

UNIT VIII

The Means of Grace

Gospel in Word and Sacrament

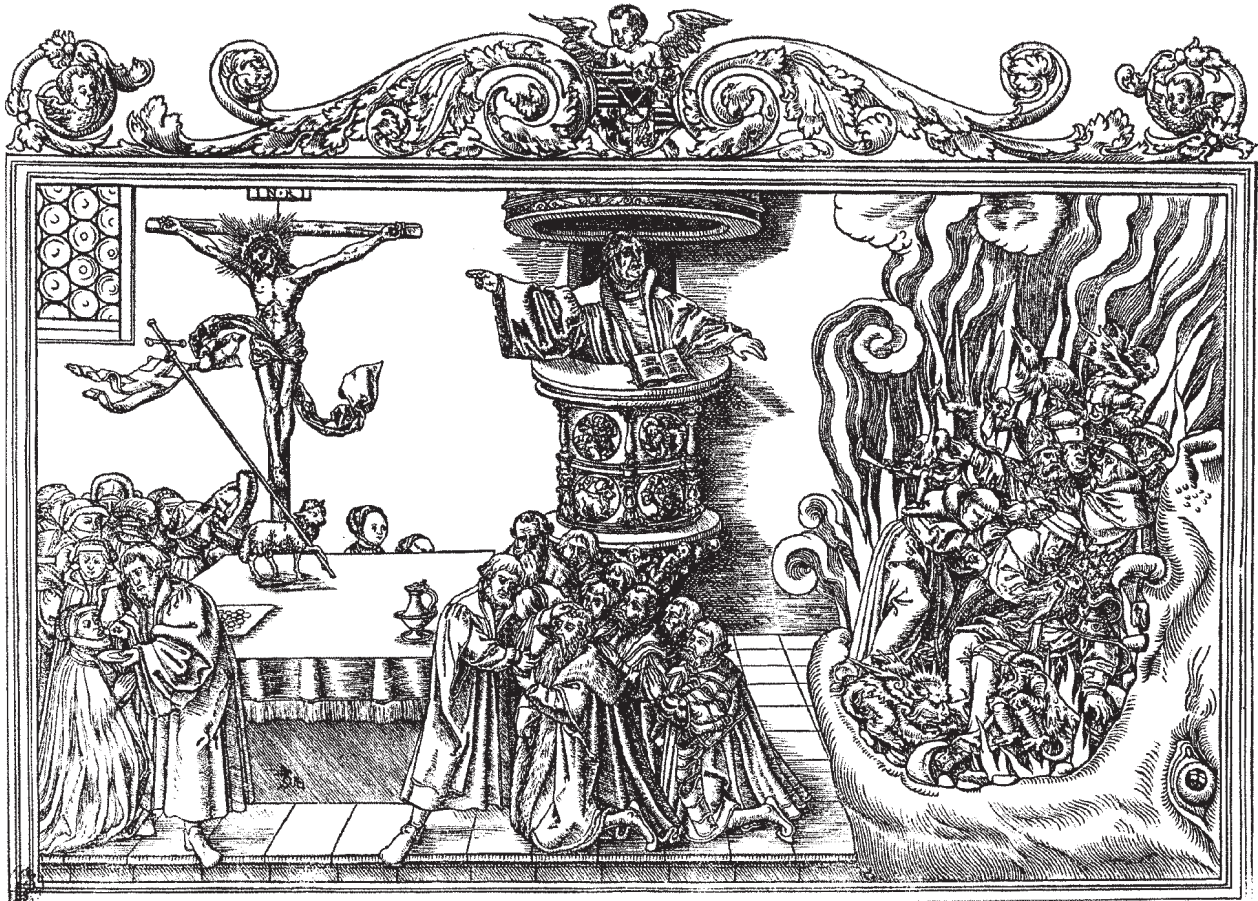


“The Means of Grace” Altar Triptych from the City Church in Wittenburg by Lucas Cranach

The channels through which God offers and conveys His undeserved love to men are called the “*Means of Grace*.” They are the Word of God, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. God works through the Means of Grace, which He has established, both to reveal His undeserved love to men, and to actually transmit the forgiveness of sin, and create and strengthen faith in the very grace of God which these means declare.

“It is God’s will to call men to eternal salvation, to draw them to Himself, convert them, cause them to be born again, and sanctify them through this

means and in no other way - namely, through His holy Word (when one hears it preached or reads it) and the sacraments (when they are used according to His Word).” (Formula of Concord, SD,II,50)



“The True Church and the False Church” by Lucas Cranach - 1546

“Although God is present and operates everywhere throughout all creation and the whole earth is therefore full of the temporal bounties and blessings of God, Colossians 1:17; Acts 17:28; 14:17, still we hold with Scripture that God offers and communicates to men the spiritual blessings purchased by Christ, namely, the forgiveness of sins and the treasures and gifts connected therewith, only through the external means of grace ordained by Him. These means of grace are the Word of the Gospel, in every form in which it is brought to man, and the sacraments of Holy Baptism and of the Lord’s Supper. The Word of the Gospel promises and applies the grace of God, works faith and thus regenerates man, and gives the Holy Ghost, Acts 20:24; Romans 10:17; I Peter 1:23; Galatians 3:2. Baptism, too, is applied

for the remission of sins and is therefore a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5. Likewise the object of the Lord's Supper, that is, of the ministration of the body and blood of Christ, is none other than the communication and sealing of the forgiveness of sins, as the words declare: 'Given for you,' and: 'Shed for you, for the remission of sins,' Luke 22:19-20; Matthew 26:28, and 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood,' I Corinthians 11:23; Jeremiah 33:31-34 ('New Covenant')." (Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, 1932)

The Word of God

God offers and conveys His grace in His Word. The Bible uses the term “*Word of God*” in three different but closely related ways. It can refer to Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh (the Incarnated Word) (John 1:1-14). It can refer to the oral Word of proclamation, in public preaching and teaching and individual witness (the Inculcated Word) (Romans 10:8). And it can also refer to the written Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures themselves (the Inscripturated Word) (2 Peter 1:19). The close inter-relationship between these three forms of God's Word is illustrated in the experience of the Bereans who came to believe in the Incarnated Word through the Inculcated Word which they accepted on the basis of the Inscripturated Word. (cf. Acts 17:10-15) In whatever form it occurs, the Word of God is a genuine Means of Grace.

“You diligently search the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.” (John 5:39)

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (Romans 1:16)

“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17)

“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe.” (I Thessalonians 2:13)

“He chose to give us new birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all He created.” (James 1:18)

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.” (I Peter 1:23)





THE SACRAMENTS

The term “*sacrament*” does not occur in the Bible. It is a Latin word which originally referred to a solemn commitment, most commonly to the military oath of a Roman soldier. In a Christian context, the term first came to be applied to the baptismal commitment of allegiance to Christ and renunciation of the devil. Eventually its use was broadened to refer to Baptism itself and later also to the Lord’s Supper.

Since it is not a Biblical word “*sacrament*” has been defined and applied in a variety of ways. As a result, the number of sacraments differs among churches. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, for example, recognize seven sacraments and understand the term in their own way. In the Lutheran Church we understand a sacrament to be a sacred act, ordained by God, which uses earthly elements together with the Word, to offer or convey the forgiveness of sins. Based on that definition there are two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. “*No intelligent person will quibble about the number of sacraments or the terminology, so long as those things are kept which have God’s command and promises.*” (Apology to the Augsburg Confession, XIII,17)

While the word “*sacrament*” does not appear in Holy Scripture, the concept of God working through visible, physical means to offer or convey His undeserved love to fallen mankind is at the heart of the mystery of the Gospel. In fact, when the Vulgate translates the Greek word “*mysterion*” into Latin in 1 Timothy 3:16, it uses the word “*sacramentum*.” The God who became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ now places His love within reach of our senses in the water of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Holy Supper.

SACRAMENT

A Sacred Act

I. Instituted or Commanded by Christ Himself

**II. In Which the Word of God is Used
Together With an Earthly Visible Element**

III. To Offer or Convey the Forgiveness of Sins

*“The Word comes to the element and it becomes a
Sacrament.” - St. Augustine*



HOLY BAPTISM



“The Baptism of Jesus” 16th Century Luther Bible Woodcut

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God’s command and connected with God’s Word.

WHICH IS THAT WORD OF GOD?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!”

WHAT DOES BAPTISM DO FOR US?

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

WHAT IS GOD’S PROMISE?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

HOW CAN WATER DO SUCH GREAT THINGS?

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God’s Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God’s Word the water is just plain water and not Baptism. But with this Word it is Baptism. God’s Word makes it a washing through which God graciously forgives our sin and grants us rebirth and a new life through the Holy Spirit. (Small Catechism, M. Luther)

THE NATURE OF BAPTISM

Baptism is a genuine means of grace. It is no more and no less than a divinely ordained means whereby God in a special manner conveys and imparts to the person baptized the forgiveness of sins provided for him by Christ's death and resurrection. In the water and the Word of Holy Baptism, God creates or strengthens faith. Thus Scripture correctly describes Baptism as a *"washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit"* (Titus 3:5).



"The Baptism of Jesus" by Rudolf Schäfer

In Baptism the Holy Ghost incorporates the individual into the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). Those who contend that Baptism is merely symbolic action without any real power or effect directly contradict the clear teaching of God's Word.

"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to the Spirit.'" (John 3:5-6)

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38; cf. 22:16)

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead

through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:3-4; cf. also vs. 5-15; Colossians 2:11-12)

“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

“Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word.” (Ephesians 5:25-26)



“Baptism Day” by Alexander Zick

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27)



*“Holy Baptism - The Fountain of Life”
by Rudolf Schäfer*

“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free -and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7)

“This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right

hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.” (I Peter 3:21)



“Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me” by Lucas Cranach

Infant Baptism

The Lutheran Church practices the baptism of infants for five Biblical reasons:

1. BECAUSE INFANTS ARE INCLUDED IN THE GREAT COMMISSION’S COMMAND TO BAPTIZE ***“ALL NATIONS.”*** The language of the Great Commission is deliberately inclusive. There is absolutely no suggestion that any age group or category of people is to be excluded from our Lord’s command to ***“make disciples”*** of everyone.

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

2. BECAUSE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICE OF “HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM.” The Greek word for *“household”* used in the New Testament specifically includes children and infants (cf. Genesis 7:23; 45:18,19; 46:6,7; 1 Samuel 22:16-19). The extended families of this period numbered dozens of people. The exclusion of children would have been completely inconsistent with the Jewish concept of family as an integral unit. This view is clearly reflected in the routine

practice of “household baptism” in the New Testament.

“Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’” (Acts 10:47-48, 11:14)

“When she and the members of her household were baptized she invited us to her home.” (Acts 16:15)

“At that hour of the night the jailor took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.” (Acts 16:33)

“Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanos, beyond that I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.” (1 Corinthians 1:16)



“The Baptism of Jesus With Luther and the Elector” by Lucas Cranach

3. BECAUSE OF THE PARALLEL BETWEEN OLD TESTAMENT CIRCUMCISION AND NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM. Circumcision was performed on eight day old infants. Baptism is identified in the New Testament as ***“the circumcision done by Christ.”*** If the Lord’s intent had been to exclude infants from baptism, it is inconceivable that this parallel would have been drawn without any qualification. Children were typically involved in the ceremonial washings of Israel, including the baptism of proselytes. Without specific instruction to the contrary, this practice would automatically have continued among the early Christians. Historical and archaeological evidence plainly indicates that this was indeed the case. The early church father Origen (182-256 AD) testifies: *“From the apostles the church received the tradition to grant baptism also to the little ones.”*

“In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God who raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12)

4. BECAUSE INFANTS ARE CONCEIVED AND BORN IN SIN AND ARE THEREFORE IN NEED OF THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN UNIQUELY OFFERED IN BAPTISM. Those who reject the baptism of infants resort to the concept of an *“age of accountability”* at which a child is old enough to understand and therefore be responsible for sin. This idea is alien to Scripture. It undermines the clear Biblical assertion that human beings are all sinful by nature and reduces human sinfulness to a mere question of bad behavior.

“Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.” (Genesis 8:21)

“Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5)

“Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.” (Psalm 58:16)

“Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom

of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, and the Spirit gives birth to the spirit.”
(John 3:5-6)

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the craving of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.” (Ephesians 2:2-3)



“Jesus Blessing the Children” Master HB of the Griffin Head - -1548

5. BECAUSE OF THE CLEAR BIBLICAL ASSERTION THAT INFANTS CAN AND DO BELIEVE. The argument over infant baptism is really a disagreement about the nature of faith and conversion. Those who reject infant baptism tend to view faith as a matter of intellectual understanding which is the result of a conscious deliberate decision to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. This view is in sharp contrast with the Biblical emphasis that faith is primarily a matter of trust. In fact, our Lord Himself suggests that the simple trust of the little child is a model which adults would do well to follow. Scripture teaches that faith is entirely the work of God, a free gift of His grace. People cannot decide to believe. God creates faith in our hearts through His Word and Sacraments.

The conversion of an adult through the proclamation of the Gospel is no less a miracle of God’s grace than the conversion of a newborn child in the water and the Word of Holy Baptism. In both instances the faith which results is entirely the work of God. Although we do not understand how God creates faith in Baptism and cannot explain why God chose to designate this action as a means of grace, we simply obey His command and believe in His promise. Luther cuts to

the heart of the matter when he says:

“If God bade you pick up a stalk of grain or a strip of feather and, with His command, promised that through this act you should have forgiveness of all your sins, grace, and everlasting life, should you not accept that proposal with great pleasure and gratitude, love it, praise it, and esteem that stalk or feather a higher and holier possession than heaven and earth?”

“Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother’s breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God.” (Psalm 22:9-10)

“For you have been my hope, O Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you, you brought me forth from my mother’s womb.” (Psalm 71:5-6)



“But if anyone causes one of these little ones (Greek - “mikroon” - any child under 4 years of age with particular reference to infants) who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea...See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18: 6,10)

“People were also bringing babies (Greek - “brephae” - newborn children, babies) to Jesus to have Him touch them. When the disciples saw this they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to Him and said, ‘Let the little children (Greek - “paidia” -all those under four years of age including infants) come to me,

and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” (Luke 18: 15-17; cf. also Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-14)

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and revealed them to little children (Greek - “nepios” - babies and very small children who cannot yet speak). Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” (Luke 10:21)

“He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from birth...When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed; ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear. But why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.” (Luke 1: 15,41-44)



“The Baptism of Jesus Outside of Wittenberg in the Elbe River” by Lucas Cranach



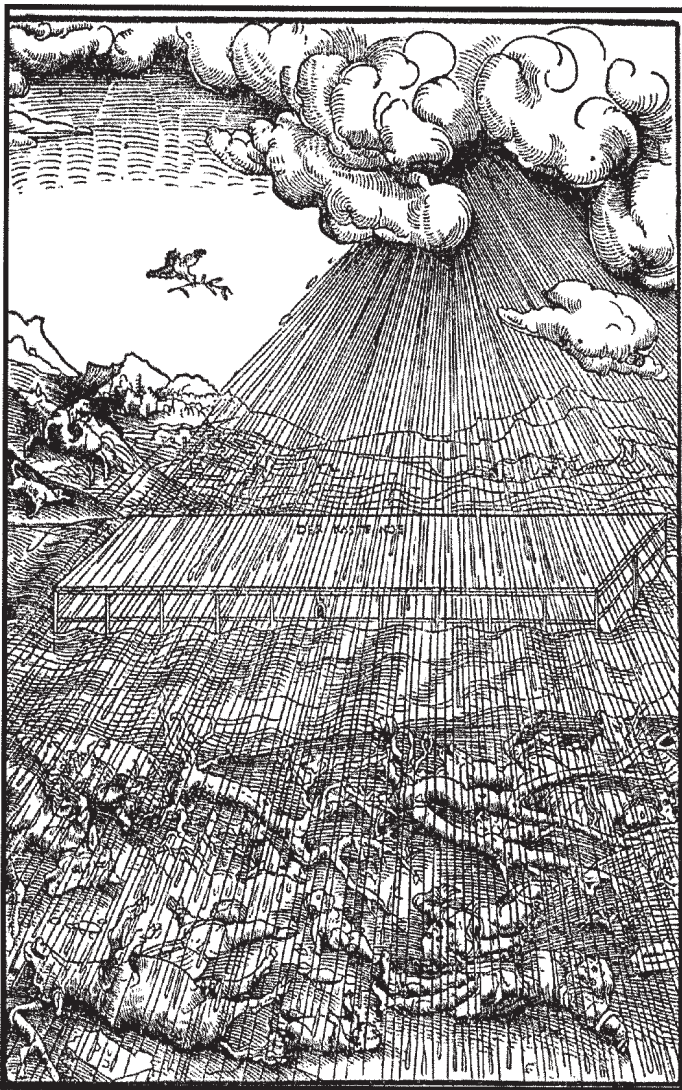
"The Baptism of Jesus" by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

By divine command (Matthew 28:19) Baptism consists of the application of water in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Bible does not prescribe a specific method of application. Therefore the usage of the term **"baptize"** must determine how the water may be applied. Scripture uses the word **"baptize"** in a variety of contexts to describe many different methods of applying water: the moistening of the evening dew (Daniel 4:33); the washing of hands and the ceremonial cleansing of cooking utensils and furniture (Mark 7:4; Luke 11:38); the children of Israel's contact with the pillar of cloud and the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:2); and, the ceremonial cleansings of the Old Testament in which water was sprinkled on an individual or a group (Hebrews 9:9-10; cf. Numbers 8:7; 19: 13,18-19; Leviticus 14:7-9; 16:14-19). It is evident that the word **"baptize"** does not limit the use of the water to any specific method of application but simply refers to the use of water. Therefore any application of water, by sprinkling, pouring, dipping or immersing in the name of the Triune God is a valid and proper Baptism. Those who insist that immersion is the only correct method of Baptism go beyond the requirements of the Bible, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9).

THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

Baptism is not a matter of choice, a mere option which God makes available. Baptism is necessary because the Lord instituted and commanded it. But Baptism is not the only means of grace and it is therefore possible to be saved without being baptized. He who, like the penitent thief on the cross, cannot be baptized, but believes the Gospel will be saved. It is the absence of faith, not Baptism, which results in damnation (cf. Mark 16:16) The rejection of Baptism, however, is deliberate disobedience of God, with which faith cannot co-exist. Those who reject Baptism reject what Baptism offers, namely forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. St. Augustine's maxim says it well: *"It is not the absence but the contempt of Baptism which damns."*



"The Flood" - Luther Bible Woodcut - 1523

"Almighty and everlasting God, who according to Thy righteous judgment didst destroy the unbelieving world by the Flood and according to Thy great mercy didst save faithful Noah and his family; who didst drown obdurate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea and didst safely lead Thy people Israel through the midst thereof, prefiguring thereby this washing of Thy holy Baptism; and who, by the baptism of Thy beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, didst sanctify and ordain Jordan and all waters for a saving flood and an abundant washing away of sin, we beseech Thee, of Thine infinite mercy, to look with favor upon this child and to bless him in Thy Spirit with true faith, that by this salutary flood, there may be drowned and destroyed in him and that he hath inherited from Adam and himself added thereto; and that, being separated from the number of the unbelieving, he may be kept securely in the holy ark of the Christian Church and ever serve Thy name with fervent spirit and joyful hope, to the end that, together with all believers, he may be accounted worthy to attain to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen." (Martin Luther's "Flood Prayer" from the earliest Lutheran Baptismal Liturgy - 1523)

THE LORD'S SUPPER



“The Last Supper” by Albrecht Dürer

WHAT IS THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ together with the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

WHERE IS THIS WRITTEN?

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and the Apostle Paul tell us: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, gave it to His disciples and said, “Take and eat. This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way, after supper He took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to them and said, “Drink from it, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

(Small Catechism, Martin Luther, 1529)

THREE BASIC VIEWS ON THE NATURE OF HOLY COMMUNION

I. ROMAN CATHOLIC

Transubstantiation

The bread and wine are physically transformed into the body and blood of Christ as the priest speaks the words of consecration in the mass. They are no longer bread and wine but have permanently become the body and blood of Christ.

"If anyone saith that in the sacred and holy sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine remains conjointly with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denieth that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood - the species only of the bread and wine remaining - which conversion indeed the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation; let him be anathema." (Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, XIII, 2)



"The True Religion of Christ" by Lucas Cranach

II. REFORMED

Representation

The bread and wine are merely symbols which represent or signify the absent body and blood of Christ. Christ's Words of Institution must be understood in a figurative sense ("is" = "represents") because it is not possible for the body of Jesus, which has ascended into heaven, to be present in the Sacrament.

"Because Christ's body, since it has the nature and mode of being of a human body, is finite and contained in heaven as a place, it necessarily follows that it is distant from us by as great an interval of space as heaven is from the earth... We repudiate as preposterous interpreters those who in the solemn words of the Supper, 'This is my body, this is my blood,' urge a precisely literal sense, as they say. For we hold it to be indisputable that these words are to be accepted figuratively,

so that bread and wine are called that which they signify.” (Mutual Consent As To The Sacraments, XXII, XXV, John Calvin)



Communion Distributed “In Both Kinds” by Luther and Huss

III. LUTHERAN

Real Presence

Both the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ are present in the Lord’s Supper, that, in other words, with the bread Christ’s body is received, and with the wine Christ’s blood. This “*sacramental union*” occurs only in the Lord’s Supper.

“We believe, teach, and confess that in the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present and are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine. We believe, teach, and confess that the words of the Testament of Christ are to be understood in no other way than in their literal sense, and not as though the bread symbolized the absent body and the wine the absent blood of Christ, but that because of the sacramental union they are truly the body and blood of Christ.” (Formula of Concord, Ep., VII, 5,6)



“Take Eat. This Is My Body” by Rudolf Schäfer

What does the Bible say?

Transubstantiation and Representation are well-meaning attempts to explain the Sacrament and make it more comprehensible. However, both must be rejected because they fail to reflect that which Scripture teaches.

1. Transubstantiation’s insistence that the bread and wine cease to exist because they have become the body and blood of Christ contradicts I Corinthians 10:16 and I Corinthians 11:27,28 which specifically refer to the consecrated elements as both **“bread”** and **“body,”** **“cup”** (wine) and **“blood.”** But it must also be noted that while this view goes beyond Scripture, it does at least maintain a belief in the presence of the body and blood of Christ, which is the essence of the Sacrament.

“The third error is that no bread remains but only the form of bread. But this error is not very important if only the body and blood of Christ, together with the Word, are not taken away - though the papists have earnestly contended and still contend for this their new doctrine. They label as heretic anyone who does not agree with them that it is a necessary truth, that no bread remains there - that monastic fantasy, supported by Thomas Aquinas and confirmed by the popes. But while they insist so strongly on this, and that out of pure arbitrariness and without any foundation in Scripture, we shall defy them and hold to the contrary that real bread and wine are truly present along with the body and blood of Christ. We are glad to be labeled heretic by such imaginary Christians and naked sophists. For the Gospel calls the Sacrament bread.

It says that the bread is the body of Christ. We shall stand by that. We are sufficiently certain, contrary to all the dreams of the sophists, that what the Scripture calls bread is bread. If it deceives us we shall take our chances.” (The Adoration of the Sacrament, Martin Luther, 1523)

2. Representation’s contention that only the bread and wine are present as symbols is directly contrary to the plain words of Christ’s institution, **“This is my body,” “This is my blood.”** To impose a figurative meaning on these words without any contextual support is to overthrow the authority of Scripture in favor of whatever seems reasonable to our minds. Furthermore, to deny the presence of the Lord’s body and blood is to destroy the Sacrament, reducing it to the level of shadow play with empty signs and symbols.

