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“GRACE AND FREE-WILL.”

An article in the *Lutheran Quarterly* by Prof. Vollert, Ph. D., as an object lesson to our adversaries.

It seems that in recent times this question becomes mooted more and more in every quarter of the Lutheran church. Even the theologians of the General Synod, who usually boast that it never has concerned them, being only a squabble between the Missouri and Ohio synods, have, as time passes on, joined with the Ohioans and Iowaans in the controversy against Missouri, and try to defend that position. At least they want to show that with joyful eyes they look on the war the Ohioans are waging on Lutheran doctrines as confessed by us. They do this mainly by translating articles from German sources, and seem to think that they have established the point when this or that “theologian of the fatherland” also coincides with them. They show, at any rate, that they hold certain doctrines because they are held by others—as all the world is wont to do.

We do not know whether our adversaries are rejoiced to find such able allies or not. Certainly they ought to become suspicious of the correctness of their position in regard to all the questions that have arisen between them and us and the scripturalness of their doctrines, if all the world hastens to the rescue. History teaches that the fight for the Truth of God has ever found few supporters, while its enemies found the whole host of half-Christians and all the

THE PASTOR IN HIS WORK.

IV. Administration of the Lord's Supper.

(Continued.)

With regard to those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, Article XXV of the *Augsburg Confession* says: "Confession is not abolished by our ministers. For the custom is retained among us not to administer the Sacrament unto those who have not been previously examined and absolved."

This declaration of the *Augustana* reflects strongly on an abuse which still obtains in some parts of our American Lutheran church. We refer to the custom of extending an invitation to members of other churches, who are in good standing in their own church, to partake of the Communion at a Lutheran altar. Whether this invitation is extended before or after the congregation has communed makes no material difference. In either case it is inviting *those of another faith* to join Lutherans in celebrating the Lord's testament.

The pastor who extends such an invitation commits a grievous sin in various ways. He acts as though he were master over the Lord's table and had a right to invite whomsoever he pleased. He opens an opportunity for unworthy persons to come forward and to eat and drink damnation to themselves. He offers the Sacrament to those who count it nothing but an emblematic meal, and who can therefore not discern the Lord's body. He is a steward who throws open the King's treasure to each and everybody.

On this custom of inviting those to the Communion who have not been to confession Dr. C. F. W. Walther uses the following vigorous language: "Such preachers act against the command of God: 'Neither be partaker of other men's sins,' 1 Tim. 5, 22. Whosoever can prevent a sin and does not only not do it, but rather himself promotes it, is partaker of that sin. Now those preachers often could

prevent this dreadful sin of an unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper. But prompted by the fear of man or the desire to please men they do not only not prevent this sin, but promote it by their frivolous invitations. O how dreadful will be their responsibility! How will they be terrified when God will lay to their charge all the guiltiness in Christ's body and blood with which those impenitent, unbelieving, and erring persons have burdened themselves whom they admitted without examination! Surely, if unworthy communicants are condemned, those who enticed them must suffer tenfold condemnation." (*Lutheraner*, vol. IV, p. 162.) This is strong language, but no one can deny that it is a just condemnation of a custom by which the holy testament of our Lord is exposed to profanation.

Such an invitation is moreover an affront to the pastor's own congregation. Of his own members he requires that they should previously announce their intention to commune and should attend preparatory worship, and then he invites strangers to partake of the communion without previous notice and without having been to confessional services. This certainly amounts to saying that Presbyterians, Methodists, etc., need no preparation, but Lutherans do. This invitation disgraces Lutherans, and it is surprising that any Lutheran congregation would tolerate it, the more so because it is so manifest a violation of the *Augsburg Confession*. The pastor who has subscribed this confession must violate his pledge by extending such an invitation, unless his subscription was of such a character as to allow him liberty to disregard the confession of his own church whenever he chooses. It is pleasing to note that this abuse is being discarded at some places where it was in vogue for generations. No Lutheran congregation should countenance it.

The persons who are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper may be classified in the following manner:

1. Those who are not yet baptized. Baptism is "the washing of regeneration," Tit. 3, 5, in which souls are "born

of water and of the Spirit," John 3, 5. Baptism being the door into the Church of Christ, its very nature requires that it must precede the participation in the Lord's testament. The Lord instituted His testament for His disciples and not for strangers and foreigners. Concerning the Passover it was commanded: "No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof," Ex. 12, 48. Even so in the New Testament no unbaptized person shall eat of this bread and drink of this cup.

2. Infants and children, because they cannot comply with the command of the apostle: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," 1 Cor. 11, 28. When in the Greek church the communion is given to infants, it is done in disregard of this command of the Lord.

