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In Memory of Prof. A. L. Graebner, D. D.

The readers of the QUARTERLY are acquainted with the sad fact that it has pleased Almighty God to remove from a wide sphere of activity our well-beloved and highly esteemed colleague, Dr. A. L. Graebner, professor in Concordia Seminary and editor of the THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY. Dr. Graebner was born at Frankentrost, Mich., July 10, 1849, and died at St. Louis, Mo., December 7 last. Funeral services were held December 11 in Concordia Seminary Hall and in Holy Cross Church, the speakers being Dr. F. Pieper of St. Louis, Mo., Prof. A. Pieper of Wauwatosa, Wis., Prof. J. Schaller of New Ulm, Minn., Rev. C. C. Schmidt of St. Louis, Mo., and Dr. H. G. Stub of Hamline, Minn. Dr. A. L. Graebner was a man of rare parts, a character of great firmness, a scholar of universal learning, a church historian of original research, a master of a fluent, dignified, and lucid English, a laborer of indefatigable energy, a Christian humble and grateful, and ever ready to serve his brethren, a valiant defender of the Christian faith, a champion especially of the *sola gratia* and the *sola Scriptura*, — a TRUE LUTHERAN THEOLOGIAN, whose death, in more than one sense, means a great loss to the Lutheran church of America.

F. BENTE.

THE PASTOR IN HIS WORK.

IV. Administration of the Lord's Supper.

In presenting the work of a pastor we now come to an act which, in our time and country, must be pronounced one of the most delicate, if not the most responsible, in all his ministerial duties. We call it a delicate act, not only because of its inherent sacredness, but more especially because there is scarcely any other thing in the entire scope of the ministerial office in which the true and faithful Lutheran pastor is so apt to incur the hatred of unionists and sectarians, and the enmity of the loose and liberal element in his own flock. Our Lutheran people dwell among the followers of Calvin and must daily associate with them, and seeing the lightness with which these regard the Sacrament and the disrespect with which they so frequently treat it they are in strong temptation to lose that veneration which is due the Lord's testament, and when a pastor watches over the Communion and refuses it to the unworthy and to those who can evidently not receive it to the benefit of their souls, he is at once decried as being illiberal, bigoted, and

selfish. Pastors and congregations that watch over their Communion table have been defamed as being so exclusive that God must divide off a separate place for them in heaven. With those who count the Sacrament nothing more than a memorial feast it is deprived of all sacredness, and not a few will partake of it in any church where they happen to be, for no other purpose than just to show themselves sociable and charitable, and to exclude any one who calls himself a Christian from it is something for which they have not the least understanding. But cost what it will, a faithful pastor dare not cast the Lord's pearls to the swine, or give the Sacrament to those who cannot discern the Lord's body. The pastor who will admit any- and everybody to the Lord's table betrays his Master's trust, gives occasion for many to eat and drink damnation to themselves, and destroys his own soul.

To present the pastor's whole duty in this matter it is necessary, first, to speak of the preliminaries to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. These are Announcement, Confession, and Absolution. The two first, as practiced in our Lutheran church, are not directly divine institutions. There is no command in the Scriptures that a man must first announce his name to the pastor and must attend confessional service when he purposes to come to the Lord's table. Nor is it commanded that he must first have absolution pronounced to him. Absolution is certainly the Lord's own institution; yea, this is the chief object of the Christian ministry to bring the forgiveness of sin to men. But the Scriptures do not say that the receiving of absolution must precede Communion. The Lutheran church has never claimed that these things, as preliminaries, are the Lord's direct command. When instituting His Supper the Lord did not take a list of the disciples' names, neither did He hear their confession and formally pronounce absolution to them. We very readily concede that a man may commune worthily without observing these forms.