“A more dangerous falsity in interpretation than the assumption that the word ‘is’ may be explained in the sense of ‘signify’ of ‘be a symbol of’ is hardly conceivable. Almost every doctrine of the Word of God will melt under it. ‘The Word was God’ would mean: ‘The Word signified, was a symbol of God.’...When it is said of Jesus Christ, ‘This is true God,’ it would mean that He is the symbol or image of the true God. By it Christ would cease to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life and would be a mere symbol of them...The characteristic use of ‘is’ is essential to the very morality of language, and language itself would commit suicide if it could tolerate the idea that the substantive verb shall express not substance, but symbol. Creation, redemption, and sanctification would all fuse and be dissipated in the crucible of this species of interpretation. It would take the Bible from us...and the infidel would then feel that the Book he has so long feared and hated, deprived as it now would be, of its vitality by the trick of interpreters, could henceforth be safely regarded with contempt... ‘This is My Body;’ simple words framed by infinite wisdom so as to resist the violence and all the ingenuity of men. Rationalism in vain attempts to remove them with its cunning, its learning, and its philosophy. Fanaticism gnashes its teeth at them in vain.” (The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology, Charles Porterfield Krauth, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1871)



“The Last Supper” by Eduard Gebhardt



“The Lord’s Supper” by Heinrich Pfieler

3. Both Transubstantiation and Representation make more sense than Real Presence. My reason tells me that the elements must be either body and blood or bread and wine. They cannot be both at the same time. Yet that is exactly what God’s Word says. So we believe what Scripture teaches and affirm the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of the sacrament even though we cannot understand or explain it. By faith we are willing to live with the mystery.

“The Lutheran teaching of the Lord’s Supper is the doctrine of Scripture, because it accepts at full value both the words pertaining to the presence of the bread as also the words pertaining to the body of Christ, without subtracting from them or adding to them. To state the matter antithetically: The Lutheran teaching does not, like Rome, make the bread imaginary bread, nor does it, like the Reformed denominations, make the body of Christ an imaginary body, that is an emblem or symbol of the absent body of Christ. It teaches a true, essential bread, and the true essential body of Christ in the Sacrament because the words of institution state both.” (Christian Dogmatics, Franz Pieper, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1933)

“You do know and must know that our text. ‘This is my body,’ etc. comes not from men but from God Himself, spoken by His own lips and set down in these very letters and words...Our text is certain; it is plausible and necessary that it should stand as the words read, for God Himself has placed it where it is, and no man dare take away or add a single letter (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2) ...You still have this glorious, reassuring advantage that you can rely upon our text with a good conscience and say, ‘If I must have an uncertain and obscure text and interpretation, I would rather have the one uttered by the lips of God Himself than one uttered by the lips of men. And if I must be deceived, I would rather be deceived by God (if such a thing were possible) than by men. For if God deceives me, He will take the responsibility and make amends to me, but men cannot make amends to me if they have deceived me and led me down to hell.” (Martin Luther, Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper, 1528)

THREE BASIC VIEWS ON THE PURPOSE OF HOLY COMMUNION

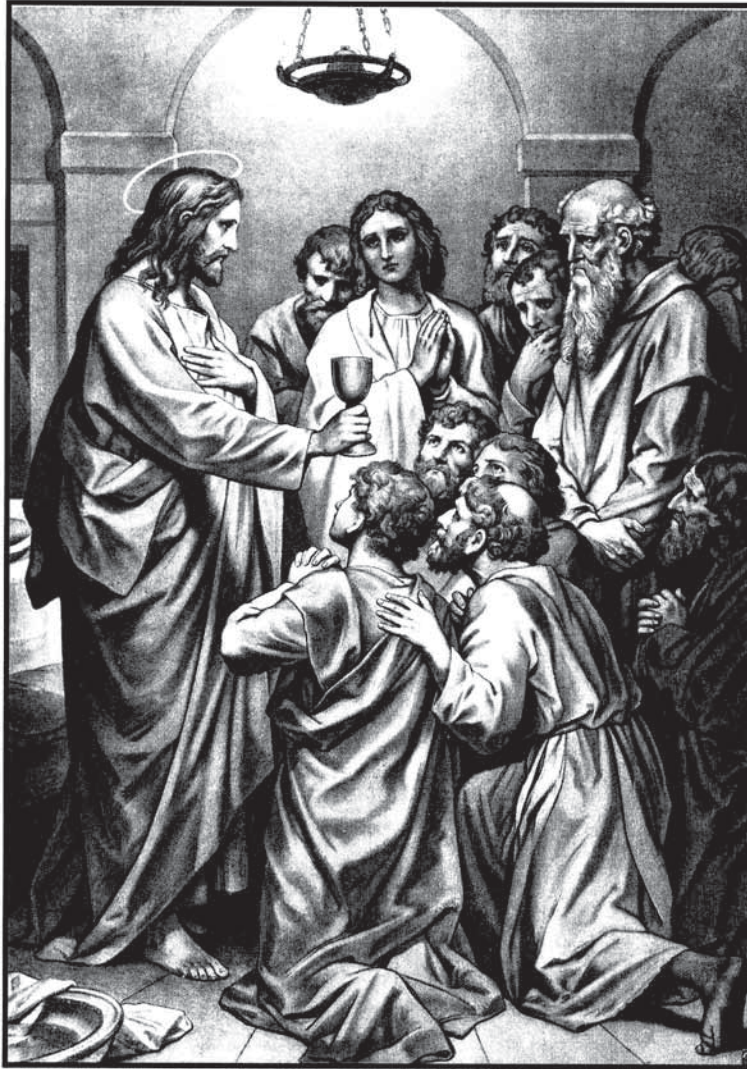
I. ROMAN CATHOLIC *Sacrifice of the Mass*



“For You” by Rudolf Schäfer

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass teaches that the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross is repeated in an “*unbloody*” way every time the Mass is celebrated, for the benefit of those who are present and those in whose memory the Mass is being said.

“And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner; who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offered by the ministry of the priests, who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits indeed of which oblation, of that bloody one to wit, are received most plentifully through this unbloody one; so far is this (latter) from derogating in any way from that (former oblation). Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles.” (Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, XXII, II)



“The Holy Communion” by Heinrich Hoffmann

II. REFORMED Memorial Feast

The celebration of the Lord’s Supper is intended as a reminder of the death of Christ for our redemption. The bread and wine, which symbolize the body and blood of the Lord, serve as a memorial feast of confession and thanksgiving conducted in obedience to His command.

“The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience, whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.” (Baptist Faith and Message, Adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, 1963)

“The Supper of the Lord is a memorial of our redemption by Christ’s death, for thereby we do show forth the Lord’s death

till he come. It is also a symbol of the soul's feeding on Christ. And it is a sign of the communion that we should have with one another... We feed on Christ only through his Word, and only by faith and prayer; and we feed on him, whether at our private devotions, or in our meditations, or on any occasion of public worship, or in the memorial symbolism of the Supper." (Reformed Episcopal Articles of Religion, XXVII, 1875)

"The sacrament, commonly known as the Lord's Supper, was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ at the close of His last passover supper, as a perpetual remembrance of His passion and death on the cross, by which sacrifice of himself He has made the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. In the sacrament, no sacrifice of any kind is offered for sin, but the one perfect offering of Christ as a sufficient sacrifice is set forth and commemorated by appropriate symbols. These symbols are bread and wine, which, though figuratively called the body and blood of Christ, nevertheless remain, after consecration, literal bread and wine, and give no countenance to the doctrines of consubstantiation or transubstantiation." (The Confession of Faith Cumberland Presbyterian Church)



"The Last Supper" by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

III. LUTHERAN Means of Grace

The basic purpose of the Lord's Supper is to convey the forgiveness of sins offered in the promise of the Words of Institution "***This is my body given for you***" (Luke 20:19) and "***This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins***" (Matthew 26:28). Thus like Baptism and the Word of the Gospel, Holy Communion is a genuine Means of Grace. Because the Lord's Supper conveys the forgiveness of sins, the Sacrament also serves to strengthen faith; express and renew the fellowship of

God's people, the Church; encourage sanctification and growth in patience and in the hope of eternal life.

All of these blessings are the direct result of the Sacrament's power to grant the remission of sins bought by the precious blood of Christ. *"The main purpose of the Holy Sacrament is to be a tool and a means through which the promises of grace are offered, communicated, and appropriated, as with a seal, guarantee, and pledge through which these promises are confirmed. However, within this major purpose, as a secondary goal, the Sacrament is to be a distinguishing sign of confession and a bond of fellowship in worship. Therefore communion fellowship is church fellowship."* (Theses on Communion Fellowship with Those Who Believe Differently, C.F.W. Walther, 1871; Translated by Laurence L. White)

"Thus the position set forth above rests on a unique, firm, immovable, and indubitable rock of truth in the words of institution recorded in the Holy Word of God and so understood, taught, and transmitted by the holy evangelists and apostles, and by their disciples and hearers in turn...After the Last Supper, as He was about to begin His bitter passion and death for our sin, in this sad, last hour of His life, this truthful and almighty Lord, our Creator and Redeemer Jesus Christ, selected His words with great deliberation and care in ordaining and instituting this most venerable sacrament, which was to be observed with great reverence and obedience until the end of the world and which was to be an abiding memorial of His bitter passion and death and of all His blessings, a seal of the new covenant, a comfort for all sorrowing hearts, and a true bond and union of all Christians with Christ their Head and with one another...We are therefore bound to interpret and explain these words of the eternal, truthful, and almighty Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Creator and Redeemer, not a flowery, figurative, or metaphorical expressions, as they appear to our reason, but we must accept them in simple faith and due obedience in their strict and clear sense, just as they read." (Formula of Concord, SD, VII, 44-45)

What Does the Bible Say?

Sacrifice of the Mass

The Roman Catholic doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass strikes at the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The teaching that Christ's death on the cross must be endlessly repeated in order that the sins of the faithful might now be forgiven necessarily means that the death of Christ ceases to be the only and all sufficient sacrifice for our sins. Thus a series of human actions is substituted for the ***"once for all"*** divine action of God in the person of His Son. God's grace is supplemented and ultimately replaced by the works of man.

Scripture explicitly repudiates this doctrine. ***"And by that will we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priests stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this Priest had offered for all***

time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time He waits for His enemies to be made His footstool, because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” (Hebrews 10:10-14)



“This Is My Body” by J. James Tissot

“That the Mass is neither a sacrifice nor a work the words of Christ’s institution prove; then also the example of the apostles themselves and of the whole primitive church. Furthermore, let those who celebrate Mass be asked what the use and benefit of their Masses are. If they say they are celebrated to abolish sins or to serve God, their godlessness is clear, since there is only one sacrifice for the abolishing of sins, namely Christ, once sacrificed. Of Him all are made partakers, not by doing or by sacrificing but by believing through the Word alone. Blasphemous it is to add something to this sacrifice, as if it had not entirely removed the sins of all men. This, then, must be the choice: either all sins, past, present, and future have not been canceled by Christ’s death, or the Mass cannot be a sacrifice or work for sins.” (M. Luther)



“The Last Supper” 19th Century Bible Engraving

“That it lacks true, firm, and solid grounds in Scripture is, however, not the only thing we criticize in the papalist Mass; what we complain about most of all is that it is an abomination, conflicting with the doctrine of the Word, the Sacraments, and faith - yes, that it is full of abuse against the unique sacrifice of Christ and against His perpetual priesthood...To institute a form of worship beside and without the Word of God, and indeed one to which is ascribed propitiation for sins, appeasing the wrath of God, and procuring of grace and other benefits from God, is a vain thing; it cannot please God; yes, it is idolatry...The papalist Mass, as we have described it in the beginning, militates against the one propitiatory sacrifice of Christ in many ways and is an affront to it...The papalist Mass militates against the eternal priesthood of Christ. For no one is able to offer Christ for sins, save only Christ Himself.” (Martin Chemnitz, Examination of the Council of Trent, Part II, Translated by Fred Kramer. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. Used by Permission.)

Memorial Feast

The Reformed doctrine that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a reminder of the death of Christ on the cross contradicts the words of institution and deprives the Christian of the individual application of the forgiveness of sins which the Lord offers and conveys in the Sacrament. The conclusion that the Sacrament cannot convey the forgiveness of sins is the logical consequence of the denial of the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of our Lord. The effect of this view is to transform Holy Communion, God's action on our behalf, into human action taken in response to a divine mandate.

“Now we come to its power and benefit, the purpose for which the Sacrament was really instituted, for it is most necessary that we know what we should seek and obtain there. This is plainly evident from the words just quoted, ‘This is my body and blood given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ In other words, we go to the sacrament because we receive there a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins. Why? Because the words are there through which this is imparted! Christ bids me eat and drink in order that the sacrament may be mine and may be a source of blessing to me as a sure pledge and sign -indeed as the very gift he has provided for me against my sins, death,

and all evil....Here again our clever spirits contort themselves with their great learning and wisdom, bellowing and blustering, ‘How can bread and wine forgive sins and strengthen faith?’ This bread and wine are Christ's body and blood and with which the words are coupled. This treasure is conveyed and communicated to us in no other way than through the words, ‘given and poured out for you’. Here you have both truths, that it is Christ's body and blood and that these are yours as your treasure and gift. Christ's body can never be an unfruitful, vain thing, impotent and useless.”(Martin Luther, Large Catechism)



“The Last Supper” With Luther and the Reformers in Place of the Disciples by Lucas Cranach

Means of Grace

The intended purpose of the Lord's Supper is clearly defined by Christ's own words of institution. ***"This is My Body given for you."*** (Luke 22:19) ***"This is My Blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*** (Matthew 26:28) Holy Communion is therefore a genuine "Means of Grace" through which God conveys the forgiveness of sins and strengthens faith.

"The price of our redemption is the body of Christ which is given for us and the blood of Christ which is shed for us. Among Christians, no one doubts that by this giving of His body and shedding of His blood the wrath of the Father has been satisfied and eternal redemption gained. But the question is, to whom does this promise pertain and who are the receivers of this benefit of Christ? To be sure, the teaching of the Gospel in general pronounces that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). But anxious and fearful minds, when they consider their sins, their unworthiness, their weaknesses, and their many temptations, become so terrified and disturbed that dangerous doubts arise concerning the individual application, that is, whether I myself have with sufficient certainty grasped the benefits of Christ and so faithfully cling to them that my conscience can stand before the judgement of God. For this reason, Christ in His Supper willed to confirm and seal to His disciples the demonstration and application of the promise of the Gospel with a certain and firm guarantee, so that in the face of all temptations faith can stand strongly and firmly in the assurance that it is a participant in Christ and all His benefits unto salvation...Therefore Christ, in the Lord's Supper distributes to us His very body which has been given for us and His very blood which has been shed for us, and He offers them to us to take and eat. Surely there can be no more faithful, firm, or efficacious sign and seal of the promise and grace which have been shown and applied to us than that Christ Himself in the Supper shows us His very body which has been given for us and His very blood which has been shed for us, not at some enormous distance, but He offers and gives it to us in so present a manner that we receive it to our very selves...Nor is this demonstration in the Supper made only in a general way, but to the individual communicants the Son of God Himself bears witness that He is offering and giving His body and blood, and without doubt at the same time also all those things which by the giving of His body and the shedding of His blood have been gained for our salvation." (Martin Chemnitz, The Lord's Supper, 1590. Translated by J.A.O. Preus, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979. Used by Permission)



Martin Chemnitz

CLOSED COMMUNION

The Scriptural Practice of Historic Christendom

“Closed Communion” is the practice of restricting participation in the Sacrament to communicant members of the local congregation and of sister congregations within our confessional fellowship. Since the days of the apostles, this practice has been the direct correlate of the Church’s affirmation of the presence of our Lord’s true body and blood in the Holy Supper.

“This food we call eucharist, and no one may receive it unless he believes that our teaching is true, and has been washed with the washing for forgiveness of sins unto regeneration, and lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as though they were common bread or common drink...as we have been taught, they are the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus.” (Apology I, Justin Martyr, 150 AD)

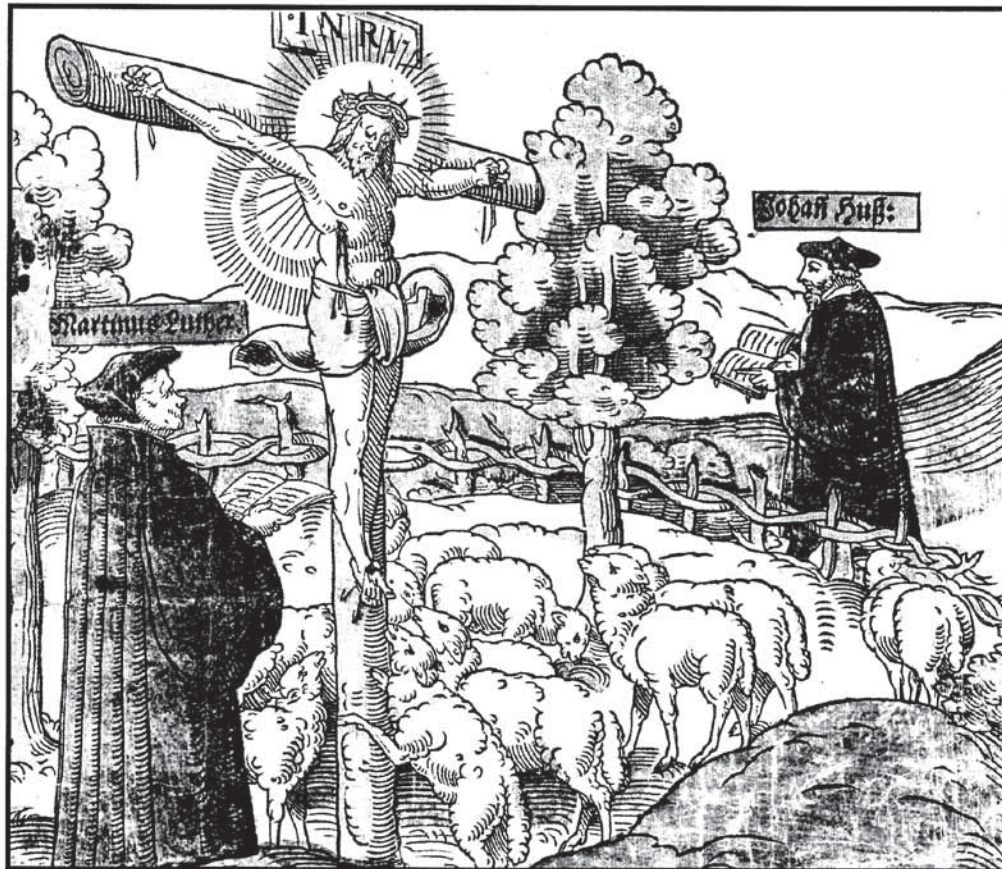
“Now it must be said that (closed communion) is not taken all that seriously when for the sacrament preachers give out only bread and wine. Who they are to whom these are given, no matter what they know and believe, is then no great concern...Since it is Christ’s body and blood that are given out in the sacrament we neither will nor can give such sacrament to any unless he is first examined. What has he learned from the Catechism and does he intend to forsake the sins which he has again committed? We would not make Christ’s Church into a pig pen (Matthew 7:6) letting anybody come, unexamined to the sacrament as a pig to its trough. Such a church we leave to the fanatics.” (Admonition to Frankfurt am Main, Martin Luther, 1532)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church observes the Scriptural practice of “Closed Communion” for two Biblical reasons:

1. Because of a loving concern for those who would receive the Sacrament “*unworthily*” to their judgement. ***“Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgement on himself.”*** (1 Corinthians 11: 27-29) Therefore the Sacrament must not be given to:

A. Sinners who are living in open and impenitent sin (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:11,13; 10:20-21; Matthew 5:23-24).

B. Those who cannot examine themselves because of a lack of instruction, immaturity, or mental incapacity (1 Corinthians 11:28).



“Martin Luther and John Hus as Faithful Shepherds Who Guard and Guide the Flock of Christ” - 1530

2. Because of a concern for the integrity of our witness to unity in the faith through the Sacrament. When we participate together in the body and blood of Christ we publicly acknowledge that we believe the same things and are one in the faith. ***“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”*** (1 Corinthians 10: 16-17). The Eucharistic Prayer of the ancient Didache (written late in the First Century) clearly recognizes the importance of the Sacrament as a profound expression of the unity of the church.

“As this bread was scattered on the hills and by being gathered together was made one, so may Thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom.”

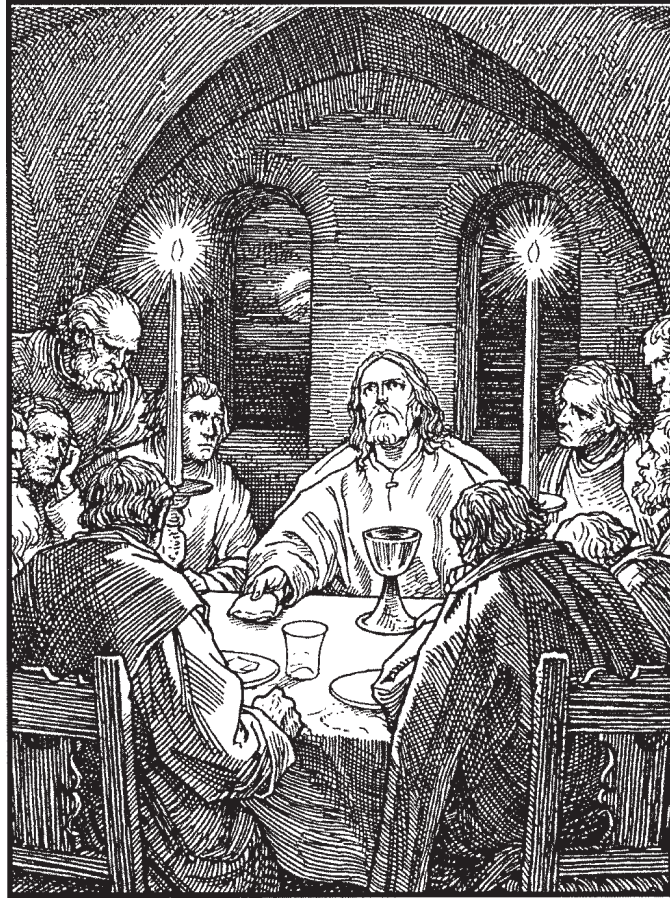
That witness to unity is false, if doctrinal disagreement exists between those who commune together. By allowing that false witness to occur we are telling our visitors from other churches and our own members that the doctrinal differences which divide us are unimportant and may safely be overlooked. That message of doctrinal indifference is clearly contrary to Scripture. In his inspired letter to the Christians in Rome the apostle Paul writes these stern words in the specific context of the congregation gathered for worship to celebrate the Lord's Supper together:

“I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching which you have learned. Keep away from them for such people are not serving the Lord Christ but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.” (Romans 16:17-18; cf. also Matthew 7:15; John 8:31-32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Galatians 5:9; 2 Timothy 2:17; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10,11).

