

The Church and Civil Religion

In response to questions raised following the recent news stories about the Rev. Robert Morris of Newtown, Conn., we encourage everyone to read Pastor Morris' statement and President Matthew Harrison's pastoral letter for themselves. Please also make use of the following resources.

Books

- Postmodern Times—A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture by Gene Veith http://bit.ly/YKu29a
- The Anonymous God: The Church Confronts Civil Religion and American Society by the Rev. Dr. David Adams http://bit.ly/14I9cKW
- The Church and the Office of the Ministry by Dr. C. F. W. Walther (particularly Thesis VIII on the church) PDF is attached. http://bit.ly/VLARdu
- Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions
 by the Rev. Paul T. McCain, general editor (particularly
 Formula of Concordia, Epitome X 7)
 http://bit.ly/Z0aUrn

Articles

- "The Challenge of Confessing and Teaching the Trinitarian Faith in the Context of Religious Pluralism"
 by A. R. Victor Raj in Concordia Theological Quarterly, July/October 2003 http://bit.ly/WWfgK5
- "Comfort Dogs Bring Solace to Sandy Hook Students" by Kim Plummer Krull http://bit.ly/WIu6Wq

Pamphlets

- *The Church Is a Mercy Place!* by the Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison http://bit.ly/XtmHYA
- Guidelines for Participating in a Civic Event LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations http://bit.ly/WIzIQD
- Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations http://bit.ly/Xt0Zpx

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The Church & The Office of The Ministry



C. F. W. Walther

MATTHEW C. HARRISON, EDITOR



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THESIS VIII

Although God gathers for Himself a holy church of elect at a place where His Word is not taught in its complete purity and the Sacraments are not administered altogether according to the institution of Jesus Christ, if only God's Word and the Sacraments are not denied entirely but both essentially [wesentlich] remain, nevertheless every believer is bound, at the peril of losing his salvation, to flee all false teachers, avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and confess [bekennen] and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox preachers [Predigern] wherever such may be found.

- A. Also in heterodox and heretical churches there are children of God, and also there the true Church is made manifest by the pure Word and the Sacraments that still remain.
- [B. Every believer for the sake of his salvation must flee all false teachers, and avoid fellowship with heterodox congregations or sects.
- C. Every Christian for the sake of his salvation is in duty bound to acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and orthodox preachers, wherever he can find such.]¹

EDITOR'S NOTE: "The ears of the people are holier than the hearts of the priests." This statement from Hilary appears repeatedly in the citations Walther amasses in section A of this threefold thesis. In preparation for the serious admonitions to flee heterodox communions that follow in sections B and C, Walther carefully and elaborately expands on the argument laid out in Thesis VI regarding the presence of genuine believers in heterodox churches. The orthodox Lutheran Church is not a sect that

Points B and C of Thesis VIII are added here so that the reader may see the full argumentation of the thesis at once. In the German editions and the Mueller translation, points B and C only appeared later, at the specific points where Walther interacted with them. MH

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asserts it is in sole possession of all religious truth and is the sole saving church of God on earth. But this fact is not at all akin to our current postmodern views of religious "truth" as purely subjective: "Truth is what is true for you." No, there is a clear standard of truth that is the Holy Scriptures. Its basic teachings on Law and Gospel are lucid. It is no more obfuscated or confusing than the simple (yet profound) Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism. Walther follows the Lutheran Confessions, which in turn follow Luther, in refusing carte blanche to condemn simple Christian people who find themselves in churches that are wrong regarding aspects of the faith. Thus the quote from Hilary about ears that are holier than preachers' mouths.

Also noteworthy in section A is how Walther speaks of "churches" or "particular churches" as various confessions (Roman Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran). Again, Walther clearly understands—as do Luther, the Confessions, and the orthodox fathers—that the Church appears in a local manifestation in the congregation, but there is a supra- and transcongregational reality such as the Lutheran Church as a communion. It is misleading to speak of the Lutheran Church as a confessing movement within the church catholic. The Lutheran Church is the catholic church gone right.

In section B, Walther sets forth the argument that despite the fact that the Church is found also among heterodox fellowships, faithful Lutheran Christians may not practice church fellowship with such persons and groups. Walther guotes Luther's commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians at great length: "Therefore, in this article [justification] we cannot yield a single hairbreadth, for the doctrine is so carefully gauged and measured off that you cannot add to it or subtract from it without great and serious harm. But the life is such that you can easily assume or also give up something, do or suffer something, as necessity demands."3 Orthodox Lutheran Christians may and should associate kindly with non-Lutheran Christians, and out of love even regard them as brothers and sisters in Christ. We may attend funerals, weddings, and other services out of respect, and we are to act respectfully in such services, though we should not participate in the Sacrament of the Altar. Walther clearly lays out the public confession of the orthodox Lutheran Church

² For a substantive look at Walther's basic approach—and that of Lutheran orthodoxy—to the Bible and the matter of interpretation, see Theses 14–17 in C. F. W. Walther, *The True Visible Church: An Essay for the Convention of the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States for Its Sessions at St. Louis, Mo., October 31, 1866*, trans. John Theodore Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 56–94. MH

³ See below, p. 111. Cf. AE 27:37. MH

in these matters. Individual Lutherans should not commune outside their confessional fellowship, nor may those of another confession normally be communed, because such participation is a declaration of confession according to both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Section C is the flip side of section B: One must avoid heterodox fellowships, and that means one should join an orthodox fellowship—an orthodox Lutheran congregation/church. We must reject what is false and confess what is true. "But who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). All this will make no sense if a Christian does not have a basic understanding of Law and Gospel and cannot judge whether what is heard and taught is the Word of God, or to what extent false teaching is mixed with the truth. Nor will it make any sense if a person has not seriously confronted the Bible's stern warnings against false teaching.

Socinus (Fausto Paolo Sozzini, 1539–1604) is referred to several times in section C. This early rationalist is a father of Unitarianism. Rationalism denies the Bible is divine revelation, and it views religion as simply a human construct. The plethora of churches and sects in the world today greatly confuse Christians, even otherwise orthodox Christians, who are tempted to throw up their hands and say, "How can there be one truth?" But the apparent variety of denominations is not as complex as it appears. There are several basic divisions that can be discovered by asking simple questions.

- 1. What is the highest authority in the church? If I answer, "Pope or council," I am Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. If I answer, "The Bible," I am Protestant.
- 2. Is salvation a gift received by faith alone, or is eternal life a reward for faith and good works? If the latter is my answer, I am Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic, If the former, I am a creedal Protestant.
- 3. How does what happened two thousand years ago on Golgotha become mine today? If I answer, "I must have an intense emotional/spiritual experience and ask Jesus into my heart, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are symbols of grace and marks of my devotion," then I am Reformed or Baptist. If I answer, "By the Word of God that makes alive and the Sacraments that actually deliver forgiveness," I am Lutheran. MH

1. Proof from God's Word

Gal 1:2 When the holy apostle names the called Galatians "communities" [Gemeinen] or "churches"—Galatians 1:2: "To the churches⁴ of Galatia"—this proves conclusively that also in these fellowships that have been misled into error by false teachers and have largely apostasized from Christ there remains the hidden seed of a Church of true believers.

Rv 2:24 Luther: 2Sm 15:11

Compare 1 Kings 19:14 and 18!⁵ Here we see that God had preserved for Himself, where the priests of Baal [Baalspfaffen] ruled, a holy Church of seven thousand elect whom even the prophet Elijah did not know. These are such as inwardly cling to Christ by a living faith, though outwardly they follow deceivers, because they "have not known the depths of Satan" (Revelation 2:24). They are like the two hundred men who followed rebellious Absalom and his mutinous mob but "went in their innocence and knew nothing" (2 Samuel 15:11).

2. Witnesses of the Church IN ITS PUBLIC CONFESSIONS

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Book of Concord (Müller, pp. 16ff.): "As to the condemnations, censure, and rejection of false and impure doctrine, and especially of that which has arisen concerning the Lord's Supper...it is not our design and purpose to condemn those men who err from a certain simplicity of mind but are **not blasphemers** against the truth of the divine Word, **indeed**, **much** less entire churches; . . . rather, it has been our intention and disposition in this manner openly to censure and condemn only the false and deceptive doctrines and their obstinate teachers and blasphemers. . . . For we absolutely have no doubt whatever that even in those churches which have hitherto not agreed with us in all things, many godly and by no means wicked men are also found who follow their own simplicity and do not understand aright the matter itself, but in no way approve the blasphemies that are cast

Luther's Bible has Gemeinen. MH

¹ Kings 19:14–18: "[Elijah] said, 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.' And the LORD said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." MH

forth against the Holy Supper as it is administered in our churches, according to Christ's institution, and, with the unanimous approval of all good men, is taught in accordance with the words of the testament itself. We are also in great hope that, if they would be taught aright, through the leading of the Holy Spirit to the infallible truth of the divine Word, they would agree with us and with our churches and schools."6

Apology [of the Augsburg Confession] (Müller, p. 156): "The wolves and false teachers, though they are in the church and do great harm, yet they are not the Church and the kingdom of Christ." Here our church confesses that the heretics are not outside the church but that they sow their pernicious seed within the church, so that therefore also in the multitude that the heretics gather around themselves the true Church is hidden. Hence the Apology (Müller, p. 153) also says: "The multitude of the wicked is much greater-indeed, almost uncountable-who despise the Word, bitterly hate it, and persecute it most vehemently, as this is done by the . . . heretics, etc. 8 Therefore, the true doctrine and Church are at times almost entirely suppressed and lost, as has happened under the papacy, as though there is no church, and lets itself often appear as though it had completely gone under."9 Here our church confesses that, because of the raging of the heretics, it often "seems as though" there was no longer any Church, though Christ "rule[s] in the midst of [His] enemies" (Psalm 110:2).

Ap VII–VIII (IV) 22, 9; Ps 110:2

[Apology] (Müller, p. 272): "We do not speak of all [condemning all Ap XXVII (XIII) 8 monks], for there may be some in the monasteries who know the holy Gospel of Christ and do not base their holiness [their righteousness] on their traditions."10

3. WITNESSES OF THE CHURCH IN THE PRIVATE WRITINGS OF ITS TEACHERS

[Martin] Luther: "There have always been some under the papacy who have believed, and of these there are still many today whom we do not know. These God preserves [in the faith] by His Word and Sacraments without the thanks of the devil and the pope" (Lectures on Psalm 45; Halle 5:668).

W² 5:468 (Cf. AE 12:297)

⁶ Cf. Triglot Concordia, 19; BSLK, 11. MH

⁷ Cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 234; BSLK, 239.25. MH

⁸ JTM expanded upon "heretics, etc.," by noting that Walther meant "Turks, Mohammedans, and other tyrants." MH

⁹ Cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 228; BSLK, 235. MH

¹⁰ Cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 420; BSLK, 379.15. Walther added a comment that "traditions" referred to human ordinances. MH

W² 20:1101 (Cf. AE 37:367) [Luther]: "Christianity is not only in the Roman Church or under the pope but throughout the world. So the prophets predicted that Christ's Gospel should go into all the world (Psalm 2[:8]; 19[:4]). Therefore, the Christian Church is dispersed everywhere physically [leiblich] under pope, Turks, Persians, and Tartars. But it is gathered spiritually by one Gospel and one faith under one Head, Jesus Christ" ([Confession Concerning Christ's Supper], 1528; Halle 20:1382).

W² 4:1136

[Luther]: "St. Augustine directs this passage" (Psalm 19:5)¹² "against the Donatists, who confined the Church to a little corner in [North] Africa. But the passage must rather be directed against our new Donatists, who deny that there are believers in India, Persia, and Asia. For wherever there are the sound [Schall] and the words of the Spirit of Christ, there beyond doubt is always the true Church of Christ, for Christ's Spirit never speaks anywhere except in His Church. Therefore, since the text here clearly says that 'the sound of the apostles has gone out to the end of the world' [cf. Psalm 19:4], and we read in no passage that this truth is retracted, we must take heed that we do not, with the wicked Donatists, either these or those, either the old or the new, glory in ourselves as though we were the only believers, since today we hear neither the Word nor the proclamation [Schall] of the apostles anywhere" (Lecture on Psalm 19 (v. 5), 1521; Halle 4:1487–88).

W² 9:44 (Cf. AE 26:25–26); 2Th 2:4

[Luther]: "Therefore, the church is holy everywhere, even in those places where the fanatics and factious spirits are ruling, provided they do not utterly deny and reject the Word and the Sacraments. For those who repudiate these things altogether are no longer a church. But where the Word and the Sacraments remain in their essential parts, there also remains a holy Church. And it does not matter even if the Antichrist himself were to rule there, for he does not sit in a stable of the devil nor in a pigsty nor among a multitude of unbelievers, but in the most exalted and sacred place, namely, 'in the temple of God' (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Therefore, it is manifest and certain that the temple of God must be and remain even under the spiritual tyrants who rule and rage in it. For everywhere, even under such tyrants, we find some who rightly believe. Hence the question can briefly and easily be answered, namely, that the Church is everywhere in the entire world, if only the Gospel and the Sacraments are present. But the Jews, Turks, fanatics, and factious spirits or heretics are not the church. For they deny and destroy these things" ([Lectures on Galatians], [1:2], 1535; Halle 8:1591-92).

