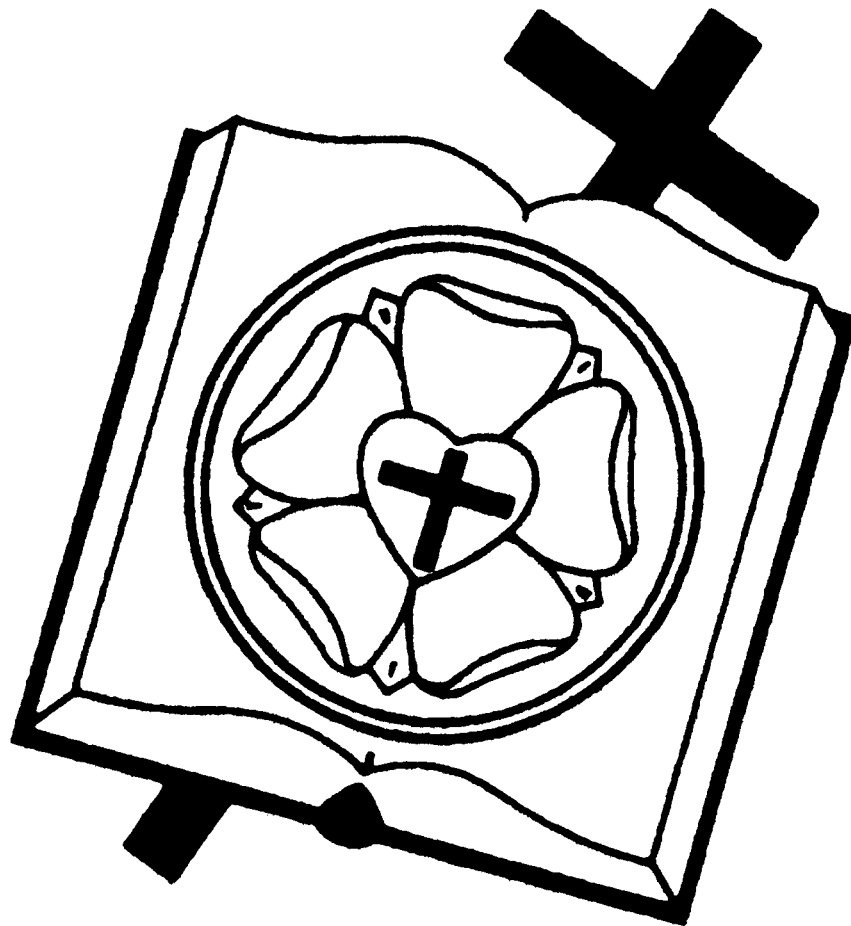
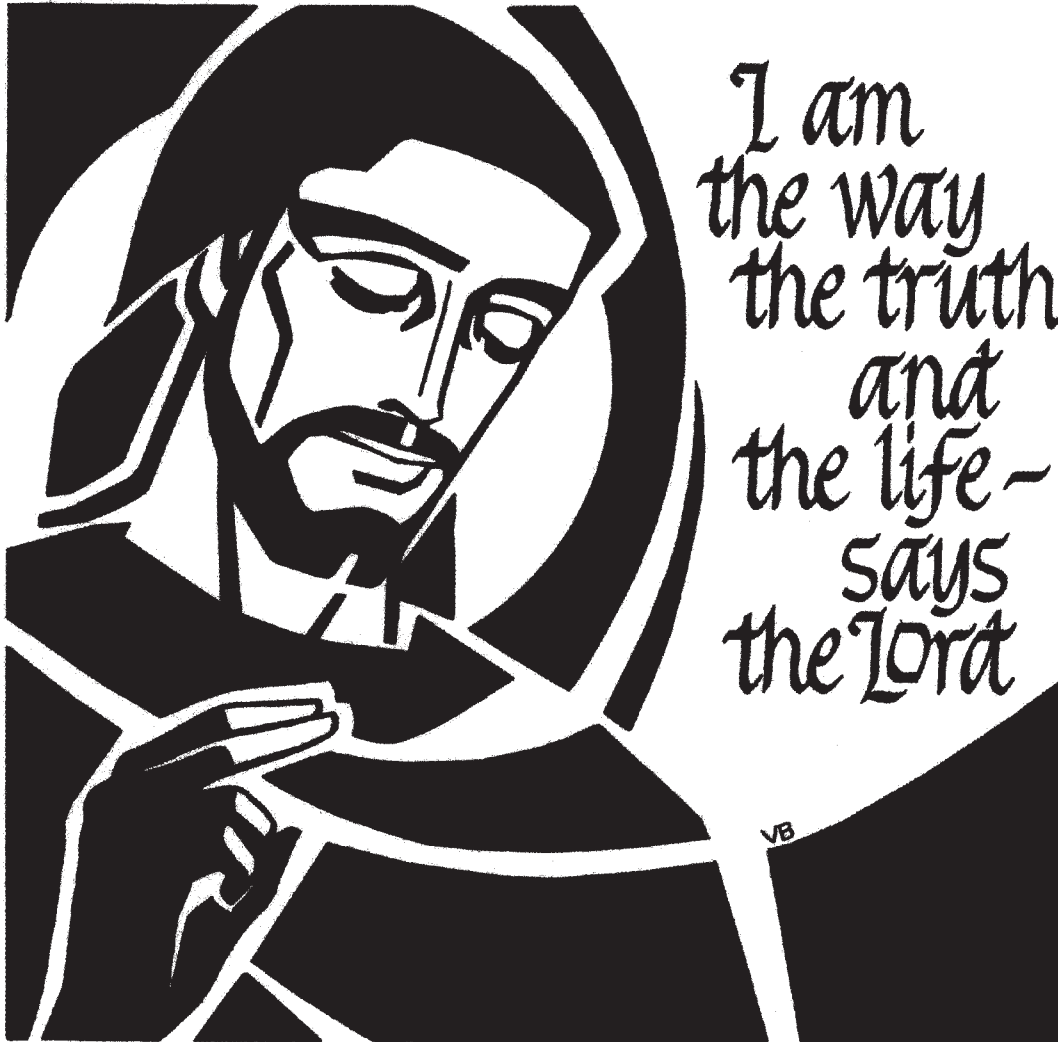


LIFE WITH GOD
A Survey Of Biblical Doctrine
As Confessed In
The Evangelical Lutheran Church



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Our Savior Lutheran Church
Houston, Texas
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UNIT I

Introduction

Ground Rules of the Class

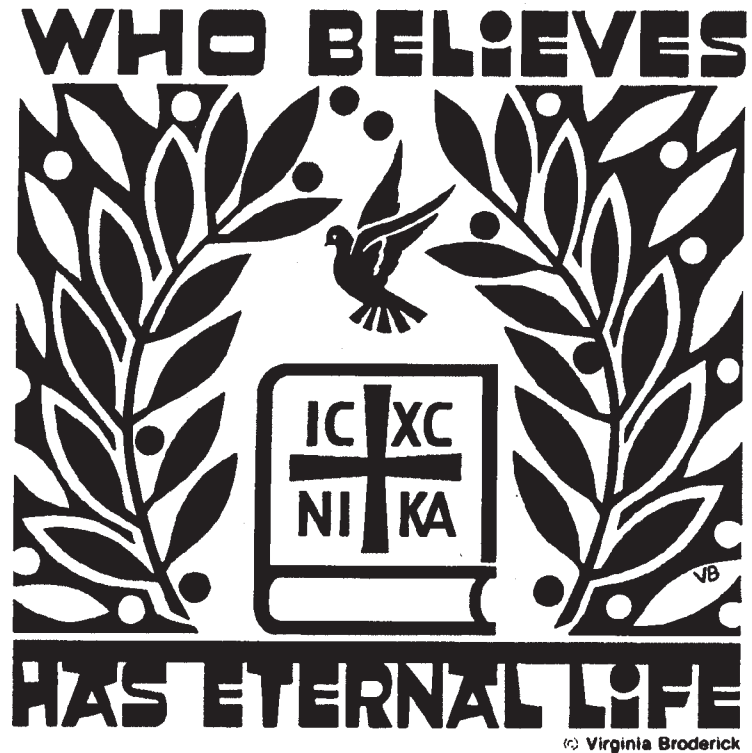
1. The Bible is our basic textbook; it is our only reliable guide. You don't have to accept anyone's opinion or tradition without Biblical support. But if it can be shown that a doctrine has a firm base in Scripture, then it must be accepted by all.

2. Class discussion and questions are encouraged. The benefit you derive from the class will be directly proportionate to your level of participation. Regular involvement in Sunday morning worship and Bible study are also strongly encouraged.

3. The printed notes will include additional material not covered during the class sessions which you are encouraged to study on your own. Time for discussion of your questions will be included at the beginning of each class session.

4. The basic doctrines of the Christian faith will be presented in a brief summary fashion. Our study is in no way comprehensive or complete. It is only the beginning of a lifelong process.

5. This class involves more than the simple transfer of information. It is intended to strengthen and renew your Life With God.



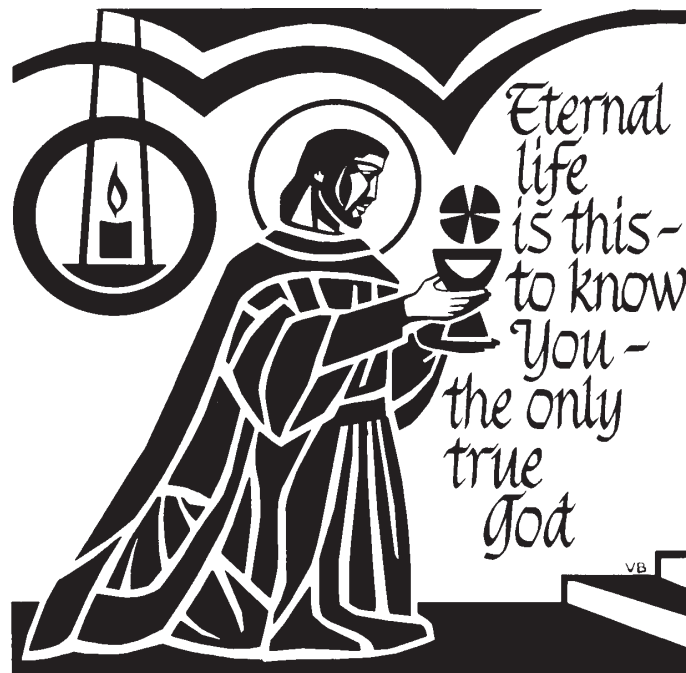
THE REAL MEANING OF LIFE

To be truly alive, that is, to experience the overflowing richness of the abundant, eternal life for which human beings were created, one must be in relationship with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.”

John 17:2,3 “For you have granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

John 11:25,26 “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’”



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WHERE CAN ANSWERS BE FOUND TO THE BASIC QUESTIONS OF LIFE?

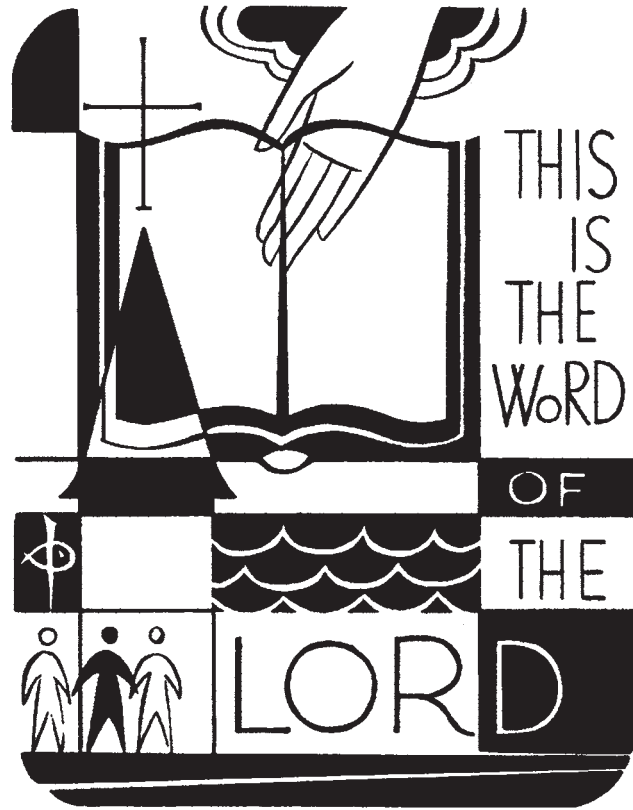
Since man's fall into sin, human beings have sought the answers to basic questions about the meaning of life within themselves. Historically this quest has followed one of three paths: (Note the parallel between these three paths and the components in the "*Image of God*" in which man was originally created. cf. p. 41)

- 1. Philosophy - seeking answers in the intellect and rationality of man.**
- 2. Mysticism - seeking answers in the feelings and emotions of man.**
- 3. Moralism - seeking answers in the self-control and discipline of man's moral will.**

The Bible teaches that all of man's attempts to find meaning for his life within himself are doomed to failure. This is inevitable because man is by nature:

- 1. Spiritually Blind - II Corinthians 4:1-4; I Corinthians 2:14.**
- 2. Spiritually Dead - Ephesians 2:1-5.**
- 3. An Enemy of God - Romans 5:6-10.**

If answers are to be provided they must come from outside of man, from God Himself. Apart from God there are no real answers to the basic questions of life. That is why God has spoken to man in His Word.



THE HOLY SCRIPTURES - THE WORD OF GOD

Each and every word of the Bible is the Word of God. (Plenary Verbal Inspiration) -

II Timothy 3:14-16 - "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." cf. Genesis 2:7; Isaiah 6:1-8; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Ezekial 2:1-3:15.

II Peter 1:19-21 - "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand, that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

The Characteristics of the Word of God

Because the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God it possesses certain divine characteristics. These characteristics include:

1. Inerrancy - The Bible contains no errors. cf. Numbers 23:19; John 10:35; 17:17; Romans 3:4; Titus 1:2.

“Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters...We reject the doctrine which under the name of science has gained wide popularity in the church of our day that the Holy Scripture is not in all its parts the Word of God, but in part the Word of God and in part the word of man and hence does, at least, might, contain error. We reject this erroneous doctrine as horrible and blasphemous, since it flatly contradicts Christ and his holy apostles, sets up men as judges over the Word of God, and thus overthrows the foundation of the Christian Church and its faith.” (Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, CPH, St. Louis:1932)





*“The Word of God as the Spring of Life”
by Rudolf Schüfer*

2. Authority - The authority of the Bible is the authority of God Himself who stands behind every statement, doctrine, promise, and command of Scripture. This authority cannot be superseded by any other. It is supreme. God said it: that settles it. *“My conscience is captive to the Word of God.”* (M. Luther, 1529) Whoever ignores, disregards, rejects, alters, or criticizes Holy Scripture, insults the majesty of God and rebels against His divine authority. cf. texts cited above, Ephesians 2:20.

“We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged...Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures. The distinction between the

Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong.”
(Formula of Concord, 1577)

3. Clarity - The Bible clearly reveals the will of God, setting forth all we need know to be saved. The Bible does not require the interpretation of others. cf. Deuteronomy 30:11-14; Psalm 119:105; II Peter 1:19; 3:15-16.

4. Sufficiency - Everything a believer must know to be saved and everything he must do to live a life pleasing to God is contained in Scripture. No additional revelation is necessary or to be expected. What is not clearly revealed in Scripture is not necessary for salvation. The Canon of Scripture is closed. cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; Matthew 15:9; John 20:31; 21:25; I Corinthians 13:8-12; II Timothy 3:16-17; 4:3,4; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-19.



“Thy Word Is a Lamp to My Feet” by Rudolf Schäfer

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Why are there so many different interpretations of the Bible? As a result of sin, natural man resists and suppresses the truth of God. In his defiance he refuses to submit to the authority of God's Word.



“Sola Scriptura” by Rudolf Schäfer

Romans 1:18-19 “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.” (This text continues - vs.20-32 - to provide Scripture’s most powerful description of the destructive effects of sin on the quality of human life.)

I Corinthians 2:14 “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them for they are spiritually discerned.”

II Corinthians 10:5 “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

II Peter 2:19-21 “They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred commandment that was passed on to them.” (cf. also II Peter 3:15-16)

WHAT IS THE KEY TO THE CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLE?

Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, is the heart and center of the Scripture and therefore the key to its true meaning.

John 5:39-40 “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life.”

Luke 24:27 “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.” (cf. also vs. 13-26)

John 20:31 “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

Ephesians 2:20 “You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.”

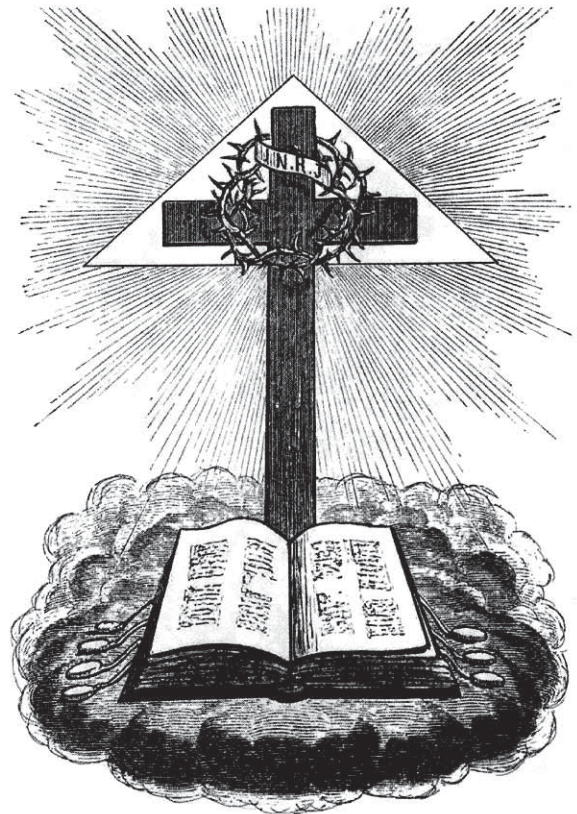
Hebrews 1:1-2 “In the past God spoke to our forefather through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.”



“All Bear Witness to Him” by Rudolf Schäfer

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION (HERMENEUTICS)

1. The Bible must be interpreted according to its own claims that it is the inspired Word of God.
2. The content of the sixty-six books of the Biblical canon is unified and consistent. The Bible cannot contradict itself. The existence of apparent contradictions in the Biblical text is the result of the inadequacy of our reason or the limitations of our knowledge.
3. Since God has chosen to reveal His Word in human language its meaning must be determined in accordance with the rules of language, grammar, and logic. Our reason, however, must always function as a servant of the inspired text; never presuming to be its master.
4. The study of Scripture is never an end in itself, a mere process of intellectual gratification. The purpose of Bible study must always be the glorification of God and the salvation of sinful men.
5. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is essential for a proper understanding of the Biblical text.
6. We are bound to the bare words (*nuda verba*) of Scripture in their normal, literal, sense unless the Scriptural text itself indicates that a figurative sense is intended.
7. The interpretation of every word and passage of Holy Scripture must be in agreement with its context.



8. No interpretation is correct unless it is grammatically correct, that is, according to the grammar and syntax of the language in which it was originally written.
9. Every interpretation of Scripture must be historically correct, that is, the Bible must be understood in the historical circumstances of the world in which it was written.
10. There is only one intended meaning for any given Biblical text.
11. All Biblical interpretation must have Christ as its center, teach Christ, and glorify Him as Savior and Lord.
12. Scripture interprets Scripture. The Scripture is its own light.

Scripture Interprets Scripture!

*It's the only way
to ever get beyond an endless variety of conflicting opinions!*

The Principle in Practice

John 1:1-14 ----- Genesis 1:1-27

Genesis 3:1-7 ----- Revelation 12:7-9

“It is indeed true that some passages of Scripture are dark; however, they contain nothing but precisely that which is found in other places in clear open passages...Be sure and do not doubt that nothing brighter exists than the sun, that is, the Scripture. But if a cloud has drifted before it, there, after all, is nothing else behind it than the same bright sun. Therefore, if you come upon a dark passage in Scripture, do not doubt that it surely contains the same truth that is clearly expressed at other places; and whoever cannot understand the dark passages should stay with the clear ones.” (M. Luther, 1521, From What Luther Says, Vol. I, Ewald Plass, Editor & Translator. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1959)

The Canon of the Bible

The term “*canon*” refers to those books in the Jewish and Christian Bible considered to be divinely inspired Scripture. The word is derived from a Greek and Hebrew term which means “*rule*”, “*measuring rod*”, or “*standard*”. Thus the Biblical Canon is the collection of books which met the standard of divine inspiration and are recognized as the Word of God.



St. Jerome - Translator of the Bible into Latin

The Hebrew Old Testament, called the “*Tanak*” (*Torah-Naviim-Kethubim*), was divided by the Jews into three sections, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. (cf. Luke 24:44) These three sections were subdivided into 24 books which included all 39 books of the modern Old Testament. The standard of canonicity for the books of the Old Testament was prophetic authorship. That is to say, for a book to be included it must indisputably have been written by a forth-teller who spoke the Word of God, a prophet. The canon of the Old Testament was formalized by a rabbinical council in the Palestinian village of Jamnia in 90 AD.

The Old Testament Apocrypha (Greek - “*hidden things*”) is a collection of 15 books written during the four centuries between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ. These books were never accepted as Scripture within Judaism. St. Jerome, translator of the official Latin Bible, the Vulgate, included the Apocrypha because of the

widespread popularity of these books but noted that they could be read for edification but “*not for confirming the authority of church dogmas*”. Luther also included them in his

German Bible version with the note: *“Apocrypha - These books are not held equal to the Sacred Scriptures and yet are good and useful for reading.”* The Roman Catholic Church at its Council of Trent in 1546 broke with both Jewish and early Christian precedent and declared the Apocrypha to be an official part of the canon of Scripture. The Catholic Church remains the only denomination which considers the Apocrypha to be a part of the Bible.

The Canon of the New Testament includes 27 books. The standard of canonicity for the books of the New Testament was apostolic authorship. For a book to be included in the New Testament Canon it must be recognized throughout the church as having been written by one of the apostles, the 14 men directly chosen by Christ to represent him as leaders of the church. By the end of the second century (200 AD) there was general agreement within Christendom as to which books should be included. There remained on the margin a number of books whose canonicity, while affirmed by the majority, was still in dispute. This group included Hebrews, James, II and III John, Jude, and Revelation. By the end of the fourth century, general agreement had also been reached in regard to these disputed books. In 367 AD, St. Athanasius published the final list of 27 books universally recognized throughout the Christian Church.



“St. Athanasius of Alexandria”

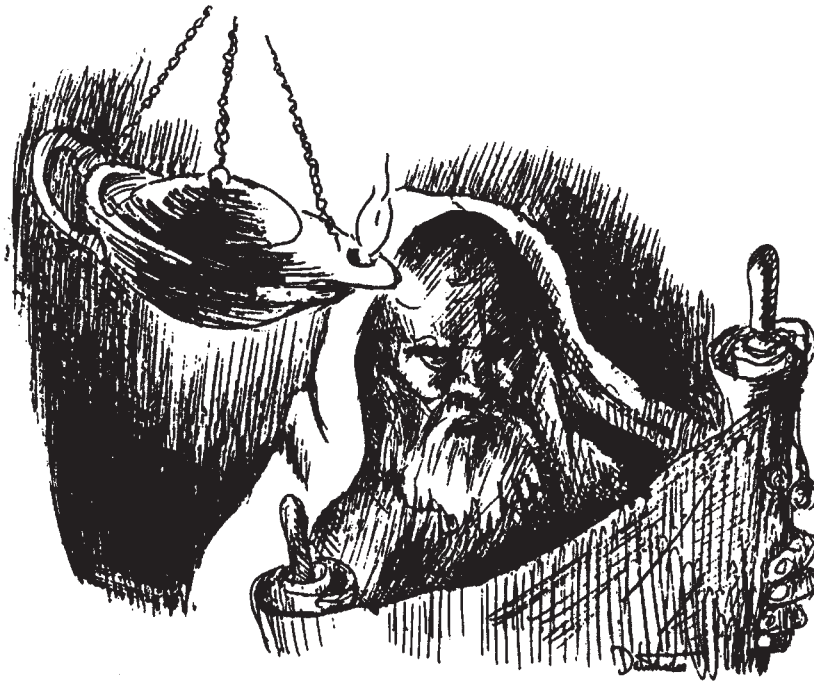
In the final analysis the books of the Bible are self-authenticating. They convey the power and authority of God who inspired them. The process of canonization is merely the record of God’s people’s formal recognition of that authority. Thus the church did not create the Bible; the Bible creates the church.

The Reliability of the Biblical Text

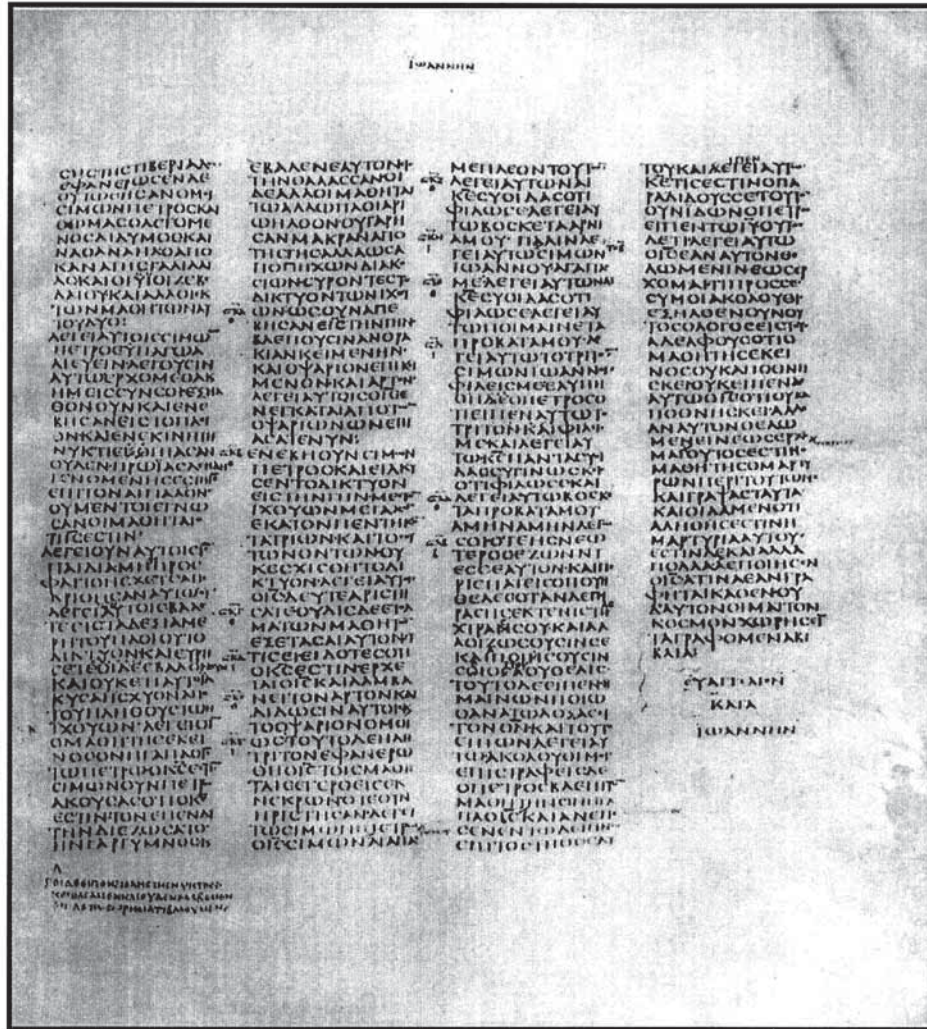
From Ancient Manuscripts to Modern Translations

The text of the Bible was originally written in Hebrew (OT) and Greek (NT). The original copies (“*autographs*”) of the 66 books of the Bible are no longer in existence. The Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture today are the result of meticulous comparison of thousands of manuscripts (hand written copies) and manuscript fragments (“*Textual Criticism*”).