Therefore the Sacrament must not be given to those who do not share our doctrinal position or who belong to a church body which confesses a different doctrinal position (Acts 2:42; Romans 16:17)

“To the early church a man was orthodox or heterodox according to his confession...Since a man cannot, at the same time, hold two differing confessions, he cannot communicate in two churches of differing confessions. If anyone does this nevertheless, he denies his own confession or has none at all.” (Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries, Werner Elert)

“The main purpose of the Holy Sacrament is to be a tool and a means through which the promises of grace are offered, communicated, and appropriated, as with a seal, guarantee, and pledge through which these promises are confirmed. However, within this major purpose, as a secondary goal, the Sacrament is to be a distinguishing sign of confession and a bond of fellowship in worship. Therefore Communion fellowship is church fellowship. Holy Communion was not instituted to make people Christians. It was instituted to strengthen the faith of those who are already Christians. Therefore Communion should be administered to no one who has been revealed as a false Christian. In Holy Communion, the body and blood of Christ is actually present, distributed, and received by every communicant. Therefore Communion cannot be administered to anyone who does not confess a belief in this mystery without grievous sin. Holy Communion is a mark of confession of faith and doctrine among those who celebrate together. Therefore the admission of members of fellowships which believe differently to the celebration of communion



“Holy Communion” by Rudolf Schäfer

within the Lutheran Church is in conflict with: Christ’s institution; the commanded unity of the church in faith and accordingly in confession; 3. Our love for those to whom the Sacrament is administered; our love for our own fellow believers, especially the weak who by this action would be given serious offense; the command not to become participants in the sins and errors of others...The more unionism and syncretism is the sin and corruption of our time, the more the loyalty of the orthodox church now demands that the Lord’s Supper not be misused as a means of external union without internal unity of faith.” (Theses on Communion Fellowship With The Heterodox, C.F.W. Walther, 1871. Translated by Laurence L. White)

“The ancient church practiced closed communion in dramatic fashion. Before the Sacrament was celebrated, heretics, catechumens, and those not in fellowship with the church, those who were mentally incompetent, and those under church discipline were dismissed from the sanctuary. The doors were closed, and then, and only then, the sacrament was celebrated. The call went out to the faithful, ‘The holy things for the holy ones!.’ The early church understood the implication of altar fellowship. It unites. It is a bond of mutual fellowship in the teaching of the apostles. Hence, there could and can be no ‘open communion.’ There is but one confession and not any other. Hence, the sacrament is closed to those who do not share in this confession...Francis Pieper, the Missouri Synod’s leading dogmatician, wrote in 1920:

‘Auch die apostolische Kirche praktizierte nicht ‘open’ sondern ‘closed’ communion.’”
(Paul T. McCain, Communion Fellowship, Waverly, Iowa: 1992. Used By Permission)

“Communing together is confessing a common faith. Christendom should remain united, should have the same faith and doctrine. To assure this unity among Christians, these must not only congregate for the preaching service - in which they hear the same Word, whereby they are called to the same faith and all together adhere to the same Head - but they must also congregate at one table and eat and drink with one another. It may well happen that someone who is listening to my sermon is nevertheless my enemy at heart. Therefore, although the Gospel also holds Christians together, the Lord’s Supper does so still more. By attending, every Christian confesses publicly and for himself what he believes. There are those who have a different faith part ways, and those come together who have the same faith, whose hope and heart toward the Lord are one. This is also the reason why the sacrament has been called communio in Latin, a communion. And those who do not want to be of the same faith, doctrine, and life, as other Christians, are called excommunicatis, people who are outside of the communion, dissimilar in doctrine, words, understanding and life. Therefore, these should not be tolerated in the group that has the same understanding; they would only divide it and split it up. The Holy Sacrament, then, serves as a means whereby Christ holds His little flock together. The teachers of old have had some fine thoughts about this matter. They have said that Christ purposely used bread and wine for His Supper. For every kernel of grain has its own body form, but they are ground together and become one bread. Just so, every human being is an individual and a creature apart from others. But in the Sacrament we are, as it were, baked into one cake; for there we have the same faith, the same confession, love, and hope. The same thing applies to the wine. There are many grapes and little berries, and each has its own body and form. But when they turn to wine, the inequality no longer exists; for the wine is one fine, beautiful juice. Christians, too, should be like this. Thus the fathers have explained it and to do so is not wrong. For the sacrament is to serve as a means to hold the Christians together in the same understanding, doctrine, and faith, so that nobody should be an individual kernel apart from the rest and have his own doctrine and separate faith. For the devil takes no holiday. He loves to tear this unity and equality to shreds, because he well knows how much injury is done him when all of us believe the same thing and cling to our one Head.” (Martin Luther, *Kirchen Postille*, 1534, *From What Luther Says*, Vol.II, Ewald Plass, Translator and Editor, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis: 1954. Used By Permission)



*Luther and John Bugenhagen Distributing Communion in the
City Church at Wittenberg by Gustav Koenig*

THE PROPER USE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christian Questions with Their Answers

(Prepared by Dr. Martin Luther for Those Who Intend to Go to the Sacrament)

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?

Yes, I believe it. I am a sinner.

2. How do you know this?

I know this from the Ten Commandments, which I have not kept.

3. Are you sorry for your sins?

Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God.

4. What have you deserved from God because of your sins?
I deserve his wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation.

5. Do you hope to be saved?
Yes, such is my hope.

6. In whom then do you trust?
I trust in my dear Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Who is Christ?
Jesus Christ is the Son of God, true God and man.

8. How many Gods are there?
There is only one God; but there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

9. What has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?
He died for me and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

10. Did the Father also die for you?
He did not; for the Father is God only, the Holy Spirit likewise. But the Son is true God and true man. He died for me and shed His blood for me.

11. How do you know this?
I know this from the holy Gospel, from the words instituting the Sacrament, and by His body and blood given me as a pledge in the Sacrament.

12. What are the words of institution?
*Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said: "Take eat; this is my body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me."
In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

13. Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?
Yes, I believe it.

14. What convinces you to believe this?
I am convinced to believe this by the Word of Christ: Take, eat, this is My body; drink of it, all of you, this is My blood.

15. What does Christ want you to do when you eat His body and drink His blood in the Lord's Supper?

Christ's wants me to remember and proclaim His death and the shedding of His blood, as He taught me; "Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of Me."

16. Why does Christ want you to remember and proclaim His death?

First, so that I may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for my sins. Only Christ, true God and true man, could do that. Second, so I may learn to be horrified by my sins, and regard them as very serious. Third, so that I may find joy and comfort in Christ alone, and through faith in Him be saved.

17. What moved Christ to die and make complete payment for your sins?

Christ was moved to do this by His great love for His Father and for me and other sinners, as it is written in John 14; Romans 5; Galatians 2; and Ephesians 5.

18. Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?

I desire to do this that I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sin, and also learn from Him to love God and my neighbor.

19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?

First, both the command and the promise of Christ, the Lord. Also the burden of sin which lies heavy upon me and causes me to feel a hunger and thirst for Holy Communion.

20. But what should a person do if he is not aware of the burden of sin and does not feel hunger and thirst for Holy Communion?

To such a person no better advice can be given than this: that in the first place, he should put his hand on his chest and see whether he still has flesh and blood. Then he should believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7.

Secondly, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15-16 and in 1 John 2 and 5.

Thirdly, he will certainly also have the devil around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16; 1 Peter 5; Ephesians 6; and 2 Timothy 2.

UNIT IX

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH



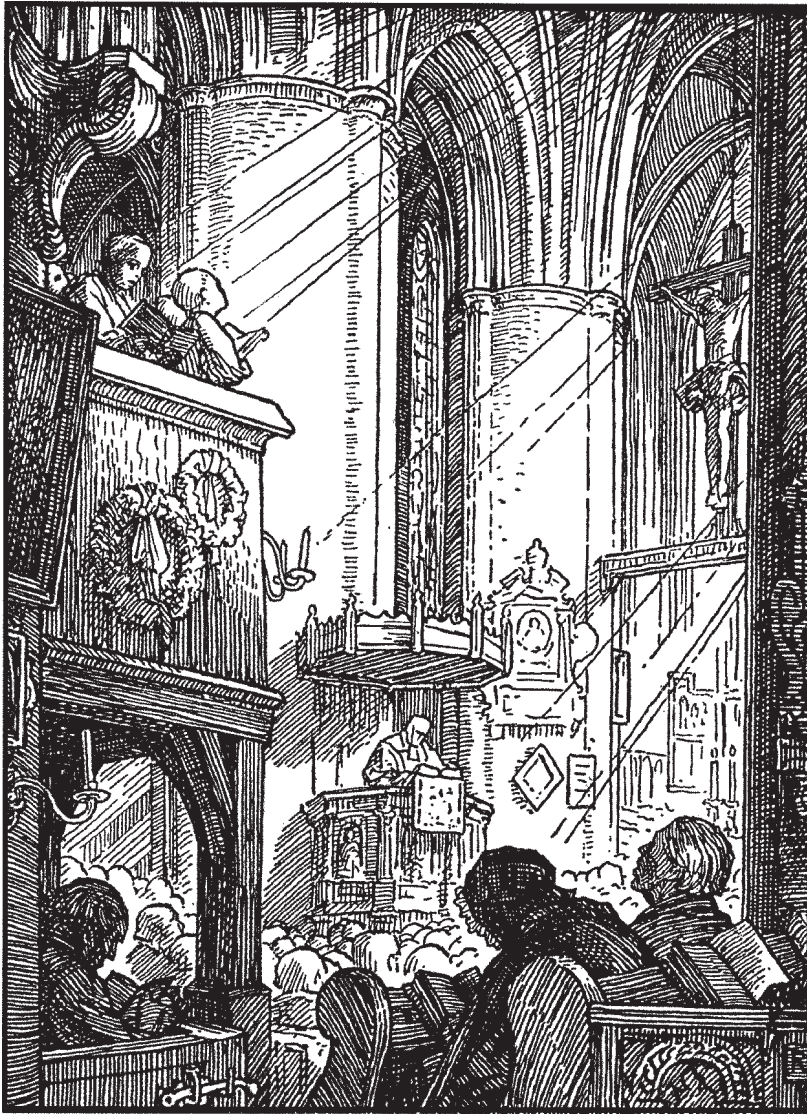
*“Luther Preaching at the City Church in Wittenberg”
by Gustav Koenig*

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 1:2)

“Thank God, a seven year old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their good Shepherd. So children pray: ‘I believe in one holy Christian Church.’ Its holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs, which they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but it consists of the Word of God and true faith.” (Smalkald Articles, III,XII)

“The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other organizations, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men’s hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ. This church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews, consecrates, and governs by His Spirit.” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, VII & VIII, 5)

“Church” in the New Testament



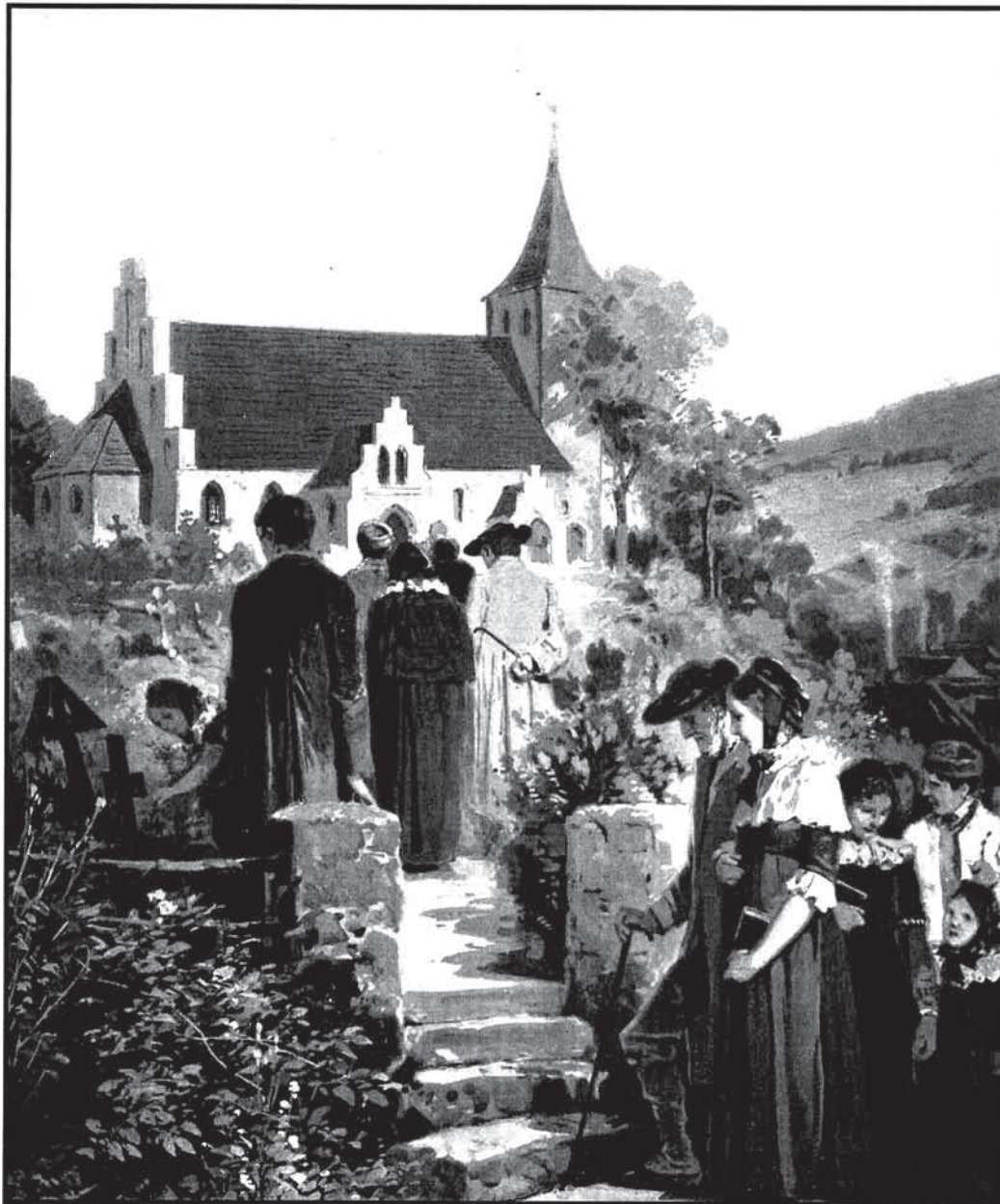
“Come Holy Spirit” by Rudolf Schäfer

The New Testament word **“church”** (Greek - *“ecclesia”*) was used in secular Greek to refer to the town meetings of the Greek city states. The citizens were summoned to the gathering by the town crier who would move through the streets calling the people out. Accordingly the meeting was designated the *“ecclesia”* (*“ek”* = *“out”* : *“kaleo”* = *“to call”*), literally, the assembly of those who had been called out.

The Bible takes this non-religious term and transforms its meaning. In Scripture, *“ecclesia”* becomes the designation for the gathering of God’s people, those who have been called out of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, to assemble together around Word and Sacrament.

We use the word “*church*” in a bewildering multitude of ways; to refer to buildings, organizations, corporations, denominations, congregations, and institutions. All of this variety can cause us to become confused about what the “church” really is. The Bible only uses the word “*church*” in one way: PEOPLE - CALLED OUT - TOGETHER, to assemble around Word and Sacrament. That is the “*CHURCH*”. The old Sunday School song expresses the Biblical sense perfectly as the children sing:

“I am the church. You are the church. We are the church, together.”



“On the Way to Church” by Alexander Zick



"Built Upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles - Jesus Christ Himself the Chief Cornerstone" by Rudolf Schäfer

The Church - Visible and Invisible

The Invisible Church - Inward Fellowship of Faith

The Holy Christian Church is all the people of God; everyone, everywhere who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Membership in this church is not a matter of race, nationality, or denominational affiliation. It is an inward fellowship of faith. *"Thus the Christian Church is physically dispersed among the pope, Turks, Persians, and Tartars, but spiritually gathered in one gospel and faith, under one Head, that is Jesus Christ."* (Great Confession, Martin Luther, 1528) It is faith, and faith alone, which determines membership in this church. But faith is hidden. Its presence cannot be conclusively identified by outward appearances. Only God can see into the hearts of men. Hence only God knows who are truly His. And so, in that sense, the church is *"invisible."* *"This is why natural reason cannot recognize it, even if puts on all its glasses...Christendom will not be known by sight, but by faith. And faith has to do with things not seen (Hebrews 11:1)."* (Preface to the Revelation of St. John, Martin Luther, 1546)

The Visible Church - Outward Fellowship of the Means of Grace

Since the invisible church is an inward fellowship of faith, it can be found wherever the means through which God promises to create and strengthen saving faith are present. (Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 28:18-19; Titus 3:5-7; Matthew 26:26-29; I Corinthians 11:23-25) Thus the Gospel in Word and Sacrament (The Means of Grace) become the external “marks” which enable us to identify and recognize the invisible church. The “*Visible Church*” is the sum total of all those who profess to be Christians and participate in the outward fellowship of the Means of Grace. “*And we do not speak of a fictitious church that can nowhere be found, but we say and know for sure that this church, in which saints live, is and remains truly on earth, namely, that some children of God are here and there in the whole world, in all kinds of kingdoms, islands, lands, cities, from the rising to the setting of the sun, who have rightly learned to know Christ and His Gospel, and we say that this church has these outward marks; the ministry of the Word, or the Gospel and the Sacraments.*” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, VII,VIII,20)



“The Parable of the Tares Among the Wheat” by Karl Bauer

It is, of course, a fact that unbelieving hypocrites, who do not truly belong to the invisible church, are mixed up with the believers among those who profess Christianity and gather around the means of grace (cf. The Parable of the Tares Among the Wheat - Matthew 13:24-30,36-43). Therefore although the Bible tells us who the church is (all believers)



"The Church" by Rudolf Schäfer

and where the church is (wherever the marks of the church are present) we can never combine the two into an identification of particular persons as believers in any given place. God knows His own (2 Timothy 2:19) and on the Day of Judgement He will separate the tares from the wheat. In the meantime we are to put the best construction on everything and operate by the rule of love which is, of course, often and easily deceived.

The Church and the Churches

It is the will of God that every believer seek the outward fellowship of other Christians and participate together with them in Word and Sacrament, to praise and glorify God, and to encourage one another in our faith and life.

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16)

“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend Your works to another; they will tell of Your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and I will meditate on Your wonderful works.” (Psalm 145:3-5)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.” (Acts 2:42,46)

“I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the House of the Lord.’” (Psalm 122:1)

God desires that this outward fellowship among Christians be based upon the pure teaching of His Word and the Scriptural administration of the Sacraments which are the “Marks” of the church.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19)

“To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said; ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.’” (John 8:31-32)

“I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one.” (John 17:20-21)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)

“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.”
(1 Corinthians 1:10)

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” (Ephesians 4:3-6,12-16)



“Luther at the Marburg Colloquy” by Gustav Koenig



“Put On the Whole Armor of God” by Rudolf Schäfer

DOCTRINE - TRUE AND FALSE

The Bible sternly warns against the dangers of false doctrine. Toleration of doctrinal error and church fellowship with those caught up in doctrinal error is firmly prohibited. Christians are called upon to *“avoid”* and *“beware of”* those whose teaching deviates from the truth of God’s Word. Doctrinal indifference is lovelessness. Our failure to confront those who hold to false teaching or who follow false teachers jeopardizes their salvation and serves to confirm them in their error. Scripture rejects easy-going permissiveness and urges us instead to *“speak the truth in love”* (Ephesians 4:16). Toleration of false teaching undermines and ultimately destroys the authority of the Word of God.

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” (Matthew 7:15)

“Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own

appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.” (Romans 16:17)

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers...’Come out from among them and be separate,’ says the Lord...Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.” (2 Corinthians 6:14,17, 7:1)

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again; if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned...I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:8-9,11-12)

“A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough. I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.” (Galatians 5:9-10)

“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversy rather than God’s work which is by faith. The goal of this command is love.” (I Timothy 1:3-5)

“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene...and they destroy the faith of some.” (2 Timothy 2:16-18)

“Therefore, rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith, and will pay no attention to Jewish myths and the commands of those who reject the truth.” (Titus 1:13-14)



“Martin Luther Burns the Papal Bull - ‘Exurge Domine’” by Paul Thumann

“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.” (Titus 3:10)

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.” (2 John 10,11)

“We are surely prepared to observe peace and love with all men, provided that they leave the doctrine of faith perfect and sound for us. If we cannot obtain this, it is useless for them to demand love from us. A curse on the love that is observed at the expense of the doctrine of faith, to which everything must yield - love, an apostle, an angel from heaven, etc.!...Doctrine is heaven; life is earth...Therefore, there is no comparison at all between doctrine and life. ‘One dot’ of doctrine is worth more than ‘heaven and earth’ (Matthew 5:18); therefore we do not permit the slightest offense against it. But we can be lenient



“Dr. Martin Luther” by Rudolf Schäfer

toward errors of life. For we, too, err daily in our life and conduct; so do all the saints, as they earnestly confess in the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed. But by the grace of God our doctrine is pure; we have all the articles of faith solidly established in Sacred Scripture.” (Galatians Commentary, Martin Luther, 1535)

“For the sectarians who deny the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper accuse us today of being quarrelsome, harsh, and intractable, because, as they say, we shatter love and harmony among the churches on account of the single doctrine about the Sacrament. They say that we should not make so much of this little doctrine...This is especially so because they agree with us on other articles of Christian doctrine. To this argument of theirs we reply with Paul: ‘A little yeast leavens

the whole lump.’ (Galatians 5:9) In philosophy, a tiny error at the beginning is very great at the end. Thus in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching...For doctrine is like a mathematical point. Therefore it cannot be divided, that is, it cannot stand either subtraction or addition. On the other hand, life is like a physical point. Therefore it can always be divided, and can always yield something...Therefore doctrine must be one eternal and round golden circle, in which there is no crack; if even the tiniest crack appears then the circle is no longer perfect...If they believed that it is the Word of God, they would not play around with it in this way... one doctrine is all doctrines and all are one, so that when one is lost all are eventually lost, because they belong together and are held together by a common bond...Therefore, if you deny God in one article of faith, you have denied Him in all; for God is not divided into many articles of faith, but He is everything in each article, and He is one in all the articles of faith.” (Galatians Commentary, Martin Luther, 1535)

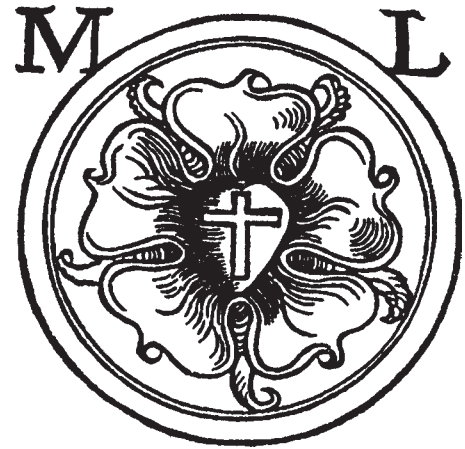


"The Presentation of the Augsburg Confession" by Gustav Koenig

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

A "*confession*" is a formal written statement of what a Church believes and teaches. Actual practice within a church body must be judged by its confession. The Confessions of the Lutheran Church were written at the time of the Reformation and published in the Book of Concord in 1580. Congregations and pastors of the evangelical Lutheran Church are pledged to honor and uphold the Lutheran Confessions because they express the

doctrines of Holy Scripture. The Confessions are not a rule of faith beyond or in addition to the Bible, but an affirmation of the doctrines of Scripture over against those who have denied those doctrines. *“The distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong. Other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scripture, but merely witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood in the church of God by contemporaries with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned.”* The Lutheran Confessions include:



The Apostles' Creed - (Third Century AD)

The Nicene Creed - (325 AD)

The Athanasian Creed - (Fourth Century AD)

The Augsburg Confession - (1530 AD)

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession - (1530 AD)

The Smalkald Articles - (1537 AD)

The Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope
(1537 AD)

The Small Catechism - (1529 AD)

The Large Catechism - (1529 AD)

The Formula of Concord - (1577 AD)

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church,
The True Visible Church of God on Earth
by Dr. C.F.W. Walther
1866*

Thesis I

The one holy Christian church on earth, or the church in the proper sense of the term, outside of which there is no life and salvation, is, according to God's Word, the sum total of all those who truly believe in Christ and are sanctified through this faith.

Thesis II

While the one holy Christian Church, as a spiritual temple cannot be seen, but only be believed, there are nonetheless unmistakable outward marks by which its presence can be known. These marks are the pure preaching of the Word of God and the uncorrupted administration of the holy sacraments.

Thesis III

In an improper sense Scripture calls also those visible communions "churches" which, though consisting not only of believers or such as are sanctified through faith, but having also hypocrites and wicked persons, nevertheless teach the gospel in its purity and administer the holy sacraments according to the gospel.

Thesis IV

Scripture even calls such visible communions "churches" as are guilty of partial deviation from the pure doctrine of the Word of God as long as they still retain God's Word essentially.

Thesis V

Fellowships which, though retaining God's Word essentially, nevertheless err obstinately in fundamentals of the Word of God are, insofar as they do this, not "churches" in the sense of Scripture but factions or sects, that is, heretical fellowships.

Thesis VI

Fellowships that disrupt the unity of the church through errors not destroying the foundation of faith, or because of persons, ceremonies, or matters of life, are, according to God's Word, sects or separatistic fellowships.

Thesis VII

Fellowships that call themselves Christian but do not recognize the Bible as the Word of God and so deny the Holy Trinity are, according to God's Word, not churches, but synagogues of Satan and temples of idols.

Thesis VIII

While ecclesiastical writers at times call those fellowships true or real churches that retain God's Word essentially, in distinction from those that are not churches, nevertheless, a true visible church in the strict sense of the term, in opposition to heterodox churches or sects, is only that in which God's Word is proclaimed in its purity and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.

Thesis IX

While, according to the divine promises, it is impossible for the one holy Christian church ever to perish, it is indeed possible, and it has actually happened at times, that in the full sense of the term there was no true visible church, namely one in which the preaching of the pure Word of God and the administration of the uncorrupted sacraments was carried on by an uncorrupted public ministry.

Thesis X

The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the sum total of all who without reservation profess the doctrine that was restored by Luther's Reformation and was in summary submitted in writing to the emperor and the realm at Augsburg in 1530, and was treated and expounded in other so-called Lutheran symbols, as the pure doctrine of the divine Word.

Thesis XI

The Evangelical Lutheran Church is not the one holy Christian church outside of which there is no salvation, although it has never separated itself from the same and professes no other.