3. The same applies to adults who have not the use of their mind. When a believer becomes deranged, he is not on that account deprived of grace. The Holy Ghost will certainly not forsake him, and Christ, the Good Shepherd, will not suffer such an unfortunate soul to be lost. But deranged persons are debarred from the Sacrament, because they cannot examine themselves. Lunacy or periodic insanity and idiocy are therefore not absolute impediments. Neither should the Sacrament be given to patients who are unconscious or delirious, or no more able to receive the elements. The pastor should also see that a patient desiring the Lord's Supper be not benumbed by opiates just at that time. He will therefore do well to mention this beforehand to the nurses or the doctor who is in attendance.

4. Ignorant persons who have been baptized, but have never been instructed in the Christian doctrine and do not know what the Sacrament is and what it is for. Under popery all, even the most ignorant, were admitted, and in some Protestant denominations there is a similar practice. But a Lutheran pastor who has subscribed the *Augustana* cannot admit those who would receive the Sacrament in ignorance, not knowing the use and benefit thereof. In a sermon on the Lord's Supper Dr. Luther says: "Hence-

forth this shall be the order that no one shall be admitted to the Sacrament unless he has first been examined and has evinced his sentiment, whether he knows what the Sacrament is, and for what purpose he wishes to commune. Long enough have we had forbearance and tolerated the old abuse." (W. XI, 834.) The greater the ignorance which prevails in our country with regard to the Sacrament, the more must a pastor be intent to certify himself that those to whom he administers it are at least so far informed as to be able to examine themselves and to commune with benefit.

The reason why the ignorant and those who have not the use of their reason are to be excluded from the Lord's Supper becomes very patent to the mind when we compare the two Sacraments of the New Testament with each other as to their nature and object. The chief thing in Baptism is God's establishing His covenant of grace with the person who is baptized. It is very clear that the establishing of such a covenant does not necessarily require the exercise of intelligence on the part of the person with whom the covenant is made. God can establish a covenant with the irrational and inanimate creatures, and He has done so. Unto Noah God said: "Behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth," Gen. 9, 8. 9. If God can establish a covenant with beasts and with birds, He can certainly do so with an infant. When Baptists and others contend that children should not be baptized, because they have not the exercise of their reason, and are therefore not capable of making a covenant, this proceeds from ignorance of the nature of Baptism; for there is nothing to prevent God from making a covenant even with generations yet unborn. But the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of a very different character. It is intended for the strengthening of faith and the promotion of godliness in those who are already become Christians. This requires the use of intelligence

on the part of the recipient, and in order to exercise intelligence it must first be there. Hence it militates against the very nature of this Sacrament to offer it to the ignorant who do not know what it is and what it is for.

The beneficial use of the Sacrament is, of course, not dependent on the *degree* of knowledge. A boy who has learned Luther's Catechism, understands it, and heartily believes it may derive greater benefit from communing than a learned Doctor of Divinity. But the knowledge which the words of institution and 1 Cor. 11 require must be there. Hence the necessity of instructing the ignorant, and this instruction should be given with the utmost care. There are pastors who count themselves most successful workers if they win many for the Lutheran fold from the sects, but this becomes a fatal mistake if those persons are not fully persuaded of the truth of Luther's doctrine. Simply to talk people into the notion of coming over to the Lutheran fold is frequently loss and not gain, because it is bringing in a strange and discordant element which may soon become troublesome or even dangerous to the church. True and genuine success is in making people Lutherans in heart, mind, and sentiment.

5. Manifest and impenitent sinners must always be refused. Because the Lord's Supper is a pledge and seal of forgiveness, it can be of benefit to those only who repent of sin and desire to be rid of it, and the impenitent who expect to go on in sin would only eat and drink damnation to themselves. The pastor who admits such manifest and impenitent sinners helps them on in the way of destruction and sins against the word of the Lord: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine," Matt. 7, 6.

However, it is well to be remembered that the Catechism combines these two things: "manifest and *impenitent*." A manifest sinner is one who lives in such sins which manifestly make a man an unchristian, and whose

sins are known. When such a manifest sinner repents and asks forgiveness at the proper place and in the proper manner, he is of course to be admitted, and if some members of the congregation suggest that one who has been guilty of disgraceful acts or has served a term in jail be not allowed to approach the altar with others, the pastor must not consent. Such a discrimination might have place if the essence of Christianity consisted in a code of morality, but the essence of our religion is comprised in the saying, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. 1, 15, and in the days of His flesh He received many who had been manifest transgressors.

Because *manifest* and impenitent sinners are to be excluded, it is evident that the pastor dare not act according to his moral conviction, or even according to his personal and private knowledge. He may be convinced in his own mind, or may know positively, that an applicant for communion is secretly living in sin and is not penitent, yet he cannot refuse the Sacrament. He may warn and expostulate to persuade such a person to stay away from the Lord's table, but he has no right to reveal what God allows to remain secret, and he must act according to Prov. 11, 13: "A tale-bearer revealeth secrets, but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."