On this point Dr. Luther writes: "No one should be admitted to the Sacrament unless he has first been to the pastor, who is to examine whether he is rightly informed as to the Sacrament, or otherwise is in need of counsel, or whether he be such a person of whom it is known that he is well informed. But if the minister himself, or the pastor who is daily occupied with it, wants to come to the Sacrament without confession or examination, this shall not be forbidden. The same must be said of other educated persons who are well able to examine themselves. We must not make this confession a new papistical obligation or necessary custom; it shall and must remain free. And I, Dr. Martin, myself sometimes commune without having been to confession, that I may not in my own conscience begin to count it a necessary custom. And again I make use of confession, and am not willing to do without it, chiefly because of absolution, *i. e.*, God's Word. But the young and the rude must be dealt with in a different manner." (W. ed., vol. X, 1937.)

Church ordinances are not absolutely binding on the conscience, and their omission will not *per se* make a man unworthy.

But the authority for these preliminaries is certainly derived from the Scriptures. They were not introduced in the church after the wisdom of men, nor merely for the sake of good order, but to comply with requirements demanded in the Scriptures. When the Christians at Corinth began to keep the Lord's Supper in a careless and disorderly manner, the Apostle Paul took them severely to task and wrote them: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep," 1 Cor. 11, 28—30. Because of the requirements made in these words, and because of the evil and soul-

destroying consequences of careless and unworthy communing, the Lutheran church introduced these preliminaries in order to aid the communicant in this way towards a due preparation, and, as far as this is possible, to restrain the unworthy from approaching this table to the harm of their own souls.

By virtue of his office the pastor is "steward" of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor. 4, 1, and because the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of such a nature as can benefit only those who acknowledge their sinfulness and desire forgiveness for Christ's sake, it is necessary for him to know who those persons are to whom he is to distribute his Master's goods. If an army steward must exercise discretion and is counted a traitor when he deals out rations indiscriminately even to the enemy, much rather must the steward of Christ be governed by his Master's orders to distribute His goods to those only for whom his Master intends them. In one way or another he must, therefore, learn beforehand who those persons are that intend to commune at a certain time, that he may be able to refuse those who are manifestly unworthy, or who are otherwise not fitted to obtain the right benefit. Hence the necessity of announcement before Communion. Only where private confession is practiced, in which the pastor deals with each one individually, a formal announcement might be dispensed with. But private confession is probably not found anywhere in English-speaking Lutheran churches, and this renders announcement the more necessary.

Time and place for announcement must not be fixed arbitrarily by the pastor. By so doing he would most likely, and needlessly, give occasion for discontent on the part of some of his parishioners. The better way is first to consult with the congregation, and the pastor, looking more to the good of the people than to his own convenience, should advise the fixing of such time and place as is most convenient or least burdensome to the larger number of

members. Neither should the pastor demand that each one must personally come to him every time. Though this should not be allowed to become the standing rule, yet it is sufficient, if persons who are spiritually and morally in good standing communicate their intention to the pastor by messenger or by letter.

By far the most commendable custom is to have announcement in the pastor's study or in the sacristy of the church on a certain day of the week. This affords the pastor the most favorable opportunity to instruct the ignorant, to encourage the weak, to rebuke the faulty, to exhort the tardy, and to give to each one the needed portion, Matt. 24, 45, and he should make full and prudent use of his opportunity. However, it is not wise each time and with each one to institute an examination of his or her spiritual condition, lest he appear over-inquisitive. This should be done sometimes, but with whom and how often must be left to the discretion of the loving shepherd of souls. Searching after hidden wrongdoing and rigor in putting questions should be studiously avoided, because thereby announcement is rendered odious to some, and they will thereafter dread or hate coming to the pastor. While a pleasant remark by the pastor is not out of place the people should not expect to be dismissed every time with nothing more than a commonplace chat or a joke. The pastor's conversation and his whole demeanor should show that he has a heart for the people, that he is solicitous for the welfare of their souls as one that must give account, ready to help them in their struggles, to comfort them in their trials, to warn them against dangers, to feel with them in their weaknesses and sorrows, to advance their inner life, and in every way to promote the salvation of their souls.