Thesis XII

If the Evangelical Lutheran Church has the marks that it preaches the Gospel in its purity and administers the sacraments according to the Gospel, it is also the true visible church of God on earth.

Thesis XIII

The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes the written Word of the apostles and prophets as the sole and perfect source, rule, and norm, and as the judge of all doctrine; (a) not reason; (b) not tradition; (c) not new revelations.

Thesis XIV

The Evangelical Lutheran Church professes the clarity of Scripture.

Thesis XV

The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes no human interpreter of Scripture whose official interpretation must be regarded as infallible and binding; (a) not any individual person; (b) not any special class; (c) not any special or universal church council; (d) not the whole church.

Thesis XVI

The Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts God's Word as it interprets itself.

(A) The Evangelical Lutheran Church leaves the decision solely to the original text.

(B) The Evangelical Lutheran Church, in its interpretation of words and sentences, adheres to linguistic usage.

- (C) The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes only the literal sense as the true meaning.
- (D) The Evangelical Lutheran Church maintains that there is but one literal sense.
- (E) The Evangelical Lutheran Church is guided in its interpretation by context and purpose.
- (F) The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognized that the literal sense may be either the proper or the improper one; however, it does not deviate from the proper meaning of a word or sentence unless the Scripture itself forces it to do so, namely by either the textual circumstances or a parallel passage or the analogy of faith.
- (G) The Evangelical Lutheran Church interprets the obscure passages in light of the clear.
- (H) The Evangelical Lutheran Church takes the articles of faith from those passages in which they are expressly taught, and judges according to these all incidental expressions regarding them.
- (I) The Evangelical Lutheran Church rejects from the very outset every interpretation which does not agree with the analogy of faith (Romans 12:6)

Thesis XVII

The Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts the written Word of God as God's Word in its entirety, regarding nothing set forth in it as superfluous or unimportant, but everything as necessary and important; it accepts also all doctrines which necessarily follow from the Scripture words.

Thesis XVIII

The Evangelical Lutheran Church assigns to every doctrine of Scripture the rank and significance which it is given in God's Word itself.

- (A) As the foundation, core, and guiding star of all teaching it regards the doctrine of Christ or of justification.
- (B) The Evangelical Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between Law and Gospel.
- (C) The Evangelical Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between fundamental and non-fundamental articles set forth in Scripture.
- (D) The Evangelical Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between what God's Word commands and what it leaves to Christian liberty.
- (E) The Evangelical Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply and carefully between the Old and New Testaments.

Thesis XIX

The Evangelical Lutheran Church adopts as an article of faith no teaching not shown with incontestable certainty to be contained in the Word of God.

Thesis XX

The Evangelical Lutheran Church highly esteems the gift of Scriptural interpretation as it is given by God to individual persons.

Thesis XXI

- (A) The Evangelical Lutheran Church is sure that the doctrine set forth in its confessions is the pure divine truth, because it agrees with the written Word of God on all points.
- (B) The Evangelical Lutheran Church demands of its members, and especially of its teachers, that they acknowledge its Confessions without reservation and are willing to be obligated to them.

(C) The Evangelical Lutheran Church rejects every fraternal or ecclesiastical fellowship with those who reject its Confession either completely or in part.

Thesis XXII

The Evangelical Lutheran Church administers the holy sacraments according to Christ's institution.

Thesis XXIII

True Evangelical Lutheran local churches or congregations are only those in which the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, set forth in its symbols, is not only officially recognized but is also professed in public preaching.

Thesis XXIV

The Evangelical Lutheran Church practices fellowship of confession and Christian love with all who are one in the faith with it.

(Walther and the Church, John M. Drickamer, Translator. Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, Missouri, 1981)



"Martin Luther Armed With Scripture Alone Against All the Powers of Church and State" - 16th Century Woodcut

The Christian and the Lodge

“The Synod has declared itself firmly opposed to all societies, lodges, and organizations of an unchristian or antichristian character...Pastors and laypeople alike must avoid membership or participation in any organization that in its objectives, ceremonies, or practices is inimical to the gospel of Jesus Christ or the faith and life of the Christian Church. It is the solemn, God-given duty of every pastor properly to instruct his people concerning the sinfulness of all organizations that

- 1. explicitly or implicitly deny the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ, or the vicarious atonement;*
- 2. promise spiritual light apart from that revealed in Holy Scripture;*
- 3. attach spiritual or eternal rewards to the works or virtues of men; and/or*
- 4. embrace ideologies or principles that clearly violate an express teaching of Holy Scriptures concerning the relationships of men to one another.*

The Synod instructs its officials to exercise vigilant care and urges all pastors and congregations to carry out these provisions and faithfully eradicate all compromise or negation of the Gospel through members’ identification with objectionable organizations.” (1992 Handbook, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod)

“That the fundamental difference embodied in the historic creeds of Christendom and those of our modern secret orders has not been clearly thought out is indicated by the fact that many pledge themselves to both. There are lodge-men who, in the churches, subscribe to the doctrine that ‘we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings’ and enthusiastically join in the singing of hymns in which that idea is embodied. Then in their lodge meetings they just as enthusiastically assent to the following declaration: ‘Although our thoughts, words, and actions may be hidden from the eyes of men, yet that All-seeing Eye...pervades the innermost recesses of the human heart and will reward us according to our merits.’...One of these declarations excludes the other. Men cannot consistently subscribe to both...It remains for us as loyal Christians constantly to walk in the fear of God, following in the paths of righteousness as defined by the commandments, which serve as a rule for godly living. We dare never flirt with the works of darkness. It is unthinkable that we would be willing to silence our confession of Christ as our Savior and to dilute the truth which we have learned from God’s inerrant divinely inspired Scriptures. We can never afford to compromise our Christian ethics with the materialistic, pleasure seeking world in which we live...Prove your loyalty by refusing to have any traffic with an organization which stifles your Christian confession, dims the light of the eternal truth you have received from Holy Scripture, and compromises your Christian way of life to the point of making it indistinguishable from the way of the world.” (Masonry in the Light of the Bible, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1964)

UNIT X

The Use of the Keys And The Office of the Holy Ministry



"The Office of the Keys"
Detail from the "Means of Grace" Altar Triptych of the City
Church in Wittenberg by Lucas Cranach

“WHAT IS THE USE OF THE KEYS? The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to His church on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

WHERE IS THIS WRITTEN? The holy Evangelist John writes in chapter 20, “Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION USE THE KEYS? A Christian congregation with its called pastor uses the keys in accordance with Christ’s command by forgiving those who repent of their sin and are willing to amend, and by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent. I believe that, when this is done, it is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself.

WHERE IS THIS WRITTEN? Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 18, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Small Catechism, Dr. Martin Luther)

The Office of the Keys is the authority/responsibility which Christ has given to His Church on earth to preach the Word of God, to administer the Sacraments which He has instituted in the Word, and to forgive and to refuse to forgive sins. This authority/responsibility is specifically implemented in confession and absolution and, whenever necessary, in the process of Christian discipline. The authority of the keys is a spiritual power which operates not on the basis of physical coercion or outward force but only in and through the Word of God. The Augsburg Confession declares:

“Our teachers hold that according to the Gospel the power of the keys...is a power or command of God to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments...This power is exercised only by preaching and teaching the Gospel and by administering the sacraments either to many or to individuals, depending on one’s calling. For it is not bodily things that are thus given, but rather such eternal things as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. These things cannot come about except through the ministry of the Word and sacraments... Inasmuch as the power of the church bestows eternal things and is exercised only through the ministry of the Word, it interferes with civil government as little as the art of singing interferes with civil government. For civil government is concerned with other things than the Gospel. The state protects not souls, but bodies and

goods from manifest harm, and constrains men with the sword and physical penalties, while the Gospel protects souls from heresies, the devil, and eternal death.” (Augsburg Confession, XVIII, 8-11)

Scripture uses three vivid metaphors to describe the nature of this authority/ responsibility. It is the power to: lock/unlock (Matthew 16:19); bind/loose (Matthew 16:19; 18:18); and, remit/retain (John 20:23).



“The Office of the Keys” by Michael Ostendorfer

The power of the keys to lock and unlock refers to the right to admit or deny entry into the dwelling place of God.

“Keys symbolize the owner of a house or a city transferring responsibility to a steward or successor. When the owner of a building give keys to an overseer to take responsibility on behalf of the whole family or enterprise, that amounts to a direct transfer of authority and agency. To be given the keys to the household of God is symbolically to be given authority to guide and govern the household in accord with the directives of the householder...The bearer of the keys has the legitimate power to open the gate of the house or city of God to the truly penitent by offering forgiveness, assuming the readiness of the penitent to abide in this wonderful dwelling place.” (Thomas Oden, *The Power of Corrective Love*, p. 33)

John Gerhardt, the great 17th Century Lutheran teacher and theologian finds a beautiful appropriateness in this image.

“The church is the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6). The Lord of the House is Christ, the Son of God (Hebrews 3:6). He is also its ‘chief cornerstone (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10), ‘in whom, the whole building being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord’ (Ephesians 2:21). The family members in this house are all believers who have been ‘built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.’ In this house there are stored all the treasures and gifts that Christ has merited by His precious suffering and death; as, for example, divine grace, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the gift of the Holy Spirit and eternal life. Hence Irenaeus calls the church ‘the true treasury of all gracious gifts.’ The matron of this house is also the church, Christ’s beloved bride (Psalm 68:13). The matron divides the spoils of the victory which Christ has wrested from His enemies. Nor do we dare to regard it as a contradiction that the church is regarded as the house of God and at the same time the matron of the house, for this is done from two different perspectives. The church is the house itself, because of the fact that God chooses to dwell there; it is the matron of the house because of its administration of the keys and God’s love. For as the matron receives the keys, by which as a good and faithful manager she should open and close the storerooms of goods and other family necessities, so Christ has given

the church the keys as His bride, who is to use them for remitting and retaining sins, indeed to open and close the kingdom of heaven.” (Quoted in Church and Ministry, C.F.W. Walther)



“God Will Preserve and Protect His Church” by Rudolf Schäfer

The imagery of binding and losing refers to the power to place one in captivity or to liberate him from that captivity. The bondage in question here is, of course, that of sin. By proclaiming the forgiveness of sins in the stead and by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church has been given the ability to set the captive free. By contrast, in the face of continued impenitence, the church must announce judgment rather than forgiveness. Thus the captive remains in bondage and cannot be untied and set free. This is an image drawn directly from the rich prophetic heritage of the Old Testament.

*“The terms bind and loose have as their background the Old Testament image of salvation as liberation from bondage. The Gospels report Jesus’ words at the beginning of His public ministry, quoting from Isaiah, **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to...proclaim release to the captives and.. to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”** (Luke 4:18,19) The historical setting of these words is, of course, the deportation of captives in the exile and the hope of their liberation and return to their homeland. The words implied much more, however, than merely political liberation. In the prophetic mind they signified also deliverance from the sin for which the deportation was the judgment. Behind the political bondage stood an enslavement to those sins which the prophets from Amos to Jeremiah had condemned.”* (Marlin Jescke, *Discipling the Brother*)



“Law and Gospel” by Franz Timmermann

Remitting or retaining is language that refers to the cancellation or continuation of a debt. Christ has paid the ransom price for the sins of mankind in His shed blood upon the cross. On the basis of that payment the church is now authorized to announce the cancellation of the debt of sin which man could never have paid for himself. This is the sweet and wondrous message of the Gospel. When that redemption is refused in unbelief and impenitence the debt remains fully in force. The church must then forcefully remind the sinner that although he has spurned what Christ has done for him the stern demands of the Law must still be met. Before that Law, with its demand for absolute perfection, the sinner stands condemned. The stern message of the Law must be proclaimed to the impenitent with unmitigated severity.

When the church exercises the office of the keys she acts *“in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* with His full authority and power. This is true both of Holy Absolution’s announcement of forgiveness and salvation, and of excommunication announcement of judgment and damnation. In reference to Absolution, the pronouncement of forgiveness by a called pastor of the church, the Augsburg Confession declares: *“At the same time the people are carefully instructed concerning the word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing. It is not the voice or word of the man who speaks it, but it is the Word of God, who forgives sin, for it is spoken in God’s stead and by God’s command.”* (AC,XXIV,3-4)

Repentance - The Crucial Issue

The critical issue in all this is repentance. In Scripture, repentance (Greek - *“metanoia”*) indicates a radical change of heart and mind followed by a moral and behavioral reformation of sinful life. *“Metanoia”* is a very powerful word which implies a fundamental coming to one’s self (Luke 15:10), in which the sinner, by the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes intensely aware of sin as an offense to divine holiness and comes to loathe the power of sin within his life. One then turns away from sin in grief over the misdeeds that have been done and turns toward God, seeking pardon and forgiveness. Repentance is part and parcel of the daily reality of the Christian life. In the first of his famous *“95 Theses”* Martin Luther declares: *“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent!” (Matthew 4:17) he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”* Psalm 51, the great Penitential Psalm of King David after his sin with Bathsheba, is the Bible’s classic statement of personal repentance. In the magnificent words of the Psalm, David abandons all pretense of personal justification, acknowledges the enormity of his offense against the holiness of God, and casts himself upon the mercy of his heavenly Father.



Repentance and Impenitence Personified - "The Pharisee and the Publican"
by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

It was a pastoral concern over the crucial issue of personal repentance which triggered the Reformation. As one of the priests of the City Church in Wittenberg, Martin Luther had been assigned the responsibility to hear the confessions of the members of his parish and pronounce forgiveness to the penitent. When he discovered that his people believed that it was no longer necessary for them to repent because they had purchased indulgences from John Tetzel, he warned them that without personal repentance their sins could not be forgiven and refused to grant them absolution. He proceeded to attack the entire theology of indulgences as destructive of men's souls. The rest, as they say, is history. Gustav Koenig, a 19th Century German artist, demonstrates the connection between these events in an engraving on the historic posting of the 95 theses. Luther is depicted at the center of the image, posting the theses against indulgences on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. To his left is John Tetzel, the infamous indulgence seller, offering the purchase of forgiveness. To his right, the people of Wittenberg cast the worthless indulgences into the fire after their pastor has led them to understand that it is impossible

to buy the forgiveness of sins. At the bottom of the engraving, Luther is shown hearing confession, and refusing to grant forgiveness to those who are not truly penitent. With these events the Protestant Reformation began. The crucial issue was repentance!



"The Posting of the 95 Theses" by Gustav Koenig

The great preacher and theologian St. John Chrysostom distinguishes the following five components in genuine repentance.

REPENTANCE

1. Recognition and Acknowledgment of Sin

2. Contrition (Sorrow for Sin)

3. Seek Forgiveness in Christ

4. Conscientious Resolve Not to Repeat the Sin

5. Willingness, Wherever Possible, to Undo the Damage of the Sin

“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ (Matthew 4:17), He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance...Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters...The true treasure of the Church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God...Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death, and hell; and thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace.” (Martin Luther, from the “95 Theses” - 1517)

Christian Discipline

When a brother or sister in Christ is living in manifest impenitent sin the community of God's people is obligated to implement the process of Christian discipline. The motive in this process must always be humble, Christlike love which earnestly desires the restoration of the brother. While the permissive culture in which we live may scorn such action as judgmental and self-righteous, true love cannot look the other way when someone we care about is involved in a pattern of self-destructive behavior. A church which fails to practice Christian discipline has failed to demonstrate genuine love to fellow believers in need. At the same time, a failure to practice Christian discipline undermines the integrity of our witness both to our own members and to the world around us.

The steps in the process of Christian Discipline are clearly delineated by our Lord Himself in Matthew Chapter 18. The goal of each step in the process is to lead the sinner to repentance. When that goal has been achieved, the process is joyfully discontinued.

Steps In the Process of Christian Discipline (Matthew 18)

- 1. Private, individual contact with the sinner
(vs.15)**
- 2. Contact with one or two witnesses (vs. 16)**
- 3. Tell it to the church (vs. 17)**
- 4. Excommunication (vs. 17)**

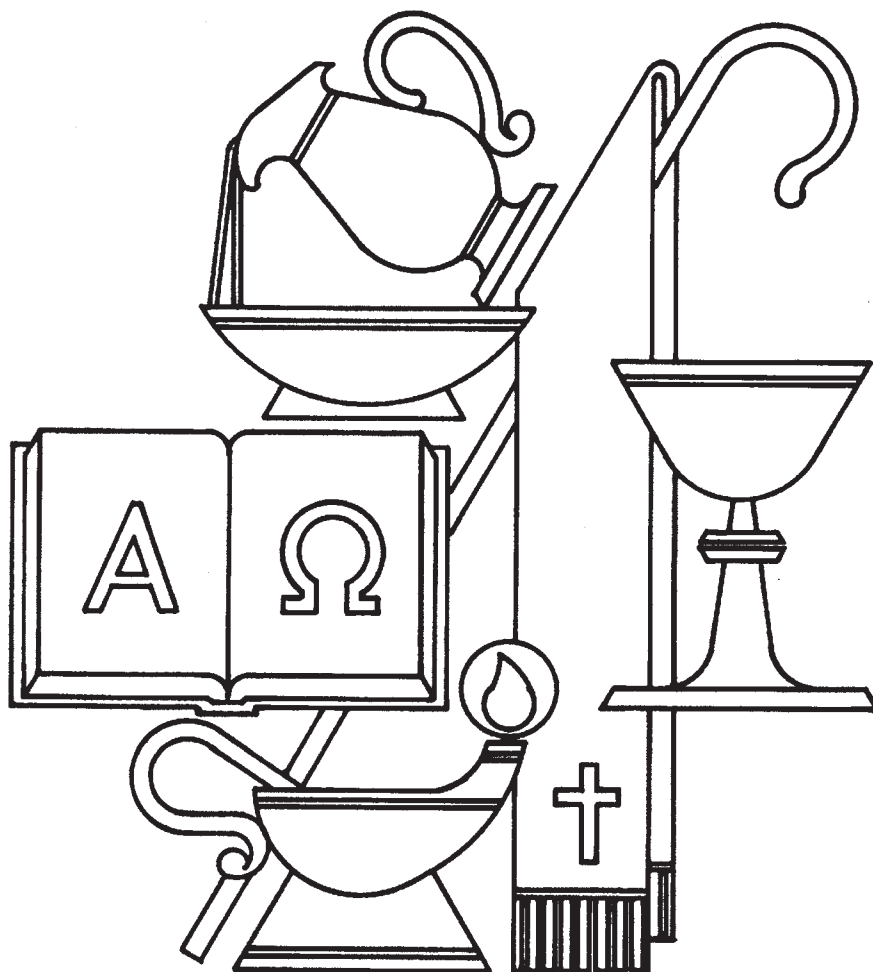
Excommunication - Tough Love In Action

When all else fails, in one final desperate attempt to bring the sinner to his senses, so that he may come to recognize the dire spiritual peril into which he has placed himself, the church resorts to *excommunication* (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11). A decree of excommunication is the formal pronouncement by the church that because of persistent impenitence an individual who has failed to respond in all of the steps in the process of Christian discipline is no longer a believer. The excommunicant is expelled from the fellowship of the church and may no longer participate in the Lord's Supper. He is literally *ex communio* (Latin - *outside of the communion*). He is no longer a Christian and if he persists in his impenitence until death, he



Michael the Archangel - The Weigher of Souls

will not be saved. In the ancient church, the grim significance of excommunication was dramatically conveyed with the symbolism of the bell, the book, and the candle. When an excommunication was announced the church bell was tolled as for the dead to indicate that the excommunicant was spiritually dead. The chancel Bible was closed to represent the removal of the individual's name from the Book of Life in heaven. Finally, one of the altar candles was extinguished to show that the light of faith had gone out within the impenitent sinner's heart. If excommunication achieves its desired result, the sinner will recognize and repent of his sin and be restored to the fellowship of the church. (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11)



The Office of the Holy Ministry

All the people of God in Christ Jesus are members of a “*royal priesthood*” (1 Peter 2:9) with direct access to the Father through His Son. Every Christian becomes a part of this “*universal priesthood of all believers*” at the time of his Baptism. The authority/responsibility of the Keys has been entrusted by God to His Church on earth. God Himself has established the office of the pastoral ministry for the public exercise of the office of the keys within the church on behalf of all. In a recent document on the ministry the Commission on Theology and Church Relations offered the following helpful observations:

“The Office of the Keys is “the peculiar church power which Christ has given to His church on earth.” It belongs to the whole church. However, its exercise is not left merely to the efforts of individual Christians or to the

uncertain ventures of self-starting, charismatic individuals. The church, as a single congregation or as a group of congregations, must call and authorize certain of its members to function publicly on its behalf. The public ministry, it is here maintained is not a mere human arrangement or the product of sociological evolution, but a divine arrangement from the beginning of the New Testament Church.” (CTCR, The Ministry, 1981)

The Augsburg Confession affirms: *“That we may obtain this faith (namely that we are justified by grace through faith for the sake of Christ) the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as though thru instruments, the Holy Ghost is given who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel.”* The authority/responsibility of the pastoral office is to preach the Gospel, to administer the Sacraments, to pronounce Holy Absolution to the penitent and to implement Biblical Church Discipline for the admonition and restoration of the impenitent.



The Bible clearly establishes the requisite qualifications for those who would serve in the pastoral office (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In the ancient traditions of the church, those who are judged to have met those qualifications, and have received a call from a congregation are set apart for the work of ministry by a ceremony called “ordination.”

Concerning the Holy Ministry

by C.F.W. Walther, 1852

THESIS I

The holy ministry or pastoral office is an office distinct from the priesthood of all believers.

THESIS II

The ministry of the Word or the pastoral office is not a mere human institution but an office that God Himself has established.

THESIS III

The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound until the end of time.

THESIS IV

The ministry is not a special, or, in opposition to that of ordinary Christians, a more holy state, as was the Levitical priesthood, but it is a ministry of service.

THESIS V

The public ministry has the power to preach the Gospel and administer the holy sacraments as well as the power of spiritual judgment.

THESIS VI

The ministry of the Word is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the power of the keys, by means of its call, which God Himself has prescribed.

The ordination of those who are called with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution but merely an ecclesiastical rite established by the apostles; it is no more than a solemn public confirmation of the call.

THESIS VII

The holy ministry is the power conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and all church power to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office in the name of the congregation.

THESIS VIII

The pastoral ministry is the highest office in the church, and from it stem all other offices in the church.

THESIS IX

To the ministry there is due respect as well as unconditional obedience when the pastor uses God's Word.

The minister must not tyrannize the church. He has no authority to introduce new laws or arbitrarily to establish adiaphora or ceremonies.

The minister has no right to inflict and carry out excommunication without his having first informed the whole congregation.

THESIS X

To the ministry of the Word, according to divine right, belongs also the duty to judge doctrine, but laymen also possess this right. Therefore, in ecclesiastical courts and councils they are accorded both a seat and a vote together with the clergy.

(From *Church and Ministry* by Dr. C.F.W. Walther, 1852)



"The Ordination of Martin Luther" by Gustav Koenig

UNIT XI

THE LAST THINGS

(Eschatology)



“The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” by Albrecht Dürer

“Also they teach that at the consummation of the world Christ will appear for judgement and will raise up all the dead; He will give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He will condemn to be tormented without end. They condemn the Anabaptists who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils. They condemn also others, who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.” (Augsburg Confession, XVII, 1530)

PHYSICAL DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

Temporal death is the separation of the physical (“*body*”, “*flesh*”) and the non-physical (“*soul*”, “*spirit*”) elements of man. At the time of death, the body goes to the grave to return to the dust and await the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day.

“The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7)

“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”
(Genesis 3:19)

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes - I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”
(Job 19:25-27)

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say: ‘I find no pleasure in them’ - before the sun and the light, and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong



Death - An Allegorical Representation by Nicholas le Rouge, 1496

men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds but their songs all grow faint; when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about in the streets. Remember Him, before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7)

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” (Luke 12:20)

“Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” (John 19:30)

“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:26)



“The Death of the Just and the Unjust” by Heinrich Vogtherr - 1540



Death Riding Forth From Hell to Claim His Rights Over Mortals by Nicholas le Rouge, 1496

At the time of death, the souls of unbelievers are immediately in Hell, there to suffer torment and punishment until public pronouncement of their eternal fate is issued on Judgement Day, when they will be re-united with their bodies.