The oldest Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament in existence today are the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered by accident at Wadi Qumram in 1947. The collection of 400 scrolls found in the Dead Sea Caves included texts from every book in the Old Testament except the Book of Esther. The scrolls, dating from before the time of Christ, were more than 1,000 years older than any previously discovered OT manuscripts. This amazing discovery demonstrated the accuracy of the 60 basic copies of the traditional “*Masoretic*” text (AD 500-900) which had been the basis for the Hebrew text used in modern times.



The Greek text of the New Testament is preserved in no less than 5,366 manuscript sources. These include papyri (88), uncials (247)-manuscripts written on animal skins



A Page from "Codex Sinaiticus"

in capital letters-, minuscules (2,795) - manuscripts written on animal skins in flowing cursive letters-, and lectionaries (2,795) - manuscripts arranged for reading according to the sequence of the liturgical calendar. 59 of these manuscripts are copies of the entire New Testament. The "Codex Sinaiticus", found in a waste basket at the Monastery of St. Catherine in 1844 by Constantin von Tischendorf dates from the early 4th century. Its counterpart at the Vatican Library in Rome, the "Codex Vaticanus," includes the whole Greek Bible from the same time period.

The careful study of this host of manuscript material indicates that the Hebrew and Greek texts on which our modern translations are based are accurate and reliable. There is not one instance in which the doctrinal differences between Christian denominations result

from a textual variant. The process of the preservation and transmission of the Biblical text is historical fulfillment of our Lord's promise: *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”* (Matthew 24:35).

“What the church lacks in our day is not a reliable text of the Bible, but faith in the sufficiently reliable text.” (F. Pieper, 1936)



UNIT II

God and Creation



Four Basic Views on God

Monotheism ----- One God

Polytheism ----- Many Gods

Pantheism ----- Everything Is God

Atheism ----- No God

Scripture ridicules the conclusion that there is no God as utter foolishness. To deny the existence of God is to deny the plain evidence of nature itself and human conscience. Atheism, so popular among the pseudo-intellectuals of the modern world, is simply not a rational alternative from the Biblical perspective.



“The Holy Trinity” by Albrecht Dürer

Psalm 14:1 “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

Romans 1:20 “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Romans 2:14,15 “When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”

Hebrews 3:4 “Every house is built by someone, but God is the Builder of everything.”



“The Holy Trinity” by Rudolf Schäfer

The Bible teaches that the true God is one. The faith of Scripture is strictly monotheistic.

Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” cf. Isaiah 40:10-31; Jeremiah 10:1-16.

Acts 14:15 “We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.”

I Corinthians 8:4 “We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.”

At the same time the Bible teaches that within the one God there are three separate and

distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

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

John 15:26 “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”

II Corinthians 13:14 “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

The Biblical teaching of a God who is one in three and three in one is called the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, incomprehensible to human reason, which must simply be accepted by faith on the basis of the Biblical testimony.



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“Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold the true Christian faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish for eternity. This is the true Christian faith that we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God, without confusing the persons or dividing the divine substance...three persons are to be worshiped in one Godhead and one God is to be worshiped in three persons. Whoever wishes to be saved must think thus about the Trinity.” - Athanasian Creed, 5th Century AD

The Attributes of God

1. God is a spirit, a personal being without physical substance. John 4:24
2. God is transcendent. He is not a part of created reality, a mere projection or amplification of natural forces. He exists apart from and over creation. Exodus 3:13-14



“The Almighty Enthroned Amid the Cherubim” - 12 Century Byzantine Mosaic

3. God is eternal, without beginning and without end, not bound by time. Psalm 90:1-2; I Timothy 1:17
4. God is unchangeable. Psalm 102:27; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17
5. God is almighty. There are no limitations upon His power. Genesis 17:1; Matthew 19:26
6. God is all-knowing. There are no limitations upon His knowledge. Psalm 139:1-4; John 21:17
7. God is present everywhere. Jeremiah 23:24; Acts 17:27
8. God is holy. He is without sin. Leviticus 19:8; Isaiah 6:3
9. God is just. He is fair and impartial. Deuteronomy 32:4
10. God is merciful and gracious. Jeremiah 3:12; Titus 3:5; Exodus 34:6-7
11. God is love. John 3:16; I John 4:8

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

The Bible teaches that God created the universe and everything that exists out of nothing in six days by His almighty Word. cf. Genesis 1:1-2:3



*“The Divine Christ as the Creator of the Universe”
13th Century Bible Illumination*

Exodus 20:11 *“In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.”*

Psalms 33:6, 9 *“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made...He spoke, and it came to be; he commanded and it stood firm.”*

Psalms 124:8 *“Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

John 1:1-3 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”*

Colossians 1:16 *“By Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.”*

Hebrews 11:3 *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*

An Affirmation of the Biblical Doctrine of Creation

“We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Genesis 1 and 2, namely by his almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence by a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less out of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God’s own record, found in God’s own book, the Bible. We accept God’s own record with full confidence and confess with Luther’s Catechism: ‘I believe that God has made me and all creatures.’” (Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, CPH, St. Louis: 1932)



An Analysis of Genesis Chapter One

“The first chapter of Genesis is the most remarkable chapter in the whole Bible and is unique in all the literature of the world. Here we have in simple and beautiful language the only answer to the question of how the world came into being...Here is dignity, simplicity, and beauty. In crisp, telegraphic style the drama of creation is unfolded day by day...There is no vagueness or uncertainty here, no bombast or meaningless verbiage. There is no grotesque description of the creating gods as found in the pagan mythologies. The Eternal God was, He speaks, and things are. Every word is a flash of creating power. Here God reveals His majesty, power, and wisdom in actions that are beyond human comprehension; yet they are described in language so simple that a child can understand it...But this chapter is not only unique in its brevity and literary beauty: its content has stood the test of time. It has withstood the vicious attacks of the enemies of the Bible throughout all the ages-like the granite mountain peak calmly

defying the raging storms and ravages of weather. But the pretentious Lilliputian critics of the past, who arrogantly attempted to undermine this Rock of Ages with their toy picks and shovels, have been forgotten and their ever changing theories are remembered only by the professionals as antiquarian theological curiosities. The same will be true in the future by those who assume the role of critics now.” (Alfred Rehwinkel, The Wonder of Creation, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis: 1974)



“The Creation of the World” by Lucas Cranach - 1534

Creation vs. Evolution

What Difference Does It Make?

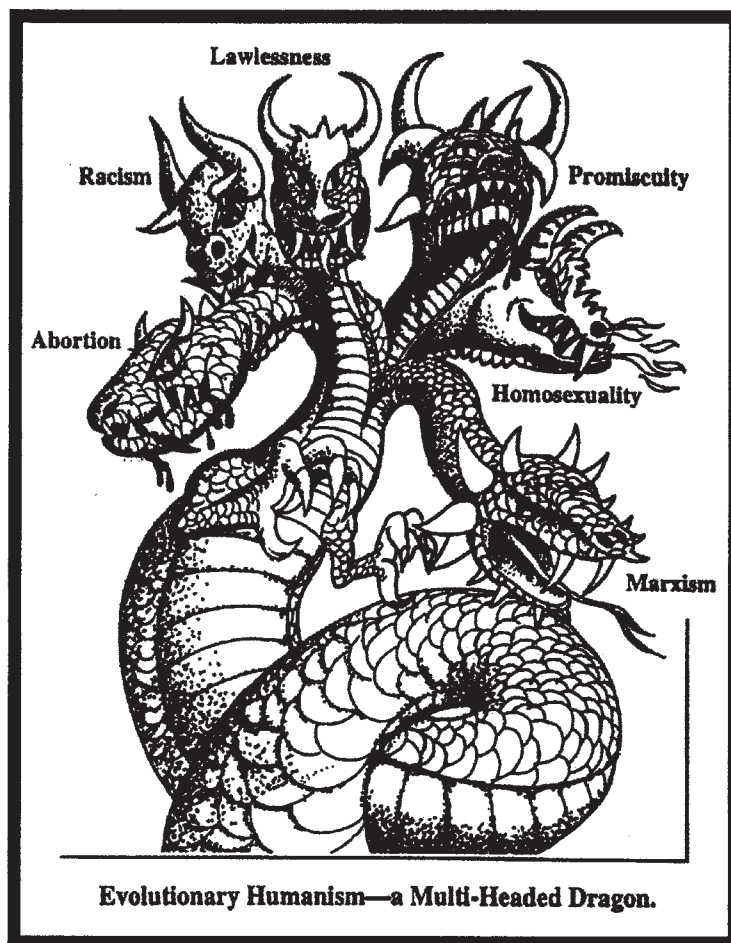
A denial of the Biblical doctrine of God as the Creator of the universe has far-reaching repercussions:

1. Destroys the basis for God's relationship with man
2. Denies man's responsibility to God
3. Robs humanity of its dignity and human life of its sanctity
4. Eliminates the possibility of objective morality
5. Jeopardizes the survival of the weak and the helpless in a world where "might makes right"
6. Subjects all human experience to random chance and accident

Evolution - A Christian Assessment

“The denial of God - rejecting the reality of supernatural creation and the Creator’s sovereign rule of the world - has always been the root cause of every human problem. This evolutionary, humanistic, pantheistic - even atheistic - world view has taken many different forms over the ages, varying with time and culture, but it has always been there in one guise or another, to turn the minds and hearts of people away from their Maker. There has indeed been an agelong war against God. It has been going on from the beginning of time and will increase in intensity in these last days...I am not speaking here only of Darwinism, nor even of biological

evolution in general, but of evolution as a total philosophy that purports to explain the origin and development of all things by natural properties and processes in a closed universe, one with no involvement by any external, supernatural Creator.” (Henry Morris, The Long War Against God, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids: 1990)



Christianity - An Evolutionist’s Assessment

“Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus’ earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the son of god. Take away the meaning of his death. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing.” (G. Richard Bozarth, “The Meaning of Evolution,” American Atheist, February, 1978)



“The Fifth Day of Creation” - 19th Century Bible Engraving

THE LENGTH OF THE CREATION DAY

In an attempt to reconcile the text of Genesis 1 with some form of “*theistic evolution*” it has been suggested that the six “*days*” (Hebrew - “*Yom*”) of creation are not literal, 24 hour, days but instead represent long geological, epochal periods of time which may have included millions of years. (cf. Psalm 90:4; II Peter 3:8)

The issue is not: “How could God have created the world?”

The issue is: “What does the Bible say about how God created the world?”

Both the immediate context of Genesis 1 (“*and there was evening and there was morning*” vs. 5,8,13,19,23,31) and the general context of Scripture (the establishment of the seventh day as the Sabbath because of the pattern of creation, Genesis 2:2, Exodus 20:8-11) make it unmistakably clear that the intended sense of the term is literal, 24 hour, days. It is therefore improper and destructive of Scripture’s authority as the Word of God to impose a figurative meaning on this term in order to comply with current scientific theory.

“Therefore I have often said, that anyone who desires to study the Holy Scriptures must see to it that he remains with the plain words whenever possible and never departs from them. Only an article of faith can compel us to conclude that the words must be understood differently than they sound. We are all the more certain that no plainer words have ever been spoken on earth than the words which God has spoken. Therefore, when Moses writes that God created heaven and earth in six days, let his words stand...If, however, you cannot understand how this could have been done in six days, then give the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are.” (Martin Luther 1524, From Preface to Sermons On the First Book of Moses, St. Louis, Edition III. Concordia Publishing House, 1894)



“The Sixth Day of Creation” - 19th Century Bible Engraving



“Carried Home on Angels’ Wings” by Rudolf Schüfer

The Creation of Angels

“I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.” (Nicene Creed, 325 AD)

The word “*angel*” (Hebrew- “*malach*” Greek- “*angelos*”) means “*messenger*” or “*ambassador*”. The angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve Him by ministering to His people. cf. Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91:10-11; Psalm 103:20-21; II Kings 19:35; II Kings 6:15-17; Daniel 6:16-23; Matthew 2:13-21; Acts 12:5-11

Scripture teaches that the angels are many and powerful. cf. Daniel 7:10; Luke 2:13; Psalm 103: 20-21; II Peter 2:10-11; Revelation 5:11 Ranks of angels are mentioned, but the differences between them are not defined: “*Cherubim*” - Genesis 3:24, Psalm 80:1; “*seraphim*” - Isaiah 6:2; “*thrones and powers*” - Colossians 1:16; and, “*archangels*” - I Thessalonians 4:16. Two of the angels, Gabriel (Daniel 8:16-26; 9:20-27; Luke 1:11-20; Luke 1:26-38) and Michael (Daniel 10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 9, Revelation 12:7) are specifically named.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

“My times are in your hands.” Psalm 31:15

All that exists is the handiwork of God with a beginning and an end as determined by the Creator Himself. God is constantly and actively present with all that he has made, keeping and sustaining, directing and governing. *“From Him and to Him and through Him are all things.”* (Romans 11:36) Without that ongoing divine participation and preservation the universe would disintegrate into chaos. The primary principles of order and direction, the very laws of nature itself flow from the will of Him who commands the morning and causes the dawn to know its place (Job 38:12)

“He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of His work. He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate - bringing forth fruit from the earth.” Psalm 104:13-14 (cf. vs. 1-35)

“He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45

“For by Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.” Colossians 1:16,17

“And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else...For in Him we live and move and have our being.” Acts 17:25,28

God’s governance of the created universe is complete down to the smallest and most intimate details of existence. The reality of divine providence is presented as a source of comfort and encouragement for the people of God.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:29-30

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear...Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!...Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!” Luke 12:22,24,27-28

“Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” I Peter 5:7



“What God Ordains Is Always Good” by Rudolf Schäfer



“The Creation of Adam” by Hans Sebald Beham - 1530

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

The universe was fashioned as a home for mankind. God created man in His own image after His own likeness, giving him dominion over every living thing that moved on the earth.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

Genesis 1:26-28

The uniqueness of humankind consists of our creation in the *“image”* and *“likeness”* of God. As creatures fashioned in His image, Adam and Eve were without sin. They knew God as He wishes to be known and were perfectly happy to live according to His will.

THE IMAGE OF GOD
Genesis 2

Ability to Make Moral Choices
(vs. 15-17)

Ability to Reason and Communicate Rationally
(vs. 20,23)

Ability to Love
(vs. 18-24)



“Adam in Eden” by Johann Elias Riddinger



“Adam and Eve in Eden” by E. Laitan

your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

The image of God was lost when our first parents disobeyed God and fell into sin. Their will and intellect lost the ability to know and please him. Even the ability to love was twisted into an expression of selfish manipulation. cf. Genesis 3:8-19. Thus the first family history of mankind in Genesis 5:3-5 distinguishes between Adam who was created in God’s own image and his son Seth who was born not in God’s image but in the image of his father Adam. For the believer, the image of God is restored as we *“put on the new man”* in Christ. That restoration, however, will only be complete when we live with Him in heaven, free from sin and all of its consequences.

Colossians 3:9,10 “Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

Ephesians 4:22-24 “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off



“The Creation of Eve” by Rudolf Schäfer

HUMANKIND AS MALE AND FEMALE

God created both man and woman in His image, equal to one another and interdependent upon one another.

Genesis 1:27 “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 2:18-23 “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’ Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all of the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam, no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said,

'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.'"

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

Galatians 3:26-29 "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."



"The Creation of Eve" by Hans Sebald Beham -1530

While men and women are equal, they are not identical. God created each gender with unique capabilities and talents designed to compliment one another. cf. Genesis 2:18 The roles which Scripture assigns to men and women in relationship to one another reflect that divine purpose. Man is to be the “head” with responsibility/ authority to place the welfare of his spouse/family ahead of his own, providing for and protecting them. Our Lord Himself provides the model for this self-sacrificing leadership. Woman, by her willing submission to the man as one equal to another, is to be the loving, caring “heart” of the family, using the sensitivity and creativity with which God has blessed her for the benefit of others. (cf. The description of the ideal wife - Proverbs 31:10-31).



*“God’s Wonderful Institution of Marriage”
by Rudolf Schäfer*

Genesis 3:17-19 “To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.’ To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and listened to the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground from which you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.’

Ephesians 5:22-33 “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church

and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - for we are members of his body. `For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you must also love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

1 Peter 3:1-2,7 "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives...Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

The Bible teaches that the church, **"the household of God"** bears a special responsibility to reflect God's will for men and women to the world. Therefore Christian women are to refrain from any activity in the church which would constitute an exercise of authority over men, or which could be construed by society as a rejection of the divinely ordained role/relationship between men and women.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 "I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teaching just as I passed them on to you. Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and that the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head - it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice, nor do the churches of God."

I Corinthians 14:33-38 "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the Word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, let he himself be ignored."

I Timothy 2:11-15 "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing - if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety."

Thus the responsibility/authority for leadership in the church, both in the pastoral office and in the governing assemblies of the congregations should be exercised by men. This certainly does not exclude women from being involved in Christ's work but directs their service in a way that accords with the headship principle that God set forth in creation.



*"Her
children arise
and call her blessed."*

Proverbs 31:28

UNIT III

SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL



"The Fall Into Sin" by Hans Weigel - 1535



“The Demons of the Seven Deadly Sins” by Hans Weigel - 1511

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

Sin is the natural condition of every human being. The Bible teaches that human sinfulness is not merely a series of errors, wrong actions, or bad habits. Sin is primarily what we are; not just what we do. The sinful thoughts, desires, words, and actions that we commit are the symptoms of the disease, not the disease itself. Our sinfulness begins at the instant we become human, before we have ever done anything.

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

Ephesians 2:1-3 “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest we were by nature objects of wrath.”

Romans 3:9-18 “We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Romans 8:7 “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”

I John 3:4 “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”



“The Fall” by J. James Tissot



ORIGINAL SIN AND ACTUAL SIN

Original sin is the total corruption of our whole human nature which we have inherited from Adam through our parents. Original sin has brought guilt and condemnation on all people, left everyone without true fear and love of God (spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God, cf. p.11), and causes everyone to commit all kinds of specific transgressions of the law of God.

Romans 5:12,14,18 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...Nevertheless death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come...Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.”

Genesis 8:21 “Every inclination of man’s heart is evil from childhood.”

Galatians 5:19 “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality; impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

Actual sin is every act against a commandment of God in thought, desire, word, or deed. It is God’s will, expressed in his Word, summarized in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), that determines right and wrong. That standard of morality is objective and absolute. It does not and cannot change in contrast to human standards of right and wrong which are subjective and functional (Does it work? Will I get caught? Does anyone get hurt?)! The corruption of Original Sin is universal. Therefore the prevalence of Actual Sin is also universal.

Matthew 15:19 “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

James 1:15 “After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.” (Sins of Commission)

James 4:17 “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” (Sins of Omission)

I John 3:4 “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”

Psalms 51:4 “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”

Psalms 14:3 “All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

Ecclesiastes 7:20 “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”

In the eyes of the holy God all sins are equally deserving of damnation. No sin is insignificant or tolerable. Sin is always a matter of life and death. While the eternal consequences of all sins are the same, some sins are more damaging than others here in time. (i.e. hate - murder: lust - adultery)

Galatians 3:10 “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’”

James 2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”

Matthew 5:19-20, 27 “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven...For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law; you will certainly not enter into the kingdom of heaven...You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart.”



“The Fall of the Human Race” by Hans Baldung Grien - 1511



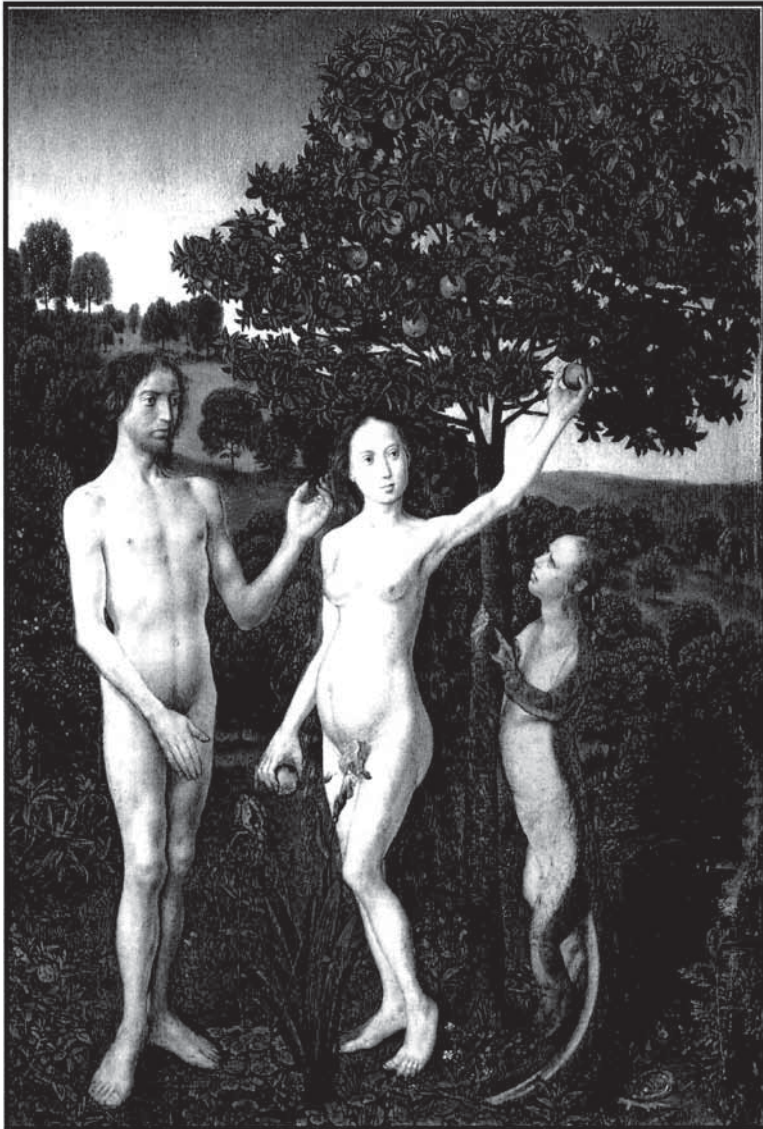
“Law and Gospel in the Garden” by Rudolf Schäfer

THE FALL INTO SIN

Sin was introduced into the perfection of God’s good creation when Eve and Adam yielded to the temptation of the devil and deliberately chose to disobey the will and command of the Creator. The Biblical account of the Fall into Sin provides a graphic description of the tactics which Satan successfully used against our first parents in the Garden of Eden. (cf. Genesis 3:1-7) He continues to use the same approach today with equally devastating results. The parallel account of the temptation of Christ (cf. Matthew 4:1-11) demonstrates that the victory of Satan is not inevitable if we will learn to pattern our lives after the *“Second Adam”* rather than the first.

THE TACTICS OF TEMPTATION

(Genesis 3:1-7)



"The Fall Into Sin" by Hugo van der Goes - 1470

STEP 1

Attack at the point of greatest vulnerability. (vs. 1)

STEP 2

Conceal your real objective by raising false questions. (vs. 1)

STEP 3

Suggest that God's commands are unrealistic and unattainable. (vs. 1)

STEP 4

Create confusion! Cast doubt on God's Word. (vs.1,2)

STEP 5

Deny the consequences of disobedience. (vs. 4)

STEP 6

Present sin as the path to happiness and self-fulfillment. (vs. 5)

STEP 7

Blend truth and falsehood together to make the lie more convincing. (vs. 5)

STEP 8
Appeal to human pride! (vs. 5)

John 8:44

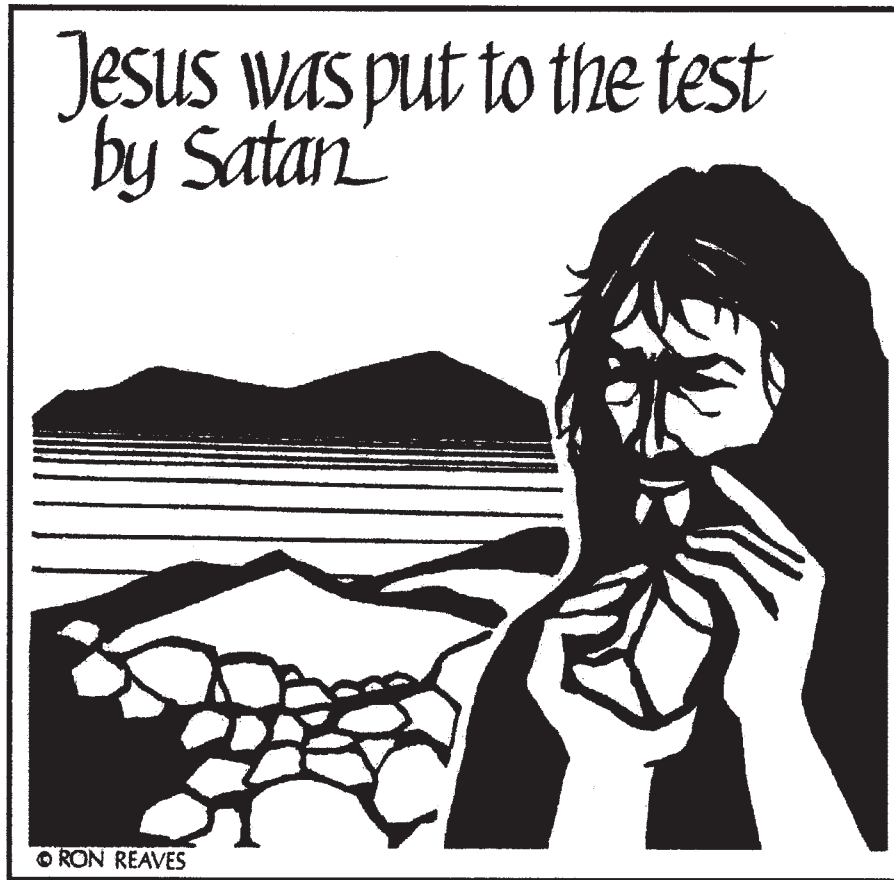
“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is not truth in him. When he lies he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

II Corinthians 2:10-11; 11:3

“If there is anything to forgive, I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes...But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”



“The Fall Into Sin and Expulsion from Paradise” by Hans Beham



COUNTER-TEMPTATION TACTICS **(Matthew 4:1-11)**

STEP 1

Focus on God's Will Instead of Personal Needs and Desires. (vs.1-4)

STEP 2

Recognize the real issue - avoid Satanic diversion. (vs.4,7,10)

STEP 3

Trust the Word of God and Wield it as your Spiritual Weapon (vs.4,7,10)

STEP 4

Do Not Be Deterred by Satan's Scripture Twisting. (vs.6)

STEP 5

Be Prepared for an Ongoing Assault - The Devil Does Not Give Up Easily
(vs.3,5,8,11)

STEP 6

Give All Glory to God and Use His Power to Defeat and Dismiss the Enemy
(vs.10)



“Get Thee Behind Me, Satan” by Rudolf Schäfer



THE AFTERMATH OF THE FALL INTO SIN

1. SHAME AND GUILT - *“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”* (Genesis 3:7)

(Note: Adam and Eve failed to recognize the real problem. They were not ashamed of being naked. They were ashamed of themselves. They expressed their guilt by concealing the portion of their bodies used to express love, our most intimate and personal emotion. Their pathetic fig leaves are an apt symbol of all of man’s futile attempts to deal with his guilt.)