The walk of the pastor in general, and more especially his deportment at the time of announcement for Communion, should always be such as to inspire the hearts of the people

with confidence toward him. Where private confession is not in use announcement is the time when parishioners are most disposed to unbosom themselves to their pastor, to acquaint him with their secret troubles, and to confess hidden sins by which they are disquieted in their conscience. But they will not do this, unless their pastor is a man in whom they have the full confidence that he will scrupulously preserve the *sigillum confessionis*. He must therefore guard his tongue never, not even by the remotest intimation, to reveal that which has been entrusted to him as confessor to any third person. Of sins that are past and revealed to him as confessor the pastor must be as silent as the grave, as though he knew nothing about them, according to the word of the Lord: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more," Jer. 31, 34. The pastor stands in the place of Christ, and the confession is made through him to Christ, and though it be a crime of the darkest dye, as long as Christ suffers it to remain hidden the pastor's lips must remain sealed. Even though the civil authorities should demand him to give testimony of what was confessed to him he must reply: Confession is made to me as the steward of Christ, and not as a citizen of the commonwealth. The man who cannot keep secret even from the wife of his bosom what has been entrusted to him as confessor is not fit for the ministerial office, and a congregation would do right in deposing such a traitor and expelling him from the ministry.

Yet cases may occur in which a pastor cannot be bound to absolute secrecy, but in which it becomes his imperative duty to take certain steps which may involve the revealing of that which was confessed to him. These cases may be divided into two classes: sins that are continued in and sins to be committed in the future. To illustrate the first class, we may suppose the case of a man confessing a murder for which an innocent man is held in durance or is sentenced to the gallows. In this case the murder itself is a sin that

is past and cannot be undone, and therefore certainly belongs under the *sigillum confessionis*, but allowing an innocent man to suffer or to be executed for it is a sin which is continued in. In this case it would become the pastor's duty to insist on the confesser that he procure the innocent man's release either by giving himself up to the authorities, or in some other way. If the confesser refuse to do this, he should be asked to give the pastor permission to take the steps necessary to bring about the innocent man's discharge. If this be also refused, the pastor must declare that he is in duty bound to prevent a legal murder, must tell the confesser so, and must then take the necessary steps, if possible without disclosing the identity of the murderer (not being a civil officer), but if this be not possible, by denouncing the murderer to the proper authorities. By consenting to let a crime which involves the destruction of life and property to go on the pastor would render himself partaker of the guilt. He that will not, though he might, prevent a crime is partner in it, Prov. 29, 24. 1 Tim. 5, 22. Neither is it in the nature of a true confession for a man confessing a sin nevertheless to declare his determination to abide in that sin. A true confession presupposes true repentance, which includes the willingness of abandoning the sin.

The other class are future sins. It seems almost incredible that any man could have the audacity to confess sins which he intends to commit in the future to his pastor, but when we remember the Romish doctrine that sins may be forgiven in advance, we easily understand that this may and does occur. Teaching that a man may be absolved from the guilt of future sins, the Romanists, consistently, also teach that future sins confessed to the priest must invariably be kept secret. When Ravailac confessed his intention of assassinating Henry IV of France to the priest Aubigny, that priest, in obedience to the doctrine of Antichrist, kept this secret when he could easily have saved the

king's life. When the Jesuit Garnett was tried for complicity in the Powder Plot at London his defense was that he had received knowledge of it in the confessional and therefore could not reveal it. In reference to these two crimes of high treason the Jesuit Binetus uttered the abominable sentence: "*Praestare omnes reges occidi, quam vel semel confessionis sigillum violari.*" (Let all the kings be killed, rather than allow the seal of confession to be violated even once.) This doctrine and practice is certainly a plain characteristic of antichristian popery. Every Lutheran pastor knows, or ought to know, that the confessing and forgiving of *future* sins militates against the very nature of these institutions. Only sins that are past, or sins which are to be put away, belong into the sphere of confession and absolution. Sins which are intended in the future do not and cannot belong there. Hence it necessarily follows that in such cases the pastor is in no way bound to secrecy, but, rather, in duty bound to prevent sin and crime as far as this may be in his power.