“The grave below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you - all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones - all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, ‘You have also become weak, as we are; you have become like us. All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you...But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.’” (Isaiah 14:9-11,17)

“And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against Me; their worm will not die; nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.” (Isaiah 66:24)

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, other to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)

“The rich man also died and was buried. In Hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’” (Luke 16:22-24; cf. also 25-31)

“He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through who also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” (1 Peter 3:18-20)

“If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgement while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.” (2 Peter 2:9-10)

At the time of death, the souls of believers are immediately with Christ in heaven, there to enjoy the peace and blessedness of His presence, anticipating the Day of Judgement when they will be re-united with their glorified bodies for all eternity.

“Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years, and he was gathered to his people.” (Genesis 25:7-8; cf. also 35:29; 49:29-33; Numbers 20:24-26;



*“Lazarus Carried to Heaven”
19th Century Bible Illustration*



"The Raising of Lazarus" by Lucas Cranach the Younger - 1558

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." (Psalm 23:4)

"But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead." (Isaiah 26:19)

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in Hell." (Matthew 10:28)

“But about the resurrection of the dead - have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matthew 22:31-32; cf. Exodus 3:6)

“Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” (Luke 2:29-30)

“The time came when the beggar died, and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.” (Luke 16:22)

“Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise.’” (Luke 23:43)

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ she told Him. ‘I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’” (John 11:25-27)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” (John 14:1-4)

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59-60)

“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built with human hands. Meanwhile, we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed, but clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident,

I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:1-10)



*“We Have an Eternal Home in Heaven”
by Rudolf Schäfer*

“I eagerly expect and hope that I in no way will be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.” (Philippians 1:20-26)

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and

avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.” (Revelation 6:9-11)

“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” (Revelation 14:13)



"Danse Macabre" by Michael Wohlgemuth - 1493

The following positions must therefore be rejected as unbiblical and destructive of Christian faith and hope:

1. That physical death marks annihilation, the end of consciousness and existence.
2. That the soul dies with the body to remain in the grave until the last day while the spirit returns to God.
3. That the souls of the dead sleep until Judgement, unaware of either bliss or torment.
4. That the existence of the soul in the intermediate state (the time between death and Judgement Day) is perfect or complete without the body, thereby promoting a platonic dualism foreign to Scripture, and downgrading the importance of the resurrection of the body.
5. That there are places other than heaven and hell which receive the souls of the dead for whatever purpose (i.e. purgatory, limbo, paradise, sheol, hades, limbus patrum, etc.) or that the souls of the dead are free to roam the earth or communicate with the living through spiritists and mediums.



“The Signs of the Times” by Rudolf Schäfer

THE BIBLE AND THE END TIMES

The Biblical View of Time

From a Biblical point of view the central event of human history was the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Everything which preceded that event was anticipatory and everything which follows it is anticlimactic. The New Testament uses the terms *“last times,”* *“fulfillment of the ages,”* *“last hour,”* and *“end of the ages”* to describe the entire period between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. Thus the “end times” began 2,000 years ago and will continue until the Lord returns in judgement. (Acts 2:16-17; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18)

The “*Signs of the Times*”

The Bible describes what it calls “*the signs of the times*” (Matthew 16:3), observable events, present throughout the New Testament era. These signs of the times are designed to remind men:

1. of the decisive victory that has been won by God in Christ and of what God is doing today to fulfill His promises and accomplish His purposes; of the reality that God rules all history;
2. of the certainty of Christ’s return; things will not always be as they are today;
3. of the continuing struggle in history between the kingdom of God and the powers of evil and call men to decision in that struggle;
4. of the necessity for constant watchfulness and readiness from the people of God for the return of the Lord is always impending.

The particular “signs” mentioned in the New Testament include:

1. Signs Evidencing the Grace of God
 - a. the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; cf. Colossians 1:6,23)
 - b. the salvation of the fullness of Israel (Matthew 10:23; Romans 11:25-26)
2. Signs Evidencing Opposition to God
 - a. tribulation (Daniel 12:1; Ezekiel 38-39; Matthew 24:3-51; Revelation 20:7-9)
 - b. false prophets and apostasy (Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1)
 - c. the Antichrist (Daniel 7:13-26; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 John 2:18-22; 4:3; 2 John 7)
3. Signs Evidencing God’s Judgment
 - a. wars and rumors of war (Matthew 24:4-6; Revelation 6:1-2)
 - b. earthquakes (Matthew 24:4-6)
 - c. famine and pestilence (Matthew 24:4-6; Revelation 6:3-8)
 - d. signs in the heavens (Matthew 24:29-31; Romans 8:18-23)



“And I looked, and behold, a pale horse; and his name that sat upon him was ‘Death.’ (Rev. 6:3) by Gustav Doré

The “*signs of the times*” in Scripture are not a series of abnormal, spectacular, or catastrophic events which will occur just before the Second Coming in order to make it possible to set dates and timetables for Christ’s return. (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32) The “*signs of the times*” are evident in the normal patterns of nature and history to those who can view world events with the eyes of faith. The “*signs*” are constant, recurring reminders to the believer that this world is dying and assurances that Jesus is coming soon. God’s people are urged to watch for the signs so that we may be alert and ready at all times.

The Antichrist

“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour...Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the Antichrist- he who denies the Father and the Son...Dear friends do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.” (1 John 2:15-18; 4:1-3)

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret



“The Coming of the Antichrist” by Michael Wohlgemuth

power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the will of Satan, displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10)

Scripture indicates that God’s people will be called upon to endure relentless persecution, opposition, and infiltration throughout the New Testament era. (Matthew 24:24; John 15:18; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9)



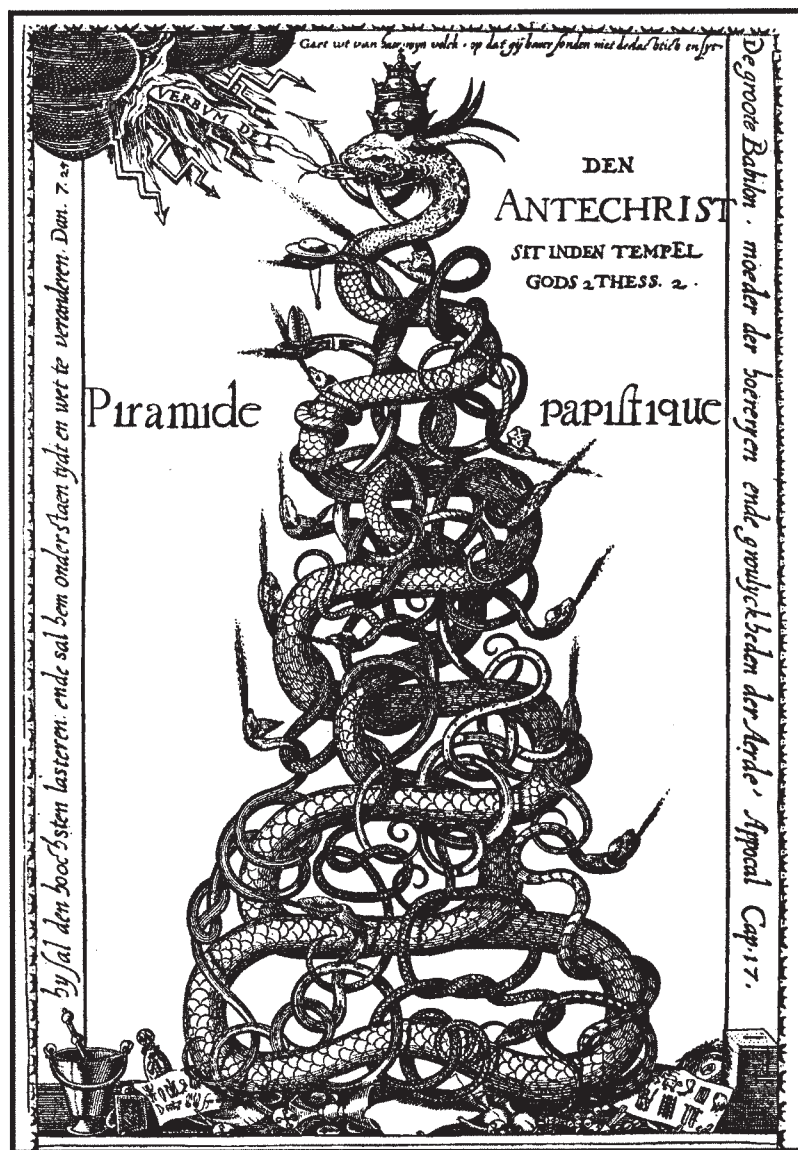
*Satan Counseling the Antichrist
by Luca Signorelli*

An endless variety of false prophets and teachers, false christs and antichrists will seek to lead Christians away from the Lord and His Gospel of salvation. Satan, the Father of the Lie, will hurl deception of every sort against the one truth of God, often using the sincerity of misguided Christians as his most effective means of wrecking havoc within the church. (cf. Matthew 16: 13-23)

Among all of the enemies of the truth one ominous figure stands out, shrouded in mystery and menace. The Bible calls him the “**Antichrist**” (I John 2:15-18; 4:1-3), the “**Man of Lawlessness**” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10) and warns that he will arise within the church itself as a bitter opponent of the Gospel throughout the New Testament era. The Greek prefix “*anti*” means “*in place of*” or “*alongside of*.” Thus the title itself hints that the Antichrist will not be an overt enemy of the Lord. The threat posed by the Antichrist will be one of secret seduction. The Biblical Antichrist does not remotely resemble the swaggering world dictators of millennialist fantasy. Instead he is one who

appears to be the most pious of all men. He may well be acting in a genuinely sincere desire to serve Jesus. While affirming the Gospel, he falsifies it. But it is this very cloak of piety which is the essence of the threat which the Antichrist poses to the people of God. His is *“the mystery of iniquity”* (KJV), *“the secret power of lawlessness”* (NIV) (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Everything about him hints of subtlety and secret seduction. He is the greatest creation of the Satanic counterfeit, a trojan horse drawn within the walls of the church itself. Posing as God’s most devoted servant, the most Christian of Christians, he claims for himself, honor, glory, and power which rightfully belong to God alone. The power of the Antichrist was already secretly at work in the church in the days of the apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 John 4:3)

and his nefarious activity will continue until the Lord comes again in judgement (2 Thessalonians 2:8). (cf. also Daniel 7:19-27; 11:36-45; Revelation 13) Our Lord summons us to watchfulness and prayer because the enemy is among us now. Those who consign the Antichrist to a safely distant apocalyptic future have fundamentally misunderstood the prophecy and its purpose. They leave the church vulnerable and defenseless, unable to recognize the enemy within its midst or protect herself against him.



*“The Papal Hierarchy as a Pyramid of Hellish Serpents”
Dutch Woodcut, 1590*



*“The Beast from the Abyss Attacking the Two Witnesses Within the Church”
(Rev. 11:7) - Bible Illustration by Lucas Cranach*

The Lutheran Confessions identify the institution of the papacy as the Antichrist. It is important to note the distinction between the office of the pope and the individual occupants of that office who may be pious and godly men. The papacy’s claims to be “the vicar (substitute representative) of *Christ on earth*” and to have “*infallibility*” in the pronouncement of doctrine and morals, along with its condemnation of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone correspond to the Biblical marks of the Antichrist. Many would suggest that while the Reformation’s condemnation of the papacy as the Antichrist may have been justified at that time by the corruption and immorality of the medieval popes, the continuation of that condemnation in the ecumenical world of today is both obsolete and offensive. This condescending conclusion fails to recognize the essential nature of both the prophecies and the papacy. The Reformers’ censure of the Roman papacy was never a matter of personal conduct or moral behavior. The concern was doctrine and doctrine alone. In that regard, if Rome has changed at all in the last five hundred years it is for the worse, not the better. The Council of Trent’s official condemnation of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone remains unaltered.

“If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema. If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema.” (Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session VI, XI,XII)

The elevation of Mary to the status of “*Co-Redemptrix*” and the proclamation of her Immaculate Conception (1854) and Assumption (1950) into heaven where she rules as the Queen of saints and angels flatly contradict the Biblical teaching that Christ alone is the Mediator between God and men. Early in this century Pope Benedict XV declared of Mary:

“Together with her suffering and dying Son, she has suffered and almost died with Him. Thus for the salvation of mankind and in order to appease the wrath of God, she has waived her maternal claims on her Son; as far as she is concerned, she has sacrificed her Son, so that it can properly be said of her that she together with Christ has redeemed mankind. (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, Num.5, 1918)

The official pronouncement of papal infallibility by the First Vatican Council (1870) brazenly proclaimed absolute spiritual authority the like of which had never been claimed by even the most notorious popes of the Dark Ages.



“The Beasts from the Land and the Sea” (Rev. 13) by Albrecht Dürer



*“The Harlot of Babylon Astride the Beast with Seven Heads” (Rev. 17)
by Lucas Cranach*

“We teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a sovereignty of power over all other churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff which is truly episcopal is immediate; to which all, of whatsoever rite and dignity, both pastors and faithful are bound to submit...not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which appertain to the discipline and government of the church throughout the world...And since, by divine right of apostolic primacy, the Roman pontiff is placed over the universal church, we further teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful. This is the teaching of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation...Therefore, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of God our Savior, the exaltation of the Catholic religion, and the salvation of Christian people, with the approval of the sacred council, we teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff, when he speaks “ex cathedra,” that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of

all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal church, is, by the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed that His church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith and morals; and that therefore, such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves, and not merely from the consent of the church, irreformable.” (Decrees of Vatican I, II-IV, Schaff, “Creeds of Christendom” Vol.2, pp.262-265)

The Lutheran Confessions’ condemnation of the Roman papacy as the Antichrist of Holy Scripture carefully avoids polemic excesses. It is couched in the restrained language of theology, presenting the Biblical marks of the Antichrist and then comparing those marks with the characteristics of the papacy as it has evolved throughout the New Testament era. Based upon that comparison, the conclusion that the institution of the papacy is, in fact, the Antichrist is unavoidable.

“This teaching shows forcefully that the pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above and opposed himself against Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is, properly speaking, ‘to exalt himself above all that is called God’, as St. Paul says, 2 Thessalonians 2,4. Even the Turks or the Tartars, great enemies of Christians as they are, do not do this, but they allow whoever wishes to believe in Christ and take bodily tribute and obedience from Christians.” (Smalkald Articles, II, IV)

“As to the Antichrist we teach that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures concerning the Antichrist, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 John 2:18, have been fulfilled in the pope of Rome and his dominion. All the features of the Antichrist as drawn in these prophecies, including the most abominable and horrible ones, for example, that the Antichrist ‘as God sitteth in the temple of God,’ 2 Thessalonians 2:4; that he anathematizes the very heart of the Gospel of Christ, that is, the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins by grace alone, for Christ’s sake alone, through faith alone, without any merit or worthiness in man (Romans 3:20-28; Galatians 2:16); that he recognizes only those as members of the Christian Church who bow to his authority; and that, like a deluge, he had inundated the whole Christian Church with

his antichristian doctrines till God revealed him through the Reformation - these very features are the outstanding characteristics of the papacy. Hence we subscribe to the statement of our Confessions that the Pope is 'the very Antichrist'." (Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, 1932)

**REGNUM SATANAE ET PAPAE.
2. THESS. 2.**



**In aller Teufel namen sitzt
Alhie der Papst: offenbart jtz:
Das er sey der recht Widerchrist
So in der Schrift verkündigt ist.
Mart. Luth. D.**

*"The Kingdom of Satan and the Pope - 2 Thess.2"
By Lucas Cranach the Elder 1545*

"Someone may think here that I am satisfying my own desire with such scornful, wounding, stinging words to the pope. O Lord God, I am far, far, too insignificant to deride the pope. For more than six hundred years now he has undoubtedly derided the world and has laughed up his sleeve at its corruption in body and soul, goods and honor. He does not stop and he cannot stop...No man can believe what an abomination the papacy is. A Christian does not have to be of low intelligence either to recognize it. God Himself must deride him in the hellish fire, and our Lord Christ, St. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 'will slay him with the breath of His mouth and destroy him by His glorious coming.' I only deride with my weak derision so that those who now live and those who come after us should know what I have thought of the pope, the damned Antichrist, and so that whoever wishes to be a Christian may be warned against such an abomination." (Against the Roman Papacy - An Institution of the Devil, Martin Luther, 1545)

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. ***“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way that you have seen Him go into heaven.”*** (Acts 1:11; cf. also Matthew 24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28) The fact of Christ’s Second Coming must be firmly maintained so that Christians are not lulled into a false sense of complacency or preoccupied with the things of this world. (cf. Luke 21:34-36; 1 Peter 3:2-4). Instead, we are called upon to live in constant expectation of the coming of the Lord. ***“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come Lord Jesus.”*** (Revelation 22:20)

1. Christ will return visibly before the eyes of all mankind.

“As lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matthew 24:27; cf. also Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 1:7)

2. Christ will return on a specific day known only to God.

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Mark 13:32; cf. also Matthew 24:44; 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

3. Christ’s return will be a shocking surprise to the great majority of humanity.

“For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; cf. also 2 Peter 3:1-10)

4. Christ will return in great glory with the angelic hosts.

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory.” (Matthew 25:31; cf. also 16:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 19:11-14; Zechariah 14:3)

5. Christ’s return is a source of hope and joy for Christians.

“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:28; cf. also Hebrews 9:28; Titus 2:13; Revelation 22:20)



“The Lord Will Come Down...With the Trumpet Call of God” by Rudolf Schäfer

THE MILLENNIUM

Millennialism (Latin - “*mille*” [1,000], “*annus*” [year]) is the unscriptural doctrine that either before (“*pre-millennialist*”) or after (“*post-millennialist*”) the return of Christ the church will experience a literal period of 1,000 years of peace and prosperity on earth. The dominant millennialist view today is dispensational pre-millennialism which divides human history into seven specific eras or “*dispensations*” in each of which God deals with people in a distinct way. According to this view, the final dispensation is the earthly millennium, which will be preceded by the secret rapture of the saints and a seven year tribulation period. Millennialism, based on a faulty understanding of Revelation chapter 20, contradicts clear Biblical teaching on the second coming of Christ and the nature of the Kingdom of God.

The Rapture

The concept of the “*secret rapture*” plays a critical role in dispensational premillennialism’s distorted view of the end times. The English word “*rapture*” is derived from the Latin verb “*rapiemur*” which means “*to be caught up.*” The term occurs in the Latin Vulgate’s translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 in which St. Paul is describing the climactic events of the last day:

“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. And after that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)



“The Dead In Christ Will Rise First” by Rudolf Schäfer

In the complex eschatology of Premillennial Dispensationalism, this straightforward account of the triumph of the saints who remain alive on earth on the great day when Christ comes again mutates into a mysterious event at the beginning of the seven year tribulation period which will precede the 1,000 year earthly millennium, which will, in turn, precede the final judgment. In this novel view, the purpose of the rapture is to remove the Gentile church from the earth, so that during the seven years of tribulation God may focus His attention upon the restoration of Israel. It is secret in the sense that the vast majority of humanity will not notice its occurrence and life will continue in a routine manner despite the sudden disappearance of every believer on earth. The basic details of this complicated theory may be summarized as follows:

“The first phase of Christ’s return will be the so-called ‘rapture,’ which can occur at any moment. At this time, Christ does not come down all the way to the earth, but only part of the way. Now the resurrection of all true believers takes place. After this resurrection, believers who are then still alive shall suddenly be transformed and glorified. Now the rapture of all God’s people takes place; risen believers and transformed believers are caught up in the clouds to meet the descending Lord in the air. This body of believers, called the church, now goes up to heaven with Christ to celebrate with Him for seven years the marriage feast of the Lamb...At the end of this seven year period, Christ will return in glory, accompanied by the church. At this time He will come all the way down to the earth. He will destroy His enemies in the battle of Armageddon, set up His throne in Jerusalem, and begin His millennial reign.” (Anthony Hoekema, ***The Bible and the Future***, pp. 164-165)

The concept of a pre-tribulation secret rapture is contrary to the Bible. It is based on distinctions and definitions which are without Scriptural foundation. It reduces the clear Biblical affirmation of the triumphant return of Christ to judge the living and the dead to a bewildering array of often contradictory details. The substantive impact of this misguided concept is to divide the unity of the church with a false reemphasis of obsolete distinctions between Jew and Gentile. At the same time, it serves to distract believers from the all important theology of the cross, with its misleading emphasis of earthly gain and glory. The false doctrine of the secret rapture *“clearly and effectively attacks some of the main articles of the Christian faith, namely the article that deals with the kingdom of Christ, the coming of Christ to judgment, and the resurrection of the dead.”* (***Brief Theses on the Millennium***, LCMS, 1857)



“The Judgment Harvest” by Karl Bauer

Brief Theses Against Millennialism

(Adopted by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1857)

- 1. Any doctrine that is not only completely foreign to the Scriptures but also contrary to them and contrary to the chief doctrines of Scripture in what follows from it must be rejected and condemned. That the teaching of a thousand year reign of Christ on earth which is still to come is one such doctrine and will be demonstrated by the following.*
- 2. We will not attempt to demonstrate in this connection that the millennialists are not united among themselves but are divided into different groups and almost endless variations. This can simply be taken for granted. Yet, as different as they are among themselves, nevertheless they agree on this: they all, or at least the most of them teach that before the end of the world a twofold visible appearance of Christ is to be expected, a twofold resurrection of the flesh, and a grand earthly kingdom of Christ and the rule of the believers over the unbelievers.*

3. *The Holy Scriptures, however, know nothing of such a teaching of a twofold visible return of Christ, a twofold resurrection of the flesh, a glorious thousand year reign of Christ on earth, and an earthly rule of the Christians over the unbelievers. This teaching is completely foreign to the Bible. Indeed it is an “agraphon,” that is, a human dream without basis in Scripture...*

4. *We are told to read Revelation 20. Well, we have read it and we are entirely convinced that we have understood it quite well...We hold it to be in its entirety a certain, divine truth, but not one clear to us. If everything in it is still not clearly revealed to us we are not therefore less able to test each interpretation. And whatever interpretation does not agree with the analogy of faith (Romans 12:7), this we reject as false with absolute certainty...Where in Revelation 20 is there one word which with incontrovertible certainty teaches a twofold visible return of Christ, a twofold bodily resurrection, and a thousand year glorious rule of Christ on earth? We may work through this often abused chapter as often as we may study it, but we cannot find a single word that expresses these points of view clearly... “Sensus scripturae sacrae non est inferendus sed efferendus”, that is, the sense of the Holy Scripture is not to be read into it but drawn out of it. This is an old but still applicable rule of interpretation. For that reason we ask again and again, where is it written?... As long as they cannot maintain this teaching of the thousand year reign of Christ on earth with clear and unmistakable passages, we must declare it to be an “agraphon.”*

5. *But we want to maintain something else. The Millennialistic teaching which we have referred to is nothing else than the old Jewish fable which was present long before the writing of St. John and the New Testament by which the holy apostles themselves were held captive before they received enlightenment. This Jewish fable arose again also after the time of the apostles and finally was rejected in the 17th article of our Augsburg Confession.*

6. *The Jewish Talmud gives proof and many places in the New Testament confirm that since ancient times the Jews held the hope that the Messiah would set up an earthly kingdom in which they would rule over the kingdoms of the heathen; that He would resurrect the patriarchs, prophets, and other Jews who had died, lead them together with those who were still living into the land of Canaan, establish the temple in Jerusalem and the levitical sacrifices, thus reconstituting the kingdom of God visibly...*

7. *The arch-heretic Cerinthus introduced this Jewish dream again into the Christian*

church according to the manifold witness of the church fathers...

8. For more than 1,000 years there was almost complete silence about this dream. At last, at the time of the Reformation it was revived by the so-called enthusiasts and Schwaermer. In particular it was the Anabaptists whom the 17th article of the Augsburg Confession had in mind...

9. ...(Millennialism) clearly and effectively attacks some of the main articles of the Christian faith; namely the article that deals with the kingdom of Christ, the coming of Christ to judgement, and the resurrection of the dead.

10. To begin, the article of the kingdom of Christ is attacked. Certainly our Lord Christ rules over a kingdom of power, since all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18; Psalm 8:7-10). However, so far as He is looked upon as Redeemer and Savior, the church is His kingdom, a kingdom of grace here on earth, while the kingdom of glory is in heaven. The supposed thousand year reign of Christ stands in opposition to both of these and cannot be accepted without damage to both...We therefore conclude that whatever kingdom is visible and built in an external, worldly, visible way (not through the means of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit) is not truly Christ's kingdom of grace on earth, to which He directed His own and by which He encouraged them...