2. FEAR - *“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”* (Genesis 3:8)

(NOTE: Man’s fear drives him to ridiculous lengths. Adam and Eve huddle in the bushes, hiding from the all powerful and all knowing God who made both them and the bushes.)

3. FALSEHOOD - *“He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’”* (Genesis 3:10)

(NOTE: Fear produces falsehood. Adam is afraid to tell the truth because he knows what God’s judgement upon disobedience must be.)

4. FAILURE TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY - *“The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me-she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.’”...The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me and I ate.’”* (Genesis 3:12-13)

(NOTE: Adam blames God or the woman. The woman blames the serpent. And so it begins - the endless passing of the buck which has gone on ever since.)



“The Fall” by Rembrandt

GOD'S RESPONSE TO MAN'S FALL INTO SIN

1. The righteous decree of the law must stand - ***“when you eat of it you will surely die”***

(Genesis 2:17). God who is just and holy cannot ignore, overlook, or tolerate sin. The tragic consequences of man's disobedience are clearly defined. (Genesis 3:14-19)



2. God, who is love and mercy, continues to pursue fallen mankind - ***“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day...But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’”*** (Genesis 3:8-9). God is unwilling to abandon us to the death and damnation we fully deserve.

3. Standing amid the ruin of His perfect creation, God makes the first promise of the Savior (*“proto-evangelium”* - *“first gospel”*). The Lord announces that He will act to undo the damage that has been done. He will pay the

price that mankind could never have paid for itself. ***“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*** (Genesis 3:15)

DEATH - THE FINAL RESULT OF SIN

“The wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23

1. Spiritual Death - the disruption of the relationship between God and man as a consequence of unbelief and sin. There can be no real life apart from God in Christ. Those who are physically alive but trapped in unbelief and cut off from God are already dead spiritually.

John 6:53 “Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will have no life in you.’”

Ephesians 2:1 “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.”

Colossians 2:13 “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature; God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.”

I Timothy 5:6 “But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.”

Revelation 3:1 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of Him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds. You have a reputation of being alive but you are dead.”

2. Temporal Death - the separation of the body and the soul. Man was created to enjoy physical immortality. But under the curse of sin, body and soul are torn apart from one another. This event, so terrifying in itself, loses its terror for Christians only because through faith in Christ temporal death becomes the gateway to paradise.



*“The Triumph of Death”
by Simon Colines, 1525*

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

Luke 23:43 “I tell you the truth, ‘Today you will be with me in paradise.’”

Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.”



“The Triumph of Death” by Anders Trost - 1682



"The Damned in the Jaws of Hell" by Michel Le Noir - 1568

3. Eternal Death - the ultimate result of spiritual death, an eternity of torment in the undying fires of Hell. Physical death for the unbeliever is not merely the end of existence. It is, instead, the beginning of everlasting punishment.

Revelation 21:8 "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars - their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."



“Michael the Archangel and the Dragon” by Rudolf Schäfer

THE DEVIL - MANKIND’S ANCIENT FOE

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” I Peter 5:8

The Bible teaches that the devil and his demons are fallen angels who committed the sin of pride, rebelled against God, and were expelled from heaven.

Isaiah 14:12-15 “How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations. You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned upon the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But

you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.”

Ezekial 12-15 “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz, and emerald, chrysolite, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until wickedness was found in you.”

I Timothy 3:6 “He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil.”



*“Michael and His Angels Fought Against the Dragon and His Angels”
by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld*

II Peter 2:4 “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to Hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgement...”

Jude 6 “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home-these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains on the great day.”

Revelation 12:7-9 “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

But he was not strong enough and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down-that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”



*“St. Michael Driving Satan and His Angels From Heaven”
by Albrecht Dürer*

Satan is known by many names and titles in Scripture which are descriptive of his nature and his work. They include: Satan - the Accuser (Hebrew) (Zechariah 3:1-2); Devil - the Accuser (Greek)(I Peter 5:8); Belial - Lawless One (II Corinthians 6:15); Beelzebul - Lord of the Flies (Matthew 10:25); Adversary (I Peter 5:8); Deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9); Murderer (John 8:44); Father of Lies (John 8:44); Lucifer -

Morning Star (Isaiah 14:12); Great Dragon, Ancient Serpent (Revelation 12:8); Prince of Demons (Matthew 12:24); Tempter (Matthew 4:3); God of this World (II Corinthians 4:4); Unclean Spirit (Matthew 12:43); and, Wicked One (Matthew 13:19).

The Bible warns that the Devil is a powerful foe for whom we dare not underestimate (Matthew 10:28; I Peter 5:8). The demons who serve him in his implacable war against God and his people are many. *“Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’”* (Mark 5:9). But even Satan himself operates within the constraints of God’s

power. To use Luther’s phrase, he is *“Gottes Teufel”* (God’s Devil) cf. Job 1:6-12 His most diabolical schemes serve the purposes and plans of God. cf. Genesis 50:20. The Word of God assures Christians that this fearsome enemy has been defeated. Standing firm in the faith, we have a share in Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil. *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:7)



“The Temptation of Christ” by Heinrich Hoffmann

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The Origin of Evil

God did not create evil. “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) The potential for evil came into being when God created angels and men with free will. From that point on the possibility existed that free will would be exercised in disobedience, and thus evil would become a reality. Satan seems to suggest as much when he tempts Eve with the half-truth, “*When you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*” (Genesis 3:5).

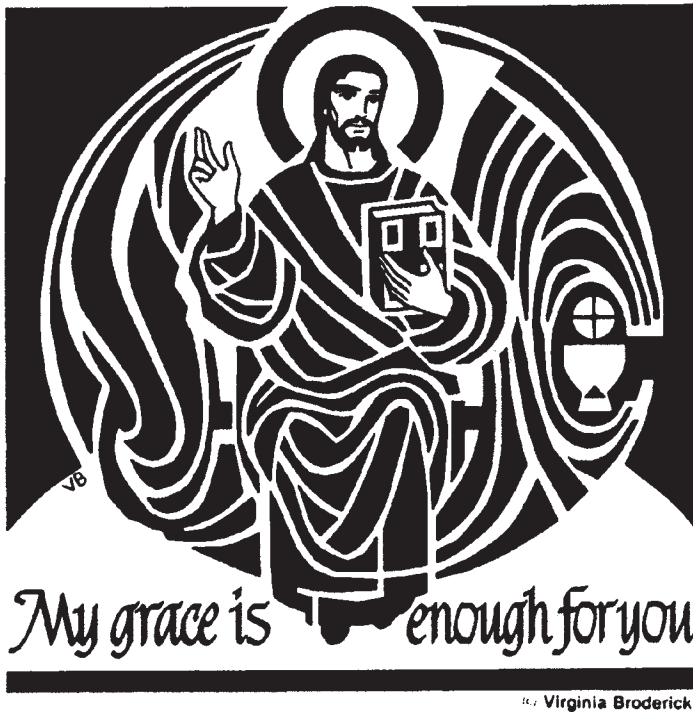
Why, then, did God endow angels and men with free will? The solution to this dilemma takes us back to the most basic question of all: Why did God create? The answer is suggested in Genesis 2 and its description of the creation of man as male and female. Having placed Adam in the midst of a perfect world, surrounded by the beauty of Eden’s garden, the text inexplicably announces; “*The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone.’*” (Genesis 2:18) Why not? Because man was created in the image and likeness of God, with the capability to love and to be loved. Unlike man, God is perfectly self-sufficient. He has no needs and depends on no one. His action in creation was caused by nothing outside of Himself, determined solely by His own good pleasure (cf. Ephesians 1:11). And yet, God is love (cf. 2 John 4:8), and His action in creation is an expression of that love. He created man to live in loving relationship with Him. But love requires free will, for without the ability to choose there can be no love. So God, the Lover, gave man free will and in so doing created the possibility of evil. Of course, He knew that man would choose sin. But He also knew that in love He Himself would pay the price to buy man back from his sin with the blood of His own Son. Thus the reason for it all was love.

Evil and Suffering in Our World

Like many people today, the Psalmist of old was troubled by the grim reality of evil in the world. He attempted to reconcile its consequences of pain, suffering, and sorrow with the love and mercy of almighty God. He failed in that attempt and was compelled to admit: “*When I tried to understand all this it was oppressive to me.*” (Psalm 73:16) But instead of rejecting God, as do so many of our contemporaries, he found peace in a faith which trusted God’s Word and accepted that which reason cannot comprehend. “*Till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny...As for me,*

it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.” (Psalm 73:16,28) We would do well to follow his example; affirming what the Bible says and recognizing the limitations of our reason.

1. God is sovereign and omnipotent. All things occur according to the determinate counsel of God. cf. Isaiah 45:7; Amos 3:6; Matthew 10:29-39.



2. Man is given the ability and the responsibility to make his own choices and remains accountable for those choices. cf. Deuteronomy 30:11-20; Romans 1:18-20; James 1:13-14.

3. While God does not desire evil, and limits its power, He does use and control it in the service of good. cf. Genesis 50:20; Job 1-2; Psalm 5:4; 33:10; Romans 8:28.

4. Suffering in the life of the believer can help to test, strengthen, and purify us in our faith, increasing our dependence on God. cf. Isaiah 48:10; Romans 8:18-39;

II Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 12:4-13; I Peter 1:6-9.

5. Scripture urges the believer to trust in the love of God and cling to His promises no matter how difficult or painful the circumstances of life may become.

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised...Though He slay me yet will I hope in Him.” Job 1:21, 13:15

“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the

Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.” Habakkuk 3:17-19

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us...And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 8:18,28,35,37-39



*“Christos Pantocrator” Christ the Almighty Lord
5th Century Byzantine Mosaic*

UNIT IV

LAW AND GOSPEL



“The Law and the Gospel” by Lucas Cranach the Elder

“The distinction between law and Gospel is an especially brilliant light which serves the purpose that the Word of God may be rightly divided and the writings of the holy prophets and apostles may be rightly explained and understood correctly. We must therefore observe this distinction with particular diligence lest we confuse the two doctrines and change the Gospel into law. This would darken the merit of Christ and rob disturbed consciences of the comfort which they would otherwise have in the holy Gospel when it is preached purely and without admixture, for by it Christians can support themselves in their greatest temptations against the terrors of the law.” (Formula of Concord, 1577)



THE LAW

“We unanimously believe, teach, and confess that the Law is properly a divine doctrine, in which the righteous, immutable will of God is revealed, what is to be the quality of man in his nature, thoughts, words, and works, in order that he may be pleasing to God; and that it threatens its transgressors with God’s wrath and temporal and eternal punishment.” (Formula of Concord, 1577)

God created man with an inherent understanding of His will as part of the divine image. The Bible calls this natural knowledge of right and wrong the Law written in man’s heart or conscience. (cf. Romans 2:14,15) Even in the aftermath of the Fall, impaired and distorted by sin, conscience remains as a witness to the will of the Creator. Conscience, however is no longer a completely reliable moral guide. It may be conditioned by human rules and restrictions to prohibit that which God does not. On the other hand, conscience can become *“hardened”* to sin so that it no longer warns the sinner against transgression.

(cf. Romans 1:21; Ephesians 4:18-19; I Corinthians 8:7) God also reveals His Law in Scripture. The written Law was given in summary form to the Children of Israel through Moses on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 20:1-21). In the Ten Commandments God told Israel how His holy will for all mankind applied to them in a special way as his chosen people. The New Testament repeats the moral content of the commandments in a more general context for all people (cf. Matthew 5:17-48; 19:17-18; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:19).

Our Lord provides the simplest summary of the Law: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matthew 22:37-40).



The Purpose of the Law

- 1. CURB - The Law helps to preserve order in the world by restraining the wicked actions of men.**
- 2. MIRROR - The Law accuses us and shows us our sin.**
- 3. GUIDE - The Law shows Christians the way that God would have us live.**

THE GOSPEL

“The Gospel, however, is that doctrine which teaches what a man should believe in order to receive the forgiveness of sins from God, since man has failed to keep the Law of God and has transgressed it, his corrupted nature, thoughts, words, and deeds war against the Law, and he is therefore subject to the wrath of God, to death, to temporal miseries, and to the punishment of hell-fire. The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, himself assumed and bore the curse of the Law and expiated and paid for all our sins, that through Him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally. For everything which comforts and offers the mercy and grace of God to transgressors of the Law strictly speaking is, and is called, the Gospel a good and joyful message that God wills not to punish sins but to forgive them for Christ’s sake.” (Formula of Concord, 1577)



While the Law is revealed in nature, conscience, and the Bible, the Gospel is revealed to us only in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him - but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.”

Ephesians 3: 2-5 “Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.”

In the Gospel, and in the Gospel alone, God offers the forgiveness of sins, the good news that we are freed from guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin, and are saved eternally because of what God in Christ has done for us. The Gospel enables us to live a God pleasing life, not because of guilt or fear, but in joyful thanksgiving to the God of our salvation.

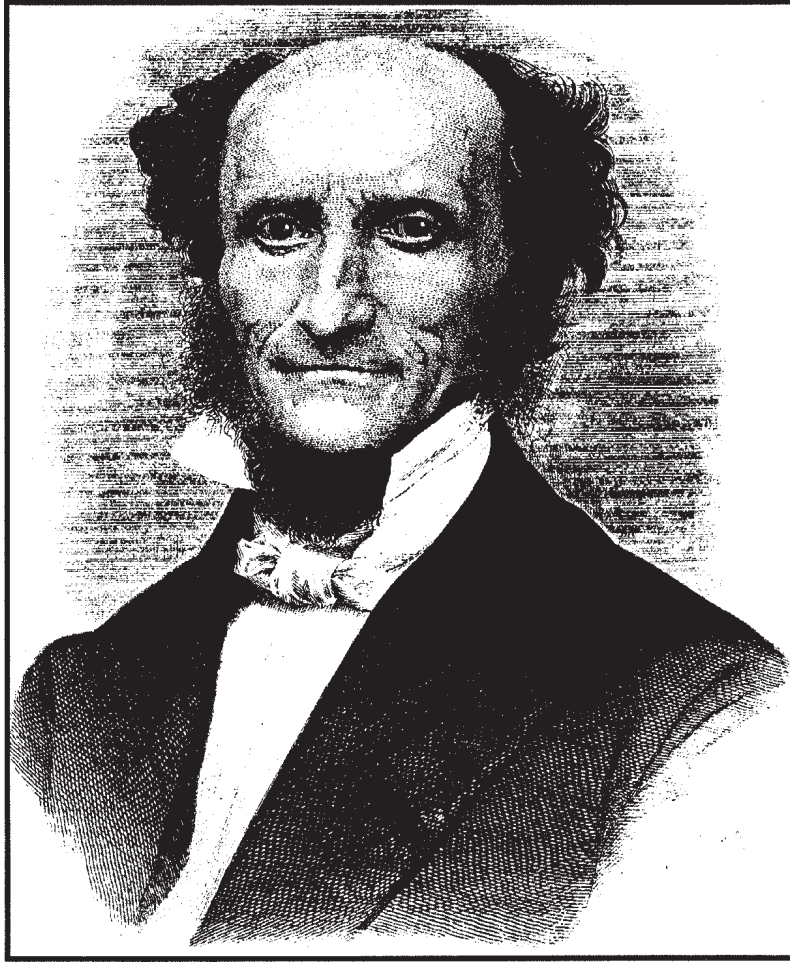


“The Death of Christ on the Cross” by Lucas Cranach

“The Gospel in a Nutshell”

“God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16



The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel

C.F.W. Walther

1884

1. The doctrinal content of all of Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, consists of two diametrically opposite teachings, namely the Law and the Gospel.

2. Only he is a pure teacher who not only presents all articles of faith in accordance with Scripture but also correctly distinguishes between Law and Gospel.

3. To distinguish properly between Law and Gospel is the most difficult and exalted skill of Christians and theologians, a skill that only the Holy Spirit teaches in the school of experience.

4. *The true knowledge of the difference between Law and Gospel is not only a glorious light for the correct understanding of all of Holy Scripture, but without such knowledge Scripture is and remains a closed book.*

5. *The first and most glaring way of mingling Law and Gospel is the teaching of the papists, Socinians, and rationalists that makes of Christ a new Moses or Lawgiver and turns the Gospel into a doctrine of works and, conversely, like the papists, condemns and anathematizes those who teach the Gospel as a message of God's free grace in Christ.*

6. *Secondly, God's Word is not rightly divided when the Law is not preached in its full severity nor the Gospel in its full sweetness, but when Gospel elements are mingled with the Law and Law elements with the Gospel.*

7. *God's Word is not rightly divided, in the third place, when the Gospel is preached first and then the Law, first sanctification and then justification, first faith and then contrition, first good works and then grace.*

8. *In the fourth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when the Law is preached to those already terrified because of their sins, or when the Gospel is preached to those who are secure in their sins.*

9. *In the fifth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when sinners, struck and terrified by the Law, instead of being directed to Word and sacrament, are instructed to strive for the state of grace through prayer and struggles, that is, to keep on praying and wrestling until they feel that God has pardoned them.*

10. *In the sixth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when faith is pictured either as if merely regarding something as true would justify and save in spite of mortal sins, or as if faith justifies and saves for the sake of the love and renewal it effects.*

11. *In the seventh place, God's Word is not rightly divided if one wants to offer the comfort of the Gospel only to those who, through the Law, experience contrition not out of fear of God's wrath but out of love of God.*

12. *In the eighth place, God's Word is not rightly divided if the impression is given that contrition is a cause of forgiveness of sins alongside of faith.*

13. *In the ninth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when faith is demanded in such a way as if a person could give it to himself, or at least contribute something toward it instead of seeking to preach faith into the heart by presenting the promises of the Gospel.*

14. *In the tenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when faith is demanded as a condition of justification and salvation, as though a person becomes righteous before God and is saved not only through faith, but also because of faith, for the sake of faith, and in view of faith.*

15. In the eleventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is turned into a preaching of repentance.

16. In the twelfth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when it is suggested that shedding certain vices and performing certain works and virtues is a true conversion.

17. In the thirteenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when believers are pictured in a way that does not fit all believers in all times with regard both to strength of faith and the feelings and fruitfulness connected with it.

18. In the fourteenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when the universal corruption of mankind is described as if true believers were living in dominating and willful sins.

19. In the fifteenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when the preacher gives the impression that certain sins are not in themselves damnable but only venial.

20. In the sixteenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when salvation is linked to membership in the visible orthodox church and salvation is denied to anyone who errs in any article of faith.

21. In the seventeenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when it is taught that the sacraments have a salutary effect even if they are merely performed "ex opere operato".

22. In the eighteenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when a false distinction is made between awakening and conversion, and not being able to believe is confused with not being permitted to believe.

23. In the nineteenth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when the attempt is made to induce the unregenerate by means of the demands, threats, and promises of the Law to renounce sin and do good works, and thus make them pious, and to impel the regenerate toward the good by means of legalistic demands rather than by evangelical exhortation.

24. In the twentieth place, God's Word is not rightly divided when the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit is described because of its magnitude.

25. In the twenty-first place, God's Word is not rightly divided when the preacher does not, in general, let the Gospel predominate.

(Law and Gospel, by C.F.W. Walther, Herbert J.A. Bouman - Translator. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1981)

UNIT V

JESUS CHRIST

SAVIOR OF THE WORLD



“The Word Became Flesh” by Rudolf Schäfer

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...The Word became flesh and lived for a time among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:1-5, 14

“I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. All this he did that I should be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.”
Martin Luther, Small Catechism, 1529



*“I Believe That Jesus Christ is My Lord” - Martin Luther
by Rudolf Schäfer*

TRUE MAN - TRUE GOD THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO NATURES IN CHRIST



“Christ as the Almighty Judge of the World” 13 Century Byzantine Mosaic

In the person of Jesus Christ God and man become one. We use the word *“incarnation”* (*“to become flesh”* - John 1:14) to describe this reality.

Jesus is true God, the second member of the Trinity, begotten of the Father from eternity. He is and has all that God is and has. He is immortal, eternal, almighty, all-knowing, and present everywhere; divine in every sense of that term. (cf. Matthew 9:6; 28:18,20; John 1:1-3; 20:28; 21:17; Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:5; Hebrews 1:3; 13:8; I John 5:20)

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus is true man, with a human body and soul. He is like us in every way except sin, voluntarily submitting to the restrictions and limitations of human existence. Jesus was born and He grew to manhood. He rejoiced and He wept. He hungered and He ate. He thirsted and He drank. He slept and He woke. He was anxious and He hoped. He knew pain, suffering and death; like us in every way except sin. (cf. Matthew 4:2; 26:38; Luke 24:39; John 11:35; 19:28; I Timothy 2:5)

“Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death...For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted...For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.” Hebrews 2:14-15,17-18; 4:15

From the instant of His conception in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ is both true God and true man. This is not a matter of component parts. The two natures are inseparable from one another. Jesus is not part man and part God. He is the God/Man. This “*personal union*” of the divine and human in Christ is permanent.

To be our Lord and Savior Jesus must be both true God and true man. Both natures are essential for the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation. To deny or to minimize

either the divine or the human nature of Jesus Christ jeopardizes the entire plan of salvation. As true man Jesus submitted to the Law for us and suffered and died in our place. As true God Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly and offered His innocent death as the sufficient ransom for the sins of mankind. He is true man and true God *“for us men and for our salvation”* (Nicene Creed, 325AD)



“The Visions of the Prophet” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

MESSIANIC PROPHECY

“The New Testament was in the Old concealed; The Old is in the New revealed.” - St. Augustine

God progressively disclosed His plan of salvation through the prophets of the Old Testament. Although the prophets themselves often did not understand the promises they were called to deliver (I Peter 1:10-12), they provided a complete description of the coming Messiah (Hebrew title - *“The Anointed One”*; Greek equivalent - *“Christ”*).



“And He will be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6) by Rudolf Schärer

The life and ministry of Jesus matches that description in every detail. The writers of the New Testament cite 226 OT prophecies which were directly fulfilled in Christ. The fulfillment of the ancient prophecies in Christ is the major theme of the apostolic proclamation of the Gospel. Thus, for example, Peter declares: ***“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified His Servant, Jesus...Indeed, all the prophets, from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.”*** (Acts 3:13,24) The following is a partial list of Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment in the life and ministry of Jesus.

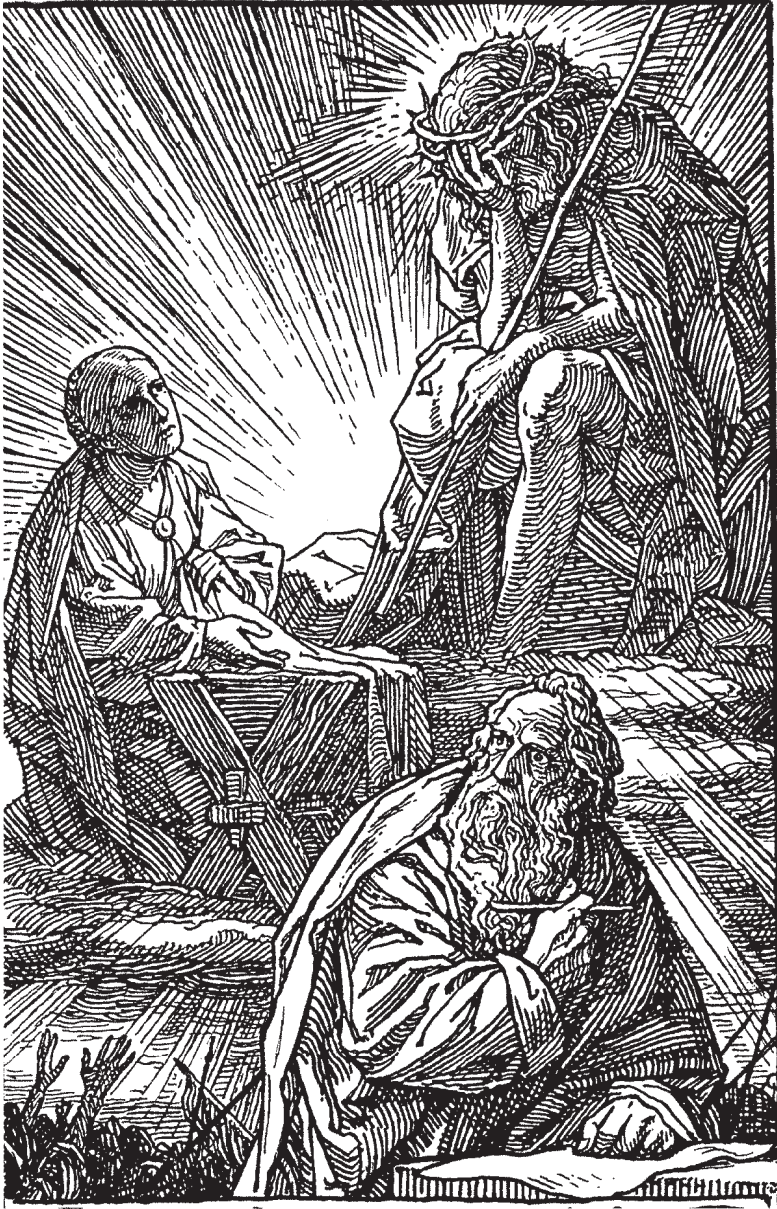
Messiah will be a man, the seed of the woman, who will crush Satan and destroy him but at painful cost (Genesis 3:15 - Matthew 1:18; Hebrews 2:14;)

Messiah will be the Son of God (Psalm 2:7 - Luke 1:32-35)

Messiah will be a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:7; 22:18; - Galatians 3:16)

Messiah will be a descendant of Isaac (Genesis 21:12 - Hebrews 11:18)

Messiah will be from the royal tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10 - Hebrews 7:14)



"The Prophet Isaiah" by Rudolf Schäfer

*Messiah will be a descendant of David (Psalm 132:11; Jeremiah 23:5 - Acts 13:23; Romans 1:3)
The time of the Messiah's coming and death (Daniel 9:24-27 - Luke 2:1)*

Messiah will be born of a Virgin as Immanuel (God With Us) (Isaiah 7:14 - Matthew 1:18,22-23; Luke 2:7)

Messiah will be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2 - Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4-6)

Messiah's birth will be announced by the appearance of a star (Numbers 24:17 - Matthew 2:1-11)

Great men shall come and bow to him (Psalm 72: 10-15 - Matthew 2:1-11)

Innocent children will die in an attempt to slay him (Jeremiah 31:15 - Matthew 2:16-18)

His coming will be proclaimed by the Forerunner (that is, John the Baptist) (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1 -Matthew 1-3; Luke 1:17)

Messiah will be anointed with power by the Holy Spirit (Psalm

45:7; Isaiah 11:2 - Matthew 3:16-17; John 3:34; Acts 10:38)

Messiah will be a great prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-18 - Acts 3:20-22)

Messiah will come to deliver his people (Isaiah 61:1-3 - Luke 4:16-21,43)

Messiah will bring light to Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-3 - Matthew 4:12-16)

Messiah will cleanse the temple of God (Haggai 2:7-9; Malachi 3:1 - Luke 19:45; John 2:13-16)

Messiah will live in poverty (Isaiah 53:2 - Mark 6:3; Luke 9:58)