6. Persons who follow dishonorable and sinful occupations must first abandon their former way. Such, for instance, are keepers of lotteries, gambling dens, disreputable houses *et id omne genus*. Into this category belong fortune-tellers, spiritualists, and those practicing the black arts, concerning which we read Acts 19, 19: "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men." People who use incantations and superstitious arts for the stilling of pain, discovering of secrets, etc., often do not know that these are heathenish practices, and they must be dealt with as persons walking in unknown sins and needing instruction.

7. Persons who are entangled in a quarrel must be exhorted to comply with Matt. 5, 23. 24. Very frequently such persons claim that they are the party which has been sinned against and therefore this word of the Lord would not apply to them, but even when this is a fact they are, nevertheless, under obligation to *seek* reconciliation before communing. The innocent party becomes guilty if no attempt at reconciliation is made. The party that has done all in its power to bring about a reconciliation and has failed must be admitted to the Sacrament lest a penitent Christian be permanently deprived of the communion by the malice of an enemy. A suit at court, if not carried on from spite and enmity, is *per se* not an impediment, but as a rule it is more advisable for Christians to refrain from communing while a suit is pending. In cases where restitution is necessary this should, if possible, be made before communing.

8. Excommunicated persons must first be received again into the communion of the Church, and their repentance must be made known to the congregation before they are publicly admitted to the Lord's Supper. When an excommunicated person makes confession on his deathbed and requests the Sacrament, his request may be granted before his repentance is made known to the congregation generally, but this is to be counted an exception to the rule.

9. With regard to lodge members the rule should obtain that they must first withdraw from the lodge. There are exceptional cases when a man can be admitted before he has *formally* announced his withdrawal to the lodge, but the rule must be: First withdraw, then commune.

10. Those who do not believe the Lutheran doctrine, according to the rule: "Lutheran altars for Lutherans only." Those who do not believe the real presence of Christ's body and blood cannot discern it, and though they may be truly converted Christians, yet their error must debar them from a Lutheran altar. Those who eat of one bread and drink of one cup are to be one in faith, as in

love. When dying persons who belong to another denomination request the communion by a Lutheran pastor, it is sufficient that they confess their faith in the words of institution, *i. e.*, in the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Time and circumstances may not permit them formally and publicly to withdraw from their former connection, and the Sacrament should not be denied them on that account.

When a person whom the pastor refuses to admit insists that he will come to the communion and the pastor must give it to him, the case must be referred to the congregation, and the congregation, next to the Word of God, being the highest authority in the Church, the pastor must then be governed by its decision, unless the case is of such a character that the pastor is in duty bound rather to resign his office than to consent to the decision of the congregation. On the one hand, it is to be remembered that the pastor is the minister, the servant of the congregation, and not its lord and ruler; on the other hand, that he is the steward of Christ and can and dare do nothing in violation of his Master's Word and command. In all cases therefore in which the decision of the congregation is not in direct and manifest violation of Christ's Word and command the pastor should yield, but if, for instance, the congregation would resolve that the pastor must admit any and everyone who applies this would be in direct conflict with 1 Cor. 11, and the pastor must rather resign than acquiesce, because he must obey Christ rather than men.

When a person has repeatedly fallen into the same sin and has repeatedly broken his promise of bettering his life, the pastor may, or, as the circumstances may be, should advise such a person to refrain from communing for a time lest offense be given to the Church or to those in the congregation who are inclined to regard the repentance of that person spurious and deceptive; for the apostle commands: "Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: even as I please all men

in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many," 1 Cor. 10, 32. 33. But while such persons may be advised to refrain from communing until they have shown their repentance by their conduct, absolution should in no way be denied them, neither should it be postponed. Absolution should be granted at once. When Peter asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus said unto him, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven," Matt. 18, 21. 22. To postpone forgiving those who repent and ask forgiveness is not in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel, unless there be very urgent reasons to suspect their sincerity.

In places and communities where the practice of the confessional Lutheran church is not generally known it may easily occur that strangers come forward who have not announced themselves. In such cases we regard the following the best mode of procedure: If the pastor is uncertain whether or not he can give the Sacrament to a person presenting himself, he should put a question or two in an undertone and then act according to the answer received. If he is positively certain that he must refuse the Sacrament, he may either simply pass that person by in the distribution, or request him or her to withdraw. Which of the two is the more advisable depends on the circumstances. The better way is if the proper officers of the church are instructed to restrain persons not entitled to the communion from approaching the altar.

The administration in all its parts should be performed by the pastor with the utmost solemnity. The celebration of the Lord's testament is a solemn act, and the pastor's behavior should show that he realizes this fully. There is nothing more offensive in the church than administering this Sacrament in a perfunctory, careless, and easy-going manner. If churchly decorum is to be observed by the pastor in all things, then certainly in the administration of this sacred Supper.