11. The notion of a thousand year earthly reign is every bit as inconsistent with the rule of glory and triumph in heaven as it is with the kingdom of grace. For the blessed dead are received into the heavenly kingdom at the moment of their departure...If now the Lord wanted to remove the blessed spirits from their dwelling place in heavenly joy and glory to bring them back to earth, the place of imperfection, their blessedness which had already begun would be interrupted and would not be eternal...Oh, how ridiculous!

12. Thus now the article of the kingdom of Christ is the first which has been attacked by this erroneous teaching, foreign to the Holy Scriptures, of a thousand year rule which is yet to come. The second is the article of Christ's return to judgement. For it has been revealed to us that Christ will come again at another time to judge the living and the dead...There is nothing of a different visible return of Christ, but rather the day of eternal decision at the end of the Christian's battle, not an in-between kingdom but the rule of eternal fulfillment. Must we not, according to Scripture, wait for the last day every hour?...

13. We still must prove that the false teaching of a thousand year rule of Christ on earth also confuses the article of the resurrection of all flesh. The Scriptures know of no other resurrection of the dead than that on the last day (John 6:39,40,44)...The expectation of the Millennialists that either a general resurrection of the believers or at least of all martyrs will occur more than a thousand years before the last day, makes also this word of the Lord a lie...



“Christ the Almighty Judge” by Albrecht Dürer

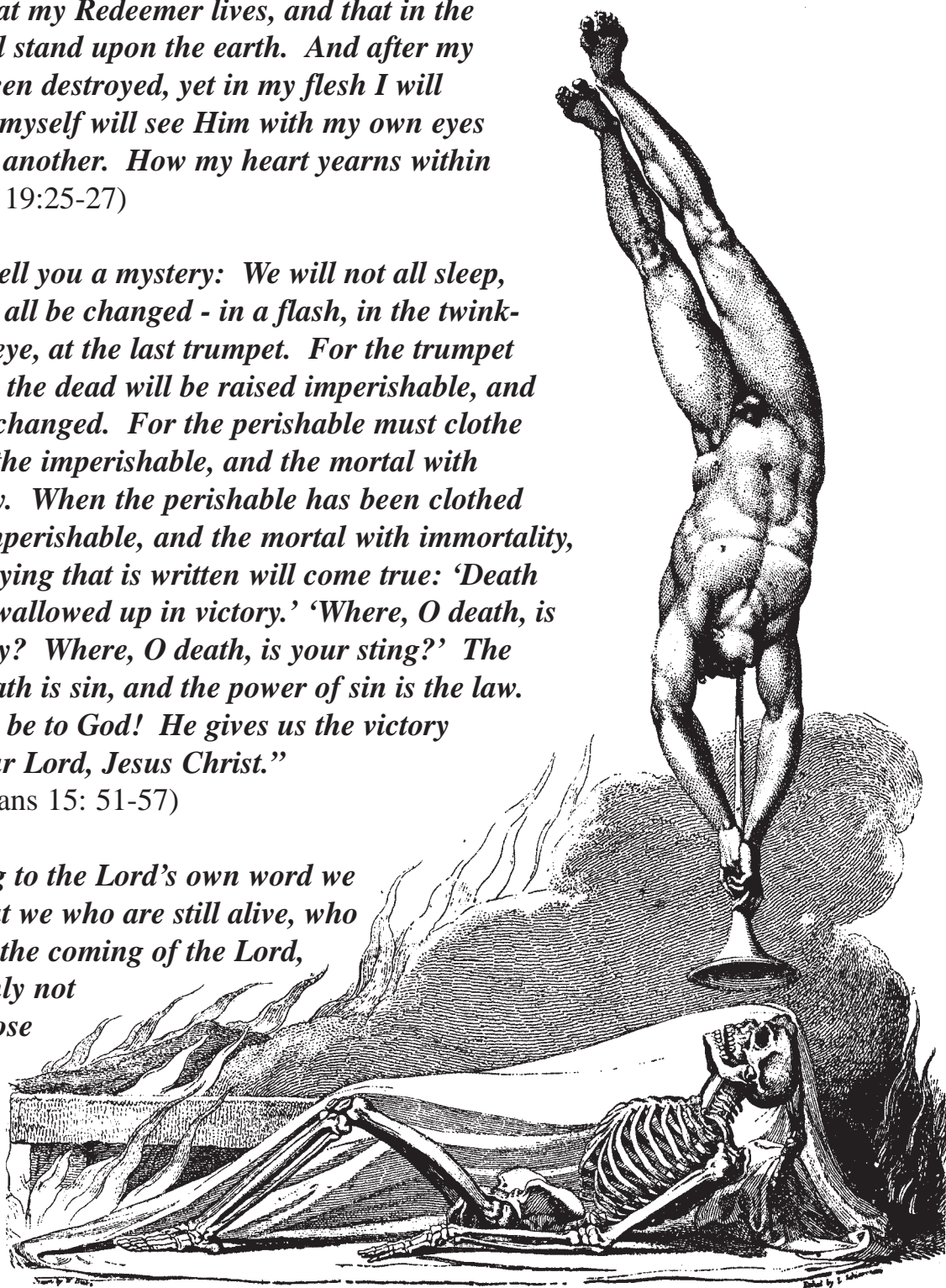
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes - I and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27)

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ."

(1 Corinthians 15: 51-57)

"According to the Lord's own word we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself



will come down from heaven,, with a loud command, with the vice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18)

The Scriptures teach that on the Last day God will raise the bodies of every human being who ever lived from the dead.

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)

“A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out.” (John 5:28-29)

“There is a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.” (Acts 24:15)

“Then I saw a great white throne and He who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from His presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.” (Revelation 20:11-13)

The Scriptures teach that in the resurrection of the dead the same bodies that have died and decayed in the grave will be restored by God and reunited with their souls.

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes - I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25-27)

“But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies...So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” (1 Corinthians 15:35-36, 42-44)

“Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” (2 Corinthians 5:1-4)

“Christ will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.” (Philippians 3:21)

“Their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will become loathsome to all mankind.” (Isaiah 66:24)



“The Last Judgment” by Pieter Bruegel

THE JUDGMENT



*"The Last Judgment" by Michael
Wohlgemuth - 1493*

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) The eternal fate of every human being is decided at the instant of his death. (Proverbs 11:7; Revelation 2:10; Hebrews 9:27) On the last day all of humanity will be summoned before the judgement seat of God, at which time formal public pronouncement of sentence will take place. The basis of the judgement is one's relationship with Christ. Those who believe in Christ, who are clothed in the robes of His righteousness, will be saved. Unbelievers, who rely on their own righteousness will be damned. The good works which are the evidence of faith, or their absence, will be cited as proof of the justice of God's verdict. (cf. Matthew 25:31-46)

The Biblical Doctrine of Hell

“Paradise Lost” by John Milton

*“A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; but torture without end Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever burning sulfur unconsumed: Such place eternal justice has prepared
For those rebellious, here their prison ordained
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far removed from God and light of heaven
As from the center thrice to the utmost pole.
O how unlike the place from which they fell!”*



*“Lucifer as the Gatekeeper of the Jaws of Hell”
by Michael Le Noir - 1568*

1. The Bible teaches that all who die outside of a faith relationship with Jesus Christ are condemned to eternal damnation. (Cf. John 3:16-18; John 8:24; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Mark 16:16)

2. The Bible teaches that the torment of the damned will consist chiefly in eternal banishment from the sight of God and permanent exclusion from communion with God. (cf. Matthew 25:41; Matthew 8:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10)

3. The Bible uses a variety of terms to describe the dwelling place of the damned.

A. "Sheol" - (64) a place of punishment for the unrighteous dead (Psalm 9:16,17; Deuteronomy 32:21-22; Psalm 49:14-15);

B. "Hades" - (11) a place of retribution for the wicked (Luke 16:22-26; Revelation 20:13-15);

C. "Tartarus" - (1) the lowest point in hell (1 Peter 2:14);



"The Damned" by Luca Signorelli from the San Brizio Chapel in Orvieto

D. “Gehenna” - (12) a place of eternal punishment in undying fire (Jeremiah 7:31; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:33; Matthew 10:28)

4. The torment of hell is unending. It will continue forever. (Jude 12,13; Revelation 14:11; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 18:8; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Daniel 12:2)

5. While the Bible clearly teaches that hell is a place, it makes no attempt to locate or define the nature of that place. (Cf. Luke 16:28; 1 Peter 3:19)

“Purer and truly orthodox is the opinion that hell is by no means to be defined as some physical or bodily place or some other part of this universe, but is a certain spiritual or illocal place outside of this universe in which the tortures of perpetual divine wrath rave and rage now in the bodies, now in the souls of men...However, where this division hell is to be, yes, where it is already, we cannot definitely state, especially since Scripture itself says nothing certain on this matter.” (Leonard Hutter, 1616)



“St. Michael Defeats the Devil”

6. In describing the state of damnation, Scripture uses a variety of terms, all of which express intense agony of body and soul. (Romans 2:9; Luke 16:23-24; Mark 9:43-44; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 13:50; Isaiah 66:24; Revelation 14:9-11; Revelation 20:10; Revelation 21:8; 2 Peter 2:17) One should, however, exercise caution in attempting to specifically define the nature of this torment.

“That, therefore, to which the Holy Ghost has ascribed the name, the properties, and the effects of true fire, is not metaphorical, but fire properly so called. But this will not be simply the element of fire as we know it today, but that which is altogether unique. Ordinarily, fire burns only bodies; the

infernal fire will act also upon souls. The former ceases when fuel fails; the latter does not stand in need of nourishment. But to desire to explain the nature of infernal fire more explicitly is a matter of curiosity rather than of profit.” (David Hollaz, 1713)

“It is wiser to be concerned about escaping this eternal fire than to engage in an unprofitable argument as to the nature of this fire” (John Gerhard, 1637)

7. Degrees of torment in hell, determined by the nature of the sins to be punished, are plainly taught in the Bible (Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 12:47-48; Matthew 10:14-15)

8. The purpose of the Biblical doctrine of hell and eternal damnation is to warn against unbelief and a false sense of security and thus to save from eternal damnation.



“The Torments of the Damned” by Lucas Cranach the Elder - 1513

“THE GATE OF HELL”

*“I am the way into the city of woe. I am the way to a forsaken people.
I am the way to eternal sorrow. Sacred justice moved my architect.*

*I was raised here by divine omnipotence,
Primordial love, and ultimate intelligence.*

*Only those elements times cannot wear
Were made before me, and beyond time I stand.
Abandon all hope ye who enter here.”*

(The Inferno, Alighieri Dante)

The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven



“St. John and the Twenty-four Elders Before the Throne of God in Heaven” by Albrecht Dürer

1. The Bible asserts that heaven is the dwelling place of God. (Deuteronomy 26:15; 1 Kings 8:30; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 57:15; 63:15; 66:1; John 14:2; Acts 7:48)
2. The Bible asserts that at the moment of physical death the soul of the believer is in heaven, that is, in the presence of God, and that at the last day all believers, both body and soul, will live with Him forever. (Matthew 25:34; Luke 16:22; 23:43; Acts 7:59; Philippians 1:23; Revelation 6:9-11; 20:4-6)

3. The Bible asserts that the joy of heaven for the believer will consist chiefly in the fact that he will be in the immediate presence of God (the beatific vision). (I John 3:2; Revelation 21:3; I Thessalonians 4:17; I Corinthians 13:11-12; Revelation 7:15; Psalm 16:11)
4. The Bible describes the blessedness of the saints in heaven as perfect freedom from sin and all of its consequences. (2 Timothy 4:18; Revelation 7:16,17; 21:4)
5. The Bible uses a variety of earthly imagery to depict the joy and blessedness of heaven. (Matthew 25:10; Revelation 19:6-9 - the marriage feast; Matthew 8:10-11; Luke 14:16-24 -the banquet; Luke 22:30; Revelation 20:4 - the reign from the throne; Revelation 21:2-22:5; Hebrews 12:22 - the new Jerusalem; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Revelation 2:7; 22:1-3 - paradise, Eden restored; Hebrews 11:13-16 - the promised land)
6. The Bible asserts that the universe as it exists today will pass away on the Last Day to be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth. (Psalm 102:26; Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:22-23; Romans 8:21; 1 Corinthians 7:31; 1 Peter 3:7-14; Revelation 21:1-4)
7. Every attempt to geographically locate heaven or specifically define its nature is folly. Heaven is a place beyond the ability of time and space bound humans to understand. (Matthew 18:10; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

*“Nowadays there are many, who like the scholastics of a bygone age, in a free and easy manner philosophize about where the place or seat of God’s habitation and that of the saints is. Is it above the crystal heavens, in a spacious realm of definite boundaries and circumscription where in a physical location there are expanses, stations, meeting places, promenades, etc.? But such assertions are made without a basis in Scripture, which indeed teaches that there is a heaven above, the dwelling place of God and the saints; but where it is and what its nature is Scripture not only does not explain but it expressly states: ‘**Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and into the heart of man has not entered what God has prepared for His saints.**’ (1 Corinthians 2:9) And Paul was carried in a rapture beyond the airy heaven and the starry heaven into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2) but he says so little about the physical aspects of the place that he confesses that he does not even know whether he was carried there in the body or outside of the body. He says that the things that he saw and heard*

in the celestial light of heaven are ‘unspeakable’ things that cannot be explained in words.” Martin Chemnitz, 1590

8. After the resurrection, the saints in heaven will live with “*glorified bodies*”. The characteristics of this life are described as:

- A. Perfect enlightenment of the intellect (1 Corinthians 13:9-10)
- B. Perfect righteousness of will and desire (Psalm 17:15; Ephesians 4:24; 5:27)
- C. Perfect security in the permanence of this blessedness (John 16:22)

The “*glorified bodies*” of the saints will, in fact, be the same bodies in which they lived here on earth (Job 19:26) cleansed of all of the consequences of sin, aging, disfigurement, disease, etc. (Matthew 22:30; John 20:26-29; 1 Corinthians 15:35-57; Philippians 3:20-21)



“The Hosts of Heaven” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

9. The joy of every saint in heaven will be perfect and complete. Thus there will be no degrees of bliss. However, Scripture does teach that there are degrees of glory in heaven corresponding to differences of work and fidelity here on earth. (2 Corinthians 9:6f.; Daniel 12:3)

“It is true, there will be differences in yonder life, according as they have labored and lived here. For example, St. Paul was an apostle, Samuel or Isaiah a prophet, etc. One will have greater brightness than the other because he worked or suffered more in his office...Thus everyone will have his distinction and glory according to his office, and still one God and one Lord will be in all, and one and the same joy and bliss. In his person none shall be more or have more than the other, St. Peter no more than you and I. Nonetheless there must be a difference according to the works. For God did not do through Paul what He did through Isaiah, and vice versa. For that reason, everyone will bring along his works through which he will shine and praise God so that the people will say; ‘St. Peter has done more than I or another. This man or this woman has led such a fine life and done such great things. In short, all are to be alike before God in faith and grace and celestial bliss, but they are to differ in their works and their honor.”
(Martin Luther)

10. The saints in heaven will maintain their individual identities and personalities and will be able to recognize and identify one another whether or not they knew one another on earth. (Matthew 17:1-4; Luke 16:23; 1 Corinthians 13:9-10)

11. The purpose of the Biblical doctrine of eternal life in heaven is to be an incentive to men to believe in the Gospel and persevere in the faith that they may obtain that eternal life. (Matthew 5:11-12)

“The doctrine concerning the heaven of the blessed and eternal life is set forth in Holy Scripture, not that we may idly dispute as theorists, concerning the locality of heaven, the beatific vision, or the properties of glorified bodies; but that, as practical men, considering the promised joys of eternal life every day, yes every hour, yes every moment, we may keep closely to the way leading there, and carefully avoid all that can cause delay or recall us from the entrance into life eternal. One of the ancients, who was asked what books he used in his daily studies, answered that he studied every day

a book with three pages; one red, one black, one white. On the red page he read of our Lord's passion. On the black he read of the torments of hell. On the white page he read of the joys of the glorified. From this study he derived more profit than if he were to ponder all the works of the philosophers." (John Gerhard)



"The New Jerusalem" by Gustav Doré



"Christmas Night" by Ludwig Richter

UNIT XII

WORSHIP AND PRAYER



“The Adoration of the Lamb” by Albrecht Dürer

“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!’ Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes - who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” (Revelation 7:9-14)

WORSHIP

(“Gottesdienst”)

God Reaching Out To His People

Through the Gospel of Christ

In Word and Sacrament

God’s People Responding Together

In Thanksgiving, Praise, and Prayer

**To the Wonderful Things That God Has
Done**

“What should occur in this house of God is that our dear Lord Himself speaks to us through His Holy Word, and that we, in turn, speak to Him in prayer and songs of praise.” (Martin Luther)



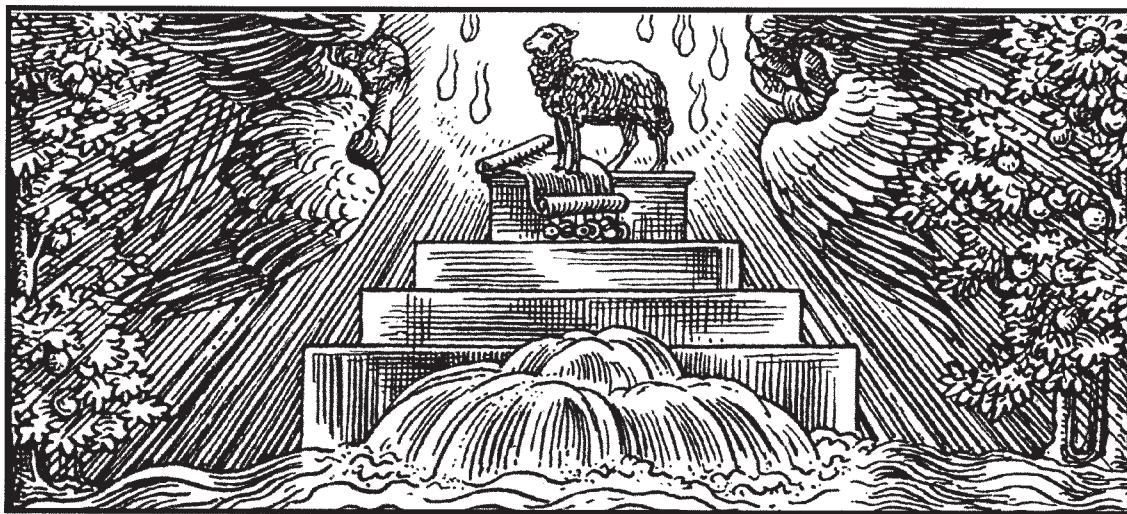
"Come, Let Us Sing for Joy to the Lord" by Rudolf Schäfer

LITURGICAL WORSHIP

The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church. That means that the basic pattern of our worship is drawn from services that have been used by Christians for many centuries, all across the world. The components of the liturgy come from the Bible and serve to focus our worship on the Word of God and our response to it in faith.

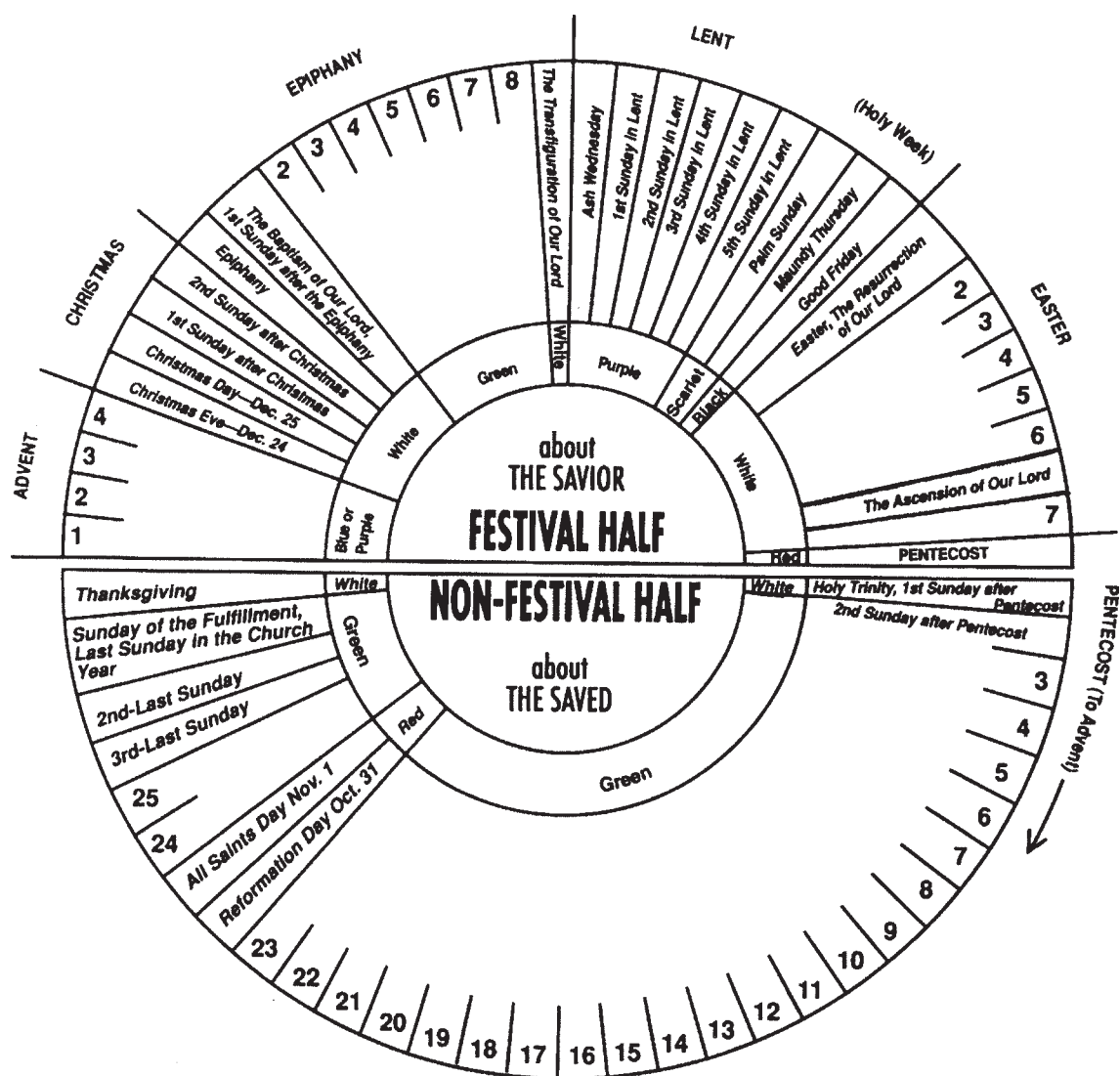
"The liturgy is a work of large dimensions and universal significance...It is not a sheaf of pretty autumn leaves, but a noble, living, tree. It is the work and possession of the whole church. It has been carefully prepared and authorized by a general church body. It is used by thousands of congregations over continental areas...Each service is a balanced order complete in itself, but each service is related to the other services in its season and to the cycle of the year. Like spokes in a wheel, each service is a polished and perfected part of a greater whole, while the wheel is something in itself, something greater than the sum of all its spokes. Ever revolving, this great cycle of the liturgical year carries the church onward and upward in its experiences of public worship from century to century, from shore to shore,

in unbroken historic and corporate continuity. Grounded upon the older and deeper foundations of historic Christianity, the liturgy has the dimension of depth. Its comprehensive quality and the extent of its use testify to its breadth. Its polished and perfected forms, to the completion of which highly endowed spirits throughout the centuries have contributed, give it the inspiration, life, and power which exalt and lift the common devotions of Christians everywhere to the throne of God in the heavenly heights...It presents a complete and well organized summary of the Christian faith and life as a basis for common meditation, prayer, and thanksgiving...The Scriptural content and tone of the liturgy is one of its greatest distinctions. Gems from the Psalms, the Prophets, the Four Gospels, and many other books of the Bible are set in the golden fabric of its text, surrounded by pure pearls of devotion in confessions and thanksgivings, canticles and collects. These too are Scriptural in tone and feeling. 'The Word of the Lord endureth forever.' Embodied in letter and spirit in the historic and beautiful services of the universal church, it glows with glory unquenchable and gives spiritual grace and power to all who hear and heed it... The liturgy is the product and possession of the universal church. It enshrines the faith and experience of every age and continent...It, too, bears the marks of the centuries and, in places, the scars of battle. The Word and the Sacrament it enshrines have nourished and still keep alive all faith on earth. Its Te Deums and Magnificats praise the Almighty throughout the centuries; its collects, litanies, and spiritual songs have brought human souls close to God for ages; its creeds and Glorias ring out unceasingly as battle cries against falsehood and error; its atmosphere of devotion is the purest known to man...A final conviction of the church concerning its liturgy is that it is ever youthful though age-old. It is something more than a heritage. It is a living, flexible, powerful instrument for today...The liturgy represents the objective, the universal, and the eternal rather than the individualistic and the temporal...It brings the church of today into conscious fellowship with our Lord, with the prophets and apostles, the confessors and martyrs of old. It lifts the church militant on earth in confident faith and hope into spiritual communion with the Church Triumphant, with the saints in heaven, and with Christ Himself, our heavenly King." (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, Luther D. Reed, Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1947)



"The Lamb's Fountain of Life" by Rudolf Schäfer

The Church Year Calendar





“Gathered Before the Cross” by Rudolf Schäfer

An Outline of THE MAIN DIVINE SERVICE (“*Hauptgottesdienst*”)

Within the Lutheran tradition of corporate worship a distinction is maintained between the “*Main Divine Service*” (“*Hauptgottesdienst*”), which is a celebration of Holy Communion, and the “*minor services*” (“*Nebengottesdienste*”), which included “*Matins*” (Morning Prayer), “*Vespers*” (Evening Prayer), and a variety of preaching, confessional, and catechism services. Those components in the Main Divine Service which remain the same are called the “*Ordinary*.” Those components of the Main Divine Service which may change from week to week or seasonally with the calendar of the Church Year are called the “*Propers*.” The “*Propers*” include: Introit, Collect, Lessons, Gradual, Hymns, Sermon, Offertory, and Proper Preface. The combination of the Ordinary and

the Propers within the service provides for both continuity and variety. The structure of the Main Divine Service may be outlined as follows:



Johann Sebastian Bach, the Master of Lutheran Church Music, at the Organ of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig by Rudolf Schäfer

The Service of Preparation

The Prelude

Preservice music helps to establish an atmosphere for worship. It focuses our attention and draws us into an attitude of prayer and praise. The organist's carefully chosen Prelude indicates the tone of the day's service and prepares the congregation for what will follow. The world's most beautiful music has been written and performed by devout Christians as an expression of their adoration and love for the Lord Jesus. Luther expressed his high regard for music when he said, "*I would gladly see all arts, especially music, in the service of Him who has given and created them.*"

The Hymn of Invocation

The Lutheran Church has often been described as the “*Singing Church*” because of our emphasis on the importance of congregational participation in the worship service. St. Paul urges; “*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*” (Colossians 3:16) The Hymn of Invocation continues the theme established in the Prelude.