Messiah will practice meekness and humility (Isaiah 42:1-2 - Philippians 2:7-9)
Messiah will demonstrate compassion (Isaiah 40:11; 42:3 - Matthew 12:15-20; Hebrews 4:15)
Messiah will be without guile (Isaiah 53:9 - I Peter 2:22)
Messiah will have great zeal for the House of God (Psalm 69:9 - John 2:17)
Messiah will teach using parables (Psalm 78:2 - Matthew 13:34-35)
Messiah will validate his ministry with great miracles of healing (Isaiah 35:5-6 - Luke 7:18-23)
Messiah will be rejected by his brethren (Psalm 69:8; Isaiah 53:3 - John 1:11; 7:5)
Messiah will be hated by the Jews (Psalm 69:4; Isaiah 49:7 - John 15:24-25)
Messiah will be spurned by the rulers of Israel (Psalm 118:22 - John 15:48; Matthew 21:42)
Messiah will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (Isaiah 8:14 - Romans 9:32; I Peter 2:8)
Messiah will be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14 - John 13:18-21)
Messiah will be forsaken by his disciples (Zechariah 13:7 - Matthew 26:31-56)
Messiah will be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12 - Matthew 26:15)
The profit of betrayal will be used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:13 - Matthew 27:7)
Messiah will endure all of his suffering patiently and silently (Isaiah 53:7 - Matthew 26:63; 27:12-14)
Messiah's face will be beaten (Micah 5:1 - Matthew 27:30)
Messiah will endure intense suffering (Psalm 22: 14-15 - Luke 22:42-44)
Messiah will be scourged and spit upon (Psalm 35: 15; Isaiah 1:6 - Mark 14:1)
Messiah's face will be disfigured almost beyond recognition (Isaiah 52: 14; 53:3 - John 19:1-5)
Messiah's death will serve as an atoning sacrifice to justify many (Isaiah 53:4-6; Daniel 9:26 - Matthew 20:28; 26:28)
Jewish and Gentile rulers will conspire to kill him (Psalm 2:1-4 - Luke 23:12; Acts 4:27-28)
The hands and feet of the Messiah will be pierced in death (Psalm 22:16 - John 19:18; 20:25)
Messiah will be executed among thieves (Isaiah 53:12 - Mark 15:28)
Messiah will be given gall and vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21 - Matthew 27:34)
Messiah will be cruelly mocked by his enemies (Psalm 22:7; 35:15-21 - Matthew 27: 39-44)
Messiah will suffer alone; even the Father's presence will be withdrawn (Isaiah 63:1-3; Psalm 22:1 - Matthew 27:46)

His enemies will gamble to divide his clothes among themselves (Psalm 22:18 - Matthew 27:35)

Messiah will pray for those who murder him (Isaiah 53:12 - Luke 23:34)

Messiah's body will be pierced after his death (Zechariah 12:10 - John 19:34-37)

No bone of his body will be broken (Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20 - John 19:33-36)

Messiah will be buried among the wealthy (Isaiah 53:9 - Matthew 27: 57-60)

Messiah's body will not decay in the grave (Psalm 16:8-10 - Acts 2:31)

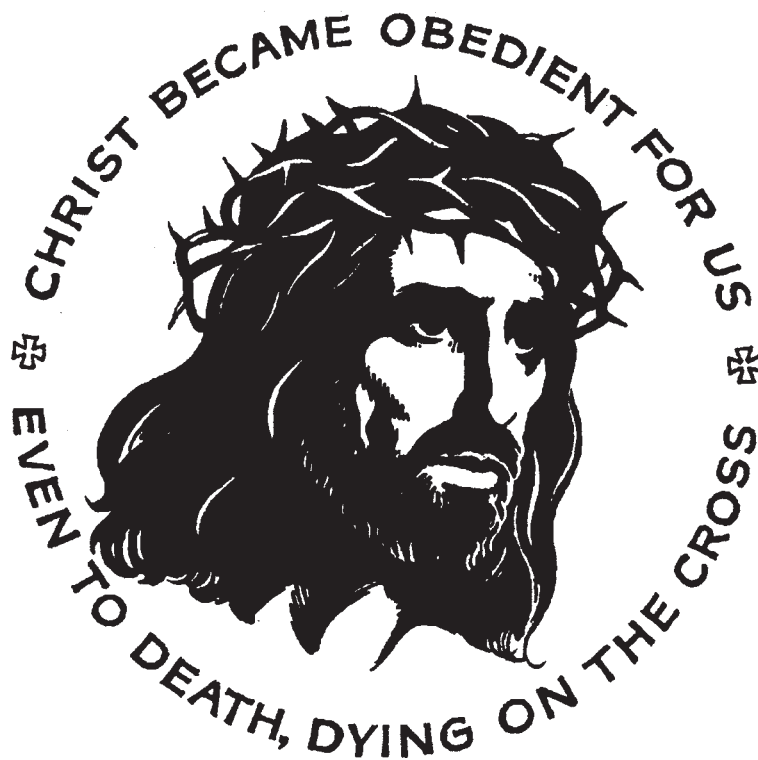
Messiah will rise from the dead on the third day (Psalm 16:8-10; Hosea 6:1-2 - Luke 24:6,31,34)

Messiah will ascend into the heavens (Psalm 68:18; 24:7-9 - Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9)



“A Shoot Will Come Up from the Stump of Jesse” (Isaiah 11:1)

CHRIST'S STATE OF HUMILIATION



Philippians 2:6-8

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!”

During the days of Jesus' life on earth our Lord did not always or fully use the divine power and glory that were rightfully His as the eternal Son of God (State of Humiliation). This voluntary renunciation of His divine attributes made it possible for Christ to live as a human being and to suffer and die in our place upon the cross. Jesus' willingness to humble himself in this way was the result of His love for us. (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9) The Apostles Creed summarizes the State of Humiliation in this way: *“He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.”*



“The Madonna With the Christ Child” by Albrecht Dürer

***“CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST
BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY”***

Holy Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary did not have sexual intercourse prior to the birth of Christ.

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had

in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because he will save His people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel - which means, ‘God with Us’.’ (Matthew 1:18-25; cf. Luke 1:26-38)

“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)



“The Birth of the Savior” by Rudolf Schäfer



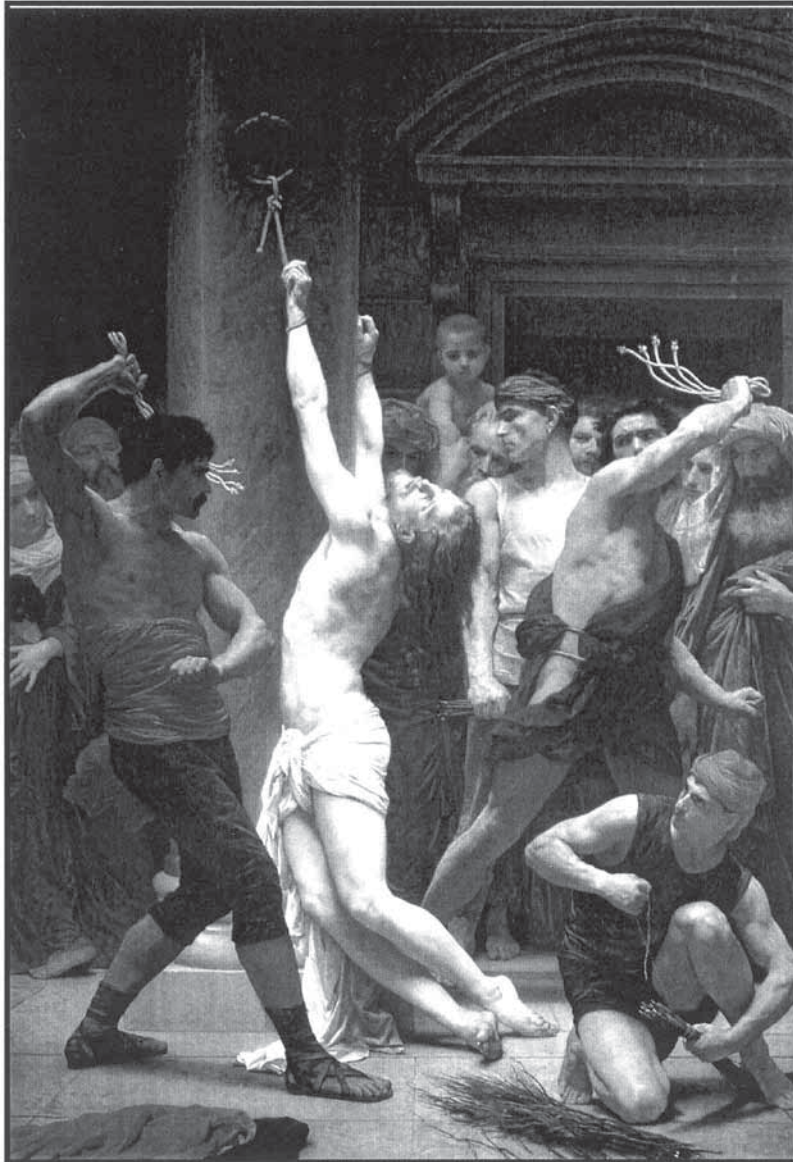
The doctrine of the Virgin Birth of our Lord is of critical importance for two reasons:

- 1. The Virgin Birth proves that Jesus Christ is true God, “*begotten of the Father from eternity*” (Nicene Creed, 325 AD).**
- 2. The Virgin Birth fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 - “*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.*”**

Mary, the mother of God, is to be honored and respected as a humble believer who willingly submitted to the will of the heavenly Father. Gabriel's salutation to the maiden of Nazareth was fitting and proper: "***Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.***" (Luke 1:28) The consideration of Mary's example, along with those of other Biblical heroes and heroines of the faith, can be a source of great encouragement for believers today. Scripture does not directly address the question of Mary's "*perpetual virginity*" (cf. Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7) although the New Testament does refer to "***brothers***" and "***sisters***" of the Lord (cf. Matthew 13:55; 27:56; Mark 3:31; 6:3; I Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19) The Roman Catholic dogmas of the "*Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*" (that Mary was conceived without the taint of original sin - 1854) and the "*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*" (that Mary did not experience the decay of physical death but was bodily assumed into heaven - 1950) are completely without Biblical support. The view of Mary as intercessor to whom the prayers of the faithful should be addressed infringes upon the role of Christ as sole Mediator and must therefore be rejected. "*Even though she is worthy of the highest honors, she does not want to be put on the same level as Christ but to have her example considered and followed. The fact of the matter is that in popular estimation the blessed Virgin has completely replaced Christ. Men have invoked her, trusted in her, and sought through her to appease Christ, as though he were not a propitiator but only a terrible judge and avenger.*" (Apology to the Augsburg Confession, 1530)



© Virginia Broderick



“The Scourging” by Adolphe-William Bouguereau

“SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE”

“He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not...He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgement he was taken away.” Isaiah 53:3,7-8

Throughout His earthly life Christ endured poverty, contempt, and persecution. Israel's rejection of its Messiah culminated in His arrest, interrogation, and trials before the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. The Biblical accounts of these events reveal an eyewitness familiarity with the intricacies Jewish internal politics and Roman judicial procedures. The sequence of events in the arrest and trials of Jesus may be summarized as follows:

1. Christ is seized by detachments of Temple guards and Roman soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane. His disciples flee in panic.

2. Christ is taken for interrogation to the palace of Annas, a powerful leader of the Sadducees. Five of his sons and one grandson served in the office of High priest. A contemporary passage from the Talmud laments the corrupting influence of Annas and his family: *“What a plague is the family of Annas; cursed be their hissing of vipers!...They are high priests themselves, their sons are treasurers, their son-in-laws are commanders, and their servants strike the people with staves.”* Annas fails in his attempt to secure incriminating information from Jesus.

3. Christ appears before an illegal midnight session of the Great Sanhedrin. The ruling Council of the Jews consisted of seventy-one members representing the two dominant factions, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Joseph ben Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas and current High Priest, presided. It is unclear how many members of the Council were actually present for this meeting. Twenty-three of the seventy-one were required for quorum. Caiaphas was unable to obtain the required testimony from



“The Man of Sorrows” by Albrecht Dürer



“Christ Taken From Caiaphas to Pilate” by J. James Tissot

at least two witnesses. He then demanded, ***“I charge you under oath by the living God; tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”*** The Lord responded, ***“Yes, it is as you say.”*** (Matthew 26:63,64) The High Priest denounced this answer as blasphemy and the Council condemned Jesus. Following the decision, Jesus was beaten and abused by the Temple guards.

4. The night’s proceedings had to be ratified by a legal meeting of the Sanhedrin to technically conform to the requirements of the law. This second session was convened at dawn on Friday in compliance with the stipulation that a criminal trial could not be held during the hours of darkness. The verdict was repeated and the sentence of death decreed. Jesus was taken to the Roman governor because the Jews no longer had the authority to implement the death penalty.

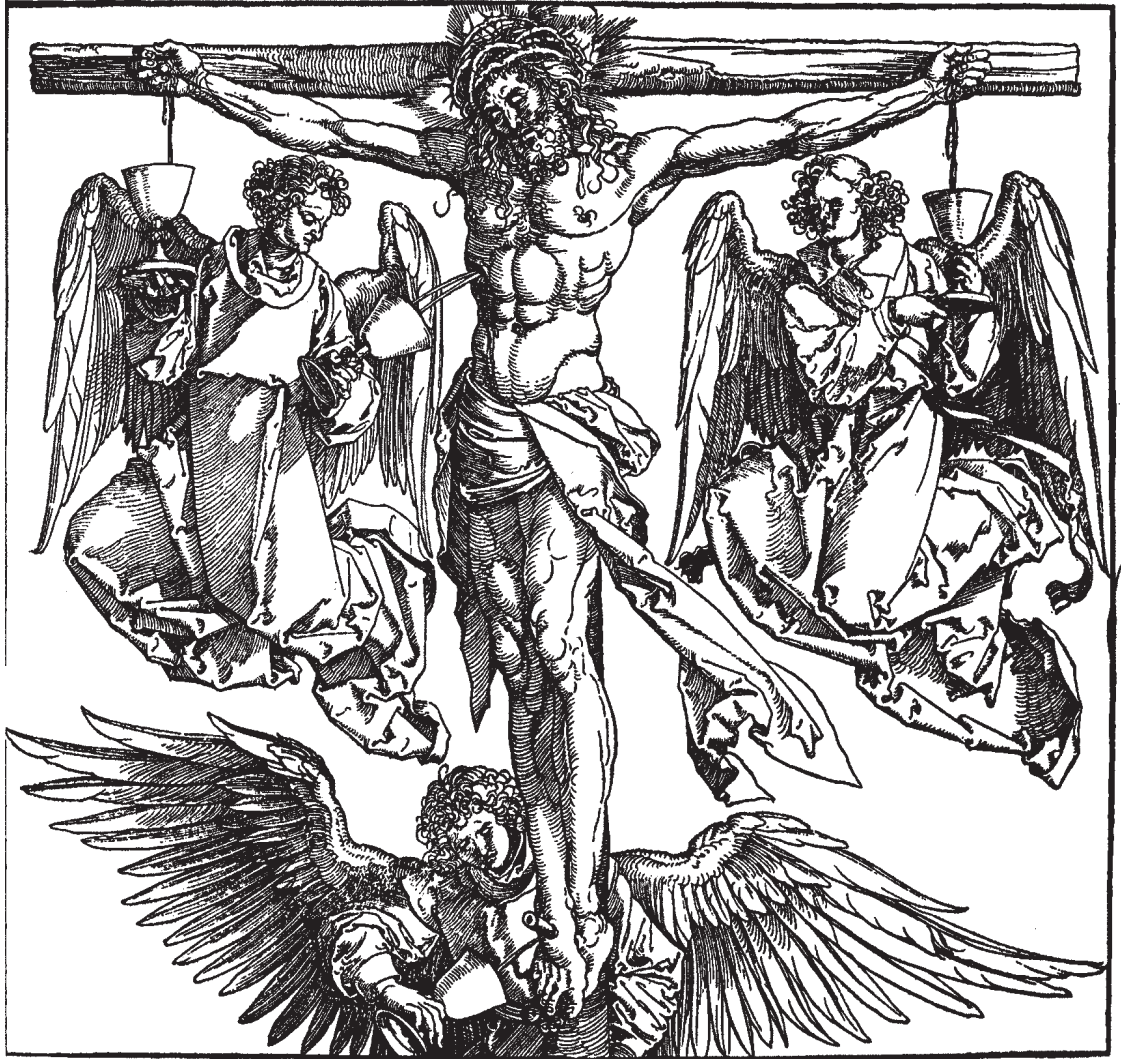
5. Jesus was arraigned before Pontius Pilate, Procurator of the Roman province of Judea. The charge has now shifted to treason and sedition. Pilate interviews Jesus and declares Him to be innocent. The Jewish leaders object vigorously. When Pilate hears that Christ is from Galilee he sends Him to King Herod Antipas, the Roman ruler of that province, who is in Jerusalem for the festival.

6. King Herod is delighted to have the opportunity to be entertained by this famous miracle worker. He questions Jesus and urges Him to perform some miraculous feat. Jesus refuses to dignify this charade with any response. The frustrated ruler and his officers then mock and abuse the Lord but Herod wisely declines to take responsibility for His condemnation. Instead, Herod Antipas sends Jesus back to Pilate for formal judgment.

7. Pilate again contends that there is no basis for condemnation. Barabbas is released instead of Jesus in the Pascal Amnesty. Pilate has Jesus flogged and presented to the crowd which demands His death. Pilate then yields and sentences Jesus to be crucified. He is beaten once again and taken to the place of execution.



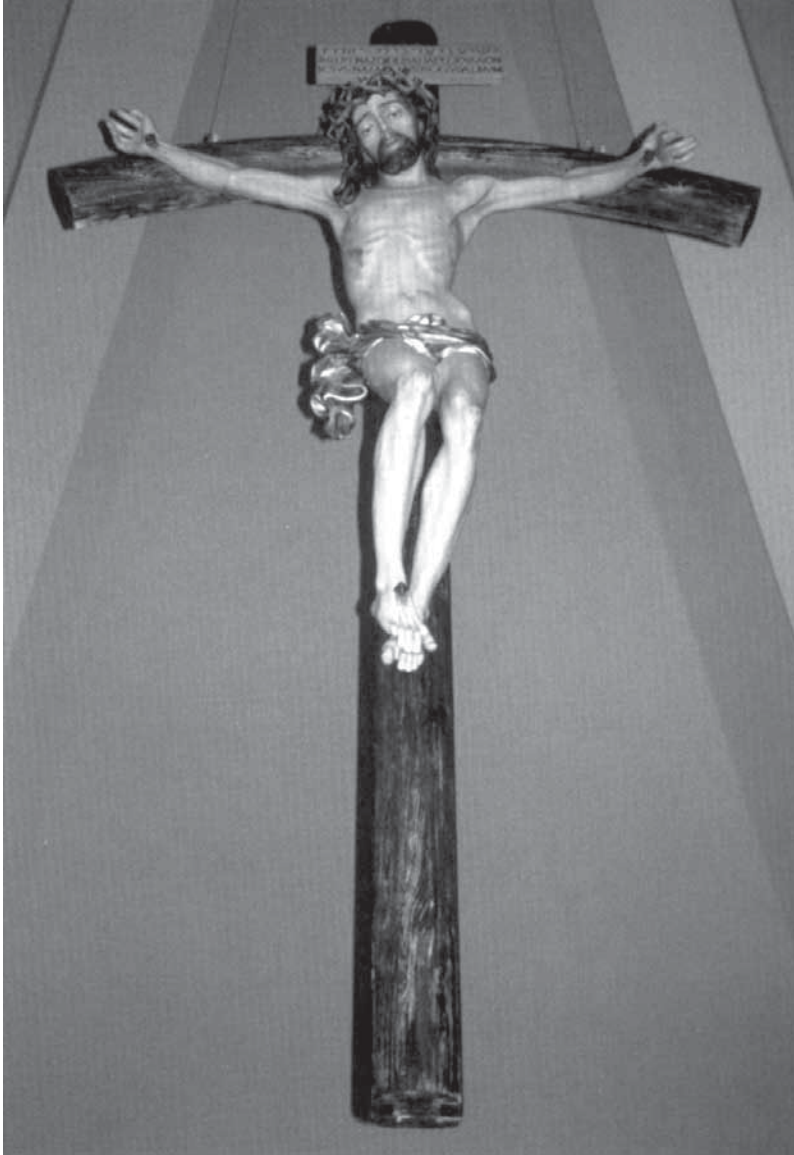
“Christ Mocked Before Herod” by J. James Tissot



“The Crucifixion” by Albrecht Dürer

“CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED”

All four Gospels include accounts of the crucifixion, the climactic event of Jesus’ role as the Suffering Servant. (Matthew 27:31-50; Mark 15:20-37; Luke 23:26-46; John 19:16-30) Death by crucifixion was a particularly gruesome and excruciating method of execution reserved for rebellious slaves and those found guilty of treason against Rome. Most Christians have little awareness of the agony which Christ endured to pay the awful price for our salvation. Study of extra-Biblical historical sources and recent archaeological discoveries have confirmed the precise accuracy of the Gospel accounts. Popular misunderstandings of Christ’s crucifixion are most often the result of artistic misrepresentation. The Romans typically proceeded in this way:

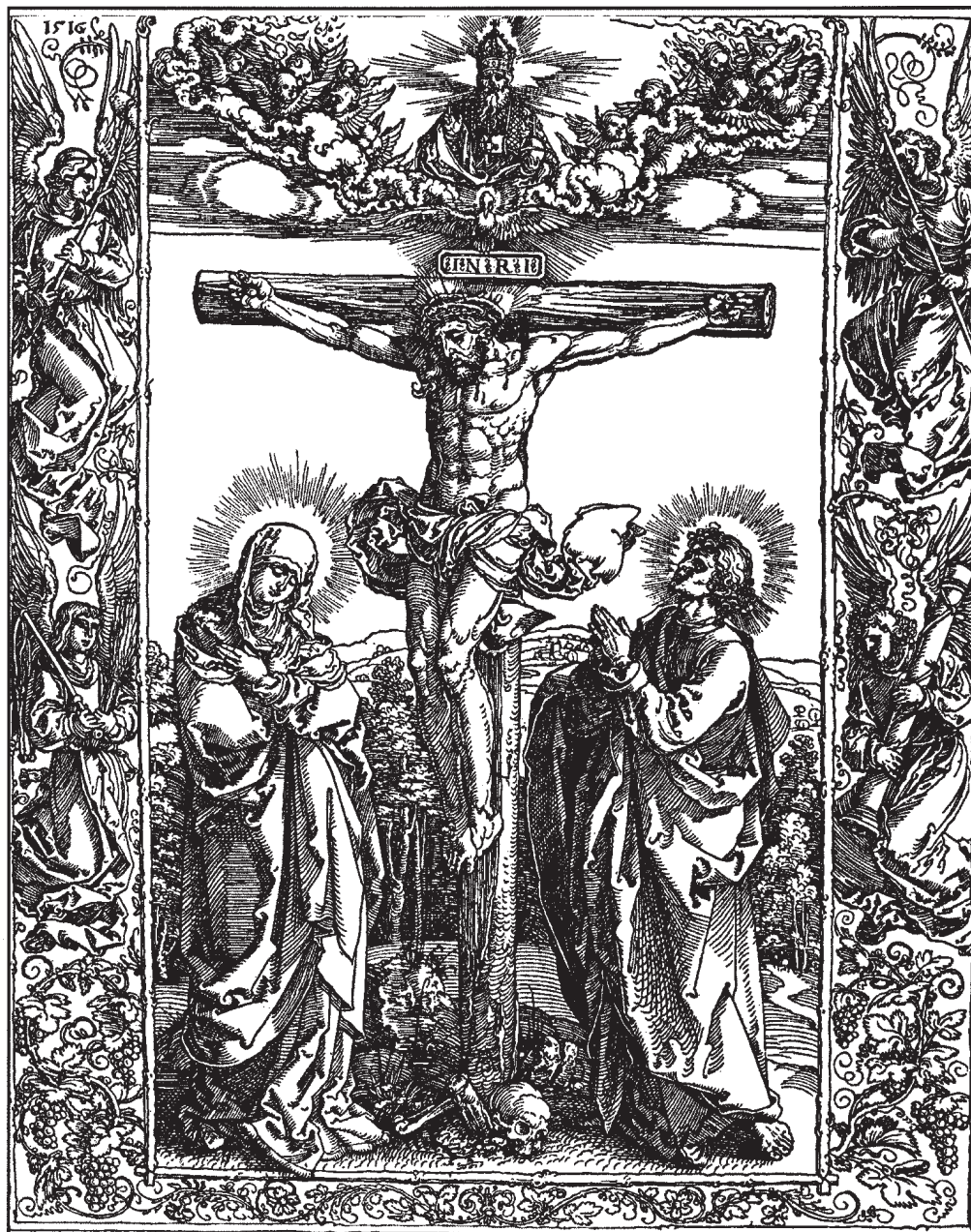


“Our Lord Upon the Cross” by Ivo Demetz

1. After sentence was pronounced the victim was stripped and scourged. The condemned man was bound to a pillar and beaten with an instrument called the “*flagrum*”. The “*flagrum*” consisted of a short handle to which were attached several long, thick leather thongs. Near the end of the thongs small pieces of bone and balls of lead were attached, designed to flay the skin and tear away the muscle tissue beneath. Scourging cut into the muscle and tore loose ribbons of flesh causing extreme pain and blood loss. This preliminary activity was designed to intensify the agony of the crucifixion itself. Among the Jews no more than 40 strokes of the “*flagrum*” were allowed. The Romans had no such restrictions. Their only guideline was that the victim was not to be killed. That was a task reserved for the cross itself.

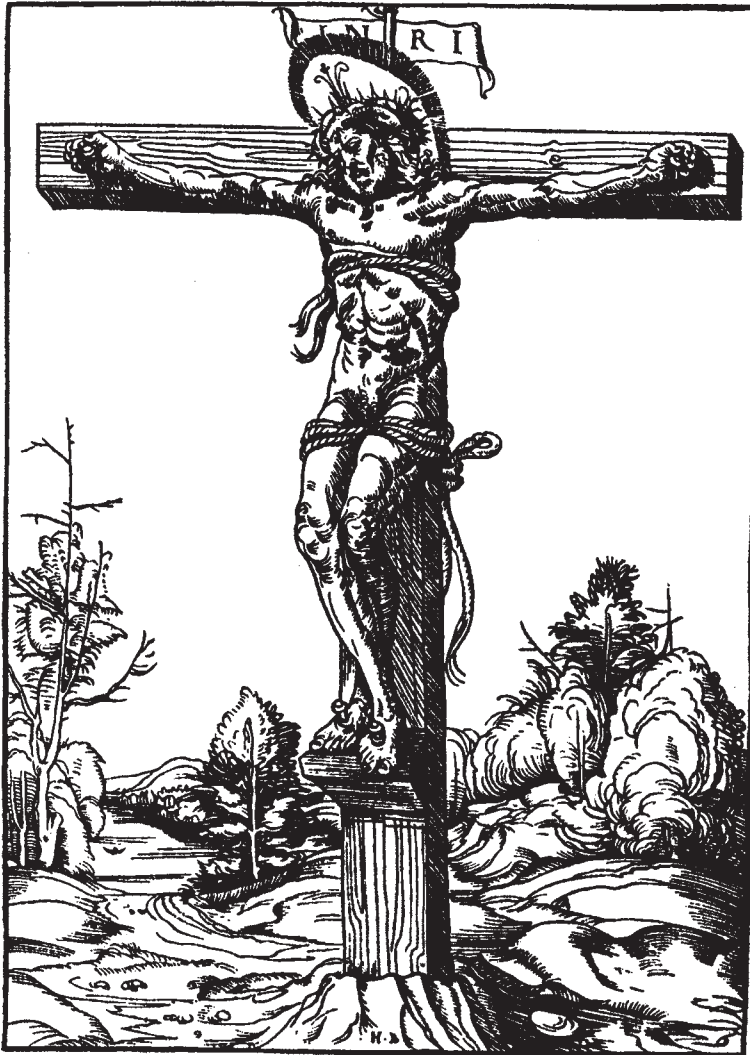
2. The cross itself consisted of two pieces. The “*stipes crucis*” or trunk of the cross was the vertical beam planted permanently in the ground at the place of execution. The vertical beam of the cross was typically between 6 and 7 feet in length. The horizontal beam of the cross was called the “*patibulum*”. The “*patibulum*” was 5 to 6 feet long and weighed between 75 and 125 pounds. In some cases a horizontal wooden hook was attached to the front of the vertical beam about half way down. It was called the “*sedile*” or seat. The “*sedile*” was designed to pass between the thighs of the victim and help support the weight of the body at the perineum. It served to prolong the process of death and was often honed to a sharp edge so that it would cut into the victim’s flesh as he

rested upon it. Most Roman cities had a specific location designated for this purpose, placed in such a way that a maximum number of the populace would have the opportunity to witness Roman justice at work. In Rome, for example, the “*Campus Esquilinus*” was the traditional place of crucifixion. Its counterpart in Jerusalem, of course, was “*Golgotha*,” the place of the Skull.