¹¹ Psalm 2:8: "Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your heritage, and the ends of the earth Your possession." Psalm 19:4: "Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." MH

¹² Psalm 19:4: "Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." MH

[Luther]: "We must confess that the fanatics have Scripture and God's Word in other articles, and whoever hears it of them and believes it will be saved, though they are unholy heretics and blasphemers of Christ" ([Concerning Rebaptism], 1528; Halle 17:2675).

W² 17:2212 (Cf. AE 40:251)

W² 20:1771 (Cf. AE 38:296)

[Luther]: "No Christian can or should pray for the fanatics nor take up their cause. They are hardened and commit mortal sin (as St. John says [1 John 5:16]). I am speaking of the teachers [Meistern]. May our dear Lord Christ help the poor people who are under them against these murderers of souls. They are admonished earnestly and often enough, but they do not want [to listen to] me" ([Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament], 1544; Halle 20:2203).

[Nikolaus] Selnecker: "During the persecutions in France, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, no doubt many innocent people were tortured to death on account of their religion, and there were found many martyrs also among the multitudes who are **Sacramentarians**, ¹³ on whom even those who have hearts of stone must have compassion. But, dear Lord, these were not killed because of their [erroneous] doctrine of the Lord's Supper, but because they refused to acknowledge the papistic abomination and so were murdered as Lutherans. Therefore, God also graciously stood by them in their need and took them to Himself, having granted them joy and comfort and having covered and patiently borne with their weakness and their error [Nebenwahn], which they harbored and into which they had been misled concerning the Lord's Supper. Just as our merciful Lord always condones the errors and weaknesses of His believing [children] that they do not defend willfully, purposely, or maliciously" (Brev. resp. ad crim. Danaei).

Jakob Heilbrunner, after having shown that "we do not owe it to the Calvinists to acknowledge them as our brethren," continues: This "is not said of the common Christians [Zuhörern] who err from simplicity or from lack of better instruction, who perhaps believe in their hearts much better and more sincerely than do their teachers, and who, because they have turned away from the papacy, must suffer persecution. With these we experience Christian compassion and intercede for them before God. These also we gladly acknowledge as our dear brethren, for they do not err maliciously, and we have the comforting hope that God will not charge their errors against them. For it is not the erring that makes anyone a heretic but the stubborn adherence to error against one or more articles of the Christian faith despite thorough instruction, warning, and admonition" (Synopsis doctr. Calvin: Summarischer Begriff und gegründ. Widerl. der Zwingl. und Calv. Lehre, p. 140a).

¹³ Sakramentierer: Protestants who followed Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and, later, John Calvin (1509-64) in denying the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. MH

[Johann] Gerhard: "The true Church is placed in contrast to the false either exclusively, that is, as a nonchurch [Nichtkirche] or one that subverts the essence of Baptism and the entire [Christian] religion itself, or privately, that is, as one that is not an orthodox church. In the latter sense, a church that is guilty of partial apostasy is not the true Church on account of its perversion of [the Christian] religion, but it is a false, that is, a corrupt and impure, church. With regard to the first contrast, we admit that such a church is a true one. This appears (1) from the true Sacrament of initiation that it retains, for which reason 'those who were baptized by the Arians were not again baptized' (cf. Augustine's Letter 103);¹⁴ (2) from the communication of the Word by means of the public reading of the biblical texts that also is a proclamation [Predigt] in a certain sense according to Acts 15:21" (cf. Conf. cath., fol. 728).

Cf. GerhTC 25:241

[Gerhard]: "It is to be noted that there are certain grades of such purity, because the Word of God is preached in the church sometimes more purely and at times less purely. But it does not at once cease to be a church even if in some chief parts of the [Christian] religion it does not teach purely. The more purely and clearly the Word of God is proclaimed in a church, the more closely the proclamation and teaching approaches the norm of the Holy Scriptures, the more pure and scriptural the church will be. But the farther it departs from the norm of the Word, the more impure and corrupt the condition of the church will be. Still it does not cease to be a church because of every perversion [of doctrine], since, as we have shown above, God will produce and preserve for Himself a holy seed and spiritual children even if the public office of the visible church is corrupted.

"Therefore, the visible church is considered according to its outward form or, what is the same, according to the public office as being either in a pure and uncorrupt condition or in one that is impure and partially corrupt. If we call the pure proclamation of the Word and the legitimate administration of the Sacrament [according to Christ's institution] marks of the Church, then we consider the church in the condition mentioned first and in comparison not only to secular communities but also to corrupt and impure churches. That this is rightly so done is obvious from the fact that definitions, rules, and canons must be deduced from the ideal, so that corrupt churches must be reformed, renewed, and purified according to the form and norm of the more pure and clear doctrine.

"It is to be noted finally that whole churches are not to be judged only on account of their pastors nor on account of a few [of their members]. Therefore, whole churches must not be condemned immediately if either

¹⁴ This quotation from Augustine could not be located. MH

¹⁵ This quotation lacks clarity in both the original and Walther's translation. JTM

their pastors or some [of their members] deviate from the purity and clarity of the doctrine, since 'often the ears of the hearers are purer than the lips of the teachers.'16 And many [members], despite the corrupt condition of the church, retain the basic doctrines and either **do not assent** to the errors that the false teachers spread or adhere to them without pertinacity or free themselves from them before the end of their lives" (Loci theologici, De ecclesia, § 126).

[Gerhard]: "When the pure preaching of the Word is called the mark of the true Church, then the term 'preaching' is generally taken for the confession of the doctrine that all members of a church, both pastors and hearers, have in common and for the public reading of the biblical texts, which also is preaching in a certain sense (Acts 15:21).¹⁷ Preaching in a narrow sense is more properly a matter [Handlung] of the pastor rather than of the whole church, and not absolutely and unconditionally necessary for the church. The extremely trying periods of persecution show that the Church can be preserved by the mere reading of Scripture without the public preaching of the pure doctrine" (Conf. cathol., fols. 728-29).

[Gerhard]: "Baptism is a special gift of the Church. Therefore, wherever Cf. GerhTC 25:243 Baptism is administered in its true and unmutilated form, there God gathers a Church. Baptism is the Sacrament of initiation, which secures entrance into the Church. Hence wherever infants are baptized, there the gate and door to the kingdom of heaven is opened. Wherever Baptism is administered in its true and unmutilated form, there it is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, as the apostle describes it in Titus 3:5; there salvation is offered to those who are baptized, because God tells us that He saves us by Baptism, 1 Peter 3:21. But outside the Church no regeneration occurs, and outside the Church there is no salvation. Hence wherever Baptism is administered, there is a Church of Christ" (Loci theologici, De ecclesia, § 128).

[Gerhard]: "It must be repeated [here from what was said above], [namely,] that the church, as regards purity of the Word, has its various grades [Stufen], so that at times it is more and then again less sound and pure. Hence as the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments are the marks of the Church when we speak of it unconditionally and absolutely, the **pure** preaching of the Word and the **correct**¹⁸ administration of the Sacraments are the marks of the pure and uncor-

Cf. GerhTC 25:247-48

¹⁶ This statement by Hilary of Poitiers was made during the Arian Controversy in the ancient church. Walther provides the quotation from Hilary below, p. 105. MH

¹⁷ Acts 15:21: "For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." MH

¹⁸ rechtmässige; Gerhard: legitima. MH

rupt Church. As by the **preaching** of the Word and the administration of the **Sacraments** the church distinguishes itself from **secular** communions, which are **outside** the church, so it distinguishes itself from **heretical** communions within the church by the **pure** preaching of the Word and the legitimate administration [of the Sacraments]" (*Loci theologici*, *De ecclesia*, § 131).

Cf. GerhTC 25:265

[Gerhard]: "If Baptism and some chief parts of doctrine are retained in their unmutilated form, then God gathers for Himself in the corrupt condition of the visible church, indeed, in the midst of the group¹⁹ of heretics, by the means just mentioned, the invisible Church [*unsichtbare Kirche*] of the elect" (*Loci theologici*, *De ecclesia*, § 141).

Cf. GerhTC 25:243–44

[Gerhard]: "To the objection that also in the multitude of heretics Baptism is administered" (therefore, how could [Baptism] be a mark of the true Church!),²⁰ "we reply: When we speak unconditionally, the Word and the Sacraments are the marks of the Church; for wherever the Word resounds and the Sacraments are administered, there is a church. But since in the churches there are not the same grades of purity and soundness, we say that the pure preaching of the Word and the correct administration of the Sacraments are the marks of the Church by which the pure and sound Church is distinguished from those that are corrupt and impure.

"We must also carefully distinguish in a group of heretics what is valuable from what is valueless; that is, what properly belongs to the church must be distinguished from the additions of human reason. Baptism that is administered in its unmutilated form by heretics and the few chief parts of doctrine that they still retain pure and unmutilated are the proper gifts of the Church, but the added falsifications and errors are a leaven that does not belong to it. Therefore, even if Baptism is administered in a group of heretics, it does not cease to be a proper gift of the Church, and so also it is its infallible **mark**" (*Loci theologici*, *De ecclesia*, § 128).

[Hieronymus] Kromayer: "It may happen that the ears of the hearers may take from what is presented to them something that is better and more consonant with the truth than was intended by the teachers. ²¹ Thus, for example, in the papacy, despite the rubbish of human traditions, nevertheless Christ was apprehended and retained by devout hearers. And again, among the hearers that recently left the papacy [Calvinists], who did not recognize the depths of Satan despite the subtle discussions of the absolute [divine] decree [regarding predestination], some had the doctrine of the justification of a sinner by faith in Christ's merits deeply engraved on their hearts. Therefore, we by no means absolutely condemn the Christians who toward

¹⁹ Haufen; Gerhard: coetu. MH

²⁰ Walther's addition. MH

²¹ Another allusion to the statement by Hilary. See below, p. 105. MH

the end of the preceding century were put to death by the mandate of Duke Alba in Belgium [in 1567].²² Most of them did not recognize the depths of Satan, and far from trusting in their good works, they desired to be justified and saved solely by faith in Christ.—The [practical] use of this doctrine in the area of teaching is that we must carefully distinguish between the dogmatists and the hearers and not measure the whole church by the errors of the former. In controversial theology²³ this doctrine is to be used against those severe judges who often cast the stone of judgment upon whole and often innocent fellowships when religious persecution arises" (Theologia positivo-polemica, part 2, pp. 512-13).

[Johannn Benedikt] Carpzov: "In Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, the Church is described not as it often happens to be but as it should be as such and in its natural [proper] condition, namely, when it is not oppressed by persecutors or troubled by heretics. Therefore, it can easily happen, as indeed it has often happened, that the Church was hidden under tyrants or existed under a corrupt preaching office. Nevertheless, it does not cease to be the Church, as the Apology of the Augsburg Confession gloriously explains on page 145" [Rechenberg edition] (Isagoge in libros ecclesiarum luth. symbolicos, p. 306).

[Carpzov]: (In the Smalcald Articles, Luther says), "'We do not admit that they [the Papists] are the Church.' Here he speaks not of the Roman Church as such but of the Papists, or what adheres to the Roman Church, as a blemish or cancer cleaves to the body. For the Roman Church is something else than is the papacy in the Roman Church. Regarding the Roman Church, we do not deny that it is a church, inasmuch as it retains the 'matrimonial documents,' as Augustine calls them,²⁴ that is, the Word with its seals [Siegeln], 25 and inasmuch as it teaches some chief parts of the faith that also all other true believers profess, no matter where they may be. But what is attached to the modern Roman Church—namely, the papistic doctrine, worship, and hierarchy—and what renders it impure and contagious so far as the ministerium and the unadulterated faith are concerned is not the Church itself but an evil that is attached to the church just as a cancer or any other disease adheres to the human body; that does not change the body into a nonbody, but merely makes it an impure and diseased body.

²² Fernando Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentel, third duke of Alba (1507-82), was governor of the Spanish Netherlands (1567-73). Nicknamed "the Iron Duke," he established a tribunal that the Calvinists called the "Council of Blood." In a ten-year period, this tribunal resulted in the execution of thousands, according to Dutch sources (Encyclopedia Britannica s.v.). MH

²³ That is, apologetics. MH

²⁴ De symb. ad catechumenos 10. MH

²⁵ That is, the Sacraments, MH

"Hence it happens that also in the diseased Roman Church there have remained and still remain some **true believers**. Some are **hidden**, namely, the children, who by means of the impure ministerium are brought to the new birth through the Sacrament of Baptism, and the simple adults, who do not recognize the depths of Satan, Revelation 2:24, so that the Word that is still proclaimed in it does not return void, Isaiah 55:[11]. But some are also **manifest**, [namely,] those who abhor the abominations and embrace what is better. . . .

"Therefore, Luther did not have in mind the Roman Church as such or inasmuch as it is still a church or inasmuch as it is the Roman [Church], but he had in mind the Papists or the papistic crowd that perverted the Roman Church, or the Roman Church inasmuch as it is papistic and teaches and professes the papistic doctrine, worship, and hierarchy. Of this [papistic crowd] he says that it is no church, just as a disease is not the body but only something that is in and corrupts the body. Here we must consider also the distinction between the Roman Church and the Roman hierarchy [Stuhl] to which the Evangelical [Lutheran] estates referred at the Diet of Augsburg" (Isagoge in libros ecclesiarum luth. symbolicos, pp. 874–75).

