way be ascribed to them. For that reason the Lutheran pastor must constantly revert to the truth of Holy Scriptures, especially from Ps. 51, where we have the clear words: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," to which we must invariably add the statement of our Lord in John 3, 6, where He lays down the fundamental principle: "Whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh." In addition to this, every Christian must always keep in mind all the other passages of the Bible in which the natural corruption of man is ascribed also to children.

Another question in which reason attempts to play a part is that of the time, the exact moment, when faith is wrought during the administration of Holy Baptism. Since the call of the Bible is: "Repent and be baptized," repentance already including faith, and since the Lord says: "He that believeth and is baptized," therefore some Christians become confused with regard to infant baptism, where it is impossible for us to determine at what moment faith has been wrought. The difficulty is due to the limitations of our reason, to the fact that many expressions which are ordinarily used refer to adult baptism, and to the other fact that our formula for Baptism is, to all intents and purposes, the same formula which was used in the ancient Church for the baptism of adults. Incidentally it may be said that it is doubtful whether we could prepare a formula which would remove all difficulties. One thing is sure, namely, that infants are not believers before they are brought to Holy Baptism. Our formula correctly states in the opening sentences: "This child is also poisoned and polluted with the same sin and subject to eternal death and damnation." A second fact which permits of no doubt is this, that Baptism works regeneration, and this regeneration includes faith, being, in fact, its essential part. But just at what point during the administration of the Sacrament faith is wrought cannot be definitely determined. It is

not safe to connect it specifically with the moment when the water touches the child, although it is correct to say that the water of Baptism becomes the vehicle of the grace of God. But it is never safe to speak or to teach in such a way as to convey the idea that there is a mechanical or magical power in the water. The words of Luther are wisely chosen when he writes: "It is not the water indeed that does them [namely, the great things which are spoken of in the previous section], but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water." We ought to emphasize that faith is given and sealed in, with, and through Baptism and not attempt to fix the time, the exact moment, when the Holy Spirit works faith in the heart of the child. The word and the earthly element, coming together and actually applied, are essential for the Sacrament. Dr. Pieper asks: "At which point in the baptismal act are we to think of faith as coming into being? Luther is not particularly concerned about fixing the time or moment. What Luther wishes by all means to emphasize is this, that the child is not baptized on account of the faith of the sponsors or that of the Christian Church or in anticipation of its own future faith, but that it be regarded as having its own faith. It is safest to place the genesis of faith within the act of baptism itself, as Luther himself says: When the pastor deals with the children in Christ's stead, he blesses them and gives them faith and the kingdom of heaven; for the work and act of the pastor are the word and act of Christ Himself. It is clear that the essential parts of a proper baptism are found in the application of water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

A question which is often asked in this connection concerns the membership of baptized children before they reach the age of conscious personality. It is often correctly stated that members of the Church Invisible are to be found wherever the means of grace are in use, even if only the children who are still in their baptismal grace may be properly so designated. This is undoubtedly true; for it may be conceded at once that infants, since they do not consciously oppose the Holy Spirit, are without exception regenerated and made children of God in and by Baptism. Of course, it must be borne in mind that these statements refer to well-ordered conditions. The Church has never countenanced promiscuous baptism, if this expression may be used. Lutheran missionaries do not practise baptism as did the great Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier, of whom it is reported that he simply passed along

the highways or through the villages where tiny children were playing and sprinkled them with water, while he repeated the formula of Baptism. That means to draw the Sacrament down to the level of a trivial ceremony, to ascribe to the water magical power, and to disregard the element of fellowship which is brought into distinct connection with Baptism. It is a matter of pastoral wisdom for the Church and all its members to inquire concerning the relation of infants who are brought to Baptism to those who are responsible for them. The background of the Christian home or at least some evident Christian influence is demanded by us before we receive a child for Baptism. For this reason our sponsor system is also very valuable, for it provides an additional safeguard as far as the Church is concerned.

As to the length of time we may suppose the grace of Baptism certainly to last, it may well be answered that it lasts until the age of first understanding or of discretion is reached, when children become conscious of the moral element in their acts. The age will differ in different individuals, but may usually be said to coincide with the age when children begin to speak fairly fluently. While no hard and fast rule can be made, the wisdom and the caution of the Church has ever been evident in the fact that we strongly urge parents and sponsors to teach children entrusted to them the first prayers and the fundamental facts concerning salvation just as soon as they are able to understand the language of their parents to the extent which here comes into consideration. It is in this sense that we earnestly warn against the neglect of Holy Baptism, and for the great majority of our baptized children it is undoubtedly true that the grace received in Holy Baptism and strengthened at a very early age through further teaching of the Gospel-message will have a better background and the opportunity to remain with them throughout their lives.