“The Crucifixion” by Albrecht Dürer

3. When the scourging was complete, the victim who remained nude and without benefit of food or water was forced to carry his *“patibulum”* from the place of sentencing to the place of execution. The beam was placed on his lacerated shoulders and his outstretched arms were bound to it. Here we see a slight difference between the Gospel texts and normal Roman procedure. ***“After they had mocked him they put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.”*** (Matthew 27:31) The requirements of



Jewish modesty were respected as Jesus was paraded through the streets lest the crowds be given an excuse for riot. But once the execution began, Roman custom again prevailed. ***“When they had crucified him they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”*** (Matthew 27:35) Our Lord was not spared any of the humiliation which was normally so much a part of crucifixion. An orderly military procession was formed. First came the centurion in charge of the event carrying a wooden placard called the *“titulus”* on the end of a long pole. The *“titulus”* provided the name of the prisoner and the crime for which he had been condemned. In Christ’s case, Pilate’s sarcastic inscription read ***“Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”*** (The Latin text of the inscription is traditionally depicted with the

abbreviation - INRI). Then came the prisoner himself, carrying the *“patibulum”* strapped across his shoulders, preceded and followed by the soldiers of the guard detail. Artists have typically depicted Jesus dragging the entire cross down the Via Dolorosa. The Gospels, however, use the word *“drag”*, not *“carry,”* reflecting actual Roman practice.

4. Upon arrival at the place of crucifixion, the prisoner was unbound and laid on the ground on his back with his shoulders resting on the “*patibulum*”. He was then fastened to the beam by 5 to 7 inch nails driven through the bony structure of the wrist, severing the median nerve and causing excruciating pain. The prisoner was then brought to his feet and backed up to the vertical “*stipes crucis*”. The “*patibulum*” would then be lifted into place in a precut notch in the top of the upright. His feet were raised off the ground and nailed to the upright beam through the bones of the heels. The centurion would lean the long pole carrying the “*titulus*” against the back of the cross so that the placard would appear above the head of the crucified. In this very practical manner both the prisoner and the crime for which he had been condemned were clearly identified as a warning to all those who might have considered opposing the imperial power of Rome.

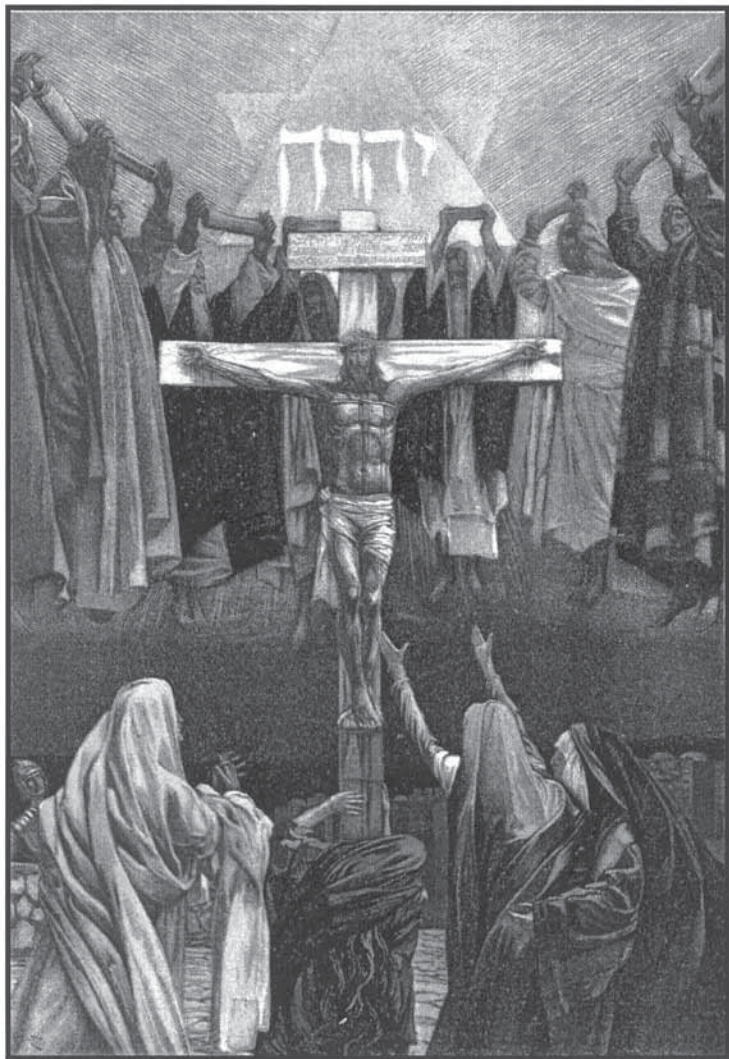


“*Christ on the Cross*”

Woodcarving by Nikolaus Gerhaert - 1406

5. Crucifixion was intended to cause a gradual, agonizing death. It often took days for the crucified to die. The actual cause of death was asphyxia caused by shock and suffocation. Suspended from the nails piercing his wrists, the crucified could only breathe by raising himself up and shifting his weight to the nails driven through his heels. After a brief interval the pain would become too intense and he would slump forward again. Shortly thereafter the symptoms of suffocation would recur and he would desperately raise up once more. As the victim slowly grew weaker, the intervals in this excruciating pattern would shorten until he could no longer relieve the pressure on his lungs. Death by suffocation was the inevitable result. If the Roman executioner had reason to shorten

the process the shins of the crucified were smashed against the cross with an instrument called the “*crurifragium*” (the “*crusher*”). Once the bones of the lower legs had been shattered it was no longer possible for the crucified to raise himself up and death would come quickly. The Gospels tell us that this was the fate of the two thieves crucified with Christ (John 19:32).



“It Is Finished” by J. James Tissot

6. The bodies of the crucified were usually allowed to remain on the cross until they collapsed from decay or were picked apart by scavengers. Thus the place of execution would be littered with the bones of those who had died before, adding to the horror of the scene. It may be that “*Golgotha*” (Place of the Skull) derived its name from the grisly practice. Scripture reports that Pilate gave permission for the burial of Christ. Roman regulations stipulated, however, that in the event that permission had been given for the burial of the crucified, the officer in charge was required to pierce the victim’s heart with his spear to guarantee that the condemned was actually dead. The Romans wanted to be absolutely certain that no one escaped their justice. To insure the meticulous observance of proper procedure in these matters, the regulation further stipulated that if one condemned to

death by crucifixion were inadvertently taken down from the cross before he was dead, the officer in charge of the execution would be condemned to take his place. The Biblical record once again precisely mirrors actual Roman procedure. ***“Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.”*** (John 19:34; cf. also I John 5:6-8)

ARCHAEOLOGY SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF JESUS!

Within the last few decades, archaeological discoveries in Israel have significantly enhanced our understanding of the crucifixion process and our awareness of the accuracy of the Bible's account of the Lord's trial and execution. Neither of the dramatic discoveries listed here were the result of deliberate exploration. Instead, they took place by accident as modern building projects were undertaken in the area around Jerusalem.

The first physical evidence of a Roman crucifixion was uncovered near Jerusalem in 1968. An excavation crew laying the foundation for a new apartment complex at Giv'at ha Mivtar stumbled upon a cluster of burial caves. Workers found that the caves were part of a huge Jewish cemetery from the first century A.D. One of the caves contained an ossuary (a stone burial jar) which held the skeletal remains of a young man and a boy. The inscription on the jar read: "John" and "John the Son of the Hanged One." The adult was evidently the victim of crucifixion. At the time of his death he was between 24 and 28 years old, about 5 1/2 feet tall, and of slender build. His right and left heel bones were fastened together by a 5 1/2 inch iron nail. Fragments of acacia wood were found under the head of the nail and the nail's point was bent around the remains of a knot of olive wood. The bones of the victim's lower legs had been crushed after death. Scholars speculate that when the body was taken down from the cross they were unable to remove the nail holding the feet because it had bent into the knot. The feet were then severed and torn from the cross along with a chunk of wood. Scratches on the arm bones of the victim indicated that nails had been driven between the base of the radius and the ulna at the wrist. The angle of a fracture in the left calf further indicated that his knees had been folded together on one side. These remains have forced a revision of the traditional picture of the crucifixion. It would seem that the victim's feet were placed parallel to one another with both knees sharply bent in one direction. A small board was then placed over the victim's feet to prevent them from tearing loose as he hung upon the cross. The spike was driven through the wood, both heel bones, and on into the cross itself. The spine was sharply twisted at the waist to enable the upper body to be nailed to the patibulum through the wrists. A small wooden hook or seat ("sedile") was mounted on the cross upon which one of the victim's buttocks rested to carry part of the body's weight, and thus prolong the painful dying. This physical evidence serves to corroborate the Biblical text's description in every detail.

Only five or six of the hundreds of characters who walk through the pages of the New Testament have ever been attested in archaeological finds. A startling discovery took place in November of 1990 which added a most significant name to that select list. As a construction crew began excavations for a water park just south of Jerusalem's old city the diggers accidentally uncovered a first century burial cave. Archaeologists were quickly summoned and entered the cave to find six ossuaries. These carved stone boxes were used for the secondary burial of wealthy Jews during the first century. At the time of death, the body was anointed with spices and wrapped in a linen shroud. Much later, after the flesh had decomposed, the bones were collected and placed in an ossuary. If the deceased was particularly wealthy or important the ossuary was often decorated and inscribed. In this instance, five of the six ossuaries bore inscriptions and carved decorations. The most intricately carved of the limestone boxes bore the familiar name of Joseph ben Caiaphas. Caiaphas, as any New Testament reader knows, was the High Priest of Israel who conspired to have Jesus arrested, conducted his trial and condemned the Savior to die for the crime of blasphemy. Inside the ossuary were the remains of a sixty year old man who had been buried with all of the pomp and dignity due the nation's High Priest. The brittle bones of the leader who had prophesied "that it would be better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50) had now been uncovered to affirm the Word of the Messiah whom he had once denied and attempted to destroy. Once again, the dry dust of ancient history stirs to testify to the absolute reliability of the Word of God.

CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION



“Therefore God Has Exalted Him to the Highest Place”

by Rudolf Schäfer

Philippians 2: 9-11

“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

After His death and burial, our Lord fully re-assumed the glory and power that were rightfully His as the Son of God (State of Exaltation). Thus the God/Man, Jesus Christ now and forever makes full use of His divine majesty and power, being present

everywhere and upholding and governing all things. The Apostles Creed summarizes the State of Exaltation in this way: *“He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”*

“HE DESCENDED INTO HELL”

“For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” (I Peter 3: 18-20; cf. also Colossians 2:13-15; Ephesians 4:8-10)

Christ’s descent into Hell was that act by which the God/man, Christ glorified, after His quickening in the tomb on the third day, appeared in the prison of the damned as a herald of their judgement and His victory. Christ has conquered Hell for us. He descended into Hell to proclaim His victory, that any lingering doubts we might have about the totality of that victory over the devil and his kingdom might be dispelled forever. Christ descended into Hell, triumphed over Satan and his hosts, took captivity captive, and like a triumphant general made a public show of the spoils of war and the vanquished enemies.



“The Descent Into Hell”-13th Century Stone Relief

“We simply believe that after the burial the entire person, God and man, descended into hell, conquered the devil, destroyed hell’s power, and took from the devil all his might. We are not to concern ourselves with exalted and acute speculation about how this occurred. With our reason and five senses this article cannot be comprehended any more than the preceding one, how Christ has been made to sit at the right hand and almighty power and majesty of God. We must only believe and cling to the Word. Then we shall retain the heart of this article and derive from it the comfort that neither hell nor the devil can take us or any believer in Christ captive or harm us.” (The Formula of Concord, SD IX, 1577)

“This was a proclamation of Jesus as Lord, that is, a proclamation of victory. Though the proclamation of this victory is centered in the moment of the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the disobedient, the essential theme of the conflict between God and Satan can be traced throughout both the Old and New Testaments...The descent into Hell is the proclamation of victory in Hell, just as the resurrection is the declaration of that victory on earth.” (David Scaer, Christology)



“Christ’s Descent Into Hell” by Sasha Schneider



“Christ Is Risen!” By Rudolf Schäfer

“THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD”

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born...If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (I Corinthians 15:3-8,17-20)

THE PHYSICAL RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST KEYSTONE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION PROVES:



"Easter Morning" by Rudolf Schäfer

1. That He is what He claimed to be, the Son of God!

"He was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead."

(Romans 1:4)

2. That God the Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son as the Redeemer of the world!

"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Romans

4:25)

3. That He will raise us from the dead to life everlasting with Him!

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live even though he dies." (John

11:25)



“The Ascension of Jesus” by Heinrich Hoffmann

***“HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN AND SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY”***

*“After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven
and sat at the right hand of God.” (Mark 16:19)*

*“That power is like the working of His mighty strength which He exerted in
Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand
in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority, power and dominion,
and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the
one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to
be Head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of
Him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:19-23)*

Christ has returned bodily to the glory of His Father to prepare a place for us in heaven (John 14:2-3). When Scripture tells us that God has “*seated Him at His right hand*” (Ephesians 1:20), it offers us the assurance that Christ, the exalted God/man, now fully exercises His divine power and authority over all the universe. Christ carries out that responsibility as he (1) sends His people out into the world to proclaim the Good News of salvation to everyone by the power of the Holy Spirit (PROPHET); (2) intercedes for us before the throne of the heavenly Father (PRIEST); and, (3) rules and protects His church and governs over all the world for the benefit of His people (KING).



“The Ascension” by Eduard Gebhardt

“FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD”

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” Matthew 25:31-32

“God has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man that He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Acts 17:31

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.” Revelation 22:20

Christ will come again with glory and with power to judge the living and the dead (Matthew 25:31,32). The day of the Lord’s return is known only to God (Mark 13:32). On

that great and terrible day, the justice and righteousness of God will be demonstrated before all of humanity, assembled before the Judgement Seat of Christ. Scripture urges us to be ready at all times for His coming (Matthew 24:44).



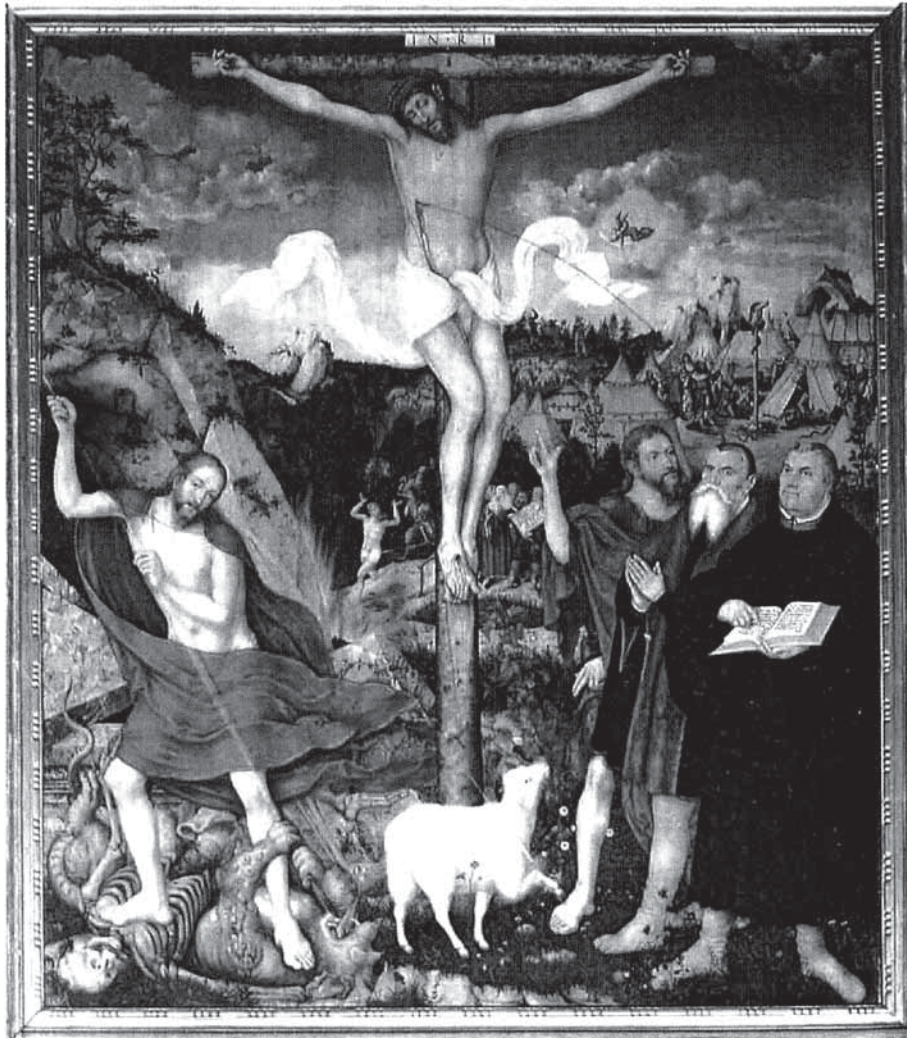
“The Last Judgment” by Michael Wohlgemut - 1493



“The Final Judgment” by C.G. Pfannschmidt

UNIT VI

God's Plan of Salvation



*“Christ the Redeemer of the World” by Lucas Cranach
From the Altar Triptych of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sts.
Peter and Paul in Weimar - 1555*

God has acted to resolve the deadly dilemma of man's sin. God has taken the initiative to do what humanity could not do for itself. He Himself has done what had to be done to win forgiveness, life, and salvation for fallen mankind. The holy and righteous God could not allow sin to go unpunished. The price had to be paid. And so God paid that awful price Himself. ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son,***

that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) Our wonderful God loves us with a love we could never have earned for ourselves. The Bible calls the undeserved love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus -

GRACE!

Scripture affirms with unmistakable clarity that our salvation is totally by grace, the result of what God has done for us in Jesus, His Son. We do not contribute to that salvation in any way whatsoever.

“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...A man is justified by faith, apart from observing the Law.”
(Romans 3:22,28)

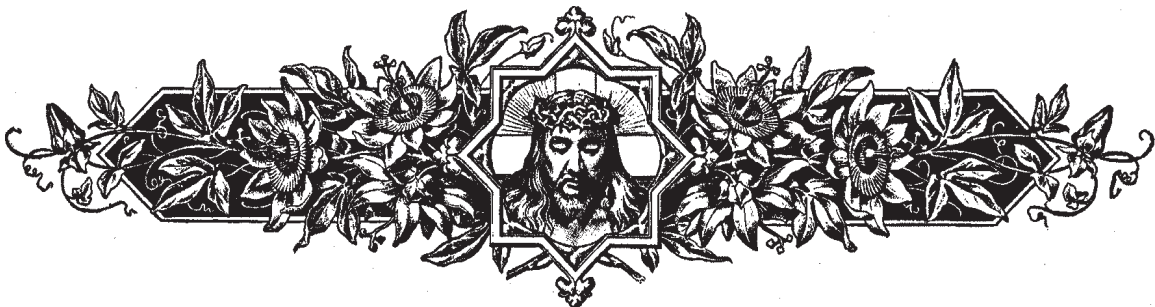
“He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.” (Titus 3:5)

“God credits righteousness apart from works.” (Romans 4:6)

“You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.” (Galatians 5:4)

“If by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.” (Romans 11:6)

“God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them...God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (II Corinthians 5:19,21)



The Vocabulary of Salvation

The Bible uses a rich variety of language to describe the saving work of Jesus Christ. Each of these compatible interpretations emphasizes a different aspect of that work and serves to enhance our understanding of what God has done for our salvation.

1. Redemption

The term “*redemption*” is derived from a Latin root meaning “*to buy back*”, thus meaning the liberation of any possession, object, or person by payment of a ransom. In Greek the root word means “*to loose*” and so “*to set free*”. The term is used of freeing from chains, slavery, or prison. The Bible uses the concept to teach that Jesus Christ has paid a complete, substitutionary, ransom price, namely the shedding of His blood to set the captive free from slavery to sin and death. By the gracious payment of that ransom price in the blood of Jesus we are restored to the harmony with God



for which mankind was created in the beginning. Martin Luther declares the wonder of this divine action on our behalf in his magnificent explanation of the Second Article of the Creed:

“He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, not with gold or silver; but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him and His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. Just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.” (Small Catechism)

Biblical texts which describe our salvation as redemption, a ransom paid to set us free from sin and death, include the following:

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28; cf. also Mark 10:45)

“Be shepherds of the church of God which He bought with His own blood.”
(Acts 20:28)

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 3:24)

“For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.” (1 Corinthians 7:22-23)

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’” (Galatians 3:13)

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” (Ephesians 1:7)

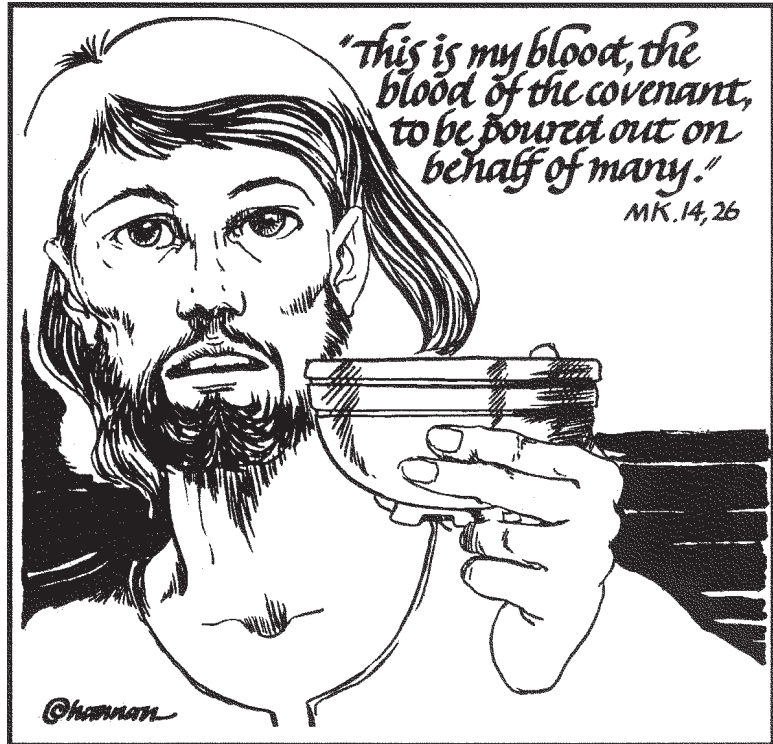
“When Christ came as the high priest of the good things that are already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the most holy place once for all by means of His own blood having obtained eternal redemption...For this reason, Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” (Hebrews 9:12,15)

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as gold or silver that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

2. New Covenant

A “covenant” is an arrangement between two parties involving mutual obligations. In the cultures of the ancient Near East such covenant agreements were characteristically sealed in the blood of a sacrificial animal. Thus the Old Testament Hebrew idiom for establishing a covenant literally means - “to cut a covenant” (cf Genesis 15:9f.; Jeremiah 34:18). The covenant concept is the predominant description of the arrangement which established the relationship between God and His people in the

Old Testament. That gracious covenant was initiated by God first with Israel and then with the church. Through the covenant which He established, God conveyed to humanity the meaning of human life and the promise of salvation. That promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The language of the covenant carries over into the New Testament which refers to what God’s love has accomplished in Christ for the salvation of humankind as the “*New Covenant*”. In this way, Scripture clearly indicates that the promises which God entrusted to Israel find their perfect fulfillment in the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ.



“So the Lord said to him, ‘Bring Me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and young pigeon. Abram brought all these to Him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other...When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram.” (Genesis 15:9-10, 17-18)

“I Am God Almighty. Walk before Me and be blameless. I will confirm My covenant between you and Me and will greatly increase your numbers.” (Genesis 17:1-2)

“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be My people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34; cf. Hebrews 8:8-12)

“In the same way, after supper, He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’” (I Corinthians 11:25)

“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills us the spirit gives life.” (II Corinthians 3:6)

“By calling this covenant ‘new’, He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.” (Hebrews 8:13)

“For this reason Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised inheritance - now that He had died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” (Hebrews 9:15)

“You have come to God, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:23,24)

3. Propitiation

“Propitiation” means the turning away of anger by the offering of a gift. Our loving God cannot be indifferent to sin and its disastrous consequences in the lives of His people. Sin provokes the anger of God and His wrath descends upon those who choose to live in sin. Unlike human anger which is often simply an irrational lack of self-control, the anger of God is the stern opposition of His holy nature to all that is evil. (cf. Psalm 11:5-7; Romans 1:18) Forgiveness necessarily involves the laying aside of God’s anger. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was intended by God to teach His people that the only means of averting His wrath against sin was the blood of the atonement (Leviticus 17:11). The Levitical sacrifices did not, in and of themselves themselves, merit the remission of sins or placate God’s anger. Instead they were designed by God to point forward to the one great sacrifice of ***“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*** (John 1:29; cf. Hebrews 10:3-4,14) David Chytraeus, one of the great theologians of 17th century Lutheranism said it well when he wrote: *“Each and every sacrifice was a sermon on the sacrifice and blessings of Christ.”* The gift that secures propitiation was provided by God Himself in the person of His Son. The blood of the atonement was the precious blood of Jesus poured out for us upon the cross.



*“The High Priest Before the Altar in the Tabernacle”
by Rudolf Schäfer*

“God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood.”
(Romans 3:25)

“Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the place of atonement...He (Christ) did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption...So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.”
(Hebrews 9:5,12,28)

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” I John 4:10

“For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.” (Hebrews 2:17)

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I John 2:1,2)



“The Offering of the Scapegoat” by Rudolf Schäfer

4. Reconciliation - Atonement

Reconciliation (Latin - *“to bring together again”*) and Atonement (Anglo-Saxon *“to overcome separation”* - literally *“at - one - ment”*) are two very similar terms which both refer to the restoration of friendly relationships and of peace where before there had been alienation and hostility. Both terms imply the removal of the offense which caused the disruption of peace and harmony. In Scripture they refer to God’s action in removing the barrier of sin which separated Him from fallen mankind by the sacrifice of His Son. The innocent Christ takes the place of guilty mankind and offers His death as our substitute (Vicarious Atonement). Luther describes what he aptly calls the *“joyful exchange”* in this way: *“Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death and damnation will be Christ’s, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul’s.”* (M. Luther, The Freedom of a Christian, 1520) Reconciliation is, first of all, a change in the heart of God toward man because of Christ’s interposing sacrifice. As a result of the *“joyful exchange”* of Christ’s righteousness for our sinfulness, God now regards us as though we had never sinned. This reconciliation is an objective reality, wholly independent of humanity’s mood or attitude. The blessings of this reconciliation are received subjectively by each individual through faith, which is, of course, also a gift of God.