[Carpzov]: "We have not separated ourselves from the Roman Church by the Reformation, but we have only abrogated the evil adhering to it, namely, the papacy. We admit that our church is a particular church, 26 but we do not say that it is the only true Church. For though, so far as visible assemblies are concerned, there may never be any purer [assembly] and [one] more exempt from blemishes than is the Lutheran [Church], yet we do not deny that there may be some other particular church, known only to God so far as the sincere members are concerned, who are hidden in such another visible group, even in one that is corrupt, in which the true Church properly consists....

"It is shown" (in Smalcald Articles III [III] 12²⁷) "that the true Church is none other than that which is holy, that is, which adheres to God's Word in true faith. And even if otherwise 'true Church' and 'pure church' are not synonymous since the one embraces more than the other (as a body may be a true body and yet one that is not pure), yet in this passage, as also in the Augsburg Confession, both [terms] are taken as synonymous, because the Church consists of the members who adhere to God's Word and to Christ in true faith and because the church, inasmuch as it is impure, is no church, though the true and pure Church is in it so far as there are [in it] hidden members [of the true Church] who are known only to God" (*Isagoge in libros ecclesiarum luth. symbolicos*, pp. 876–77).

²⁶ Note the use of "particular church" for the Lutheran Church in general. MH

²⁷ Cf. BSLK, 459. MH

From this it is obvious that our venerable teachers use the term "Lutheran Church" in a twofold sense. (1) Sometimes they use the expression in the general sense of the Church that Luther and all Lutherans confess as their spiritual mother and that has one Spirit, one faith, one doctrine, and is spread all over the earth. This Church existed even before Luther indeed, from the beginning of the world. Of the Lutheran Church in this sense, therefore, our fathers certainly confess according to God's Word that it is the only true Church outside of which there is no life and salvation. For in that case, they mean to designate no other church than the one holy Christian universal **invisible** congregation [Gemeinde]²⁸ of the saints and elect. However, this church our venerable teachers designated the "Lutheran Church" not because they thought that the proper kingdom and inheritance of Christ is the sum total of all those who rightly call themselves Lutherans, but because the enemies called the holy **doctrine** that the Lutherans profess, which is the doctrine of the whole true catholic Church, Lutheran, just as they called all **churches** that accepted this doctrine **Lutheran** churches.

(2) At other times, the fathers of our Lutheran Church designated [by that term] also the **visible** entirety [Gesammtheit] of all those who bear the name "Lutheran" and expressly profess the public Confessions that those Christians drafted who, in the sixteenth century, left the papacy and were derided by the Papists as "Lutherans." Of the Lutheran Church in this sense our fathers of course admit that it is not the only true Church but merely a particular church. This distinction is of the greatest importance. The failure to understand it has caused the greatest confusion, as is evident.

[Johann Conrad] Göbel: "In this article" (Article VII of the Augsburg Confession) "the Church, so far as pure doctrine [puritatem doctrinae] and pure worship [reinen Gottesdienst] are concerned, is described not as it always is but as it always should be, and also in what condition it was when it flourished [in flore] and was in its greatest glory as, for example, in the days of our Lord Christ and those of His holy and beloved apostles and as, by God's grace, it is found today in the Evangelical [Lutheran] churches. The Church of God here on earth is not always found in the same condition [Statu] nor [does it] always remain in the same fortunate state of well-being that always flourishes. Instead, the Church is like the **moon** that at times waxes and then again wanes, and the holy Gospel is proclaimed more purely at one time than at another. Such changes are noticed even at the time of the apostles in the very churches that they themselves had planted. Nevertheless, just as at the time of a lunar eclipse the sky does not disappear, so God preserves His Church on earth in the midst of darkness, [that is,] when the divine Word and the holy Sacraments are corrupted and obscured by false teachers. . . .

²⁸ Note that Gemeinde or "congregation" is used by Walther for the universal Church. MH

"Although the holy Gospel in the churches is not always kept equally pure and the holy Sacraments are not always administered according to the Gospel, but often great eclipses and obscurations darken the Church of God, the Church still does not lose its name. From Revelation 2-3 we learn that the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Laodicea, and other cities suffered from severe blemishes²⁹ and corruptions, yet they retained their names and were called the Church of God. This is true also of the church at Corinth, as we are told in the salutation [1 Corinthians 1:2]. Hence, though a church may be corrupt, and its condition could be much better, we must not at once throw out the baby with the bathwater and turn over such a church to the evil foe with cordial new year's greetings, but we must distinguish the good from the evil,³⁰ that is, the exquisite from the disdainful, just as experienced goldsmiths separate the gold from the copper, and the silver from the dross. The prophet Malachi uses these examples in Malachi 3[:3]" (sermons preached on the Augsburg Confession by J. C. Göbel, pastor at Augsburg, in 1654; pp. 524, 532).

Augustine: "Do not flatter yourselves," (Donatists,) "because we do not reject your Baptism. It is not your Baptism but that of the catholic Church that we possess. Therefore, when you separated yourselves [from the church], you took it along, not for your salvation but for your harm. For the sacred vessels of the Lord remained holy even among the heathen, for which reason the king [of Babylon], who dared desecrate them, was punished by the anger of God. Nor did the ark of the covenant lose its power [virtutem] of holiness even when it was captured by its enemies [1 Samuel 5]. If, then, those sacred

²⁹ Göbel: naevos. MH

³⁰ Göbel: pretiosum a vili. MH

^{31 1} Samuel 5: "When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and He terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, 'The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god.' So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, 'What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?' They answered, 'Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.' So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing a very great panic, and He afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, 'They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.' They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said,

vessels in no way lost the characteristic of holiness when they were with the heathen and no longer with their proper owners [the Israelites], how much more do the Christian Sacraments not lose their holiness when they pass over to the heretics in such a way that they remain also with us!" (Contra gaudentium 3.14).

[Augustine]: "In consequence of the darkness of the flesh, even some good [members] erred in that faction for a long time, though the fury of the evil [heretics] against the Church of God without doubt had become manifest" (De unit. eccl. 20).

[Augustine]: "Those who separate themselves from the communion of the rest [the Christian Church] violate Christian love, destroy the bond of unity, and are separate themselves in all things if they fail to do what they received in that communion [the church]. Hence if anyone who has joined their communion [that of the heretics] desires to return to the church, he must first receive what he did not receive [in the heretical communion]. But if they [the heretics] in some things do the same [as the Christian Church], they have not separated themselves in these things, and so far as their adherence is concerned, they remain in the structures of the whole [church]. In the rest they are cut off. If, then, they [the heretical churches] receive someone [who strayed away] into their fellowship, he will remain connected with the church in those parts in which [the heretics] are not separated. Hence when such a one [who has left the church] wishes to return to it, he will be healed in those parts in which he erred and was miserably mauled. But where he was received [by the heretics] as a believer, there he will not be healed [if he return to the church], but he will be acknowledged, so that we may not wound him more when we desire to heal that which is sound in him" (De bapt. 1.8).

Hilary: "The ears of the people are holier than the hearts of the priests. . . . Hence Christ's people will not perish under the priests of the Antichrist, since they believe that [the priests] mean what they hear of them. [The people] thus hear from them that Christ is God; so they believe that it is as they say. They are told of the Son of God; so they believe that God, who became incarnate, is and remains true God. They hear" (about Christ) "that He was before time; so they believe that this 'before time' means 'forever'" (Lib. adv. Auxentium 215). Here Hilary shows that even under the Arian preachers, who denied Christ's deity, since they retained the orthodox terminology, God's Church of true believers could be preserved.

^{&#}x27;Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.' For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven." MH

[John] Chrysostom: "It is not he who departs from the church bodily who leaves it, but he who in his mind forsakes the fundamentals of the truth confessed by the church" (homily 46 on Matthew).³²

B. Every believer for the sake of his salvation must flee all false teachers, and avoid fellowship with heterodox congregations or sects.

1. Proof from God's Word

Not a few, on hearing that the Church exists wherever the Word and the Sacraments are still found essentially, infer from this fact that it is a matter of indifference whether they belong to an orthodox [rechtgläubige] or to an unorthodox [falschgläubige] church, since, after all, they are in the church and so can be saved. But they are mistaken. True, it is not necessary to leave a heterodox communion in order to be in the church, and many indeed are saved who, for lack of knowledge, outwardly belong to sects and nevertheless continue in the [true] faith. But what does it profit anyone to be **in** the church if he is not of the church and [so] does not belong to it? Whoever has learned to recognize the false doctrine of the sects and their teachers and despite this fact continues to belong to them is indeed still in the church but not of the [true] Church. Such a person does not belong to the divine seed that is hidden in the sects. His continuing fellowship with the sects is not a sin of weakness, with which the state of grace can exist, for such a person acts willfully and contrary to the will of God, who in His holy Word commands us to flee and avoid false teachers and their false worship.

Therefore, as little as the doctrine that true Christians still commit sins of weakness justifies those who think that for that reason they knowingly and willfully may continue in sin, indeed, as surely as those who thus sin against [divine] grace are children of perdition, so little also does the doctrine that in the sects there are also children of God justify those who, contrary to God's command, knowingly desire to continue in them. Indeed, so surely also are such willful partakers of the perversion of the Word of truth children of perdition. For thus it is written:

Dt 13:1-3

Deuteronomy 13:1–3: "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells

³² This quotation could not be located in NPNF¹ 10:287–89. MH

you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Matthew 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Mt 7:15

Matthew 24:23-24: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There He is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

Mt 24:23-24

Acts 20:30-31: "And from among your own selves will arise men Ac 20:30-31 speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears."

Romans 16:17–18: "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive."

Rm 16:17-18

1 Corinthians 10:18, 21: "Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?³³ You cannot drink at the same time from the cup of the Lord and the devil's cup; you cannot at the same time be participants of the Lord's table and the devil's table."

1Co 10:18, 21 Luther

1 Corinthians 11:19: "There must also be factions³⁴ among you, **that** 1Co 11:19 Luther they which are approved may be recognized among you."

2 Corinthians 6:14–18: "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty."

2Co 6:14-18

Galatians 5:9: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."

Gal 5:9

³³ Luther's Bible has: in der Gemeinschaft des Altars. MH

³⁴ Luther: Rotten, ITM

Ti 3:10-11 Luther

Titus 3:10–11: "Avoid a divisive man, if he has been admonished once and a second time, and know that such a person is twisted and sinful since he has condemned himself."

2Jn 10-11

2 John 10–11: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting; for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works."

Rv 18:4

Revelation 18:4: "Come out of her" (Babylon), "My people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues."

2. WITNESSES OF THE CHURCH IN ITS PUBLIC CONFESSIONS

Ap VII–VIII (IV) 48; Mt 7:15; Gal 1:9 Luther **Apology** [of the Augsburg Confession] (Müller, p. 162): "Nevertheless, we should not receive or listen to false teachers, for they no longer stand in Christ's place [*Christus statt*] but are antichrists. And Christ clearly commands us regarding them: 'Beware of false prophets' [Matthew 7:15]. And Paul [writes] to the Galatians: 'If anyone preaches any other gospel to you, ... let him be accursed' [Galatians 1:9]." 35

Tr 38

Smalcald Articles, Appendix (Müller, p. 335): "In the third place, we must know also that though the pope had the primacy and superiority by divine right, we do not owe obedience to such popes as propose false worship, idolatry, and false doctrine contrary to the Gospel. Indeed, we should regard such popes and such rule as anathema and an accursed matter, as Paul clearly teaches in Galatians 1:8 and as it is written in Acts 5:29." 36

Tr 41–42; Mt 7:15; 2Co 6:14 Luther

[Smalcald Articles, Appendix] (Müller, pp. 336, 337): "This being the case, all Christians should beware most diligently that they do not make themselves partakers of such godless doctrine, blasphemy, and unjust tyranny, but they should flee from and curse the pope and all his members or adherents as from the Antichrist's kingdom, as Christ has commanded: 'Beware of false prophets' [Matthew 7:15]. And Paul commands that we should avoid false preachers and curse them as an abomination. In 2 Corinthians 6[:14] he says: 'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what . . . communion has light with darkness?' Indeed, it is difficult for us to separate ourselves from so many lands and people and teach a different doctrine. But here is God's command that everyone should take care and not consent to those who teach false doctrine or intend to uphold it by tyranny." 37

³⁵ Cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 242-43; BSLK, 246.20f. MH

³⁶ Cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 515; BSLK, 483. MH

³⁷ Cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 517; BSLK, 485. MH

[Smalcald Articles, Appendix] (Müller, p. 342): "For so Paul commands Tr 72 that all bishops who either teach false doctrine or defend false doctrine and false worship should be regarded as criminal people."³⁸

Formula of Concord, [Solid] Declaration, Article X (Müller, p. 698): "In like manner, too, such ceremonies should not be reckoned among the genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference [Mitteldinge], as make a show or feign the appearance as though our religion and that of the Papists were not far apart, thus to avoid persecution, or as though the latter were not at least highly offensive to us; or when such ceremonies are designed for the purpose, and required and received in this sense, as though by and through them both contrary religions were reconciled and became one **body**; or when a reentering into the papacy and a departure from the pure doctrine of the Gospel and true religion should occur or gradually follow therefrom. For in this case what Paul writes, 2 Corinthians 6[:14, 17], shall and must apply: 'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For . . . what fellowship has light with darkness? . . . Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord."39