Another question is that which concerns the necessity of bringing children to Baptism just as soon as possible. While we are very careful not to declare that such children are absolutely and everlastingly condemned in whose case the administration of Holy Baptism was not possible, as far as human beings can judge, we lay the sacred obligation upon all parents and relatives of children born within the Church to bring them to the Sacrament at the very earliest opportunity or to make use of emergency baptism if circumstances seem to demand this. For the comfort of such parents as have not been able to have a child baptized in spite of their efforts to have the Sacrament administered at the earliest

opportunity, we may say that while we are bound to the means of grace, God is not so bound, and we have the evidence of John the Baptist's case that God can well give His Holy Spirit even before birth, and therefore regeneration is possible without any outward means of grace.

A question which may become of great practical importance is this: Is the act of baptism valid if performed by a pastor who for his own person or as a member of his denomination denies the essential facts of the doctrine of Baptism? It is true, of course, that the validity at all times depends upon the use of Christ's command or the words of institution. The following distinction is here to be observed. The Word and the Sacraments are both means of grace, but the former may be preached effectively by any one, provided he presents the Gospel-truth. But in the case of the Sacraments, particularly Holy Baptism, another element enters, namely, that it is a confession of membership and fellowship, the acceptance and declaration of membership in the church-body so concerned. In an anti-Trinitarian body, for example, the meaning connected with the names of the Trinity is not that of the Bible, and therefore such officiating is not acceptable. If we know that a person was baptized in a church-body which denies the fundamentals of Christian truth, in particular the Trinity, we cannot recognize the validity of a baptism performed by an unbelieving pastor of an unbelieving body. The former ceremony has no significance, and the Sacrament which we administer is in truth the first Baptism received by such a person.

A final question with regard to Holy Baptism is that which concerns the instruction of such as desire Holy Baptism and membership in the Church. Just as soon as a person is able to understand the fundamental facts pertaining to his salvation, he ought to receive enough instruction to be able to confess his faith before receiving the Sacrament; for the order of Scripture is: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." This is in keeping with those passages of Scripture that show us people receiving Holy Baptism. The Jews were baptized of John, confessing their sins, since John's call was: "Repent and be baptized," and his baptism was rightly called the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The centurion Cornelius likewise gave evidence of a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of Christian knowledge before he was baptized at Peter's direction. And of the eunuch of Ethiopia, Philip directly asked a confession of his faith before he administered the Sacrament. It is an essential feature

of true Christian practise to have thorough indoctrination before receiving people into membership. (Indoctrination and reception of adult members.)

The chief difficulty connected with the doctrine of the Lord's Supper is that concerning the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. This is evident even from the fact that the average Protestant in sectarian circles will accuse the Lutherans of teaching transubstantiation or at least consubstantiation. It seems that it is very hard even for their theologians simply to accept our Lutheran Confessions on the matter of the sacramental presence. For with great definiteness our Lutheran Confessions as well as the writings of the Lutheran teachers have rejected every term which does not express the exact statement of Scriptures. Transubstantiation implies a transformation of the elements in the Sacrament. Consubstantiation implies a union or mixture of the elements in a local and physical sense, a notion which is expressly condemned in our Confessions as Capernaitic eating and drinking. Impanation implies that the body and blood of Christ are found locally in the bread and the wine, and this term is likewise rejected by all true Lutherans, just as the term subpanation cannot be held, since it likewise assumes that the body of Christ is present within the bread in a physical and local manner. We also reject the symbolical, or significative, theory held by Zwingli and his followers, Luther's stand at Marburg having definitely determined the manner in which the truth has since been defended against this peculiar perversion. We also reject the dynamic theory, the notion that the substantial presence is merely dynamic, as most of the Modernists hold, the celebration of the Sacrament without the true body and blood of Christ serving merely to affect the emotions by the memorial of His suffering and death and thus conveying the power immanent in the body and blood of Christ in heaven. To all true Lutherans the presence of the body and blood of Christ is a sacramental presence, which cannot be defined beyond the clear statements of Scripture. We know that the bread in the Sacrament is the communion of the body of Christ, and we know that the wine in the Sacrament is the communion of the blood of Christ. Therefore the best way of putting it, in teaching young and old, is to use the expression coined by Luther and stating: "It [the Lord's Supper] is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself." May God preserve us steadfast in His Word and truth unto the end!

**Soli Deo Gloria!**