“God Was In Christ Reconciling the World to Himself” by Rudolf Schäfer

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” (Leviticus 17:11)

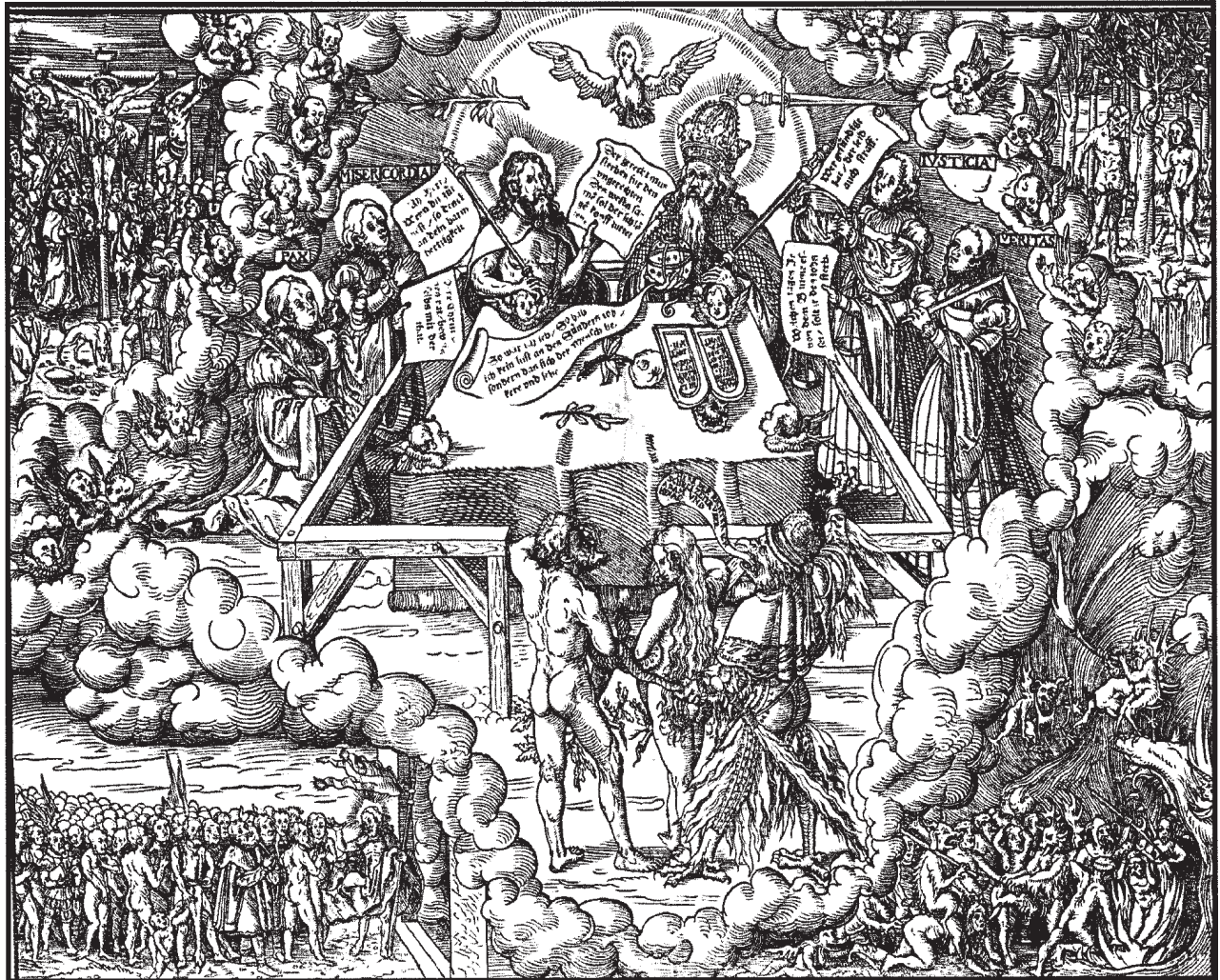
“Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:4-6)

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:8-11)

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation... We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (II Corinthians 5:18-21)

“But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.” (Ephesians 2:13-16)

“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” (I Peter 3:18)



“The Justification of Adam and Eve” by Jacob Lucius - 1556

5. Justification

Justification is the declarative act of God by which He establishes persons as righteous, that is in right and true relationship to Himself. In Greek, justification is a forensic term - that is, it applies to the law court and the act of acquitting or vindicating someone. To be justified, in a Biblical sense, means to be declared “*not guilty*”. It has to do with the innocence of a person. Justification in Scripture is a verdict not a process or quality in man. God’s declaration of man as innocent is just and fair because of the atoning death of Christ on the cross where full payment for sin was exacted in blood. Therefore the justification of the sinner is completely by grace, not on the basis of anything man has done but only because of what God in Christ has done for man. All this is entirely apart from the Law and human effort. The Bible firmly condemns every attempt to combine self-righteousness with the righteousness of God as futile and damnable. The righteousness of God is appropriated to the individual by faith alone. Man cannot produce

his own faith, neither in whole or in part, but through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament (Means of Grace) God confers faith through the working of the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood...so as to be just and justify the man who had faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:20-26)

“What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness’...The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - to us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 4:3,23-5:1)

“Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all man. For just as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one Man, the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:18-19)

“So we too have put our faith in Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law, no one will be justified...I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.” (Galatians 2:16-17,20-21)

“The article of justification, which is our only protection, not only against all the powers and plottings of men but also against the gates of Hell, is this: by faith alone in Christ, without works, are we declared righteous and saved...The article of justification is the



“Sola Gratia” by Rudolf Schäfer

master and prince, the lord, the ruler, and the judge over all kinds of doctrines; it preserves and governs all church doctrine and raises up our conscience before God. Without this article the world is utter death and darkness. No error is so mean, so clumsy, and so outworn, as not to be supremely pleasing to human reason and to seduce us if we are without the knowledge and contemplation of this article...This doctrine is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour...In short, if this article concerning Christ - the doctrine that we are justified and saved through Him alone and consider all apart from Him damned - is not professed, all

resistance and restraint are at an end. Then there is, in fact, neither measure or limit to any heresy or error...Whoever departs from the article of justification does not know God and is an idolater.” (Dr. Martin Luther from What Luther Says , Vol. II. Ewald Plass, Translator and Editor. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1959.)

“Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accord with the summary formulation of our Christian faith and confession described above, that a poor sinner is justified before God (that is, he is absolved and declared utterly free from all his sins, and from the verdict of well deserved damnation, and is adopted as a child of God and as an heir of eternal life) without any merit or worthiness on our part, and without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, by sheer grace, solely through the merit of the total obedience, the bitter passion, the death, and the resurrection of Christ, our Lord, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness. The Holy Spirit offers these treasures to us in the promise of the Gospel, and faith is the only means whereby we can apprehend, accept, apply them to ourselves, and make them our own. Faith is a gift of God whereby we rightly learn to know Christ as our Redeemer in the Word of the gospel and to trust in Him, that solely for the sake of His obedience we have the forgiveness of sins by grace and are accounted righteous and holy by God the Father and are saved forever..Accordingly the word ‘justify’ means to declare righteous and free from sins and from the eternal punishment of these sins on account of the righteousness of Christ which God reckons to faith.” (Formula of Concord, SD, VI, 1577)



“In the Hour of Death - Look to the Cross of Christ Alone” by Rudolf Schäfer

UNIT VII

Conversion and Sanctification

The Work of the Holy Spirit



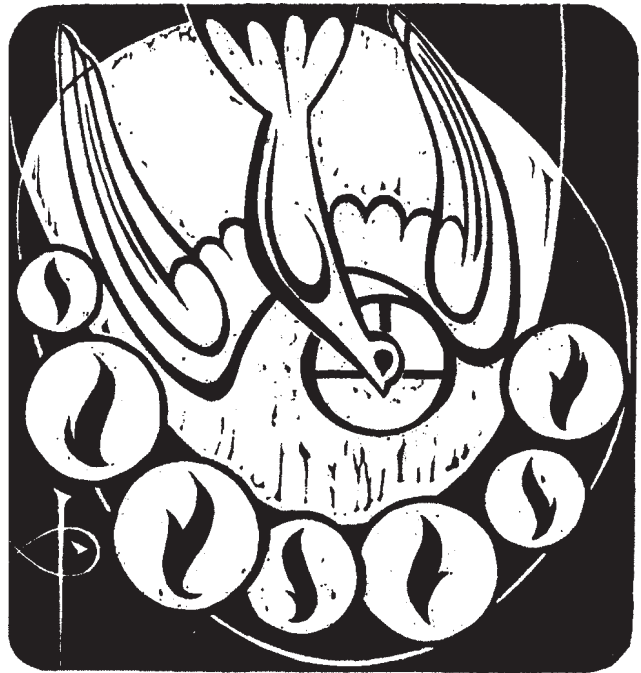
“The Day of Pentecost” 19th Century Bible Engraving

“I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead; and He will give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.” (M. Luther, The Small Catechism, 1529)

The Natural Condition of Man

No human being can by his own reason or strength decide to believe in Jesus Christ. ***“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*** (I Corinthians 2:14) Natural man is, even at his best, spiritually blind, dead, and hostile to the things of God for his salvation. (cf. II Corinthians 4:1-4; Ephesians 2:1-5; Romans 5:6-10) There is no dormant spiritual strength or energy that might be roused to produce the spark of faith. By himself, man is spiritually helpless and hopeless.

Nonetheless, just as it is not natural for men to admit that they are sinners who deserve eternal punishment from God so it is not natural for them to believe that they can be saved only by what Christ has done for them. The Lutheran Confessions call this deadly delusion *“the opinion of the Law”*, an instinctive inclination to spurn the grace of God and depend upon man’s own efforts instead. (cf. Apology to the Augsburg Confession, IV, 146) It is this attitude of work righteousness that is really at the heart of man’s enmity against God. Scripture firmly rejects *“synergism”* (that is, man working in co-operation with God for his own salvation) in every form. By nature, sinful man is incapable of accepting Jesus. ***“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.”*** (I Corinthians 12:3; cf. also Genesis 8:21; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:14,18,22-23; 8:7; Galatians 5:17).



“Free will by its own natural powers can do nothing for man’s conversion, righteousness, peace, and salvation, cannot co-operate, and cannot obey, believe, and give assent when the Holy Spirit offers the grace of God and salvation through the Gospel. On the contrary, because of the wicked and obstinate disposition with which he was born, he defiantly resists God and His will unless the Holy Spirit illuminates and rules him. For this reason

the Holy Scriptures compare the hearts of unregenerated man to a hard stone (Ezekial 26:26; Jeremiah 5:3), which resists rather than yields in any way to human touch, or to an unhewn timber (Hosea 6:5), or to a wild, unbroken animal (Psalm 73:22).” (Formula of Concord, SD,II,18-19)

Faith is a free gift of God. Man comes to faith through the work of God the Holy Ghost.

“Holy Scriptures ascribe conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and everything that belongs to its real beginning and completion in no way to the human powers of the natural free will, be it entirely, or one half, or the least and tiniest part, but altogether and alone to the divine operation and of the Holy Spirit.” (Formula of Concord, SD,II, 25)



Conversion - The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Bible contains many different terms which describe that work of the Holy Spirit by which He changes the spiritually blind, dead, and resisting unbeliever into a believing child of God. Once again, the variety of terminology serves to highlight different dimensions of what God does to bring men to faith and enriches our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. Conversion - God's action in turning the sinner away from sin and unbelief to faith and new life in Christ. ***"You were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."*** (I Peter 2:25; cf. also Psalm 51:13; Jeremiah 31:18; Acts 3:19; 11:21; 15:3)



"Jesus and Nicodemus" by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

2. Regeneration - God's action in causing the unbeliever to be ***"born again"*** to faith and new life in Christ. ***"You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God."*** (I Peter 1:23; cf. also John 3:3-6; Titus 3:5) NOTE: Every believer in Jesus Christ is ***"born again"***. Contrary to the notion widespread among Pentecostals today, to be ***"born again"*** means to come to faith and does not refer to some later spiritual experience which separates Christians into two different categories.

3. Quickening - God's action in making a believer out of an unbeliever raises him from death to life. ***"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ."*** (Colossians 2:13; cf. also Ephesians 2:4,5; I John 3:14)

4. Enlightenment - God's action in removing the spiritual blindness of natural man by bringing him to faith in Christ Jesus. *"I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."* (Acts 26:18; cf. also Isaiah 9:2; John 1:14; 8:12; 2 Corinthians 4:6; I Peter 2:9)



"The Means of Grace in the Lutheran Church"
by J.C. H. Koopmann

The Holy Ghost Works Through the Means of Grace

The Bible teaches that the Holy Ghost uses the means which God has established to create faith in the hearts of men. Instead of working immediately and directly, which would leave us dependent on purely subjective experience, God has chosen to convey the blessings of the redemption which Christ has won for us through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. We call these channels which convey God's undeserved love to us the *"Means of Grace."*

"Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth." (John 17:17)

"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

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

“He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

“He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” (Matthew 26:27-28)

“Through the Word and the Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel.” (Augsburg Confession, V, 1530)

“God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through His spoken Word and the Sacraments.” (Smalkald Articles, VIII, 10, 1536)



“Martin Luther Preaching Christ Crucified” by Lucas Cranach

FAITH

Knowledge

To Know the True God As Revealed In His Word

Faith comes through hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17)

Acceptance

To Accept the Bible as the Word of God

“You accepted it not as the word of men but as it actually is, the Word of God.” (I Thessalonians 2:13)

Trust

To Trust in God with the Firm Confidence that all of His Promises Will Be Fulfilled For Me

“I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

“We believe, teach, and confess, that faith is not a mere knowledge of the stories about Christ, but the kind of gift of God by which, in the Word of the Gospel, we recognize Christ aright as our Redeemer and trust in Him, so that solely because of His obedience, by grace, we have forgiveness of sins, are regarded as holy and righteous by God the Father, and shall be saved eternally.” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, III, 4, 1577)



“The Day of Pentecost” by Rudolf Schäfer

SANCTIFICATION

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The term “*sanctification*” (Latin - “*to make holy*”) refers to the spiritual growth of the believer which follows upon justification. This process of renewal is the work of God the Holy Spirit through which the Christian is restored, step by step, in the image of God, righteousness of life, and holiness of conduct. While justification takes place outside of man as God declares him to be righteous for Christ’s sake, sanctification is divine action within man, Christ in us, as by faith we become participants in the death and resurrection of our Lord. Christ’s action in me (Sanctification) is the necessary result of Christ’s action for me (Justification). The two are inseparably connected to one another.

“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God,

as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to do this more and more...It is God's will that you should be holy...For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit.” (I Thessalonians 4: 1,3,7-8)

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.” (I Thessalonians 5: 23-24)

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6: 7-10)

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him?...In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead...Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder...As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2: 14, 17-19, 26)

“Our churches teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits and that it is necessary to do the good works commanded by God. We must do so because it is God's will and not because we rely on such works to merit justification before God, for forgiveness of sins and justification are apprehended by faith, as Christ Himself also testifies, ‘When you have done all these things say, ‘We are unworthy servants’ (Luke 17:10).” (Augsburg Confession, VI)



“Striving Toward the Heavenly Goal” by Rudolf Schüfer

The Causes of Sanctification

The God who creates faith also produces sanctification by His infinite power. ***“For it is God who works in you both to will and to act according to His good purpose.”*** (Philippians 2:13) (cf. also I Thessalonians 5:23-24; Ephesians 2:10) God must make the unwilling willing. He must give the strength and power to conquer sin. When a Christian fights against temptation, when with his heart he confesses his sin with sorrow, when he rejoices in Jesus Christ and in gratitude to his Savior wishes to glorify the Savior’s name, when the Christian is moved to help his neighbor, to be forgiving - it is God who works these things in him. The Holy Spirit, promised to believers as a precious gift by the Savior, teaches them and brings to their remembrance the words of Christ (John 14:26); guides them into all truth and glorifies Christ (John 16:13,14); and, fills

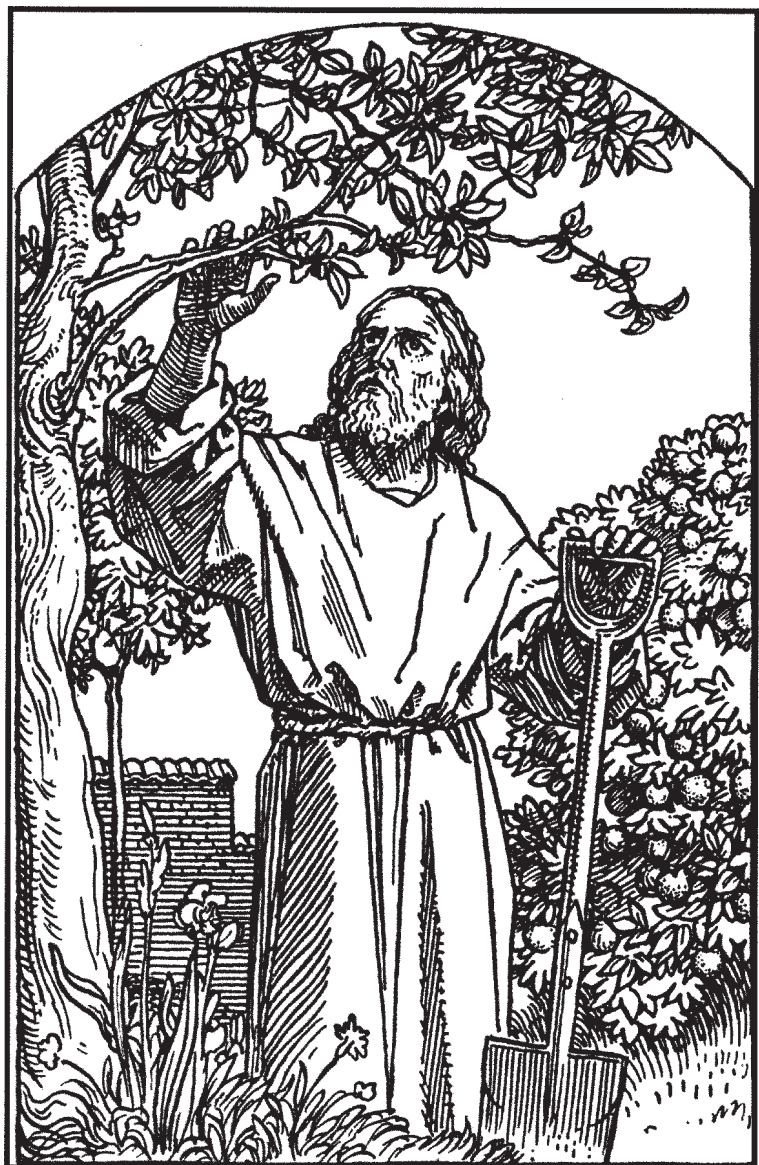
them with His gifts (I Corinthians 12:7-11). As the Spirit of prayer (Zechariah 12:10) He teaches believers to pray (Romans 8:15,26). As the Spirit of adoption He strengthens their confidence that they are children of God (Romans 8:16). As the Spirit, not of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7) He strengthens them in their daily battle against their flesh (Galatians 5:16-18, 22) and works in them righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17). As the Spirit of the God of hope (Romans 15:13) he enables them to abound in hope through His power (Romans 15:13).

But in this work of sanctification the Christian also plays a part. In conversion, man experiences the working of God in a completely passive way. In sanctification God calls the believer to play an active role, using the gifts and abilities conferred upon him by the Holy Spirit. Thus Scripture urges God's people to "grow in grace" making the best possible use of the gifts which He has given.

"As God's fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

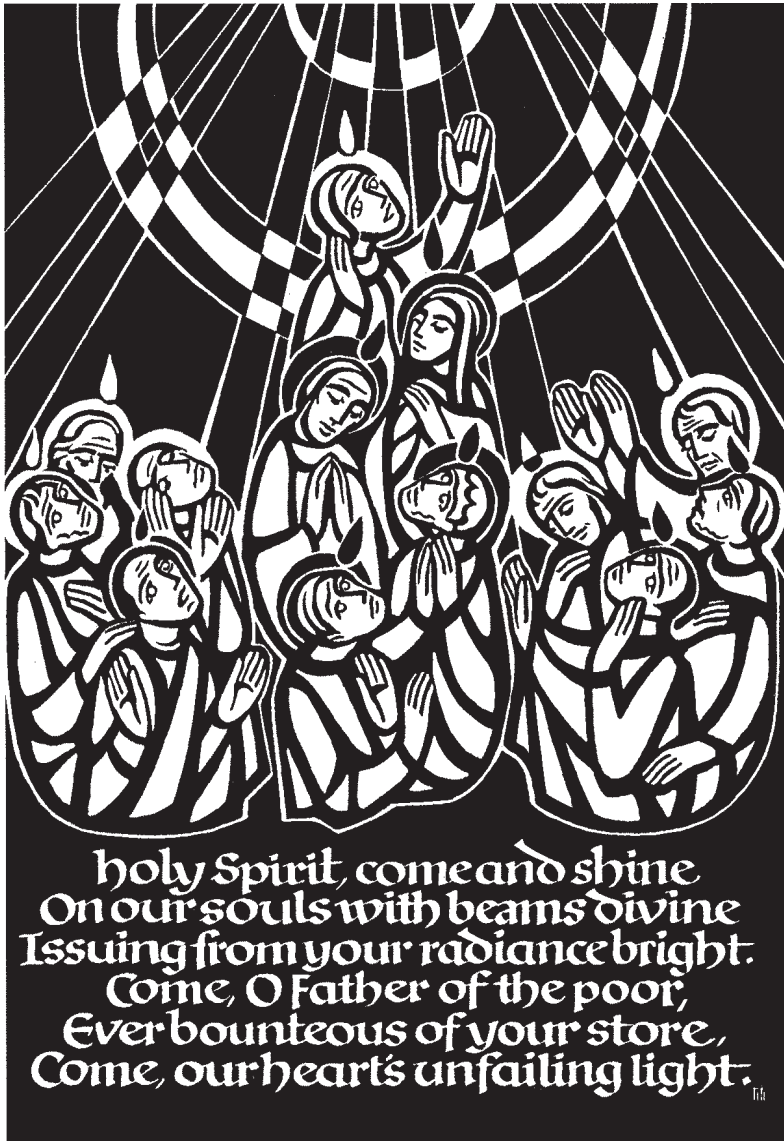
"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, not now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12)



"Fruitful Branches" by Rudolf Schäfer

“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.” (1 Timothy 4:14)



“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” (2 Peter 3:18)

“From this it follows that as soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated His work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must co-operate by the power of the Holy Spirit, even though we still do so in great weakness. Such co-operation does not proceed from our carnal and natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit has begun in us in conversion, as St. Paul expressly and earnestly reminds us, ‘Working together with Him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain.’ (1 Corinthians 6:1) This is to be understood in no other way

than that the converted man does good, as much and as long as God rules him through His Holy Spirit, guides and leads him, but if God should withdraw His gracious hand man could not remain in obedience to God for one moment. But if this were to be understood as though the converted man co-operates alongside the Holy Spirit, the way two horses draw a wagon together, such a view could by no means be conceded without detriment to the divine truth.” (Formula of Concord, SD, II, 65,66)

Saint And Sinner At The Same Time

(“Simul Justus Et Peccator”)

Sanctification is progressive but never perfect. The Christian is a saint, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, whose righteousness, or perfect obedience, is imputed to him by faith. But at the same time, he remains a sinner, though his sin is covered through forgiveness in Christ. The sinful nature, with which all men are conceived and born, is not done away with when a person is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Its guilt is forgiven, but the “*Old Adam*” remains, always attempting to drag us back into the old way of sin. The conflict between that which we have become in Christ (“*New Man*”) and that which we are by nature (“*Old Adam*”) is the daily reality of the Christian life.

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. In my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ, our Lord!” (Romans 7:15-25)

“I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

“The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other.” (Galatians 5:17)



“David and Bathsheba” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

PRESERVATION IN THE FAITH

“He who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 10:22)

The Bible plainly teaches that it is possible for a believer to fall away from the faith (apostasy). A persistent pattern of willful, deliberate sin will destroy a faith relationship with the Lord. The effect of impenitent sin on the spiritual life of the believer is cumulative. If sin is allowed to dominate the heart is *“hardened”* and repentance becomes all the more difficult. The further one departs from Christ the more difficult it is to return. (cf. Romans 1:18-32; Ephesians 4:17-32) The Law in Scripture sternly warns those who are complacent and self-righteous to repent lest they forfeit salvation.

“Those on the rock are those who receive the Word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.” (Luke 8:13)

“My dear children for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and

change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.” (Galatians 4:19)

“You may fight the good fight of faith, holding on to a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.” (1 Timothy 1:19-20)

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction.” (Galatians 6:7)

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence - continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12)

“So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12)



“Nathan’s Rebuke of David’s Sin” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld



“David’s Repentance” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

“It is therefore necessary to know and to teach that when holy people, aside from the fact that they still possess and feel original sin and daily repent and strive against it, fall into open sin (as David fell into adultery, murder, and blasphemy), faith and the Spirit have departed from them. This is so because the Holy Spirit does not permit sin to rule and gain the upper hand in such a way that sin is committed, but the Holy Spirit represses and restrains it so that it does not do what it wishes. If sin does what it wishes, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present, for St. John says, ‘No one born of God commits sin; he cannot sin.’ Yet, it is also true, as the same St. John writes, ‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.’ Smalkald Articles, III,III,43-44)

“Our churches condemn the Anabaptists who deny that those who have once been justified can lose the Holy Spirit, and also those who contend that some may attain such perfection in this life that they cannot sin.” Augsburg Confession,XII,7)

“It is very necessary that this gospel be preached to those in our day who know the gospel, to me and others like me, who can teach and train all the world and consider themselves very close to God, as having entirely devoured God’s Spirit, with feathers and bones...For this judgement strikes at what lies deepest in the heart of man, the spiritual self-conceit, which in poverty, disgrace, and misfortune - and just because of this - regards itself as first...It reaches very high and strikes very fine people; yes, it terrifies the most eminent saints, for Christ is here addressing this warning to his apostles. We see how fear has here gripped the greatest saints, and how many have here fallen from their high spiritual estate...They fell because of the vicious, insidious deception by which they became secure and thought; We have become so close to God that there is no longer any danger...Behold how Saul fell! How he allowed David to fall! How Peter had to fall! How several disciples of Paul fell!” (M. Luther, Kirchen Postille, 1543. St. Louis Edition, Vol. XI, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis)



“David’s Forgiveness” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld



“The Repentance of the Prodigal Son” by Rudolf Schäfer

In contrast to the stern warnings of the Law, the Biblical Gospel assures the humble believer that his salvation is sure because it rests solely upon the promises of God. The God who has called us to faith and who accomplishes His work of sanctification within us also keeps and preserves us in the true faith to life everlasting. Hence the security of our salvation does not depend upon the intensity of our faith, the frequency of our good works, or the holiness of our lives. The salvation of the Christian is certain because it depends on the grace and power of God alone!