FC SD X 5-6; 2Co 6:14, 17 Luther

3. WITNESSES OF THE CHURCH IN THE PRIVATE WRITINGS OF ITS TEACHERS

[Martin] Luther: "Whoever knows that his soul's curate [Seelsorger] teaches Zwinglian [Reformed] doctrine, he should avoid him and rather go without the Sacrament as long as he lives than receive it of him; indeed, he should rather die and suffer all things because of it. . . . In summary, while I am treating this subject, I hear with great horror that in the same church [einerlei Kirchen] and at the same altar both parties [Lutherans and Reformed] receive and obtain the same Sacrament, one party believing that they receive mere bread and wine and the other that they receive the true body and blood of Christ. Often I hesitate to believe that a preacher or curate of souls can be so hardened and malicious as silently to let both parties go [to the Sacrament], each in the illusion that they receive the same Sacrament according to their belief. If such a one should exist, he must have a heart that is harder than stone, steel, or diamond can be. He must surely be an apostle of wrath. The Turks and Jews are much better, for they deny our Sacrament and confess" (this) "publicly; so we remain undeceived by them and do not fall prey to idolatry. But these guys [Gesellen] must be the really

W² 17:2011, 2016 (Cf. WA 30/3:556-57, 561)

³⁸ Latin text: tamquam anathemate. JTM [For the entire citation, cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 524; BSLK, 492. MH]

³⁹ Cf. Triglot Concordia, 1053, 1055; BSLK, 1055. MH

high-ranking archdevils, for they give me mere bread and wine, and yet let me believe that I receive Christ's body and blood, and so they cheat me atrociously. Such [fraud] is too hot and hard; God will punish that before long. Therefore, whoever has such preachers or may expect that [fraud] from them should be warned about them as of the very devil himself" ([Letter to the Christians in Frankfurt am Main], 1532; Halle 17:2440, 2446).

W² 17:1180

[Luther]: "Whoever regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain cannot stand in one stall with others who teach false doctrine or are agreeable to it, nor can he continue to speak sweet words to the devil and his followers. A teacher who is silent over against error and nevertheless pretends to be a true teacher is worse than an outspoken fanatic [ein öffentlicher Schwärmer] and by his hypocrisy does greater harm than a heretic, so that no one should put confidence in him. He is a wolf and a fox, a hireling and a belly server [Romans 16:17]; he despises and rejects the doctrine, the Word, the faith, the Sacrament, the church and school. He either secretly lies with the enemies [of the truth] under one cover, or he is a cynic and a windbag who wants to see how things will turn out, whether Christ will win the victory or the devil, or he is altogether uncertain in his mind and not worthy to be called a **pupil**, let alone a teacher. He does not desire to offend anyone; he wants neither to confess Christ nor to hurt the feelings of the devil and the world" (conversation with Dr. Georg Major, 1546; Halle 17:1477).40

W² 9:642–653 (Cf. AE 27:36–46); Gal 5:9 [Luther]: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). "St. Paul regarded that warning very highly, and we should, too, especially in our time. For the factions [Rotten] that declare that Christ's body and blood are not present in the Lord's Supper slander and defame us as though we were contentious, stubborn, and unfriendly because on account of this one article concerning the Sacrament we sunder Christian love and the unity [Einigkeit] of the church. They think that we should not regard this article, which is not too important anyhow and of which we cannot be sure since the apostles did not explain it as much as is necessary, so highly and greatly, that on account of it we let the whole Christian doctrine and the general unity of so many Christian congregations⁴¹ go to pieces, [especially] because they certainly agree with us in all other doctrines of the Christian faith, which [they say] are more necessary and also more important.

⁴⁰ This document is not listed in Aland, *Hilfsbuch zum Lutherstudium*. W² 17:1179 notes that it is printed in the Altenburg edition (8:502), Leipzig edition (21:688), and the Erlangen edition (65:86) of Luther's writings. MH

⁴¹ christlichen Gemeinden; WA 40/2:45.28: Ecclesiarum concordiae. Walther is quoting the German text from W¹ 8:2652. MH

"With this argument, which makes a favorable impression on and sounds well in the ears of the common people, they effect not only that those who adhere to them become extremely inimical to us, but they also induce many pious people to become angry with us and imagine that we do not want to fellowship [mit ihnen nicht halten wollten] with them because of sheer stubbornness or some special grudge. But all that is clever trickery and craftiness of the devil, by which he endeavors nothing else than to pervert and overthrow not only this article [concerning the Holy Supper] but also the whole Christian doctrine.

"Therefore, we reply to their pretext with St. Paul and say: 'A little Gal 5:9 leaven leavens the whole lump' [Galatians 5:9]. Just as in philosophy a little mistake in the beginning will end in a very great and enormous error, so also in theology a little error will pervert and corrupt the whole Christian doctrine. Therefore, we must distinguish carefully between doctrine and life. The doctrine is not ours but God's, who has called us merely to be its servants and ministers. Therefore, we neither shall nor can yield or surrender even the least tittle or letter of it. But the life is ours, and therefore the Sacramentarians may demand of us nothing that we would and should not gladly do, suffer, forgive, etc., yet in such a way that we do not surrender anything of the doctrine and faith. For we always maintain with St. Paul: 'A little leaven leavens the whole lump.'

"Therefore, in this article we cannot yield a single hairbreadth, for the doctrine is so carefully gauged and measured off that you cannot add to it or subtract from it without great and serious harm. But the life is such that you can easily assume or also give up something, do or suffer something, as necessity demands.

"If a little speck of dust gets into the eye, you cannot endure it; so you let someone take it out, or otherwise it will harm the eye. Therefore, we Germans are accustomed to say of the treatment of the eye: 'Nothing is good [that gets] in the eye.' And Christ says in Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34: 'The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, if your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light,' and again in [Luke 11:]36: 'If, then, your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light.' By this allegory or parable Christ indicates that the eye, that is, the doctrine, must be absolutely pure and uncorrupt, clear and bright, so that not a particle of darkness, not even a little cloud, can be noticed in it.

"So also St. James in his Epistle says in 2:10 very nicely and aptly, not Jas 2:10 Luther indeed of his own spirit but as he heard it of the apostles: 'Whoever sins at one point is guilty of all.'42 Therefore, the doctrine must be like a precious and pure golden ring that has no rent or flaw; for as soon as such a ring

Mt 6:22 Luther; Lk 11:34, 36 Luther

⁴² Walther cites this from Luther's Bible translation. MH

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suffers a flaw or rent, it is no longer perfect. What would it benefit the Jews if they believe that there is one God and Creator of all things—indeed, if they were to believe all articles [of the Christian faith] and accept the whole Bible—but deny Christ? Therefore, the saying of St. James is true: 'Whoever sins in one point is guilty of all' [James 2:10].

"Therefore, we must carefully consider this passage against [the Sacramentarians'] argument, who charge us with the lie that we tear asunder love and unity in Christianity to the great harm and detriment of the holy Church. We certainly are ready and willing to keep peace with them and to show them love, but only as long as they allow our doctrine of faith to remain inviolate and pure. If we cannot obtain that from them, it is in vain for them to praise Christian love so highly. May that love be cursed to the depth of hell that is maintained to the harm and detriment of the doctrine of faith, to which whatever there may be must be subject: love, apostle, angel from heaven, and everything else.

"Hence, by the fact that they regard this matter so lightly and as of such little importance, they clearly show what they think of the majesty and glory of the divine Word. If they would seriously and heartily believe that they were dealing with God's Word, they would not jest and joke so frivolously with it, but they would hold it in highest esteem and would believe without any doubt or disputation what it tells and prescribes to them. They would also recognize that one word of God is all, and again that all words of God are one. They would recognize that all articles of our Christian faith are one, and again that one is all, so that if they surrender one, they in the course of time will gradually surrender all, one after the other; for they all cleave together and belong together.

"Therefore, we will let them exalt Christian love as much as they may. But we will glory in the majesty and glory of the Word and faith. Regarding love, you may yield somewhat without any harm or danger. But that cannot be done with the Word and faith. Love should suffer all things and yield to everyone. But faith can and should not suffer anything and should yield to absolutely no one. Love, which gladly yields, believes all things, puts the best construction on all things, forgives and suffers, is often deceived. But nevertheless all deceptions cannot harm it with a real harm rightly so called, for it never denies Christ, even if it is deceived. Therefore, love does not permit itself to be disturbed but always continues helping and benefiting everyone, even those who are ungrateful and unworthy. On the other hand, when the matter concerns salvation, and the fanatics teach their falsehood and error under the pretense of the truth so as to deceive and mislead many people, we certainly must show no love and must not approve and justify their error; for

then we lose not [merely] a gift granted to an ingrate, but we lose the Word, faith, Christ Himself, and eternal life.

"Therefore, do not doubt that if you deny God in one article, you deny Gal 5:9 **Him most surely in all.** For He does not permit Himself to be divided piecemeal into many articles, but He is altogether one God in every article and in all. Hence, when the Sacramentarians accuse us at great length and in many words that we do not consider love, as we justly should, we answer them with this passage of St. Paul: 'A little leaven leavens the whole lump' [Galatians 5:9]. Again: It is an evil thing to jest with honor, faith, and the eyes.

"All this I have said in so many words in order to confirm our adherents and to teach others who might be offended by our steadfastness [Beständigkeit], as they think that we are so very obstinate and stubborn, and that without valid reason. Therefore, it does not trouble us if they greatly boast how eager they are to preserve love and unity between us and them and how sorry it makes them that the two are separated. For whoever does not love and honor God and His Word is not benefited, even if he loves whomever he wills.

"For this reason St. Paul in this passage admonishes both teachers and hearers not to think that the doctrine of faith is so unimportant and frivolous a matter that they might jest and amuse themselves with it as they please. Rather, it is a glorious ray of sunshine, coming directly down from heaven to illuminate, warm, and rule us. As the whole world with all its wisdom and power cannot change this light of the sun, which comes down directly from heaven, so also we can neither subtract from nor add anything to the doctrine of faith, unless we want to destroy it altogether. . . .

"'He who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is' (Galatians Gal 5:10 Luther 5:10). With these words St. Paul condemns the false apostles most vehemently, as though he were pronouncing this verdict on them from the judgment seat of Christ. He ascribes to them the very offensive term 'deceivers of the Galatians,' though the friendly Galatians regarded them as the most holy people and as far greater teachers than even St. Paul himself.

"With this dreadful verdict, by which he so vehemently condemns the false apostles, he at the same time wanted to persuade the Galatians to guard and take care of themselves against them, as though they were the most dangerous poison. He meant to tell them: Why do you listen to these harmful and venomous liars who teach you nothing [good] but only lead you astray and with their teaching accomplish nothing other than merely to confuse your consciences? Therefore, they will also bear their judgment, no matter how great or exalted they might be.

"From the words 'whoever he is,' we may conclude that according to their outward appearance the false apostles must have been very pious and

Gal 1:8 Luther

holy people. It may be that among them there was an especially great and famous man who perhaps had been a disciple of the true apostles and therefore was held in highest esteem; for certainly St. Paul had just cause to use such hard, condemning words. In the same way he says earlier in [Galatians] 1:8: 'Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.' No doubt many were greatly offended at these hefty and hasty words, and they may have thought: How can St. Paul act so hastily contrary to [Christian] love? Why is he so stern and stubborn in a matter so unimportant and insignificant? Why does he hand over to the devil and everlasting perdition those who are Christ's servants just as much as he is? But for all that he does not care an iota, nor does it matter to him that they [the false teachers] were regarded as pious, holy, and learned men and so were highly esteemed. But because they pervert the doctrine of faith he curses and condemns them most vehemently, nor does he doubt by a hairbreadth that his way of treating them is right.

Thus today we also regard all as cursed and condemned [verbannet und verdammt] who say that the article concerning the Sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is unclear, or who distort the words of Christ in the Holy Supper. For we, in short, desire to retain all articles of the Christian doctrine absolutely pure and sure, whether they be great or small (though not one is small or insignificant to us), and we do not want to surrender one tittle of it. And that is as it should be; for the doctrine is our only light that lights and guides us and shows us the way to heaven. If we let it be made weak and dim in one particle, then we may be sure that it will become altogether powerless. If we fail here, love will do us no good. We certainly can be saved without the love and unity of the Sacramentarians, but we cannot be saved without the pure doctrine and faith. Hence we gladly keep peace and unity with those who with us treat and believe all articles of the Christian faith in a Christian and right way. Indeed, we would also like as much as possible to keep peace with our enemies; we will pray for those who in ignorance slander and persecute our doctrine, but never for those who knowingly and contrary to their conscience attack one or more articles of the Christian faith.