The Invocation

PASTOR: *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

PEOPLE: *Amen.*

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17) The Liturgy begins with the Invocation which recalls our baptism in the Name of the Holy Trinity. We who are baptized come together in His Name, in response to His call, gathered around His Word and Sacrament. The Invocation acknowledges the presence of God on the basis of His promise: “*For where two or three come together in My Name, there am I with them.*” (Matthew 18:20).

The Confession of Sins

PASTOR: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

PEOPLE: *But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

PASTOR: *Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.*

ALL: *O Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor miserable sinner, confess to you all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserve Your punishment now and forever. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being. Forgive me all of my sins and grant me the power of Your Holy Spirit that I may amend my sinful life.*

It is truly an awesome thing for a sinful human being to stand in the presence of the holy God. Thus, before we can worship God properly we must acknowledge our sin and receive the personal assurance of His mercy and forgiveness. This public or general

confession (in contrast to individual, private confession) is particularly appropriate in a Service of Holy Communion, as a part of personal preparation and self-examination before the Sacrament. The Apostle Paul earnestly advises: *“A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.”* (1 Corinthians 11:28)

A short verse (versicle) and response from I John 1:8-9 serve to introduce the confession. Similar versicles and responses are used elsewhere in the service to introduce significant parts of the liturgy. Note the careful and comprehensive wording of the confession. It recognizes the grim reality of sin as a part of our human nature and emphasizes that the individual sins of omission and commission which fill our lives are the results of our sinful nature. Because of this deadly combination of original and actual sin we deserve only death and damnation. Hence the sinner is absolutely dependent upon God’s undeserved love in Christ.

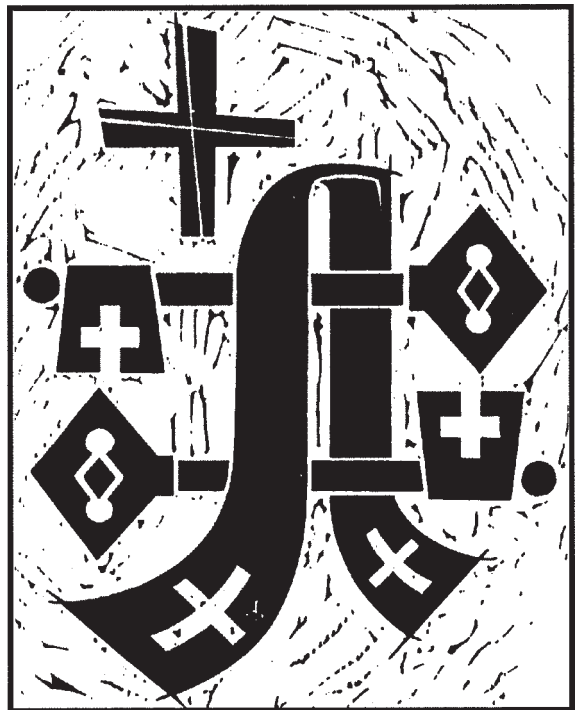
The Absolution

PASTOR: *Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all of your sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

PEOPLE: *Amen.*

“And with that He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone

his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” (John 20:22) The Absolution formula is clear, pure, personal Gospel, and nowhere else is the ability of the oral Gospel to convey Christ’s gift of salvation seen more clearly. Christ has entrusted to His Church the Office of the Keys (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:15-20). The pastor is called to exercise that Office publicly on behalf of the congregation. In Christ’s place, and by Christ’s command, he forgives the sins of Christ’s people. This is not merely a general announcement about the availability of forgiveness. Sins are actually being forgiven! The worship of God’s people is not a *“menu reading session;”* it’s a meal.



THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

The Introit

“Introibo ad altare Dei.” (Latin - *“I will go unto the altar of God.”* Psalm 43:4). The *“Introit”* is the entrance song of the service. Like the overture of a great opera it sets the tone and expresses the theme of the day. The Introit consists of pertinent verses from the Psalms and the *“Gloria Patri”* (Latin - *“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”*). The Introit marks the beginning of the Service of the Word and serves as an introduction to the Lessons of the Day.

The Kyrie

PASTOR: *In peace let us pray to the Lord.*

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

PASTOR: *For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.*

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

PASTOR: *For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.*

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

PASTOR: *For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.*

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

PASTOR: *Help, save, comfort and defend us gracious Lord.*

PEOPLE: *Amen.*



“Kyrie Eleison” (Greek - *“Lord, have mercy”*) is an echo of the ancient cry with which people once greeted the arrival of their king. The fabric of the liturgy is colored by contrasting moods of praise and petition. Between the joy of the Introit and the Cantic which follows, the Kyrie is a somber expression of our humility and an acknowledgment of our weakness and absolute dependence upon the Lord. God’s people acclaim Him as they begin their worship and intercede for the peace and well being of all people. We have no claim upon God. He owes us nothing. We pray, trusting in His grace and His goodness, asking only for mercy which we have not and could not earn.



The Hymn of Praise

“This Is the Feast of Victory”

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain,
Whose blood set us free to be people of God.*

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*Power, riches, wisdom, and strength,
And honor, blessing and glory are His.*

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*Sing with all the people of God,
And join in the hymn of all creation:*

*Blessing, honor, glory, and might
Be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen.*

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*For the Lamb who was slain
Has begun His reign. Alleluia.*

This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

God's answer to His people's prayer for mercy is the redemptive work of Christ. For this we adore and glorify Him in the Hymn of Praise. The text of this joyful canticle comes from two scenes in the Revelation of St. John (5:8-14; 7:9-13) where the celestial hosts of saints and angels praise and magnify God and the Lamb for Christ's great victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil. As we gather together here on earth to sing the praises of God our voices are joined with those of the saints who have preceded us to glory and myriads of angels who surround the heavenly throne of God and glorify Him without pause or interruption.



"This Is the Feast of Victory" by Rudolf Schärer

The Salutation

PASTOR: *The Lord be with you.*

PEOPLE: *And also with you.*

The Salutation constitutes a reciprocal prayer of the pastor for his people and of the congregation for its pastor before they offer their petitions to God together. Each time the Salutation and its response are offered the bonds of love and unity between pastor and people are tied again. The substance of the greeting is essentially Hebrew although its variations are present throughout Scripture (cf. Ruth 2:4; Judges 6:12; Luke 1:28; II Thessalonians 3:16; II Timothy 4:22).

The Collect of the Day

The “*Collect*” is a brief but significant prayer which expresses the theme of the day. The term “*collect*” is derived from the Latin title of services where Christians gathered together for prayer (“*ecclesia collecta*”). A complete collect traditionally contains five parts: an invocation; a basis for the petition, the petition, the purpose or benefit desired, a closing doxology (song of praise). With an unbroken use of nearly fifteen centuries by multitudes of believers in all lands, the collects constitute an important part of the liturgical inheritance of the church. We prize them for their antiquity, universality, excellence, and beauty.



“The Old Testament” Title Page from Volks Bilderbibel - 1865

The Old Testament Lesson

“In the Service so far, there has been a gradual approach to the altar of God. Our spirits have been purified and elevated as we ascended the four steps of contrition, longing, praise, and petition. In all of this we have spoken. We now pause in reverent silence as God speaks. The thought that nothing we can say or do can compare in importance with His Word invests the readings of the liturgical lessons with special solemnity and dignity.”
(Reed)

The lessons used in the Service each Sunday are part of a series of texts chosen by the Church to present the basic themes of our faith consistently throughout the year. The use of these texts, often called “*Pericopes*” (Greek - “*to cut around*”), helps to insure that our worship is not subject to the whims or interests of an individual pastor or the local concerns of a congregation. The first of the liturgy’s three appointed Scripture readings is drawn from the 39 books of the Old Testament, recalling the message of Law and Gospel proclaimed to God’s people Israel by faithful prophets across the centuries. The Old Testament continues to play a prominent role in the worship of the Christian Church, both through the Old Testament Lesson and the selections from the Psalms which occur throughout the service. In this way, the Church affirms the unity of God’s plan of salvation and of the people of God in every place and time. During the weeks after Easter, the First Lesson comes from the Book of Acts instead of the Old Testament, to place special emphasis on the apostolic preaching of the resurrection.

The Gradual

The “*Gradual*” is a selection of portions of the Psalms sung in response to the First Lesson and serving as a bridge to the Epistle which follows. The title “*Gradual*” is derived from the fact that these Psalm verses were originally sung from a step (Latin - “*gradus*”) of the Altar. The Gradual is one of the Propers and changes with the seasons of the Church Year.

The Epistle Lesson

The Second Reading is from one of the Epistles (Letters) of the New Testament. In the Epistle Lesson the Apostles of our Lord speak to His Church, just as they spoke by divine inspiration to the congregations of Christianity’s first generation, many of which they themselves had founded. The Epistle Reading precedes the Gospel as the lesser precedes the greater. Some ancient commentators compared the role of the Epistle to that of St. John the Baptist who went before the Lord to prepare His way.

The Verse

A verse from Holy Scripture usually sung in preparation for the reading of the Gospel. There are general verses as well as specific verses for the seasons of the Church Year.



“The Four Evangelists Before the Glorified Christ” by Rudolf Schäfer

The Holy Gospel

The Gospel Lesson is a selection from the accounts of the life of our Lord recorded by the four evangelists, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. The reading of the Holy Gospel is one of the high points of the liturgy for in these inspired accounts of the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ we stand in the presence of the Savior in a unique and powerful way. The traditions of the liturgy signal the special significance of the Gospel in a variety of ways. The congregation rises to its feet during the Gospel Lesson to honor the presence of the Lord. The special significance of the Holy Gospel is further indicated by the congregational versicles which precede and follow it. (“*Glory to You, O Lord!*” “*Praise to You, O Christ!*”) The reading of the Gospel for the day has always been regarded by the Church as something of extraordinary importance because it declares the very words of Christ. On high festival days a “*Gospel Procession*” in which the Gospel text is read from the midst of the congregation may be used to celebrate the presence of our Lord among His people.

The Nicene Creed

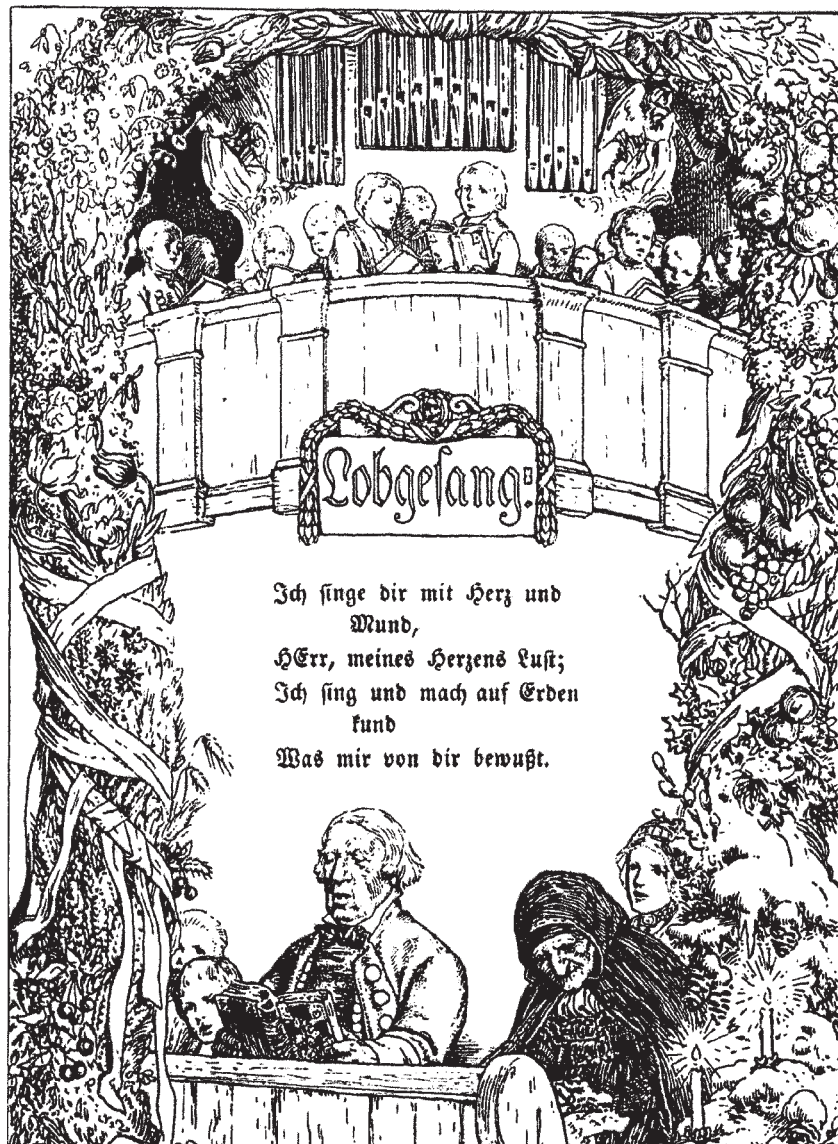
“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets, and I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

The Creed is a confession of our holy Christian faith, based upon the Word of God. Such a confession is, then, a logical sequence to the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Every use of the Creed is, in a sense, a renewal of our baptismal covenant. The comprehensive wording of the Nicene Creed (Adopted at the Ecumenical Council of Nicea, 425 AD) *“witnesses to the perpetuity, unity, and universality of the Christian faith; it binds Christians to one another and to the faithful of all centuries.”* (Reed)





*"Paul Gerhardt's 'Rejoice My Heart Be Glad and Sing'"
by Rudolf Schäfer*

The Hymn of the Day

This is the principal hymn of the Service ("*Hauptlied*"). Following the lessons and the Creed and immediately preceding the Sermon, the Hymn of the Day serves to reinforce the major thought of the Service. The congregational hymn was one of the great contributions of the Reformation to public worship. Martin Luther was himself a gifted musician who wrote scores of great hymns for congregational singing. The magnificent church music of masters like Johann Sebastian Bach and Paul Gerhardt continued that grand tradition within the Lutheran Church. Unlike much of the empty fluff that passes for music in much of the modern church, the great Lutheran chorales are substantive expressions of the objective truth of the great doctrines of Scripture.

The Sermon

“The restoration of the Sermon to its ancient place and power became one of the marks of the Reformation...The Sermon follows the Creed, as the Creed follows the Gospel. It must be true to the common faith as the expression of this faith must be true to the everlasting Gospel...The Sermon is the voice of the living Church, lifted in instruction, testimony, and exhortation.” (Reed) Typically, the Sermon is based on one of the three lessons for the day. It is the general custom of Lutheran churches to begin the Sermon with the apostolic greeting: *“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:2)

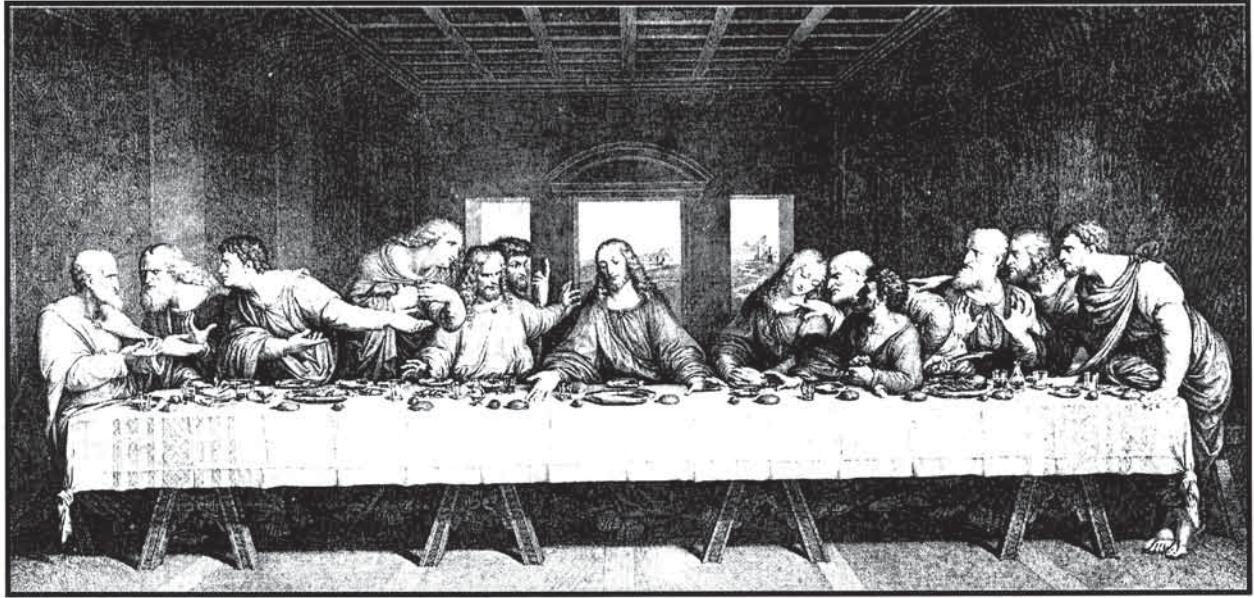


“Preaching in the Lutheran Church” by Lucas Cranach the Younger

The Votum

“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.”

The Sermon traditionally concludes with this brief word of pastoral blessing upon the hearers based on Philippians 4:7. “Votum” is a Latin word which means prayer.



“The Last Supper” by Leonardo di Vinci

THE SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

The Offertory

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence; And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; And uphold me with Thy free Spirit.*

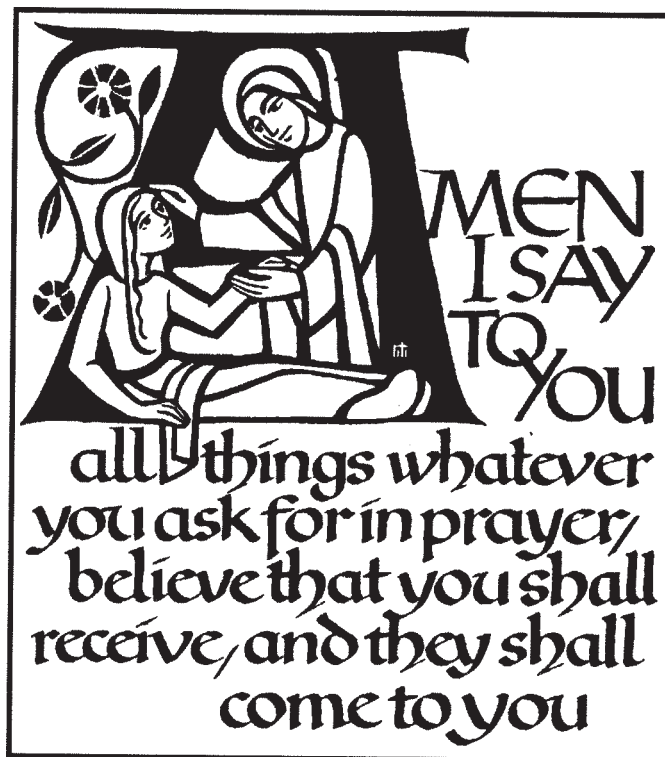
As we prepare to bring our offerings forward to the Lord’s Table, and anticipate the celebration and distribution of the Sacrament, the congregation sings the “*Offertory*” to express our gratitude for all of God’s blessings, dedicate ourselves to Him, and request His continued blessing upon us. The classic text of the Offertory comes from Psalm 51:10-12.

The Offering

As stewards of the gifts which God has given us, God’s people rejoice in their ability to give “*as He has prospered them*” (I Corinthians 16:2). These offerings are a token of our self-dedication to God with all that we are and all that we have. The music played while the offerings are gathered is called the “*Voluntary*.” It may reflect on the theme of the day or be more general in nature.

The Prayers

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone.” (I Timothy 2:1) The prayer of the Church is offered on behalf of the church, the government, and all people everywhere. The common prayer of God’s family assembled for worship together is the joint expression of the individual prayers and intercessions which characterize the life of every Christian. Our prayers are the expression of our love and concern for one another and by praying together we strengthen the bond which unites us as the family of God.