As a matter of course it is an altogether different thing when a confessor acknowledges himself guilty of a certain sin and, at the same time, expresses his fear that also in the future he will not be able to refrain from that sin. That person needs all the sympathy and encouragement the pastor is able to give him, and his secret must be kept inviolate.

In the country, where the people live scattered, or where two, three, or more congregations are combined in one parish, personal announcement to the pastor during the week is frequently impossible, and other arrangements must be made. Where confessional services are held on the Saturday before Communion announcement can take place then. This still offers the pastor opportunity to speak privately with individual persons. This good old custom of having special preparatory services on the day preceding Communion is much to be recommended for various reasons. When the people assemble specially for this purpose, their

minds are impressed more forcibly with the solemnity of the act of communing, and in a regular confessional sermon the preacher has a more favorable opportunity to expatiate on those subjects on which the occasion requires him to speak than in a necessarily short confessional service on Sunday morning. We are well aware that the holding of preparatory services on the preceding day is not practicable everywhere, but its peculiar advantages admit of no doubt.

The adjusting of personal and family quarrels, the rebuking of those who manifestly need correction, etc., should not be postponed until they announce their intention of going to Communion. For obvious reasons these things should be previously attended to by the pastor.

Persons that refuse to comply with the order of announcing themselves must not for this reason alone be debarred from communing. Such persons generally need instruction, and are to be treated with forbearance. Then only can they rightfully be taken under discipline when their refusal manifestly proceeds from unchristian motives. Nor should the pastor neglect also publicly to instruct the people on the necessity of announcement for Communion and on the benefits accruing to it. In some German Lutheran congregations this may not be necessary, but where the very air is full of sectarian independentism, it becomes imperative. And this instruction should not be confined to this one custom only. To many outside the Lutheran church the entire arrangement of confessional services is a stumbling block, because they regard it a remnant of popery, and when occasion offers a Lutheran pastor will do well to set forth from the pulpit why our church preserves this practice, and what authority there is for it in the Scriptures. It is certainly the duty of every Lutheran minister to combat the existing prejudice against our church. There are many who take exception to the peculiarities in our worship and practice simply and only because they do not know the whys and the wherefores.

To complete the subject of preliminaries to the administration of the Lord's Supper two remarks on the formula of absolution must be added. Among English-speaking people a Lutheran pastor is apt to be asked to so change the formula of absolution as to make it read: "I announce unto you that God forgives you your sins." To this request no Lutheran pastor can consent, because it would involve a denial of the Lutheran doctrine on the means of grace and even the perfectness of redemption. Christ's resurrection is the world's absolution, and ministers are sent to bring this absolution to men. "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name," Luke 24, 46. 47. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," John 20, 23. The Gospel is absolution, and the minister in the stead of Christ pronounces this absolution to particular persons for their greater assurance. But the change mentioned would convey the idea that the forgiveness is not actually in the Word itself and must be obtained aside from the Word, which is a distinctively Calvinistic idea. When it is argued that the forgiveness is certainly in the Word and by the Word, yet not in the minister's word, it must be replied that the minister's word is none other than God's Word, and the minister is only the messenger pronouncing it. The Lord does not say: To whom ye announce that God forgives him, He says: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted," and Luke 10, 16 He distinctly declares: "He that heareth you, heareth me." Putting the very best construction on it the formula: I announce that God forgives, must render the absolution uncertain to the mind of the hearer. When a messenger comes to a prisoner and says, "I announce unto you that the governor pardons you," the prisoner would have reason to say, "Thank you for the announcement. When will the governor's pardon arrive?" But when the messenger says, "In the name of the governor and by his command I pro-

nounce you a free man,' that leaves no room for the prisoner to doubt.

In some Lutheran liturgies the formula of the retention of sin to the impenitent is added to that of absolution, but to use both together is very unwise. When this formula of retention is read directly after the absolution, timid souls are very easily rendered uncertain as to which now belongs to them, the absolution or the retention, and so the spark of confidence kindled by the absolution is lost to them again. In using such liturgies the formula of retention should always be omitted, and the amen should follow right after the absolution.

F. KUEGELE.