Gal 5:10 Luther

"And if we are so rigid and stubborn, we are taught that by the very example of St. Paul, who publicly and vehemently condemns the false apostles in a matter that they and their adherents regarded not only as insignificant and secondary but even as highly unfair (for they believed both, [namely,] that [the teachers] taught rightly according to God's Word and that [the hearers] believed rightly and according to God's Word); for he says: 'Those who trouble you shall bear their judgment' [Galatians 5:10]. Therefore, as I often and in many words have admonished to do, we must

diligently distinguish between doctrine and life. Doctrine is heaven; life is earth. In life there is sin, error, discord, vain labor and work. There love must not listen but overlook; it must suffer; and it must govern and exercise the forgiveness of sins, as long as one does not desire to defend such sin and error. But doctrine is a far different matter, for it is holy, pure, undefiled, heavenly, divine. Whoever desires to change or pervert that, to him must be shown neither love nor mercy. For that reason it [pure doctrine] requires no remission of sins.

"Therefore, it is not at all proper to try to compare doctrine with life; for a single letter, indeed, a single tittle of Scripture, is of more and greater importance than heaven and earth. Hence we cannot bear to have anyone pervert it in the least. We can well excuse and overlook weaknesses and faults in life. For we, too, are weak human beings who daily fail and sin; indeed, all dear saints confess most earnestly in the Lord's Prayer that they are sinners and that they believe in the forgiveness of sins. But by the grace of God our **doctrine** is pure. There is not a single article of our faith that is not well and firmly grounded in the Holy Scripture. But these [articles] the devil would like to besmirch and pervert [befudeln und verkehren]. That is why he attacks us so insidiously with the argument, accusing us through the factious spirits that we do not keep the peace but are quarrelsome and destroy the unity and love in the church or Christendom. . . .

"Here, then, we learn how St. Paul regards a little error in doctrine that might appear as very insignificant, if not even as the truth. He regards it as so great and dangerous that he dares curse the false apostles, though these seemed to be great persons. Therefore, we dare not regard the leaven of false doctrine as insignificant. No matter how small it may appear, its result is that the truth and salvation will be suppressed and crushed and God will be denied unless we guard against it. For if the Word is blasphemed and God is denied and blasphemed (and this must follow of necessity), then there is no longer any hope for salvation. But though we are slandered, cursed, and killed, we shall not be overpowered; for He who is never destroyed can again raise us up and deliver us from the curse, death, and hell.

"Therefore, we should learn to regard the majesty and glory of the Word Gal 5:9 greatly and highly, for it is not so insignificant and trifling as the fanatics of our time think, but a single tittle [of it] is greater and more than heaven and earth. So here we do not care anything for Christian unity and love, but we directly make use of the judgment seat, that is, we curse and condemn all those who pervert and corrupt the majesty of the Word even in the least; for 'a little leaven leavens the whole lump' [Galatians 5:9]. But if they will let us have the Word wholly and unmutilated, then we will be willing not only to keep love and peace with them, but we offer ourselves gladly to be

their servants and to do all they ask of us. However, if they do not let us [retain the Word], then may God grant that before they and all the world, and we with them, perish and be cast into the abyss of hell, He may remain true in His Word. If He remains, then there remains life and salvation. Then also those who believe His Word will truly remain and be preserved, even if they were in the abyss of hell" ([Lectures on Galatians], 5:9–12, 1535; Halle 8:2652ff.).

W² 20:772ff. (Cf. AE 37:23–28) [Luther]: "We will begin with the fact that they" (the Zwinglians) "write whole books and admonish us that we should not on account of these causes [differences regarding the Lord's Supper] destroy Christian unity, love, and peace; for it is an insignificant matter (they say) and an unimportant controversy because of which Christian love should not be violated. So they reprove us for adhering so sternly and firmly to [the doctrine of the Lord's Supper] and causing divisions. . . . But may such love and unity be cursed into the depth of hell, because such a unity not only tears apart Christianity, but it also mocks and ridicules its great distress in a devilish way. . . .

"No, my dear sirs, I will have nothing to do with such peace and love! If I would kill someone's father and mother, wife and child, and purpose to destroy also him, and then would say, 'Keep the peace, my friend; we want to love each other, for the matter is not of such importance that we quarrel about it,' what [do you think] he would tell me? Oh, how he would love me! So, then, the fanatics destroy my Christ, my Lord, and God my Father, in addition also my mother, Christianity, together with my brethren, and they also want to have me dead, and [yet] they want to cultivate my friendship [Liebe]. . . . Nor does it benefit them to say that otherwise they esteem the Word of God and the whole Gospel most dearly and highly except only this doctrine. My dear friend, God's Word is God's Word and does not bear any criticism. Whoever accuses God of lying in His Word and [so] blasphemes Him, or whoever says that it is a small matter in which He is being blasphemed and called a liar, he blasphemes the whole God and regards as insignificant all blasphemy of God. God is one and cannot be divided. He cannot be praised in one place and reproved in another, nor can He be honored in one place and despised in another. . . .

Mt 10:37 Luther; Mt 10:34; 2Co 6:15 "But we poor sinners [we Lutherans who oppose the Sacramentarians], who are 'altogether without the Spirit,' answer these pious Christians [the Sacramentarians] from the holy Gospel: 'He who loves father and mother, wife and child, house and home, as well as his own soul more than Me, is not worthy of Me' (Matthew 10:37⁴³); and again, v. 34: 'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.' So also Paul says: 'What accord has Christ with Belial?' [2 Corinthians 6:15]. If, then, we are to live in Christian unity and preserve

⁴³ Luther's paraphrase, largely based on Luke 14:26. MH

Christian love with them, we must also love their doctrine and practice [Lehre und Thun] and assent to it or at least condone it. Whoever cares to do this, let him do it, but not I! Christian unity is in the Spirit and means that we are of one faith, one mind, and one judgment [eines Mutes] (Ephesians 4:6). We gladly will be united with them in secular [weltlich] matters; that is, we are willing to keep bodily or temporal peace with them. But in spiritual matters we will avoid, condemn, and reprove them as long as they live as idolaters, perverters of God's Word, blasphemers, and liars. In addition we are willing to suffer persecution and separation from them as from enemies if and so long as God permits this. We also want to ask and admonish them to desist [from their error]. But to yield to their blasphemies, ignore and approve them, that we neither can nor want to do. . . .

"Therefore, we shall say to these fanatics and visionaries [Geistern], who Lk 22:48 offer us such peace, what Christ said to Judas, His betrayer, in the garden: 'Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?' (Luke 22:48). Most certainly it would be a Pharisaic peace and a kiss of betrayal if they ask us to be their friends and keep silence as we watch their burning and murdering by which they lead so many souls eternally into hell. And yet they insist that this [their teaching] should be regarded as insignificant and of no importance" (That These Words of Christ, 'This Is My Body,' Etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics, 1527; Halle 20:962ff.).

> W² 20:1778 (Cf. AE 38:304)

[Luther]: "Because so many and great warnings and admonitions of God have been addressed to them in vain" (the Sacramentarians), "... I must let them go and avoid them as self-condemned ([Greek:] autokatakritous), Titus 3:11, for knowingly and maliciously they want to be condemned. Nor will I have fellowship with any of them, whether he be Stenkefeld, 44 [Ulrich] Zwingli, or whoever he may be, neither by letters, writings, words, nor deeds, as the Lord commands in Matthew 18:17. I regard them all as one cake, for they refuse to believe that the Lord's bread in the Holy Supper is His true natural body, which the wicked and Judas received orally as well as St. Peter and all [other] saints. Whoever refuses to believe this (I declare), let him not molest me with letters, writings, or words. Let him not expect me to have fellowship with him, since that will never happen" ([Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament], 1544; Halle 20:2211–12).⁴⁵

[Luther]: "Some unreasonable persons [Geister], deceived by the devil, say regarding the Sacrament and other errors that we should not contend so sternly about one article and because of it destroy Christian love or deliver each other to the devil. But though they err in a minor matter, we must

W² 9:831-32 (Cf. WA 34/2:387)

⁴⁴ Luther is referring to Kaspar von Schwenkfeld (ca. 1489/1490-1561), though he uses the name "Stink-feld." MH

⁴⁵ This passage is part of the Lutheran Confessions. See FC SD VII 33. MH

yield and concede a little and preserve brotherly and Christian unity or fellowship, since they agree in other articles. No, dear friend, I will not have peace and unity if that means to deny God's Word, for this means to lose eternal life and all things [all spiritual blessings]. ⁴⁶ It is not proper here to yield or concede anything to please you and a few [other] people. But to the Word all things must yield, whether he is foe or friend. For that was given us solely for eternal life and not for outward or temporal unity and peace. The Word and doctrine must bring about Christian unity or fellowship. Where people are agreed and united in that, all other things [such as Christian fellowship] ⁴⁷ will follow, but where that is not the case, no unity will remain.

"Therefore, do not speak to me of love and friendship if the Word and doctrine are to be destroyed; for it is not love but the Word that brings eternal life, divine grace, and all heavenly gifts. We will be glad to maintain external peace with them in outward things as we must be with everyone else in this world, even with our worst enemies. Let that be done in this life and in secular affairs about which we do not contend. But in the matter of doctrine and Christian fellowship we will have nothing to do with them nor regard them as brethren but rather as enemies, because they knowingly continue in their error, and we will contend against them in our spiritual warfare. It is only a satanic, deceitful, and crafty attack by which they declare and demand that we should somewhat yield to them and condone their error for the sake of unity. By that [attack], [Satan] insidiously tries to lead us away from the [divine] Word. If we would concede to this and agree on this point, then he already has gained ground and would soon have an entire yard, and if we would yield to him the breadth of a finger, he soon would have⁴⁸ the whole hand.

"It may not appear that there is much danger and influence connected with this matter, but St. Paul represents it as very great; in fact, there is at stake the loss of God and eternal life, not merely money or goods, the love and favor of men, earthly peace and quietness, or whatever else flesh and blood may give or do or whatever else the world may give or take. Let these [earthly gifts] remain or perish, whatever may remain or perish; by that [Satan] has not yet gained anything. But if you permit him to take from you this one thing, the Word, you have lost all things and nothing can counsel or help you; for then the chief thing is lost without which there is no good [blessed] life. Whatever you can do will neither avail nor stand before God, and yet with such fine show and pretense the devil seeks and endeavors to

⁴⁶ JTM added the bracketed text. MH

⁴⁷ JTM added the bracketed text. MH

⁴⁸ Literally, "tear off." MH

rob you of [eternal life]; for it is his intention to deprive you of everything. Therefore, we dare not jest on this point nor be secure" (Sermon on the Christian's Armor and Weapons, 1532; Halle 9:455-57).

[Martin] Chemnitz: "It is true that, because doctrine is the chief part of the office, if true doctrine is perverted and perverse opinions are established, then the very Office [of the Ministry] itself is changed. And the office of those who pervert the doctrine must be abandoned, as it is written: 'Beware of false prophets' [Matthew 7:15]; and again: 'They do not listen to the voice of the stranger, but flee from it' [John 10:5]" (Examen concilii Tridentini, p. 237, a).49

Mt 7:15: Jn 10:5 Luther

[Johann] Gerhard: "We concede that in a certain good sense we are schismatics, namely, inasmuch as we have separated ourselves from the Roman Church and its head, the Roman pope. But we have in no way separated ourselves from the unity of the catholic Church and its Head, Christ Jesus. What a blessed schism [seliges Schisma] [this is] by which we were united with Christ and the true catholic Church! Such a schism it was in ancient times when the Christian Church severed its connection with the Jewish synagogue, and such also was commanded in Acts 2:40: 'Be saved from this perverse generation,' and again in Revelation 18:4: 'Come out of her, My people.'

Cf. GerhTC 25:288: Ac 2:40 Luther; Rv 18:4

"Such a schism the fathers also command. Ignatius [of Antioch] thus writes in his Letter 6 to the Philadelphians: 'If anyone follows him who has deviated from the truth, he will not inherit the kingdom of God, and he who refuses to avoid a false prophet will be condemned to hell.'50 Ambrose, in his commentary on the sixth chapter of Luke, remarks: 'If any church rejects the faith, it must be forsaken.' Chrysostom, in his homily 46 on Matthew, says: 'He does not leave the church who leaves it physically, but he who in spirit leaves the foundation of the Christian truth. We indeed leave them" (the Arians) "in a physical way, but they [leave the Church] by their faith' [their error of denying the deity of Christ]. Admonished by these commands and examples, we have separated ourselves from the idolatrous Roman

⁴⁹ Cf. Chemnitz's Works 2:142. MH

⁵⁰ Walther mistranslates the reference in Gerhard, who refers to "Ignat. Epist. 6 ad Philad." (that is, "Ignatius, Epistle 6 to the Philadelphians") not "Ignatius in seinem Briefe an die Philadelphier im 6. Kapital." The quotation is from the fourth chapter of Epistle 6. The Epistles of Ignatius survive in a corpus with spurious letters added to the genuine letters, which were recognized by Eusebius and Jerome, and in an interpolated text. Textual scholars speak of the "long" and "short" recensions. The two Loeb versions print and translate only the "short recension," which was first identified by Archbishop Ussher (1581-1656), better known for his work on biblical chronology. The sentences quoted by Walther are found together in the "long recension." The Greek is printed by J. P. Migne in PG 5:821A with a Latin translation at 5:822. For an English translation, see ANF 1:80. The sentence quoted is found in both recensions. MH

Church. We have not left Zion; rather, we have fled out of Babylon. We have not divided the church, but we have separated the disciples, following the example of Paul in the church at Ephesus (Acts 19:9). We have not erected an altar against an altar, following the examples of Jeroboam and the Donatists, but we cast the altar of Damascus" (2 Kings 16) "out of the house of the Lord and restored true worship" (*Loci theologici*, *De ecclesia*, § 156).