The Preface

PASTOR: *The Lord be with you.*

PEOPLE: *And also with you.*

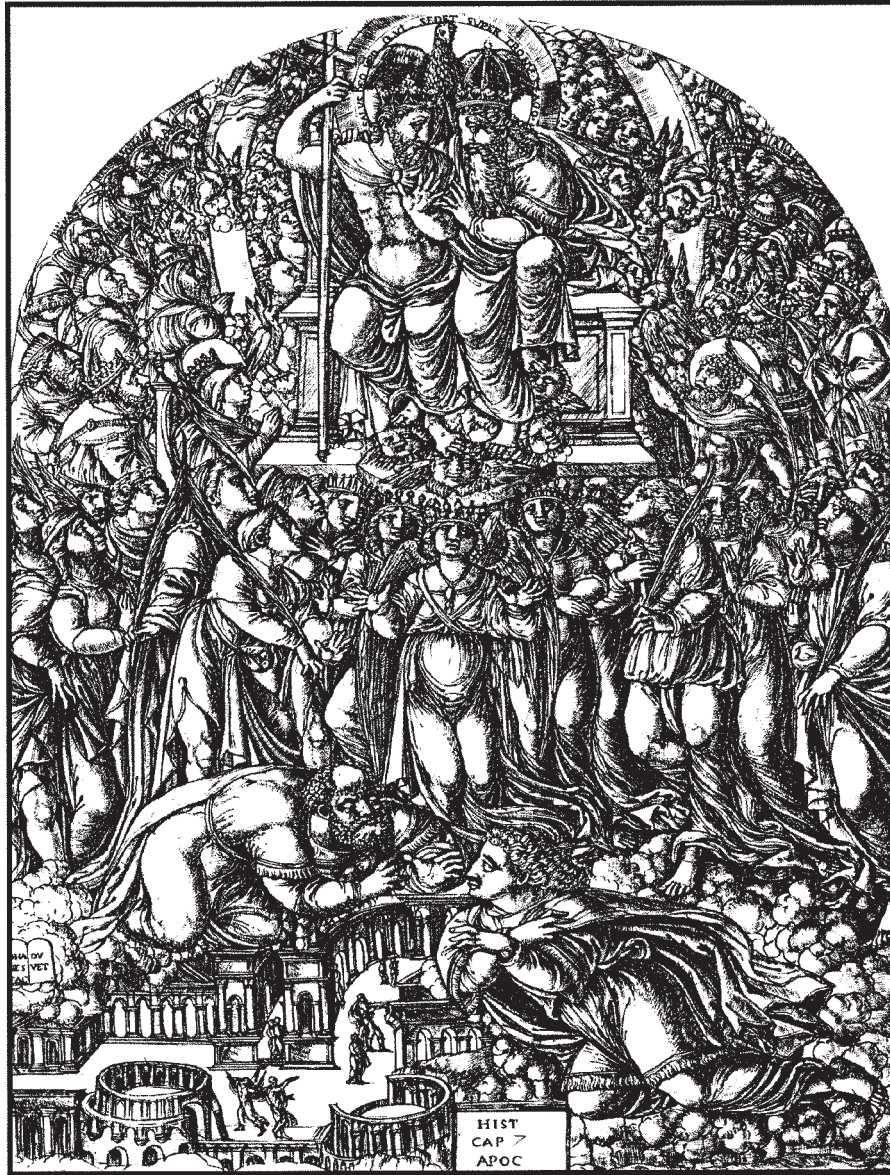
PASTOR: *Lift up your hearts*

PEOPLE: *We lift them to the Lord.*

PASTOR: *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.*

PEOPLE: *It is right to give Him thanks and praise.*

PASTOR: *It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father everlasting God:*



"The Host Arrayed in White Before God's Throne in Heaven"
by Jean Duvet - 1561

...Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee and singing:

"This is a liturgical introduction which leads into the heart of the celebration of the Holy Sacrament. In its exalted phrases we have the oldest and least changed part of the liturgy. The thought is simple, strong, majestic; the form one of great dignity, beauty, and power... Reverence, adoration, joy, and thanksgiving surge through these brief but lofty sentences... The church, as the actual body of believers pours out its love and gratitude in reverent commemoration and exalted praise." (Reed)

The Preface begins with the Salutation which indicates the significance of that which follows and emphasizes the togetherness of communion as we share in the Body and Blood of our Lord. ***“Lift up your hearts.”*** (*“sursum corda”*) directs the attention of the congregation to the divine source of this precious blessing: ***“We lift them up unto the Lord.”*** The early church father, Origen correctly advises: *“A man must lift up his soul before lifting up his hands; lift up his mind to God before lifting up his eyes, and, before standing to pray, lift up his spirit from the things of earth and direct it to the Lord of all.”*

The celebration of the Holy Supper is indeed a *“eucharist”* (I Corinthians 10:16), a *“thanksgiving”* for the divine gifts of grace which flow to us from the sacrificial life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. A seasonal theme (the *“Proper Preface”*) is inserted at this point to recall specific acts of redemption appropriate for that time in the Church

Year as the special occasion for thanksgiving.



“With Angels and Archangels” by Rudolf Schäfer

The Preface concludes with a triumphant invitation to the Church on earth to unite in praise with ***“angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven”***. *“The church’s worship on earth tends toward a point where it may unite in an eternal unison with the worship of the celestial hosts...Because they have the same center, the Lamb that was slain, they stand in real communication with one another. The church on earth may already join in the praises of the angels and pray God to grant that its voice on earth may unite with the “Sanctus” of the angels in heaven.”* (Brunner)



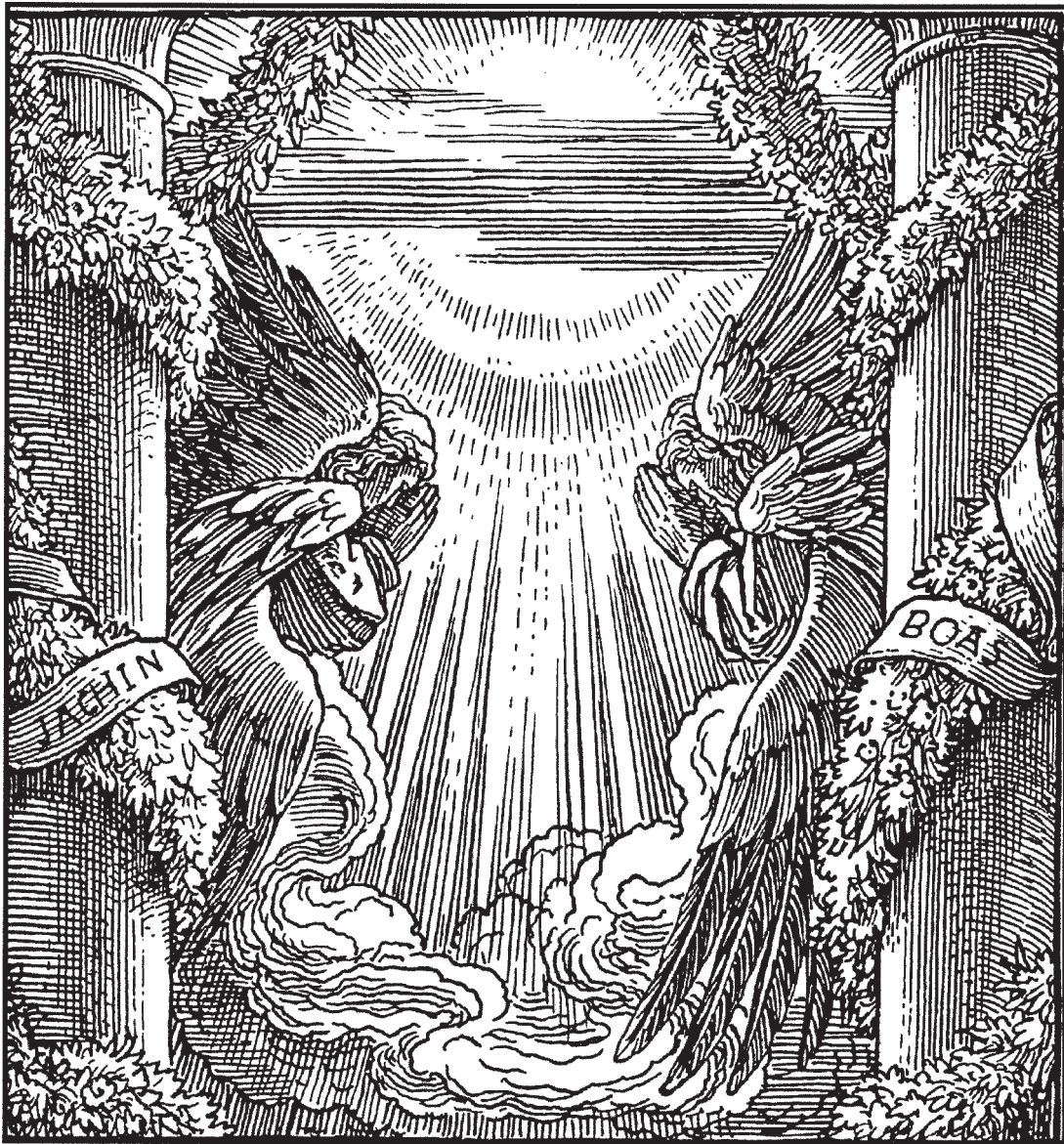
“Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts” by Rudolf Schäfer

The Sanctus

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord,
God of Pow’r and Might;
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory;
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

“The Sanctus, which derives its name from the Latin word for “holy”, is the climax and conclusion of the Preface...It is a solemn act of adoration and thanksgiving in the spirit of holy awe. It has been called ‘the most ancient, the most celebrated, and the most universal of Christian hymns.’” (Reed) The Sanctus opens with the seraphims’ dramatic acclamation of the divine majesty from Isaiah 6:2-3. The ringing “trisagian” (Greek - “Three Holies”) which the seraphim sang expresses the awe and wonder of the creature in the glorious presence of the Holy One of Israel. The deity is designated as “God of Pow’r and Might” based upon the Hebrew title “Yahweh Sabaoth” (literally - “Lord of Hosts”) which emphasizes His almighty power. The majestic opening phrases of the Sanctus set the stage as we prepare to stand in the presence of the almighty and eternal God who deigns to come to us in the blessed Sacrament.

The remainder of the Sanctus picks up the joyful greeting of the crowds hailing Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. (cf. Matthew 21:9) The people hailed Jesus as their Savior, the promised King of David's line. *"Hosanna in the highest"* they cried, repeating the refrain of Psalm 118:25-26. "Hosanna" is a Hebrew word which means *"Save now, we pray."* We join these joyful pilgrims in spirit as we use the words of their ancient hymn to greet the Savior who comes to us in the Sacrament. *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!"*



"The Serephim Before God's Throne" by Rudolf Schäfer



"Our Father" by Lucas Cranach

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The placement of the Lord's Prayer directly before the Words of Institution is most significant. In this dramatic manner, the most

distinctive prayer of fellowship in Christ, the prayer of our Lord Himself, here becomes the table prayer of God's people gathered together to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Martin Luther declares this prayer to be more precious than all the riches of the earth. *"God anticipates our need and puts into our mouths the very manner and matter of the prayer which He wants us to offer...This is surely a great advantage the Lord's Prayer has over all other prayers which we may compose ourselves... Therefore no nobler prayer can be found on earth than the Lord's prayer, which we pray daily. For it has the clear testimony that God loves to hear. We should not surrender it for all the riches of the world."* (Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, 1529).



"Deliver Us From Evil" by Lucas Cranach



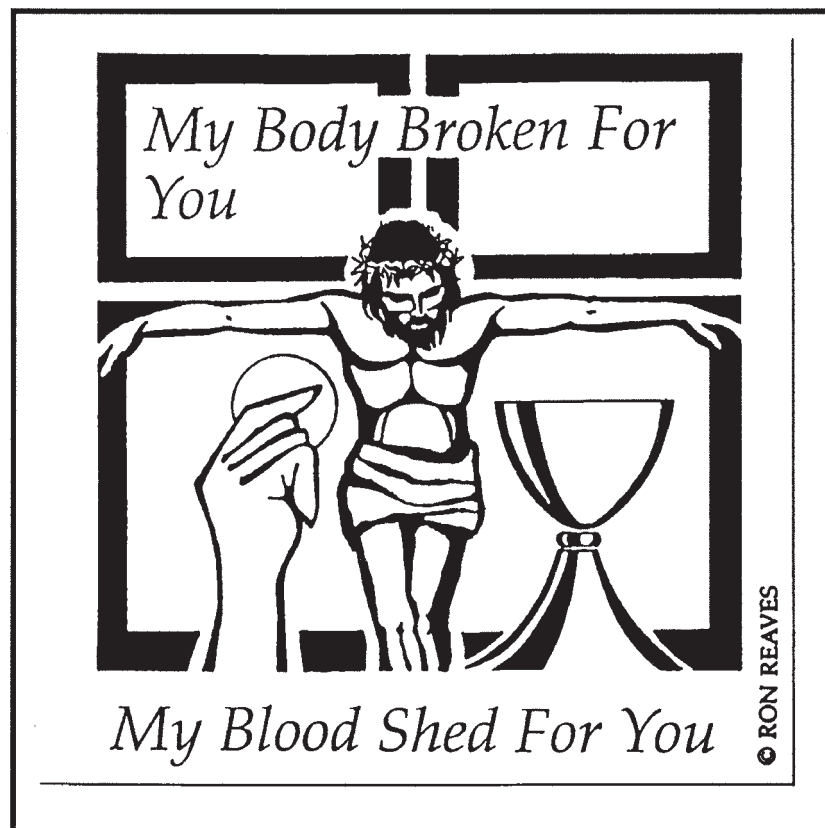
"This Is My Blood For You" by Eduard Gebhardt

The Words of Institution

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night on which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take eat; this is My Body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.

After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My Blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me."

It is the Word of God that brings the Sacrament into existence. *“Christ Himself prepares this table and blesses it. No human being, but only Christ Himself who was crucified for us, can make of the bread and wine set before us the Body and Blood of Christ. The words are spoken by the mouth of the priest, but by God’s power and grace through the words that he speaks, ‘This is my Body,’ the elements set before us in the Supper are blessed. Just as the words ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,’ were spoken only once but are ever efficacious in nature and make things grow and multiply, so this word was indeed spoken only once, but it is efficacious until this day, and until His return it brings it about that His true Body and Blood are present in the church’s Supper.”* (St. John Chrysostom on the Significance of the Words of Institution, Quoted in The Formula of Concord, SD, VII,76)



The Pax Domini

PASTOR: *The peace of the Lord be with you always!*

PEOPLE: *And also with you.*

"Pax Domini" means *"the Peace of the Lord"* in Latin. The traditional Hebrew greeting *"Shalom"* (Peace) was given new meaning and power by our risen Lord as He came to His troubled disciples on the first Easter. (John 20:19) Because He lives, our lives can be peaceful. In the ancient church the members of the congregation greeted one another with the *"Kiss of Peace"* at this point in the liturgy (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). This gesture was a dramatic expression of the profound unity shared by the members of the congregation as men and women who have all been redeemed in the precious blood of Jesus. That unity is both expressed and established as the members of the congregation participate together (Latin - *"communio"*) in the celebration of Holy Communion. At this point in the liturgy of the early church, visitors and guests were excused and the doors were closed with the cry

"the holy things for the holy ones!" All of this took place to emphasize the intimacy of this communion in the precious body and blood of the Lord Jesus. This brief blessing preceding the distribution, the *"Pax Domini,"* is all that remains of these ancient customs.



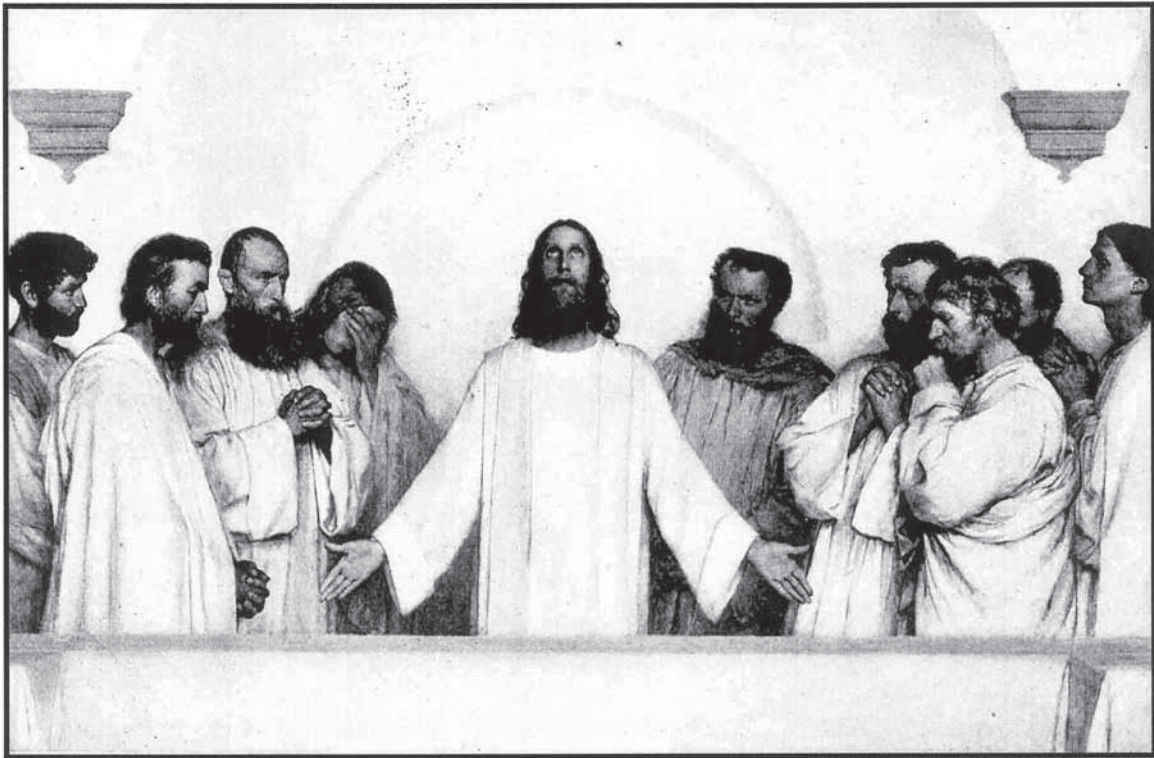
"Behold the Lamb of God" by Ivo Demetz

The Agnus Dei

*"Lamb of God you take away the
sin of the world,
Have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God, you take away the
sin of the world; have mercy on
us. Lamb of God, you take away
the sin of the world, Grant us
peace."*

"Agnus Dei" is a Latin phrase which means *"Lamb of God."* For centuries the blood of lambs sacrificed on Hebrew altars pointed forward to the one great sacrifice of the *"Lamb of God who takes*

away the sin of the world.” As John the Baptist greeted our Lord with this title (John 1:29) he was identifying Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. In threefold repetition the Agnus Dei emphasizes Christ’s vicarious atonement. His Body and Blood, given and shed for His people, takes away our sin and delivers us from death. As we approach His Holy Table, we acknowledge that Christ, ***“our Passover Lamb”*** (1 Corinthians 5:7), has been sacrificed for us.



“Given For You” by Eugene Bernard

The Distribution

As we kneel at the Lord’s Table, the Pastor invites us, *“Take eat: this is the true Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins. Take drink: this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the remission of all your sins.”* After we receive the Sacrament we hear the comforting words spoken by the pastor: *“May this true body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting. Amen. Depart in peace.”* It is good practice to offer a short prayer of thanks when we return to our pews. While the meal is being distributed, the congregation and/or the choir sing one or more hymns.

The Cantic

“Nunc Dimittis”

*“Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace
According to Thy Word,
For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation,
Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people.
A Light to lighten the gentiles and the Glory of Thy people Israel.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
And to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.”*



“Lord, now Lettest Thou Thy Servant Depart in Peace” by Rudolf Schäfer

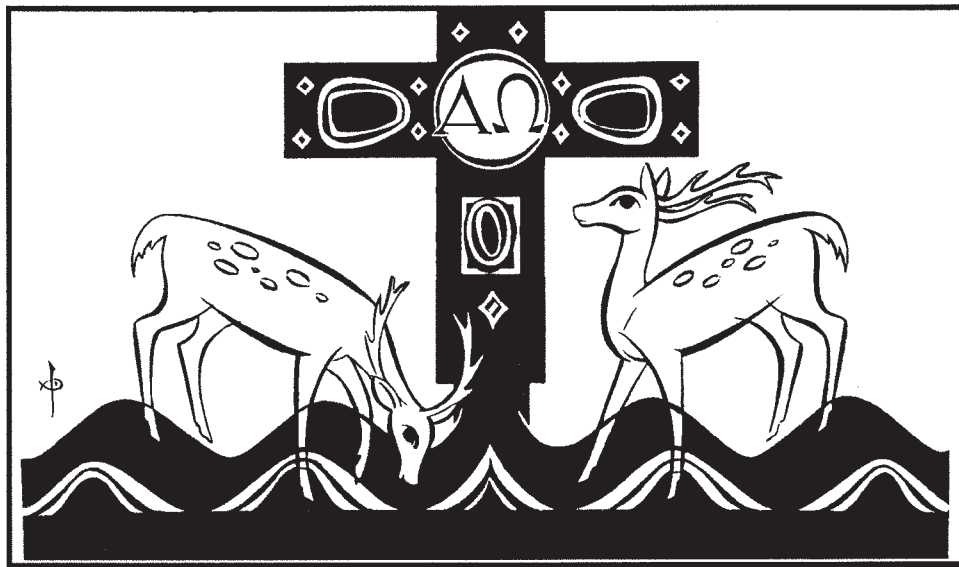
Simeon had been promised that he would see the Savior before he died. After old Simeon in the temple held the baby Jesus in his arms he was ready to depart in peace (Luke 2:29-32). Having encountered the Messiah, he had seen the salvation of God. God’s ancient promises had been fulfilled, and the old man was now ready to go home. In the Post-communion Cantic we who have encountered the Lord in the Holy Sacrament express that same bold confidence as we echo Simeon’s joyful song. The Cantic is called the “*Nunc Dimittis*,” the first two words of the Latin text. At times an alternate cantic “*Thank the Lord and Sing His Praise*” is used after the Distribution.

The Thanksgiving

PASTOR: *We give thanks to You, Almighty God, that You hast refreshed us through this salutary gift; and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith towards You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.*

PEOPLE: *Amen.*

As the Service draws to its conclusion, we express our gratitude and appreciation to our gracious God in the Collect of Thanksgiving. The words of the prayer were written by Martin Luther for his “*German Mass*.”



The Benediction

PASTOR: *The Lord bless you, and keep you.*

The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

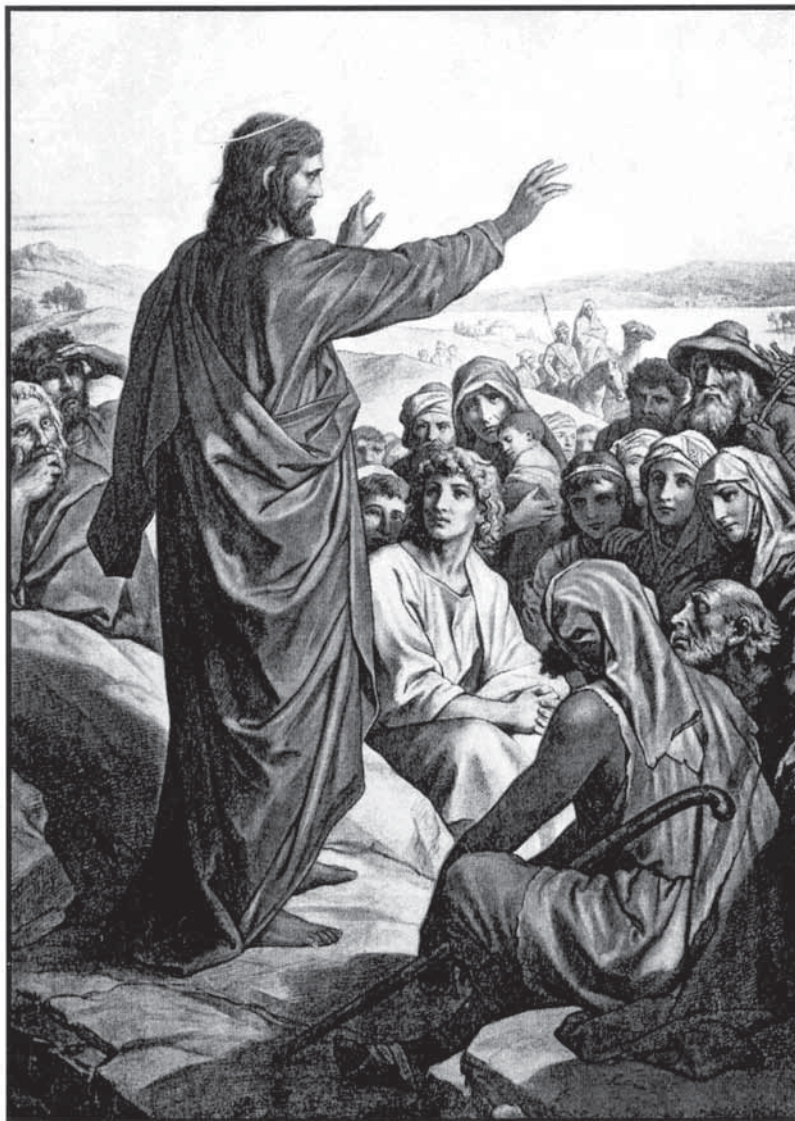
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

PEOPLE: *Amen. Amen. Amen.*

The Aaronic Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26) concludes the Communion Service. It is the

only benediction formula commanded by God. Jesus Christ, our High Priest, has come to us in a uniquely personal way in the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. This beautiful blessing is God's promise that Christ will go with us as we go out into the world from His house. The people respond to God's promise with an emphatic threefold "*Amen,*" "*So be it - It is true!*"

The Benediction is often followed by a Closing Hymn which summarizes the Service theme and sends the people on their way. As the people depart from the house of God, the organist plays a "*Postlude*" from the repertoire of the church's great music to send the congregation out into the world eager and inspired to serve the Lord who has refreshed them for that service in Word and Sacrament.



"Jesus Blessing the Multitude" by Heinrich Hoffmann