“In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade - kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

“And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. To Him be the power forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:10-11)

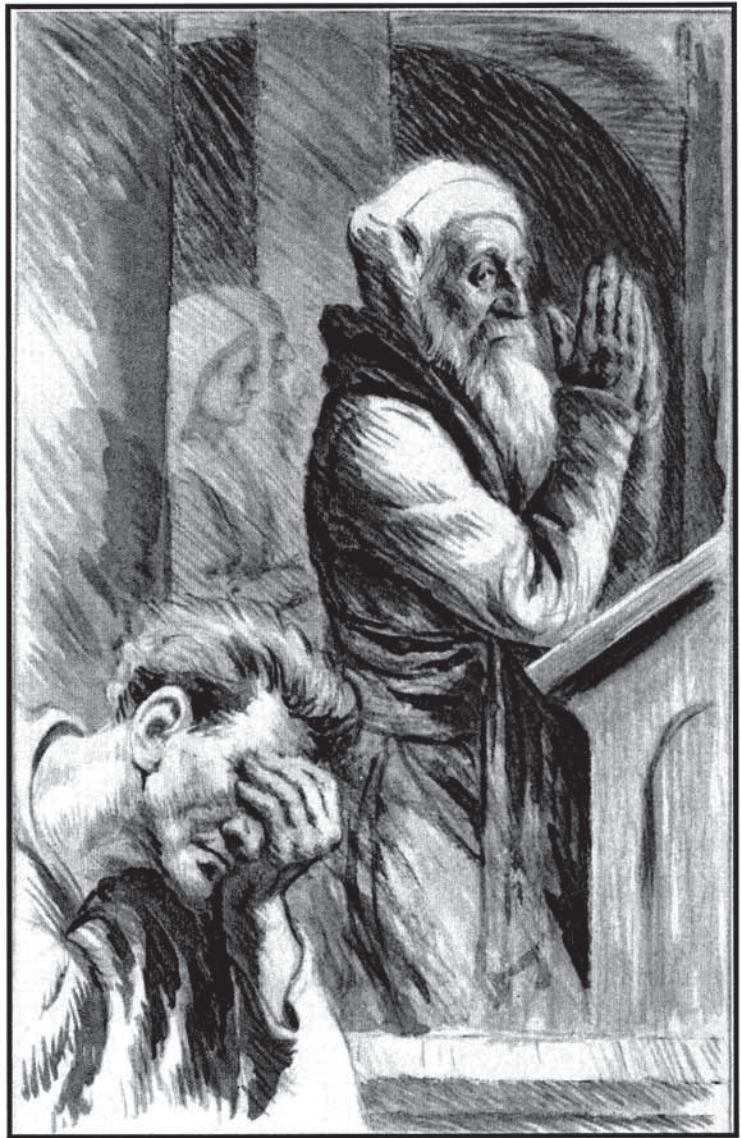
“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)

“He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ is faithful.” (1 Corinthians 1:9)

“But the Lord is faithful and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.” (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

The doctrine of preservation in the faith as it is taught in Holy Scripture appears to present us with a contradiction. Those passages which warn against falling from the faith are difficult to harmonize with the texts that assure us that God will preserve us in the faith. The Biblical dialectic of Law and Gospel reflected in the doctrine of preservation in the faith is to some extent an indication of the on-going tension between saint and sinner which exists in the life of every Christian.



“The Pharisee and the Publican” by Karl Bauer

“Thus the Christian must learn to live in constant tension between these two. When he begins to lean over to the left, toward pride and presumption and confidence in the strength of his faith, and to trust in his own character, then the warnings against apostasy, the Savior’s ‘Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation,’ pushes him upright once more. But usually man, even the Christian man, whose heart is never fully what it ought to be, begins then to lean over to the right - he becomes afraid and begins to doubt that he will ever make it to the gates of the heavenly city. Once again the Savior comes and stands on the other side to support him and to push him upright with his promise, ‘Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God’ (Isaiah 41:10). And he knows that when his pilgrimage comes to an end, ‘all the trumpets’ will be blowing ‘for him on the other side’.” (Siegbert Becker, The Foolishness of God. Milwaukee: 1982, Northwestern Publishing House)



“The Restoration of the Prodigal Son” by Rudolf Schäfer

Although reason cannot comprehend or coherently explain that which appears to be a contradiction, by faith we accept both God’s warnings and His promises as completely true. There is a fundamental principle of faith at issue here which applies in every part of the Christian life. Whenever a believer is confronted by a choice between that which seems reasonable and that which is Biblical, the Christian will always choose to stand upon the solid rock of God’s inspired Word.



“Jesus Weeping Over Jerusalem” by J. James Tissot

“Why Some and Not Others?”

Why are some people saved while others are damned? (“*Cur alii, alii non?*”) This perplexing question has troubled Christian thinkers for many centuries. It has aptly been called the “*cross of the theologians*” (“*crux theologorum*”). The itch to answer the “*cross of the theologians*” has led many astray. We must be content with what Scripture says, bowing in humble adoration before the superior wisdom of God (Romans 11:33). The pertinent Scriptural principles may be summarized as follows:

1. There is no difference among men. All are sinners who have fallen far short of the glory of God and deserve only death and damnation.

“Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12; cf. 8:7; Ephesians 2:3; Psalm 51:5)

2. God desires the salvation of every human being. There is no difference in His attitude toward men.

“This is good and pleases God our Savior who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4; cf. John 3:16)

3. All those who are saved were chosen for salvation by God, given faith as a free gift of His grace, and preserved in that faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“But join me in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.” (1 Timothy 1:8-9; cf. Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:11-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)

4. Whoever is lost is damned by his own fault because he has rejected the truth and spurned God’s salvation.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” (Matthew 23:37; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Acts 7:51; Hosea 13:9)

“But whenever something in the discussion of this subject soars too high and goes beyond these limits we must with Paul place our finger on our lips and say, ‘Who are you, a man, to answer back to God?’” (Formula of Concord, SD, XI, 63)



“The Return of the Prodigal” by Karl Bauer

UNIT VIII

The Means of Grace

Gospel in Word and Sacrament

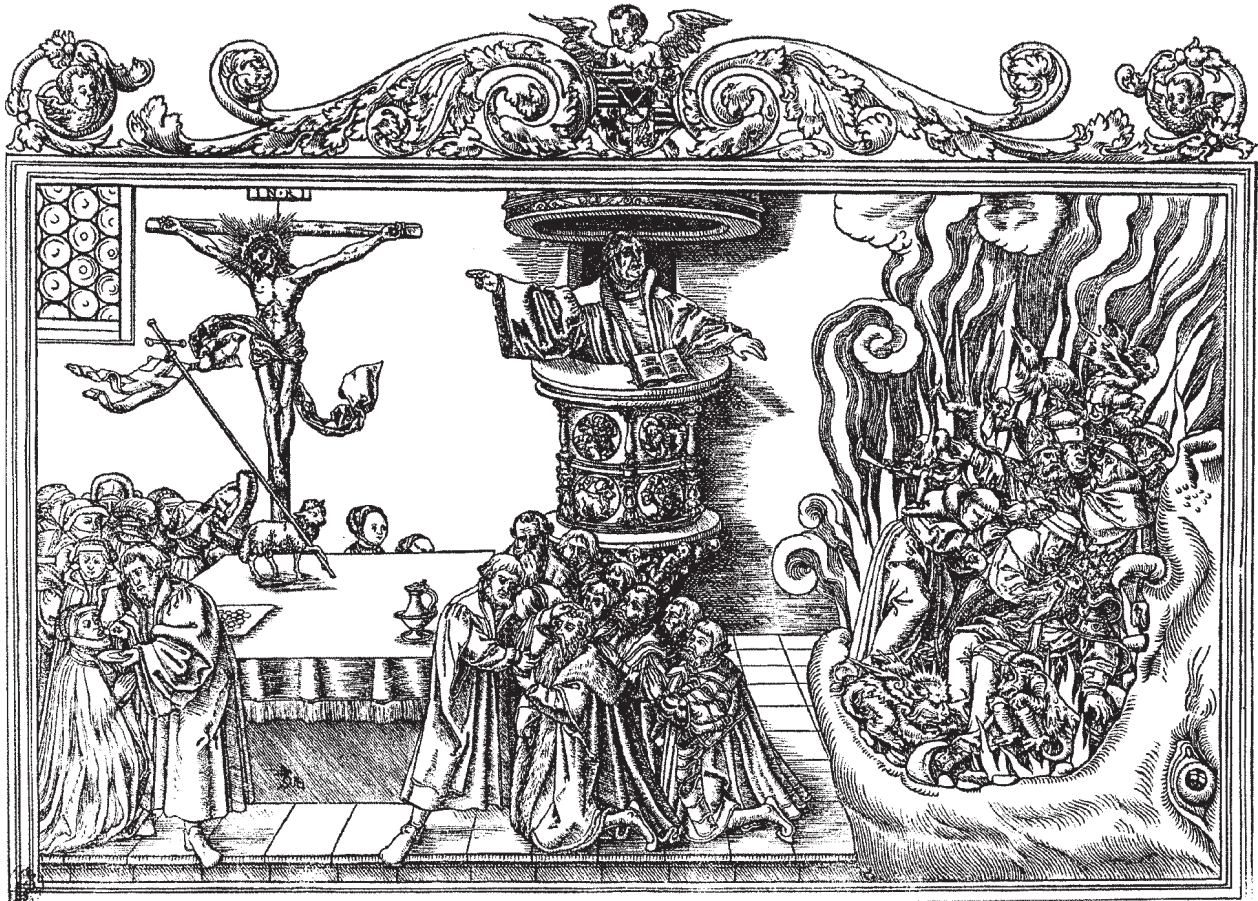


“The Means of Grace” Altar Triptych from the City Church in Wittenburg by Lucas Cranach

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

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

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



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

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

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

The Word of God

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





THE SACRAMENTS

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

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

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

SACRAMENT

A Sacred Act

I. Instituted or Commanded by Christ Himself

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

III. To Offer or Convey the Forgiveness of Sins

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



HOLY BAPTISM



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

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

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

WHICH IS THAT WORD OF GOD?

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

WHAT DOES BAPTISM DO FOR US?

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

WHAT IS GOD’S PROMISE?

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

HOW CAN WATER DO SUCH GREAT THINGS?

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

THE NATURE OF BAPTISM

Baptism is a genuine means of grace. It is no more and no less than a divinely ordained



“The Baptism of Jesus” by Rudolf Schäfer

means whereby God in a special manner conveys and imparts to the person baptized the forgiveness of sins provided for him by Christ’s death and resurrection. In the water and the Word of Holy Baptism, God creates or strengthens faith. Thus Scripture correctly describes Baptism as a *“washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:5).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“Baptism Day” by Alexander Zick

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

Infant Baptism

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

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

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

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

practice of “household baptism” in the New Testament.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

the heart of the matter when he says:

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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



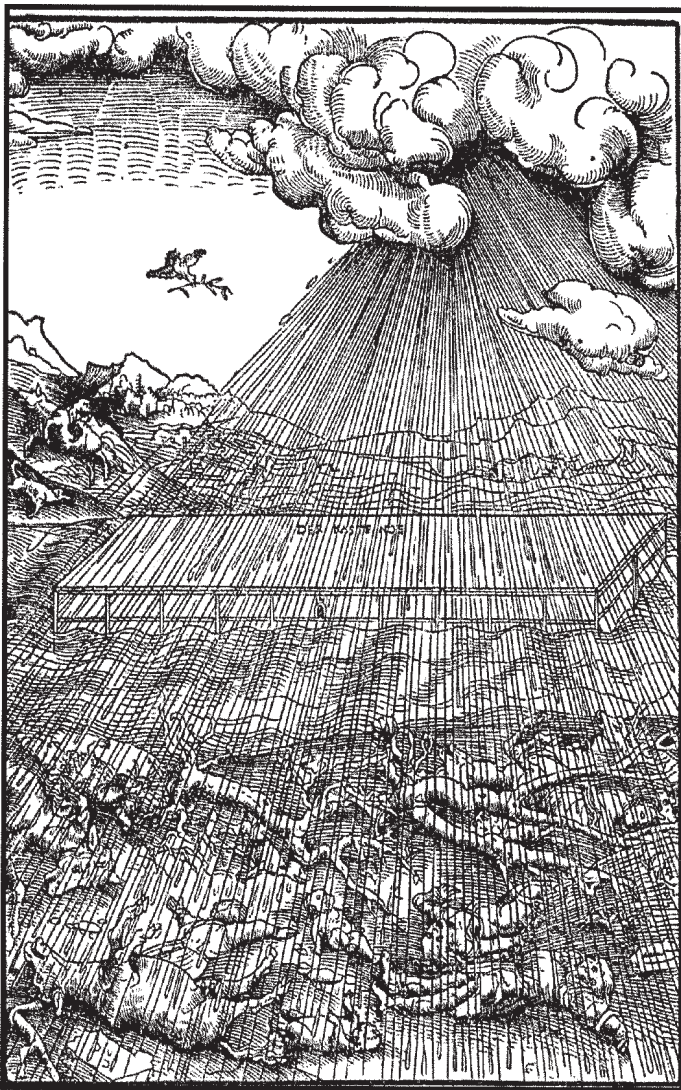
“The Baptism of Jesus” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

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

THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

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



"The Flood" - Luther Bible Woodcut - 1523

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

THE LORD'S SUPPER



“The Last Supper” by Albrecht Dürer

WHAT IS THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION?

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

WHERE IS THIS WRITTEN?

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

(Small Catechism, Martin Luther, 1529)

THREE BASIC VIEWS ON THE NATURE OF HOLY COMMUNION

I. ROMAN CATHOLIC *Transubstantiation*

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

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



“The True Religion of Christ” by Lucas Cranach

II. REFORMED *Representation*

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

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

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



Communion Distributed “In Both Kinds” by Luther and Huss

III. LUTHERAN

Real Presence

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

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



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

What does the Bible say?

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

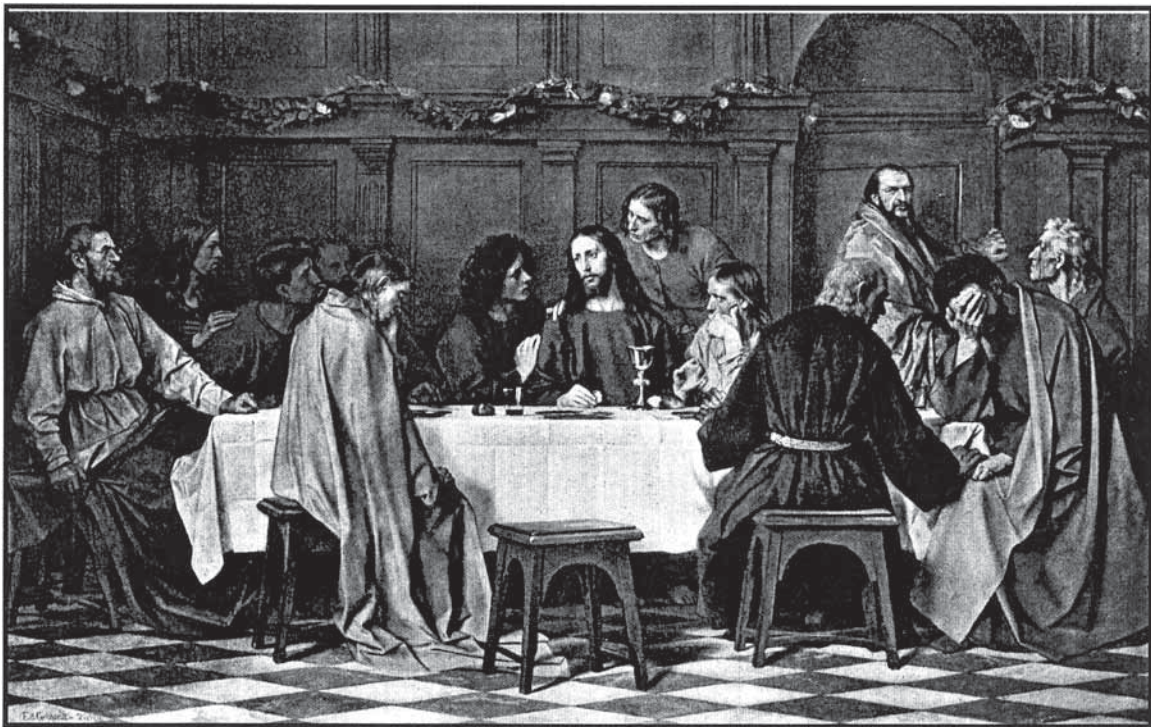
1. Transubstantiation’s insistence that the bread and wine cease to exist because they have become the body and blood of Christ contradicts I Corinthians 10:16 and I Corinthians 11:27,28 which specifically refer to the consecrated elements as both **“bread”** and **“body,”** **“cup”** (wine) and **“blood.”**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

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

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

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

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



“The Last Supper” by Eduard Gebhardt



“The Lord’s Supper” by Heinrich Pfieler

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

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

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

THREE BASIC VIEWS ON THE PURPOSE OF HOLY COMMUNION

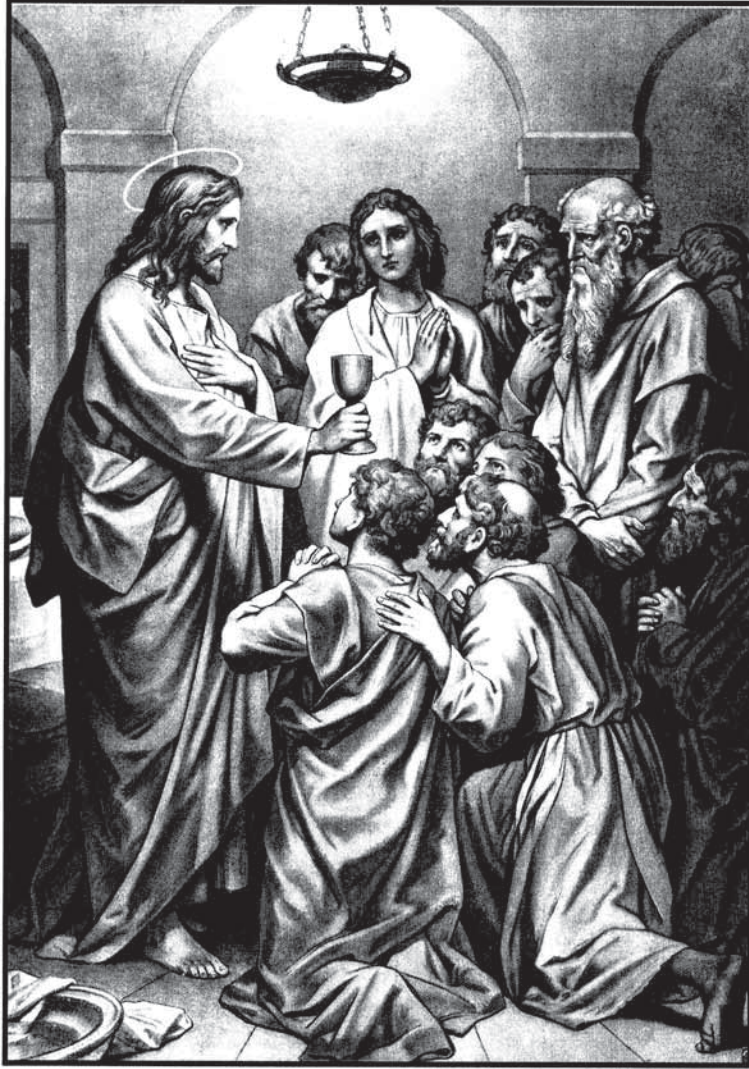
I. ROMAN CATHOLIC *Sacrifice of the Mass*



“For You” by Rudolf Schäfer

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

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



“The Holy Communion” by Heinrich Hoffmann

II. REFORMED Memorial Feast

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

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

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

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

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



"The Last Supper" by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

III. LUTHERAN Means of Grace

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

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

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

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

What Does the Bible Say?

Sacrifice of the Mass

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

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

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



“This Is My Body” by J. James Tissot

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



“The Last Supper” 19th Century Bible Engraving

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

Memorial Feast

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

“Now we come to its power and benefit, the purpose for which the Sacrament was really instituted, for it is most necessary that we know what we should seek and obtain there. This is plainly evident from the words just quoted, ‘This is my body and blood given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.’ In other words, we go to the sacrament because we receive there a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins. Why? Because the words are there through which this is imparted! Christ bids me eat and drink in order that the sacrament may be mine and may be a source of blessing to me as a sure pledge and sign -indeed as the very gift he has provided for me against my sins, death, and all evil....Here again our clever spirits contort themselves with their great learning and wisdom, bellowing and blustering, ‘How can bread and wine forgive sins and strengthen faith?’ This bread and wine are Christ's body and blood and with which the words are coupled. This treasure is conveyed and communicated to us in no other way than through the words, ‘given and poured out for you’. Here you have both truths, that it is Christ's body and blood and that these are yours as your treasure and gift. Christ's body can never be an unfruitful, vain thing, impotent and useless.”(Martin Luther, Large Catechism)



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

Means of Grace

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

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



Martin Chemnitz

CLOSED COMMUNION

The Scriptural Practice of Historic Christendom

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“Holy Communion” by Rudolf Schäfer

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

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

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

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



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

THE PROPER USE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christian Questions with Their Answers

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

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?

Yes, I believe it. I am a sinner.

2. How do you know this?

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

3. Are you sorry for your sins?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNIT IX

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH



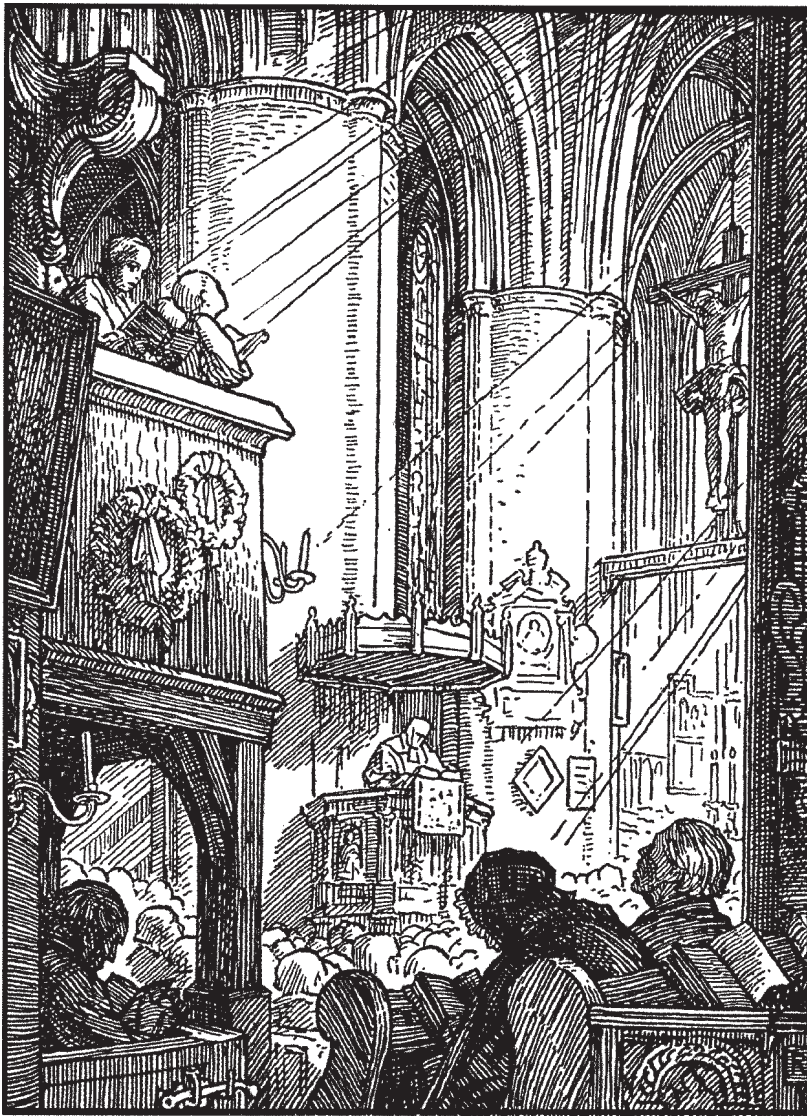
*“Luther Preaching at the City Church in Wittenberg”
by Gustav Koenig*

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

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

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

“Church” in the New Testament



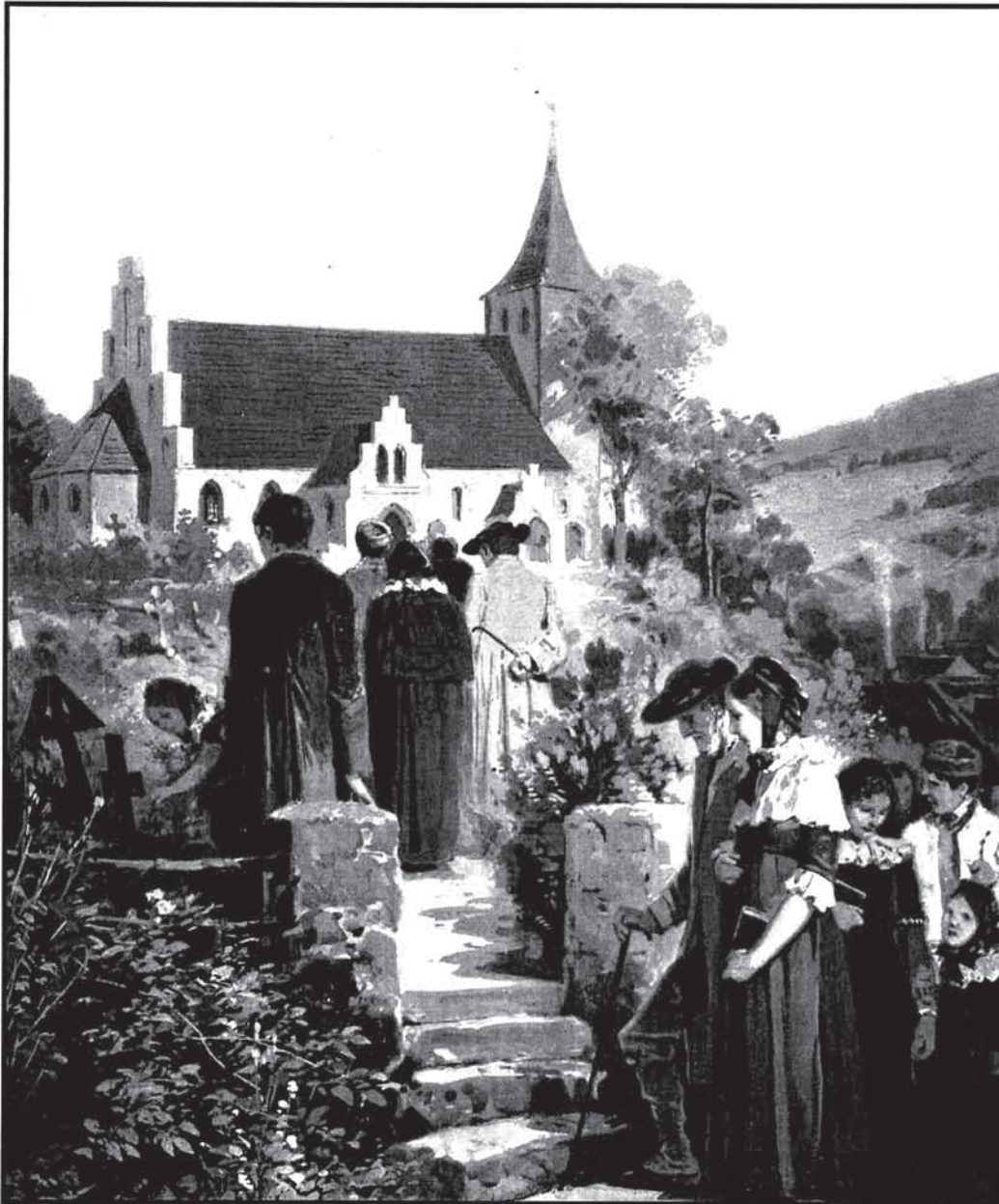
“Come Holy Spirit” by Rudolf Schäfer

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

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

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

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



“On the Way to Church” by Alexander Zick



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

The Church - Visible and Invisible

The Invisible Church - Inward Fellowship of Faith

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

The Visible Church - Outward Fellowship of the Means of Grace

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



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

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



“The Church” by Rudolf Schäfer

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

The Church and the Churches

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“Luther at the Marburg Colloquy” by Gustav Koenig



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

DOCTRINE - TRUE AND FALSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



“Dr. Martin Luther” by Rudolf Schäfer

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

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

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

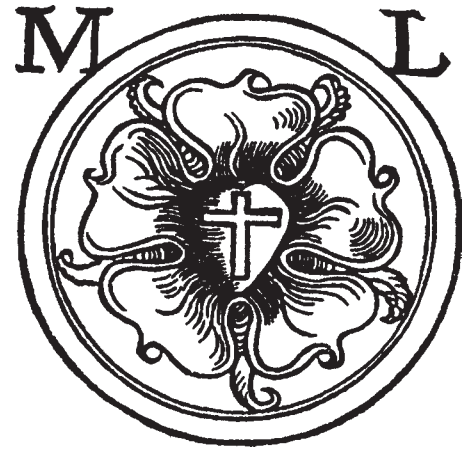


“The Presentation of the Augsburg Confession” by Gustav Koenig

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

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

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



The Apostles' Creed - (Third Century AD)

The Nicene Creed - (325 AD)

The Athanasian Creed - (Fourth Century AD)

The Augsburg Confession - (1530 AD)

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession - (1530 AD)

The Smalkald Articles - (1537 AD)

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

The Small Catechism - (1529 AD)

The Large Catechism - (1529 AD)

The Formula of Concord - (1577 AD)

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

Thesis I

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

Thesis II

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

Thesis III

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

Thesis IV

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

Thesis V

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

Thesis VI

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

Thesis VII

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

Thesis VIII

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

Thesis IX

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

Thesis X

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

Thesis XI

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

Thesis XII

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

Thesis XIII

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

Thesis XIV

The Evangelical Lutheran Church professes the clarity of Scripture.