2Co 6:14 Luther; Eph 5:11 Luther; 1Co 10:14

[Friedrich] Balduin: "The admonition of Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14 is most serious: 'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?' and Ephesians 5:11: 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,' or 1 Corinthians 10:14: 'Flee from idolatry.' This [admonition] separates all believers from fellowship [Genossenschaft] with the wicked and severs the adherents of various religions from one another in their religious exercises [worship]. Therefore, it is the duty of every pious and steadfast confessor to guard the treasure of sound doctrine, of whose truth he is convinced in his conscience, in order that it may not be defiled, diminished, or lost altogether, which can easily happen through indiscreet association with opponents of the true religion. Therefore, we are in duty bound, as much as possible, to keep away from their worship [that of the heterodox] in order that we may not burden our consciences nor offend the weak by appearing to be in agreement with [zusammenzuhalten] the opponents. Against this apostolic admonition some here sin in a twofold way. In the first place, they of their own accord and without any outside command take part in such sacrilegious worship either because they are Epicureans, to whom religion is of no concern, so that they regard it as immaterial to what communion they belong, or because they seek some advantage that they could not obtain if they would refrain from agreement with others in the matter of religion. However, such people sin most grievously since there is only one faith, and of this everyone must be sure in his heart; for according to Romans 14[:23], whatever is done with a doubting conscience is sin, and in matters of religion, sinful gain must be avoided altogether. Such people halt between two opinions, and if they are not inveterate Epicureans, they at least are lax in religion and must face the Lord's severe judgment.

"In the second place, there are those who allege that they are compelled by the government to attend such [heterodox] worship. But since the government has no authority over conscience and religion, it is right to refuse it obedience in this matter, for we must obey God more than men, Acts 5[:29]. So also we must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's [Matthew 22:21].... Augustine, in his sixth sermon on the words of the Lord in the Gospel of Matthew, says: 'When the **emperor** commands one thing but **God** another, what do you judge? God's power is

the greater; that of the government is the lesser. Give to the government your taxes, but render obedience to God. Be complaisant: the government threatens you with **prison**; **God**, with **hell**.'51

"Nevertheless, there are two cases in which someone may attend the worship of unbelievers or heretics without violating his conscience: (1) in order to observe it, attending it only that one may bear better and surer witness against the ungodly nature of the unbelievers or heretics. Thus tourists attend the synagogues of the Jews or the papistic Mass and view their processions to be eyewitnesses of what they saw when they tell others about it, to whom it might seem hardly credible. But here great caution is needed so that it does not appear as though we agreed with the opponents. Therefore, we must refrain from the opponents' acts of worship [Geberden]; we must not fall down on our knees with [them] or beat our breast with [them], as the Papists do at the Mass. But rather we must make it publicly known by some signs that we do not agree with them, though we should not express our attitude toward the worship of the opponents by laughter or any other public sign of contempt.

Mt 6:24

"Where it is impossible publicly to show that we do not agree with them, it is better to remain away from such worship in order that we may not burden our conscience or expose ourselves to any peril from the opponents. Here is no place for hypocritical dissimulation, for this offends both God and man. 'No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other,' Matthew 6:24. Thus Paul at Athens entered the temple of the idol; yet he did not approve idolatry, but rather he made use of the occasion better to inform the idolaters, Acts 17:22-23. However, it is necessary that anyone who, without endangering his conscience, desires to attend the worship of the heretics merely as an observer should above all be sure that what he sees and hears there is contrary to true worship. . . . Then he who in his heart is firmly convinced of [the error] will, because of his own greater illumination through the Gospel, feel sorry for these blind persons and intercede before God for those so miserably deceived, that He may not impute to them their sin, but rather lead them to the knowledge of the truth.

"(2) It is permitted to attend the worship [gottesdienstlichen Übungen] of heretics if that is demanded by the government [weltliches Amt]. For example, if someone accompanies his papistic prince or master to the Mass or the papistic processions, he is free to do so, but he must in no way approve the idolatry of his superior or deny any part of his religion to please him, nor dare he hypocritically take part in the papistic superstition, bow his knees before papistic objects of worship, beat his breast, invoke the saints, offer

⁵¹ Cf. Sermon 12.13 (NPNF1 6:302). MH

gifts to the priests reading Mass, or show respect for or interest in it in any other way. But he must attend merely as an observer, not on account of the worship but merely for the sake of his master, whom he must accompany in his secular service. Thus Elisha permitted Naaman the Syrian to accompany his king to the temple of Rimmon, where the king indeed worshiped his idol but Naaman did not, for he merely served him by conducting him there, 2 Kings 5:18.

1Co 8:13

"But here also care must be taken in a twofold way. (1) This political service must not give offense to the weak, for if such conduct of an Evangelical [Lutheran] servant in a papistic temple would offend the weak, who perhaps might think that he harbors doubts about the Evangelical religion and approves the papistic idolatry, then he should rather desist from such service. For even things not forbidden must be left undone if they cannot be performed without giving offense, as Paul writes concerning the eating of meat: 'If food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble,' 1 Corinthians 8:13. In such a case either the weak are to be instructed and shown the true cause of such conduct, or the papistic master should be asked to spare him such service by which a weak brother is offended.

"(2) It may happen that such a service is required of Evangelical [Lutheran] ministers to tempt them, namely, whether they will agree in religion with their superiors, or whether by their presence they will approve or confirm the godless worship. In such cases it is not permitted to attend false worship. For if our liberty is tried and our consent is forced from us against our will by fraud, then according to Paul's example (Galatians 2:5) we must in no way yield to the enemies of the truth. Thus the Protestant electors and princes at the famous Diet of Augsburg in 1530 declined to accompany Emperor Charles V to the Masses and Corpus Christi processions because they perceived that this service was purposely asked of them at the instigation of the monks, not merely to do the emperor a political service but to confirm by their presence the papistic abomination. This they knew well because that diet was convened largely so that the Confession might be heard that opposed the papistic abomination. Hence they did not wish to act contrary to this [Confession] by this dangerous action" (Tractatus de casibus conscientiae 2.6.6).

2Co 6:14; 1Co 10:14 [Balduin]: "We have the command of the apostle: 'Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 6:14); rather: 'Flee from idolatry' (1 Corinthians 10:14). Those who knowingly and willingly take part in the idolatrous worship of the Papists and the heterodox religious exercises of the Calvinists are unequally yoked together with unbelievers by publicly participating in strange [heterodox] worship, even though they do not approve

of it in their hearts. Those who have learned to know the truth must flee all lies and errors. **Second**, we have the example of the primitive church, when the Christians would have nothing to do with the Jews in the public exercise of their religion. Although they agreed in many chief parts of religion, every party practiced its religion in its own communion in order that they might not seem to mingle religions [Religionsmengerei], which God had forbidden in the Law: Deuteronomy 22:9; Leviticus 19:19.

"In the third place, we must not confirm heretics in their errors, which would be done if we would take part in their worship. For by that we would lead them to believe that in the course of time we would join them also in other matters. Indeed, they would mock us, as though we would thereby signify that we had separated ourselves from them without [just] cause, since now we approve their worship by our conduct.

"In the fourth place, we would make ourselves partakers of the many blasphemies and abominations of which the sect is guilty, and this we must avoid with the greatest earnestness. For we are commanded to come out from them in order that we may not be partakers of their sins and may not receive their plagues (Revelation 18:4). If this coming out cannot be done with the body, it should be done in the heart by avoiding their worship [gottesdienstlichen Handlungen].

"In the fifth place, we would greatly offend the weak, as though we were not sufficiently firm in our faith and had done wrong by contradicting the adversaries so long and consistently. For why should we participate in the worship of those whose religion we know to be false? 'Woe to that man by whom the offense comes!' Matthew 18[:7].

"In the sixth place, the Sacraments are also marks of the Church and its confession. Hence whoever knows that the papistic or Calvinist churches are not the true Church must refrain from the sacraments of these churches; otherwise he silently approves the faith of such a church. Indeed, the use of the Sacraments is a special form of confessing.⁵² Hence, if we intensely loathe the [false] doctrine of a [heterodox] fellowship, we must also shun its sacraments so that we do not commit hypocrisy; for nothing is more dangerous in matters of religion than this pest. Indeed, what kind of faith or religion would that be of which by our action we attest the very opposite? For that reason, God demands that we serve Him with our whole person: Deuteronomy 6[:5]; Matthew 22[:37]. Incidentally, even a protest made by this outward action to show disapproval of the religion of the opponents cannot avert the danger of hypocrisy, for such a protest would be contrary to our action [fellowshiping with the heterodox], which supports or confirms

Mt 18:7 Luther

⁵² der Gebrauch der Sakramente eine besondere Art des Bekenntnisses. MH

the Papists and similar opponents in their errors and silently admits that they are right.

"Here, **finally**, we must add the example of the believers in the primitive church, who would have no fellowship with false teachers. As Irenaeus reports, the apostle **John** declined to sit next to Cerinthus.⁵³ **Polycarp**,⁵⁴ a student of John, spurned the greeting of the heretic Marcion so that the latter indignantly exclaimed: 'Do you not know me?' Polycarp answered him: 'I know you as the firstborn of Satan.'⁵⁵ So also **Cyprian** of old prescribed in book 1, chapter 4: 'A faithful and compliant people must separate itself from a public sinner and may not take part in the worship of a godless priest.' When Arsacius, after the banishment of Chrysostom, became his successor in the congregation⁵⁶ at Constantinople, not one of the believers honored him by addressing or hearing him, as Theodoret, Sozomen, and Nicephorus attest. Indeed, many preferred to be exiled rather than attend the worship of this hireling. Of Lucius the Arian,⁵⁷ as Socrates [of Constantinople] reports, someone said, 'God forbid that your hand should ordain [weihe] me.'

"Thus the [ancient] believers abhorred the worship of the heretics as long as they could still find a purer preaching office elsewhere. In the same way we must avoid the worship of those whose religion we know for sure is false and contrary to God's Word. If the government should compel us to attend such worship, we must disobey it, since this is contrary to conscience, which no one dare domineer. . . . But this matter [fellowshiping with the heterodox must be observed still more with regard to the Sacrament of the Holy Supper, which does not have as great a necessity as Baptism. That should be received neither from the Papists nor the Calvinists; for they do not have the true Lord's Supper because they pervert the essence of this Sacrament. . . . Here the saying of Augustine holds: 'Believe and you have eaten.' As I said before: To receive the Sacrament is a mark of confession and doctrine. Therefore, whoever does not regard as true the doctrine of the church in which he intends to attend the Sacrament cannot partake of the Sacrament in that church with a clear conscience" (Tractatus de casibus conscientiae 2.6.7).

Here we may add a few more testimonies from the writings of the teachers of the ancient church:

Ignatius [of Antioch]: "I beseech you therefore—yet not I but the love of Christ—live only on Christian fare, and refrain from strange food, which

⁵³ A Gnostic heretic. JTM

⁵⁴ Bishop of Smyrna. MH

⁵⁵ Cf. Against Heresies 3.3.4 (ANF 1:416). MH

⁵⁶ Gemeinde; Balduin: ecclesia. MH

⁵⁷ Heretical bishop of Alexandria. MH

is heresy. Those [groups] mix Jesus Christ into their poison, in which they say [things] unworthy to be believed, resembling those [persons] who give deadly poison with honeyed wine. Therefore, beware of such men! This will be possible for you, if you are not puffed up and are inseparable from God, from Jesus Christ, and from the bishop and the commands of the apostles (Epistle to the Trallians 6–7).⁵⁸

[**Ignatius**]: "For there are some who make a practice of carrying about the name" (of Christ) "with wicked guile, in that they do certain other things that are unworthy of God. These you must shun as wild beasts, for they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, and you must be on your guard against them, just as you must do with people who suffer from a difficult-to-cure" (contagious) "disease" (Epistle to the Ephesians 7).⁵⁹

[Ignatius]: "For as many as belong to God and Jesus Christ, these 1Co 6:9-10 are with the bishop. And as many as repent and come to the unity of the Church—these also shall be of God, to be living according to Jesus Christ. 'Be not deceived' [1 Corinthians 6:9-10], my brethren; if anyone follows a maker of schism, 'he does not inherit the kingdom of God.' If any man walks in strange doctrine, he revokes his faithful consent to the Passion" (of the Lord) (Epistle to the Philadelphians 3).⁶⁰

[Ignatius]: "But I guard you in advance against beasts in the form of men. You must not only avoid welcoming them, but, if it is possible, do not even meet [them]. Only pray for them, whether they may repent They abstain from the Eucharist and prayer" (as an act of fellowship)⁶¹ "because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh [Fleisch] of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins and whom the Father raised up by His goodness. They, then, who deny the gift of God perish in their disputes. It would be more beneficial for them to love, so that they also are resurrected. Therefore, it is right" (for us) "to refrain from such men and to speak about them neither in private nor in public, but rather to give heed to the prophets and especially to the Gospel, in which the Passion" (of Christ) "is clearly revealed to us and the resurrection perfectly accounted. But flee from divisions as the beginning of all evils" (Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 4, 7).⁶²

Irenaeus: "The apostles as well as their disciples exercised such great caution that they did not even want to converse with any of those who

⁵⁸ Cf. Apostolic Fathers 1:217-19. MH

⁵⁹ Cf. Apostolic Fathers 1:181. MH

⁶⁰ Cf. Apostolic Fathers 1:241-43. MH

⁶¹ By this insertion it appears Walther wishes to draw a distinction between prayer that is a demonstration of fellowship (i.e., public worship) and other prayer. MH

⁶² Cf. Apostolic Fathers 1:255, 259-61. MH

deceitfully tried to pervert the truth by their own fabrications" (*Lib. adv. haer.* 3.3).⁶³

Cyprian: "We must remain separate from the heretics as far as they themselves have separated themselves from the church" (Ep. I, 3 *ad Cornel*.).

Ti 3:10 Luther

Ambrose: "When a church spurns the faith and does not possess the foundation of the apostolic preaching, we must desert it in order that it does not besmirch us with the stain of perfidy. That is what the apostle clearly demands when he says, 'Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition'" [Titus 3:10].

1Jn 2:19

Augustine: "All who leave the church and are cut off from the unity of the church are antichrists. This [truth] no one should doubt, for he" (the apostle) "himself designated them thus: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us' [1 John 2:19]. Therefore, all who do not remain with us but go out from us make it manifest that they belong to the antichrist. . . . Either we are antichrists or they are antichrists. They call us antichrists and say that we went out from **them**; we say the same thing of them. But this epistle (of [St.] John) describes the antichrists. Everyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is an antichrist [1 John 2:22]. Therefore, let us consider those who deny this, and let us take notice not of what they say but of what they do. For if they are asked, they all with one accord profess that Jesus is the Christ. Let the tongue be silent for a while, and let us look at the life. If we find [from the life], as Scripture itself tells us, that the denial is done not merely with the tongue but by deed, then we certainly shall find many antichrists who indeed profess Christ with their mouth but depart from Christ by their conduct [moribus].

Ti 1:16; Mt 12:34

"Where do we find this in Scripture? Listen to the apostle Paul. When he spoke of such [heretics], he said: 'They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works' [Titus 1:16]. Here we learn who is an antichrist: whoever denies Christ in works is an antichrist. I do not listen to what is said; rather, I consider how one lives. If **the works speak**, do we demand **words**? For what evil [person] does not wish to speak what is **good**? But what does the Lord say of such? 'You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil?' [Matthew 12:34]. You bring to my ears your **voice**, but I regard your **thoughts**. There I behold an evil will, and you bring forth false fruits. . . .

"He is a doubly lying antichrist who confesses with his **mouth** that Jesus is the Christ but denies it with his **works**. He is a liar because he speaks one way and acts in another. Therefore, my brethren, if works are to be questioned, we find not only that many antichrists have gone out from us, but that many [have] not yet revealed that they have already gone out from us. For the church has many perjurers, deceivers, evildoers, etc. And all this

⁶³ Cf. Against Heresies 3.3.4 (ANF 1:416). MH

we cannot enumerate, which is opposed to the doctrine of Christ and to the Word of God. But the Word of God is Christ. Hence everything that is opposed to the Word of God is anti-Christian [im Antichrist]. For the antichrist is opposed to **Christ**. And do you want to know who manifestly opposes Christ? When it happens that they do evil and we begin to reprove them, they will blaspheme—because they do not dare blaspheme Christ— His servants by whom they are reproved. And when you show them that you tell them Christ's words, not your own, they will try, as long as they can, to prove to you that you speak **your own** words and not those of Christ. But when it becomes clear that you have spoken the words of Christ, then they will oppose also Christ and will begin to criticize **Him**" (*Expos. in ep.* I. Joh. 3).64

C. Every Christian for the sake of his salvation is in duty bound to confess and adhere to orthodox congregations [Gemeinden] and their orthodox preachers, wherever he can find such.

1. Proof from God's Word

The Lord says: "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). Again: "Whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). Finally, His holy apostle writes: "If you **confess** with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Romans 10:9-10).

According to these words, a person who has faith in Christ and His truth in his heart but refuses to confess it with his mouth cannot be saved. Hence every Christian is in duty bound, at the peril of losing his salvation, publicly to renounce those who, as he knows, pervert Christ's truth and publicly to acknowledge and adhere to those who, he knows, publicly witness to Christ and His unadulterated truth. Hence our Lord says, "The one who hears you

Mt 10:32-33 Luther: Lk 9:26: Rm 10:9-10

Lk 10:16; Mt 10:14-15, 40-41; 2Tm 1:8

hears Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). And again: "And if anyone will **not receive** you or **listen to your words**, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. . . . Whoever receives **you** receives **Me**, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. **The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward**, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward" (Matthew 10:14–15, 40–41). So also St. Paul writes to Timothy: "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, **nor of me His prisoner**, but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

1Co 1:10–13; Eph 4:3–6; 1Jn 2:19; Heb 10:25 Luther; Mt 18:17

God's Word also declares very emphatically that a Christian should have fellowship with those who confess the true faith and beware of causing divisions and separations, be it by word or deed. For thus it is written: "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, 'I follow Paul,' or 'I follow Apollos, or 'I follow Cephas,' or 'I follow Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Again: "[Be] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of" (us) "all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:3–6). Finally: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19). All of these are grounds on which the apostle bases his admonition: "Let us ... not neglect our meeting together as is the habit of some" (Hebrews 10:25), and the command of the Lord: "If he refuses to listen even to the church [Gemeine], let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17).

Ac 2:42, 44, 46–47 Luther Accordingly, we are told of the first Christians not only that "they devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching**" but also **to** "**the fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And all who believed were together. . . . And day by day, they attended the temple together and broke bread in their homes; they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the **community** [*Gemeine*] day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42, 44, 46–47).

2. WITNESSES OF THE CHURCH IN ITS PUBLIC CONFESSIONS

Formula of Concord (Müller, p. 517): "And because directly after the FC Ep Summary 3 times of the apostles, and even while they were still living, false teachers and heretics arose, and symbols—that is, brief, succinct confessions—were composed against [heretics] in the early church, which were regarded as the unanimous, universal Christian faith and confession of the orthodox and true Church, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, we pledge ourselves to them, and hereby reject all heresies and dogmas that, contrary to them, have been introduced into the church of God."65

[Formula of Concord] (Müller, p. 569): "In the third place, since in these FC SD Summary 5 last times the benevolent God, out of special grace, has brought the truth of His Word to light again from the horrible darkness of the papacy through the faithful service of the precious man of God, Dr. Luther, and since this doctrine has been collected from, and according to, God's Word into articles and chief parts of the Augsburg Confession against the corruptions of the papacy and also of other sects, we confess also the first, unaltered Augsburg Confession as our symbol for this time, not because it was composed by our theologians but because it has been taken from God's Word and is founded firmly and well therein, precisely in the form in which it was committed to writing in the year 1530 and presented to Emperor Charles V at Augsburg by some Christian electors, princes, and estates of the Roman Empire as a common confession of the reformed⁶⁶ churches, whereby our reformed churches are distinguished from the Papists and other repudiated and condemned sects and heresies, after the custom and usage of the early church, whereby succeeding councils, Christian bishops, and teachers appealed to the Nicene Creed and confessed it."67

From this we see very clearly that our church was not at all separating AC XXI 1ff. itself from the true, orthodox Christian Church by separating itself from the papacy. Rather, by that [separation] it wanted to be faithful to the true Church of the past. Indeed, it was so far removed from separating itself from it that in its Augsburg Confession it referred to its agreement not only with Scripture but also with the church, and not merely with the church in general but especially also with the true Roman Church as it declares:

⁶⁵ Cf. Triglot Concordia, 777; BSLK, 768. MH

⁶⁶ This, of course, does not refer to the church that now bears the name "Reformed" and is commonly known by that term but to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which, true to God's Word, is the truly reformed church. CFWW

⁶⁷ Cf. Triglot Concordia, 851, 853; BSLK, 834-35. MH

"Since then [our doctrine] is clearly rooted in Holy Scripture and also is **not contrary to or against the common** [*gemeiner*] **Christian—indeed, also Roman—Church**, so far as we can judge from the writings of the **fathers**, we hold that our opponents cannot disagree with us regarding the articles mentioned above" (conclusion of Article XXI; Müller, p. 47).⁶⁸

But as the whole later church should always confess the early church, so every Christian should always confess and adhere to the orthodox church.

3. WITNESSES OF THE CHURCH IN THE PRIVATE WRITINGS OF ITS TEACHERS

W² 20:90–92 (Cf. AE 36:265–66) [Martin] Luther: "I see that it is very necessary to admonish those whom Satan is now beginning to persecute. Among them are some who think that they, when attacked, might escape danger, so they say, 'I do not adhere to Luther, nor to anyone else, but cleave to the holy Gospel and the holy or Roman Church.' Thus they are left in peace. And still they retain my doctrine in their heart as evangelical and hold to it. Truly, such confession will not help them, and it means as much as denying Christ. Therefore, I beseech them earnestly to beware.

"It is true that you should not say by body and soul: 'I am a Lutheran or a Papist,' for none died for you nor is your master—rather, Christ alone. And you should confess yourself to be a Christian. But if you believe that Luther's doctrine is evangelical and the pope's unevangelical, you must not cast Luther aside; otherwise you will cast aside his doctrine, which you regard as that of Christ. So you must say, 'Luther may be a scoundrel or a saint [Bube oder Heiliger], for that I do not care; yet the doctrine is not his but that of Christ Himself.' For you see that the tyrants have in mind not [merely] to kill Luther but to destroy his doctrine. It is on account of his doctrine that they attack you and ask you whether you are a Lutheran. Here surely you must not reply evasively, but you must freely confess Christ, whether He be preached by Luther, Claus, or George. The person you may ignore, but the doctrine you must confess.

2Tm 1:8; Mt 10:40; Lk 10:16 "For thus St. Paul writes to Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:8: 'Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our **Lord**, nor **of me** His prisoner.' If it would have sufficed for Timothy [merely] to confess the Gospel, Paul would not have commanded that Timothy should be unashamed of him—that is, not the **person** of Paul, but **the one who was bound on account of the Gospel**. If, then, Timothy would have said: 'I hold neither to **Paul** nor to **Peter** but to **Christ**,' though **he knew** that **Peter** and **Paul** taught Christ, **he**

⁶⁸ Cf. Triglot Concordia (German), 58; BSLK, 83c-d. MH

thereby would have denied Christ Himself. For Christ speaks in Matthew 10[:40] of those who preach Him: 'Whoever receives you receives Me'; and 'The one who rejects **you** rejects **Me**' [Luke 10:16]. Why is that? Therefore, in this manner, since they treat His messengers [Boten] (who preach His Word), so it is as if they treated Christ Himself and His Word in the same way" ([Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament], 1522; Halle 20:136-37).

[Luther]: "In addition, this article" (concerning the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper) "is not an article or teaching fabricated by men apart from Scripture, but it is clearly established and rooted in the Gospel by clear, pure, unmistakable words of Christ and has been believed and held with one accord from the beginning of the Christian Church in the whole world until this very hour. This is proved by the books and writings of the dear fathers, both in the Greek and the Latin language, as well as by the experience of its daily use and work until this very hour. The testimony of the whole holy Christian Church (if we would have nothing more) should alone suffice us to remain true to this article and to hear or to tolerate no factious spirit. For it is dangerous and atrocious to hear and believe anything against the unanimous testimony, belief, and teaching of the whole holy Christian Church that from its beginning now for more than fifteen hundred years has been taught with one accord all over the world.

"If it were a new article and had not been taught so unanimously by the entire Christian Church in the whole world ever since its beginning, it would not be so dangerous or atrocious to doubt it or to dispute about whether it is right. But since it has been taught with one accord from the beginning by the whole Christian Church, whoever will doubt it does as much as though he refuses to believe that there is a Christian Church. And thereby he not only condemns the whole holy Christian Church as a damnable heretic but also Christ Himself with all the apostles and prophets, who established and mightily attested this article in which we confess: 'I believe in a holy Christian Church,' namely, by the words of Christ, Matthew 28:20: 'Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age'; and by those of St. Paul in 1 Timothy 3:15: "... the Church of God ... [is] a pillar and foundation of the truth."

"Let Your Honorable Princely Grace consider that if you let such factious spirits come in and tolerate them—since you may hinder and prevent them—you would greatly burden your conscience and perhaps never again let it be at rest, not only on account of the souls that by them might be misled and go to perdition, whom Your Grace might have saved, but also on account of the whole holy Christian Church against whose faith, inherited of old and taught everywhere, and against whose witness to let anything be taught, if you could hinder it, would be an intolerable burden for [your] conscience.

W² 20:1684-86 (Cf. WA 30/3:552)

Mt 28:20: 1Tm 3:15 I would rather let not only all factious spirits testify against me but also all emperors, kings, and princes, wisdom and right than let one iota or tittle of the whole holy Christian Church witness or stand against me. For you dare not jest with any article of faith that has been unanimously held from the beginning in the whole Church, just as little as one may jest with papal or imperial rights or other human traditions of the fathers or councils" (*Letter against Some Factious Spirits, to Margrave Albert of Brandenburg,* 1532; Halle 20:2096–98).

Ps 26:8; 84:1

[Philip] Melanchthon: "We should know that there must be a public office of the Gospel and public assemblies, as we are taught in Ephesians 4[:10-12]. And we must join this assembly; we must be citizens and members of this visible assembly, as Psalm 25 commands us: 'LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells';⁷⁰ and Psalm 83: 'How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!'⁷¹ These and similar passages do not speak of a Platonic idea but of the visible church, in which the voice of the Gospel resounds and in which the office of the Gospel is seen; by this God has revealed Himself and is efficacious. And we should not praise those vagabonds who roam about and join no church because they cannot find an ideal [church] in which there is not something lacking in morals and discipline. Rather, we should seek the church in which the articles of faith are taught purely and no idolatry is defended. That church we should join and hear and love its doctrine as we unite our intercession and confession with its prayers and confession. . . . We should also learn to support it in order that no devastations arise. For where there are no assemblies, there the voice of the Gospel becomes silent. So the Mohammedan tyrants in many places destroyed all temples and did not permit even their own people to assemble. We should recognize that such satanic devastations and dispersions are a dreadful and very great evil. Therefore, we should ask God that He may preserve His congregations [Gemeinden], and we ourselves should support them with all our resources" (Loci theologici [Leipzig, 1552], pp. 420-22).⁷²

Cf. GerhTC 25:3-4

[Johann] Gerhard: "Since outside the Church there is no salvation, and he does not have God in heaven for his Father who does not have the church on earth for his mother,⁷³ therefore it is necessary that we be sure which assembly deserves the name and definition of a church in order that we may join that church and keep away from the church of the wicked. This same

⁷⁰ This is Psalm 26:8 in the ESV. MH

⁷¹ This is Psalm 84:1 in the ESV. MH

⁷² Cf. The Chief Theological Topics, trans. J. A. O. Preus, 2d ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 239–40. MH

⁷³ Cf. Augustine, On the Creed 1 (NPNF¹ 3:369). MH

necessity, to know this doctrine" (of the church), "the disputations of the Papists force on us, for on this article they place their chief hope of victory, and they appropriate the name 'catholic church' exclusively to themselves. . . .

"There are also other errors of fanatical men concerning the church. Some, despising the office of the Word and the Sacraments, boast of their [new] inspirations and revelations and extol themselves as being the true church of Christ. Others, when thinking of a church, look for the greatest assembly, or where the mighty and learned are inclined, and therefore hold that this assembly is the church. Still others ascribe salvation also to the heathen who are outside the church and without the saving knowledge of Christ. Others again falsely imagine that the church is the conflation [Zusammenfluss] of all sects, if only they bear the name of Christ. Some do not join any fellowship and do not concern themselves about any church, but rather indulge in their own special opinions and nevertheless hope to be saved. Some, finally, on account of the wicked persons who in this life mingle with the church, separate themselves from the church. On account of this and other perversions, the doctrine of the church must be diligently explained from the passages of Scripture" (Loci theologici, De ecclesia, § 2).

[Hieronymus] Kromayer: "It is necessary for us to look for the true Church. This is denied by the Remonstrants, 74 who follow in the footsteps of [Laelius] Socinus [1525–62]. He regarded the question of which is the [true] Church and where it is to be found as unnecessary, indeed, as useless. This he did to hide himself and his followers all the better and more securely and to spread his [heterodox] articles of faith. But we are commanded not only to seek the true doctrine and to distinguish it from the false but also to join the true Church and to have fellowship with it. This we prove from (1) Matthew 7:13–14: 'Enter by the narrow gate,' etc. (2) Romans 16:17: 'Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine that you learned, and avoid them.' (3) 1 John 4:1: 'Beloved, do not believe every spirit,' etc. (4) 2 Corinthians 6:14–15: 'Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers,' etc. (5) Ephesians 4:3ff.: 'eager to maintain the unity,' etc. . . . Therefore, we must not only acknowledge the [divine] truth, but we also must practice fellowship with those who confess it, according to Ephesians 4:3 and 1 Corinthians 12:12[-13]: 'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,' etc.; and Hebrews 10:25: '... not forsake our assembly,' etc." (Theologia positivo-polemica [Leipzig, 1677], pp. 1028-29).

[Abraham] Calov: "Must we seek the true Church in order to join it? Socinus, in the first chapter of his tract on the church and sending out

Mt 7:13; Rm 16:17 Luther; 1Jn 4:1; 2Co 6:14; Eph 4:3 Luther; 1Co 12:12-13; Heb 10:25 Luther

⁷⁴ A Dutch Arminian group. JTM

ministers of the church, judges that the question 'What [is the Church] and by what is the Church [known]?' is not necessary, indeed, is almost useless. Then he tries to prove that the Church cannot of necessity be known by its marks because it is not in itself necessary that the true Church be sought and recognized. This last point he again tries to prove from the fact that it is sufficient for salvation to keep Christ's commandments, and Christ has nowhere commanded us to seek the Church.

"If, then, he is faced with the objection that everyone must be in the true Church of Christ, and that from this it follows of necessity that everyone must seek and recognize the true Church of Christ, he denies this conclusion. Rather, he says that as soon as anyone has the true **doctrine** of Christ, he is actually in the true Church, and to be in it, he need not inquire which is the true Church of Christ since he already knows it, for he knows the others who have the same saving doctrine of Christ.

"Now, though we indeed confess that it is not directly and absolutely necessary for anyone to know what is the true Church and by what [marks] it is to be found (so that a person could not be saved unless he knows it and has joined a visible church as a member), if only he belongs to the invisible Church, which [truth] in other places we prove against the Papists, nevertheless we cannot agree with the Socinians, who judge too carelessly and indifferently concerning the necessity and benefit of seeking the true Church, etc., as though it were in no way necessary to recognize and join the true Church, since it is not only not commanded but really not necessary to seek it.

"This statement of Socinus is no doubt made in order that he may have for himself and others a subterfuge at hand; for this sect neither would nor could join a church, and also they are of the opinion that little would come of it. And this is no wonder, for they regard the Sacraments, which are only administered in the church, as amounting to nothing or at least to very little, and they do not at all consider them to be means of salvation [grace].

Eph 1:23; 4:12; Mt 3:2; Rv 3:12; 11:2; 1Tm 3:15 "Against Socinus we briefly quote: (1) The names of the church, for it is called the 'body of Christ' (Ephesians 1:23; 4:12); the 'kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 3:2); the 'city of God' (Revelation 3:12; 11:2); and the 'household of God' (1 Timothy 3:15). Therefore, the members dare not be separated from the body; the sons of the kingdom should, as much as possible, be in the kingdom; the spiritual citizens must be in the city of God; and God's family members must be in His house. They must not be away from the body, the kingdom, the city, and the house of God so that they themselves may not assemble with it, as much as possible, also with the outward fellowship.

"(2) The **type of the ark of Noah**, which no doubt prefigured the true Church. Since only those were saved who were in the ark of Noah, while the

others, who were outside the ark, perished in the flood, so there is no salvation outside the Church, but only in it are we preserved from the deluge of God's wrath, 1 Peter 3:18. Similar is the example of the homes of the Israelites in Egypt, which the angel of death did not touch, while outside them he killed all the firstborn, Exodus 12:13. Such also is the house of Rahab, in which all were saved who were received into it, while those who were outside were destroyed, Joshua 2:[19]; 6:21 (cf. the letters of Cyprian).

- "(3) The parables. In John 10[:1ff.] the church is compared to a sheepfold; as the sheep that roam about outside the sheepfold fall prey to the wolves or thieves, so also we shall perish unless we join the church. [The church] is compared to Jerusalem in Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22[-23]; and Revelation 3:12. But just as those who desired to worship God and to bring an offering to Him had to come to Jerusalem, Psalm 87:2, where God had His fire and hearth, Isaiah 31:9, so also must we join the church so that we serve God. The church is called our mother in Galatians 4:26; therefore, all of her children must gather to her in order that they might be nurtured by her to life everlasting (cf. Irenaeus).
- "(4) The command of Christ, Matthew 18:17: 'Tell it to the church.' If Mt 18:17 we are to tell anything to the church, we must of necessity know where and which the true Church is. So we must inquire which is the true Church and by no means regard this as something useless.

"(5) The command of the apostle, Hebrews 10:25: 'Let us ... not forsake Heb 10:25 Luther the assembly.' If we are not to forsake the assembly, we must join the holy assembly and Church, and therefore it is also necessary to find out where it is.

- "(6) The generally accepted principle: 'Outside the Church there is no salvation,' which can be proved from Ephesians 2:12ff.; 4:16; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 22:15. If ordinarily there is no salvation outside the Church, we must seek the Church to have a part in salvation. Then, if we cannot be joined with it in deed, we will at least be joined with it in our longing for it, and so it can happen that we rejoice also in having outward fellowship with it. Hence we dare not omit the search for it.
- "(7) The blessings entrusted to the Church. Whom God has entrusted with His spiritual and heavenly blessings, in order that they might ordinarily be imparted there, must not be regarded as useless and unnecessary to seek. And God has entrusted them to the Church—namely, the Word, the Sacraments, the Keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power to loose and to bind—in order that these spiritual gifts may be imparted [to man] there. Therefore, regeneration, renewal, illumination, remission of sins, sanctification, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are gifts that properly belong to the

Church. And as they are found in the Church, we must certainly seek to find the Church in order that we may enjoy these blessings.

Mt 18:20 Luther

"(8) The **promise** given to the communion of saints; for to it Christ has in particular promised His presence, Matthew 18:20: 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.' Therefore, it is necessary that we find ourselves among those who are gathered together in Christ's name; so we must seek them and cleave to them so that we may take part in this special promise.

Ps 84:4

- "(9) The heartfelt **desire of believers**, who, far from regarding fellowship with the church of God as not at all necessary or even as useless, heartily and ardently yearn for it (Psalm 26:8; 27:4; 42:3; 84:4). The psalmist says: 'Blessed are those who dwell in Your house, ever singing Your praise!' [Psalm 84:4].
- "(10) The **consensus of the ancient fathers**. Irenaeus: 'Those who do not adhere to the Church will not partake of the work of the Holy Spirit; for where the Church is, there is also the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is also the Church and all grace'; (cf. Cyprian, on the unity of the Church). Augustine writes: 'He who does not have God for his Father does not have the Church for his mother.' Again: 'Whoever has separated himself from the Church may think he were living ever so praiseworthy; yet for this one sin, that he has torn himself away from the communion of Christ, he will not inherit life, but the wrath of God will abide on him' Cocinismus profligatus, pp. 888–91).

[Johann Andreas] Quenstedt: "Outside of the visible church no invisible Church is to be sought, for the invisible Church is included in the visible" (*Theologia didactico-polemica*, part 4, 15; fol. 1639).

Finally, this [truth] is attested also by the ancient church [fathers]:

Ignatius [of Antioch]: "Let no one deceive himself: If one is not within the altar [area], he ruins his participation in the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two has such great power, how much more does that which the bishop and the whole church [offers]?⁷⁷ Therefore, whoever does not enter the common assembly⁷⁸ is already overly self-conceited and has already condemned himself. For it is written: 'God resists the proud'; therefore, we should be careful not to oppose the bishop, so that we are subject to God' (*Epistle to the Ephesians* 5).⁷⁹

⁷⁵ De Symbol. ad catech. 4.10; et serm., c. IX, de temp. CFWW [Cf. Augustine, On the Creed 1 (NPNF¹ 3:369). MH]

⁷⁶ Ep. CLII. CFWW

⁷⁷ ganzen Kirche; Ignatius: pases tes ekklesias. MH

⁷⁸ Versammlung; Ignatius: epi to auto, "at the same place." MH

⁷⁹ Cf. Apostolic Fathers 1:179. MH

[Ignatius]: "Just as the Lord did nothing without the Father, since He was one with Him, neither in His own person nor through the apostles, so you also should do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters. Do not attempt to decide what is appropriate [for you] by yourselves, but [let there be] in common one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope in love and in holy joy! Jesus Christ is one; there is nothing over Him. So let all come together as to one temple of God, as to one altar, to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father and is with one" (Father), "to whom He ascended. Be not led astray by heterodox opinions or by old fables that are profitless" (Epistle to the Magnesians 7-8).80

Clement of Rome: "Therefore, you who have laid the foundation of the sedition, be obedient to the presbyters [Ältesten] and receive the punishment as penance, bowing the knees of your heart. Learn to subject yourselves and put away the boastful and proud arrogance of your tongue, for it is better to be found small and of good reputation in the flock of Christ than to lose that hope by esteeming yourselves above measure" (Ep. ad Corinthians 57.1).81

Irenaeus: "In the Church God has established the apostles, prophets, teachers, and all the other operations of the Holy Spirit. In all this those do not participate who do not come to church but cheat themselves out of [eternal] life by their wicked opinions and their very wicked works" (Book 3, [ch.] 40).82



⁸⁰ Cf. Apostolic Fathers 1:203-5. MH

⁸¹ Cf. Apostolic Fathers 1:107. MH

⁸² Cf. Against Heresies 3.24.1 (ANF 1:458). MH