Thesis XV

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

Thesis XVI

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

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

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

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

Thesis XVII

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

Thesis XVIII

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

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

Thesis XIX

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

Thesis XX

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

Thesis XXI

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

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

Thesis XXII

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

Thesis XXIII

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

Thesis XXIV

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

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



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

The Christian and the Lodge

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“The Office of the Keys” by Michael Ostendorfer

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



“Law and Gospel” by Franz Timmermann

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

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

Repentance - The Crucial Issue

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



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

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

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



“The Posting of the 95 Theses” by Gustav Koenig

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

REPENTANCE

1. Recognition and Acknowledgment of Sin

2. Contrition (Sorrow for Sin)

3. Seek Forgiveness in Christ

4. Conscientious Resolve Not to Repeat the Sin

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

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

Christian Discipline

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

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

Steps In the Process of Christian Discipline (Matthew 18)

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

Excommunication - Tough Love In Action

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



Michael the Archangel - The Weigher of Souls

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



The Office of the Holy Ministry

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

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

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

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



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

Concerning the Holy Ministry

by C.F.W. Walther, 1852

THESIS I

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

THESIS II

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

THESIS III

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

THESIS IV

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

THESIS V

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

THESIS VI

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

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

THESIS VII

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

THESIS VIII

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

THESIS IX

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

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

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

THESIS X

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

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



"The Ordination of Martin Luther" by Gustav Koenig

UNIT XI

THE LAST THINGS

(Eschatology)



“The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” by Albrecht Dürer

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

PHYSICAL DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

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

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

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

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

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



Death - An Allegorical Representation by Nicholas le Rouge, 1496

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



“The Raising of Lazarus” by Lucas Cranach the Younger - 1558

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



"Danse Macabre" by Michael Wohlgemuth - 1493

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

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



“The Signs of the Times” by Rudolf Schäfer

THE BIBLE AND THE END TIMES

The Biblical View of Time

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

The “*Signs of the Times*”

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

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

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

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



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

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

The Antichrist

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

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



“The Coming of the Antichrist” by Michael Wohlgermuth

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

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

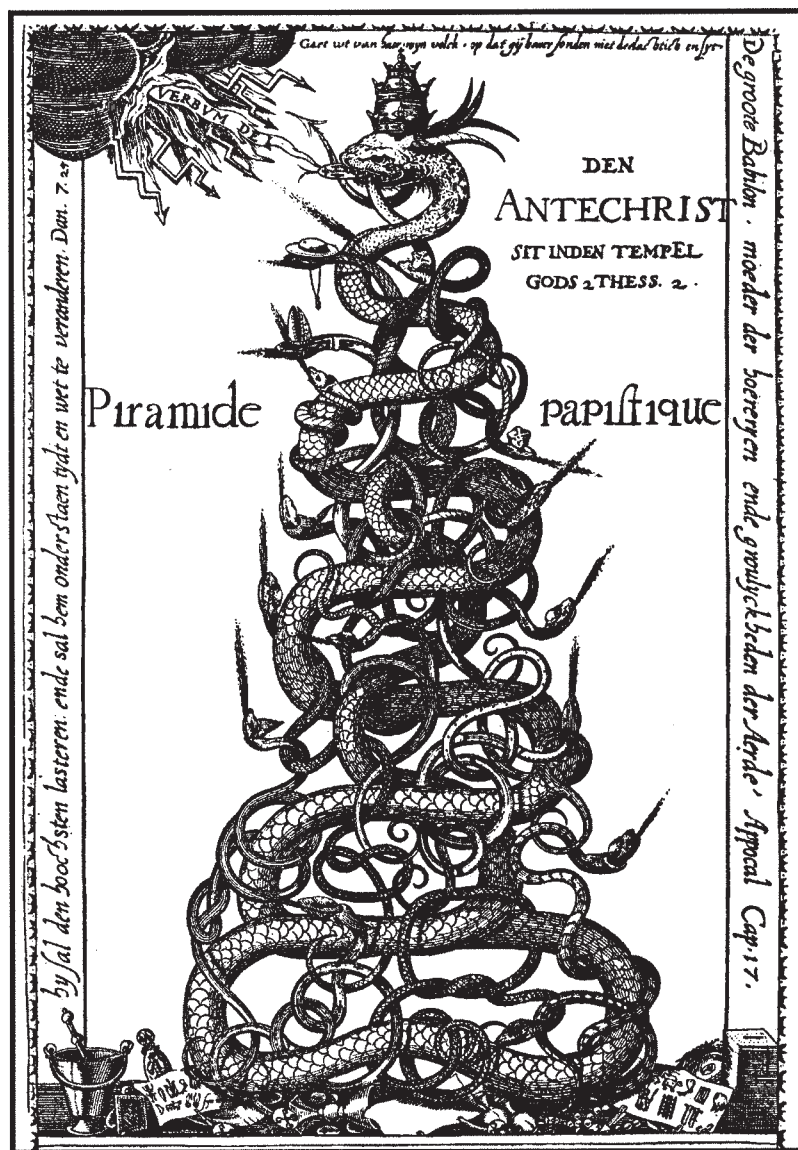


*Satan Counseling the Antichrist
by Luca Signorelli*

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

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

appears to be the most pious of all men. He may well be acting in a genuinely sincere desire to serve Jesus. While affirming the Gospel, he falsifies it. But it is this very cloak of piety which is the essence of the threat which the Antichrist poses to the people of God. His is *“the mystery of iniquity”* (KJV), *“the secret power of lawlessness”* (NIV) (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Everything about him hints of subtlety and secret seduction. He is the greatest creation of the Satanic counterfeit, a trojan horse drawn within the walls of the church itself. Posing as God’s most devoted servant, the most Christian of Christians, he claims for himself, honor, glory, and power which rightfully belong to God alone. The power of the Antichrist was already secretly at work in the church in the days of the apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 John 4:3) and his nefarious activity will continue until the Lord comes again in judgement (2 Thessalonians 2:8). (cf. also Daniel 7:19-27; 11:36-45; Revelation 13) Our Lord summons us to watchfulness and prayer because the enemy is among us now. Those who consign the Antichrist is a safely distant apocalyptic future have fundamentally misunderstood the prophecy and its purpose. They leave the church vulnerable and defenseless, unable to recognize the enemy within its midst or protect herself against him.



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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

THE MILLENNIUM

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

The Rapture

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

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



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

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

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

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



“The Judgment Harvest” by Karl Bauer

Brief Theses Against Millennialism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“Christ the Almighty Judge” by Albrecht Dürer

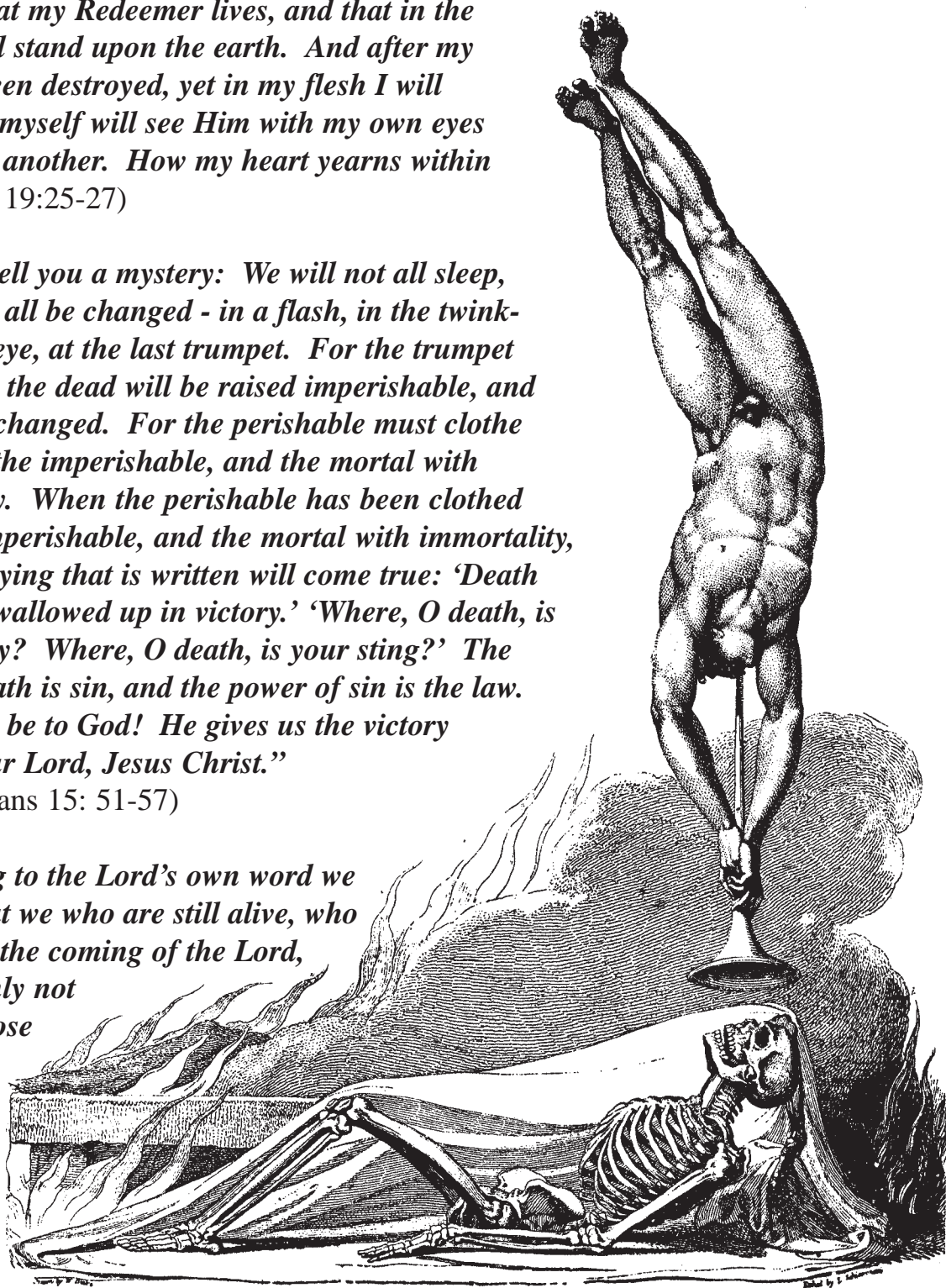
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

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

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

(1 Corinthians 15: 51-57)

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



“The Last Judgment” by Pieter Bruegel

THE JUDGMENT



*“The Last Judgment” by Michael
Wohlgemuth - 1493*

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

The Biblical Doctrine of Hell

“Paradise Lost” by John Milton

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



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

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

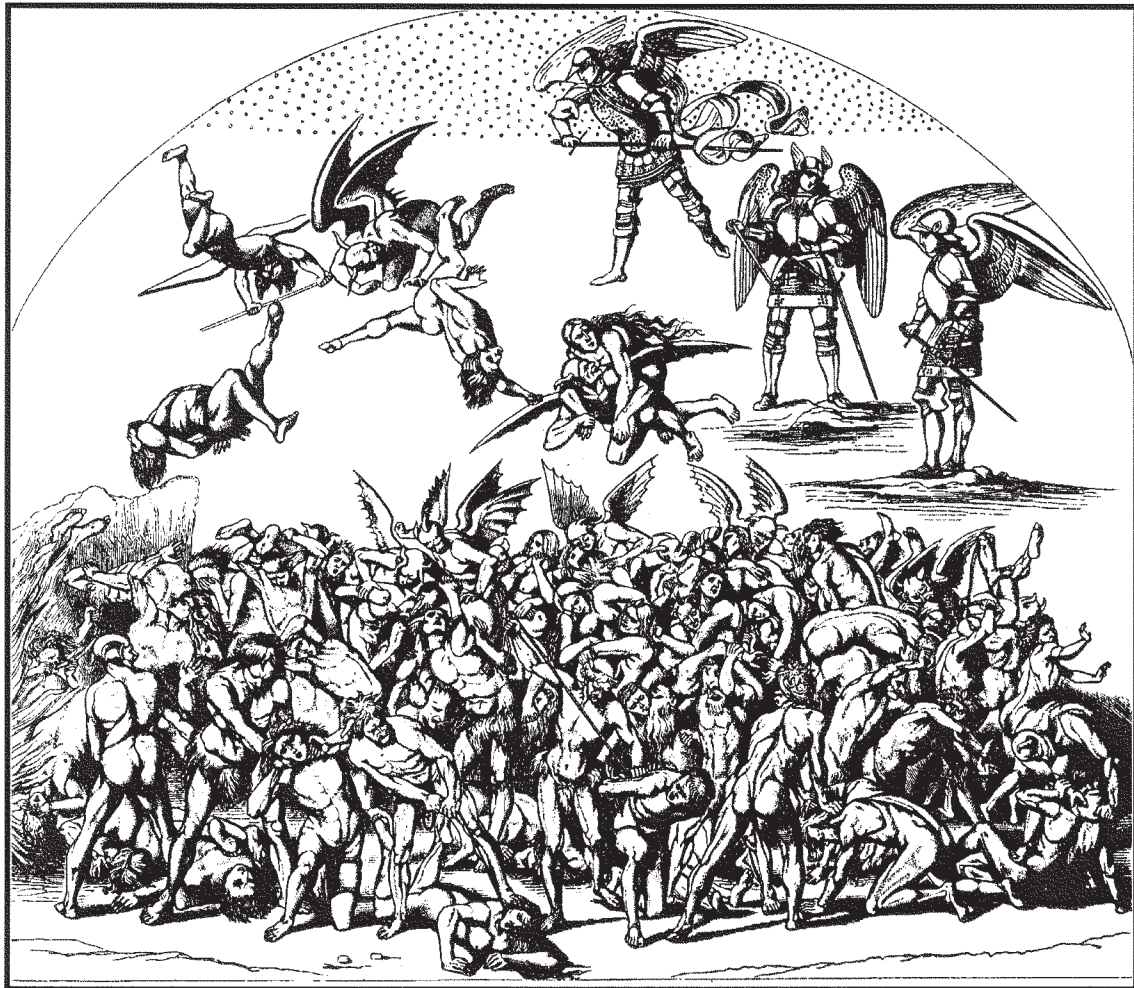
2. The Bible teaches that the torment of the damned will consist chiefly in eternal banishment from the sight of God and permanent exclusion from communion with God. (cf. Matthew 25:41; Matthew 8:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10)

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



"St. Michael Defeats the Devil"

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

“THE GATE OF HELL”

“I am the way into the city of woe. I am the way to a forsaken people.

I am the way to eternal sorrow. Sacred justice moved my architect.

I was raised here by divine omnipotence,

Primordial love, and ultimate intelligence.

Only those elements times cannot wear

Were made before me, and beyond time I stand.

Abandon all hope ye who enter here.”

(The Inferno, Alighieri Dante)

The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven



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

1. The Bible asserts that heaven is the dwelling place of God. (Deuteronomy 26:15; 1 Kings 8:30; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 57:15; 63:15; 66:1; John 14:2; Acts 7:48)

2. The Bible asserts that at the moment of physical death the soul of the believer is in heaven, that is, in the presence of God, and that at the last day all believers, both body and soul, will live with Him forever. (Matthew 25:34; Luke 16:22; 23:43; Acts 7:59; Philippians 1:23; Revelation 6:9-11; 20:4-6)

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

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

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

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

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

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



“The Hosts of Heaven” by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

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

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

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

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

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

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



“The New Jerusalem” by Gustav Doré



"Christmas Night" by Ludwig Richter

UNIT XII

WORSHIP AND PRAYER



“The Adoration of the Lamb” by Albrecht Dürer

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

WORSHIP
(“Gottesdienst”)

God Reaching Out To His People

Through the Gospel of Christ

In Word and Sacrament

God’s People Responding Together

In Thanksgiving, Praise, and Prayer

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

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



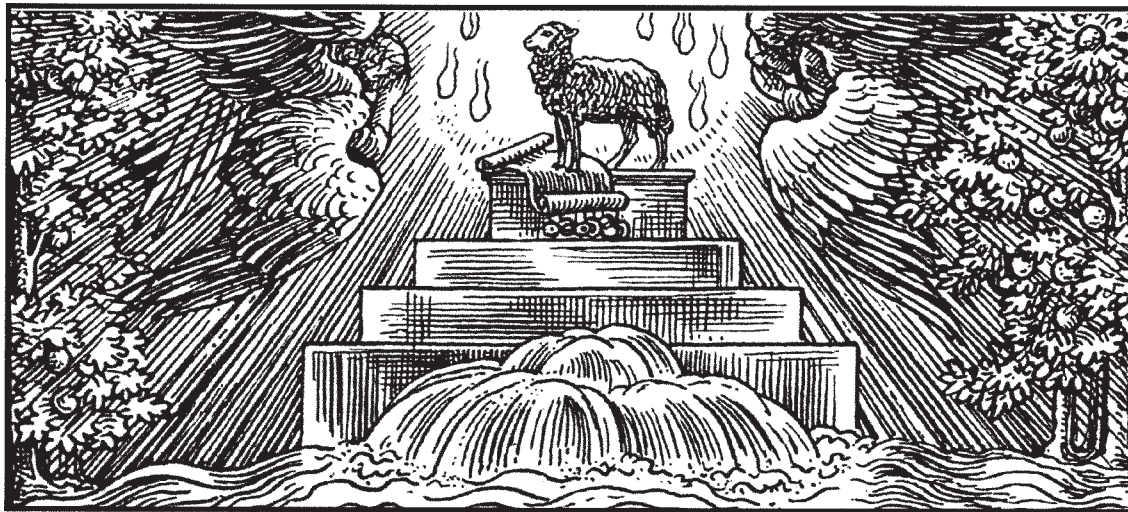
“Come, Let Us Sing for Joy to the Lord” by Rudolf Schäfer

LITURGICAL WORSHIP

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

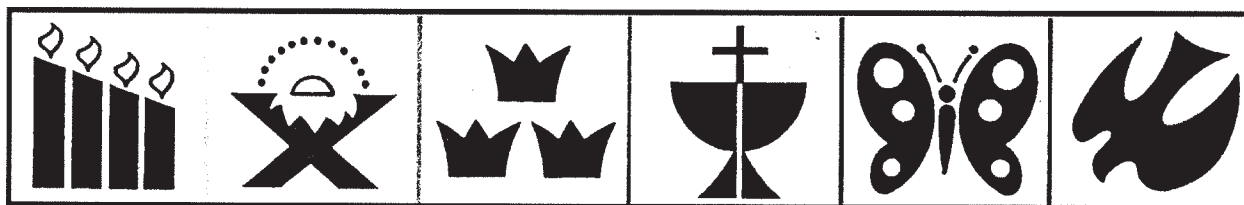
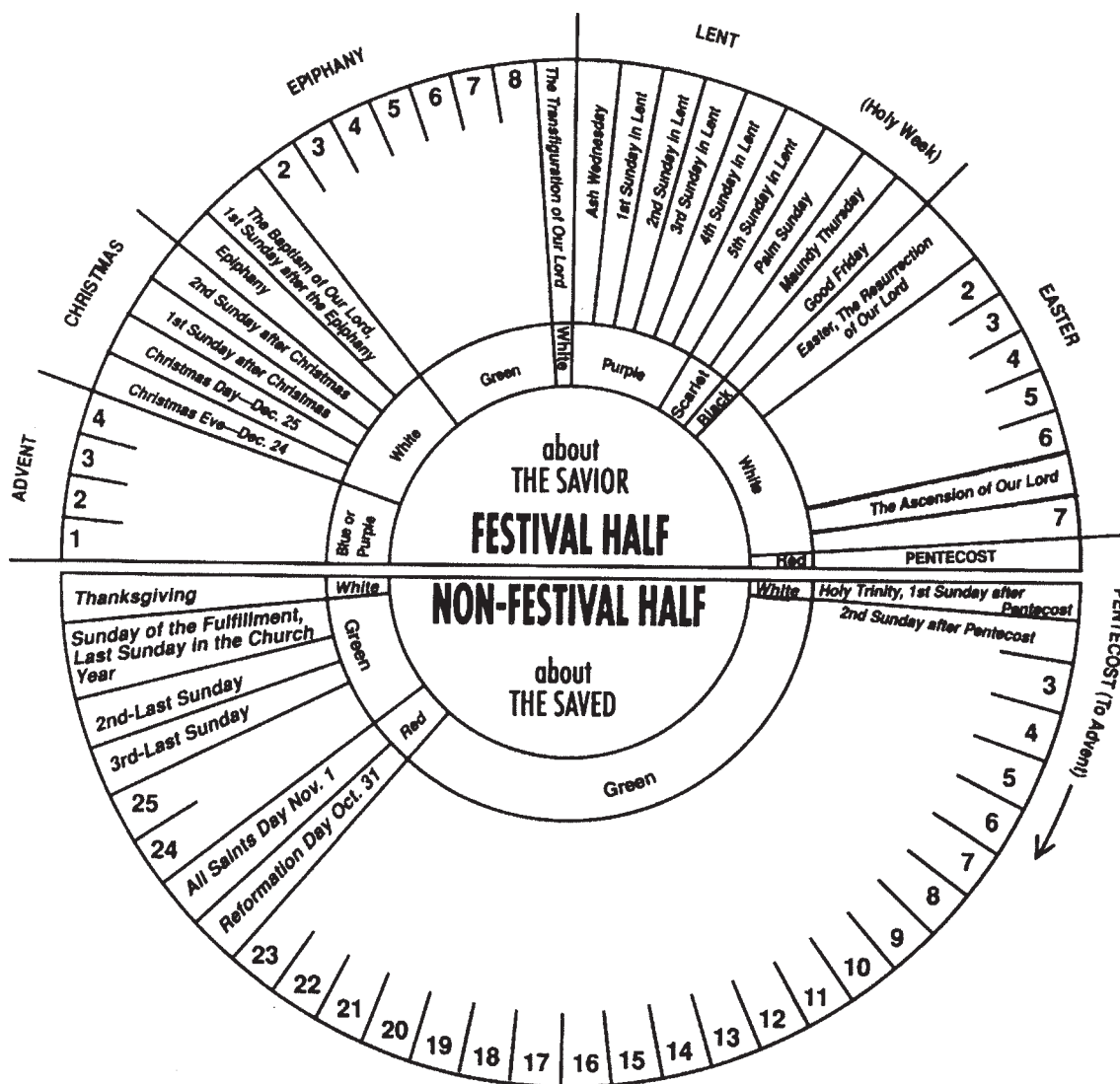
“The liturgy is a work of large dimensions and universal significance...It is not a sheaf of pretty autumn leaves, but a noble, living, tree. It is the work and possession of the whole church. It has been carefully prepared and authorized by a general church body. It is used by thousands of congregations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

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



“The Lamb’s Fountain of Life” by Rudolf Schäfer

The Church Year Calendar





“Gathered Before the Cross” by Rudolf Schäfer

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

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

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



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

The Service of Preparation

The Prelude

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

The Hymn of Invocation

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

The Invocation

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

PEOPLE: *Amen.*

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

The Confession of Sins

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

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

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

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

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

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

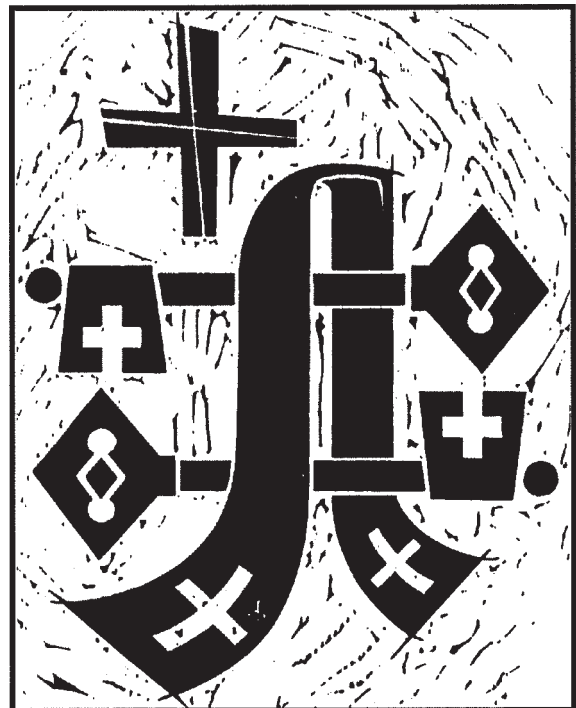
A short verse (versicle) and response from I John 1:8-9 serve to introduce the confession. Similar versicles and responses are used elsewhere in the service to introduce significant parts of the liturgy. Note the careful and comprehensive wording of the confession. It recognizes the grim reality of sin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

The Absolution

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

PEOPLE: *Amen.*

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



THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

The Introit

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

The Kyrie

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

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

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

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

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

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

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

PEOPLE: *Lord have mercy.*

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

PEOPLE: *Amen.*



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



The Hymn of Praise

“This Is the Feast of Victory”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



"This Is the Feast of Victory" by Rudolf Schäfer

The Salutation

PASTOR: *The Lord be with you.*

PEOPLE: *And also with you.*

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

The Collect of the Day

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



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

The Old Testament Lesson

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

(Reed)

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

The Gradual

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

The Epistle Lesson

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

The Verse

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



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

The Holy Gospel

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

The Nicene Creed

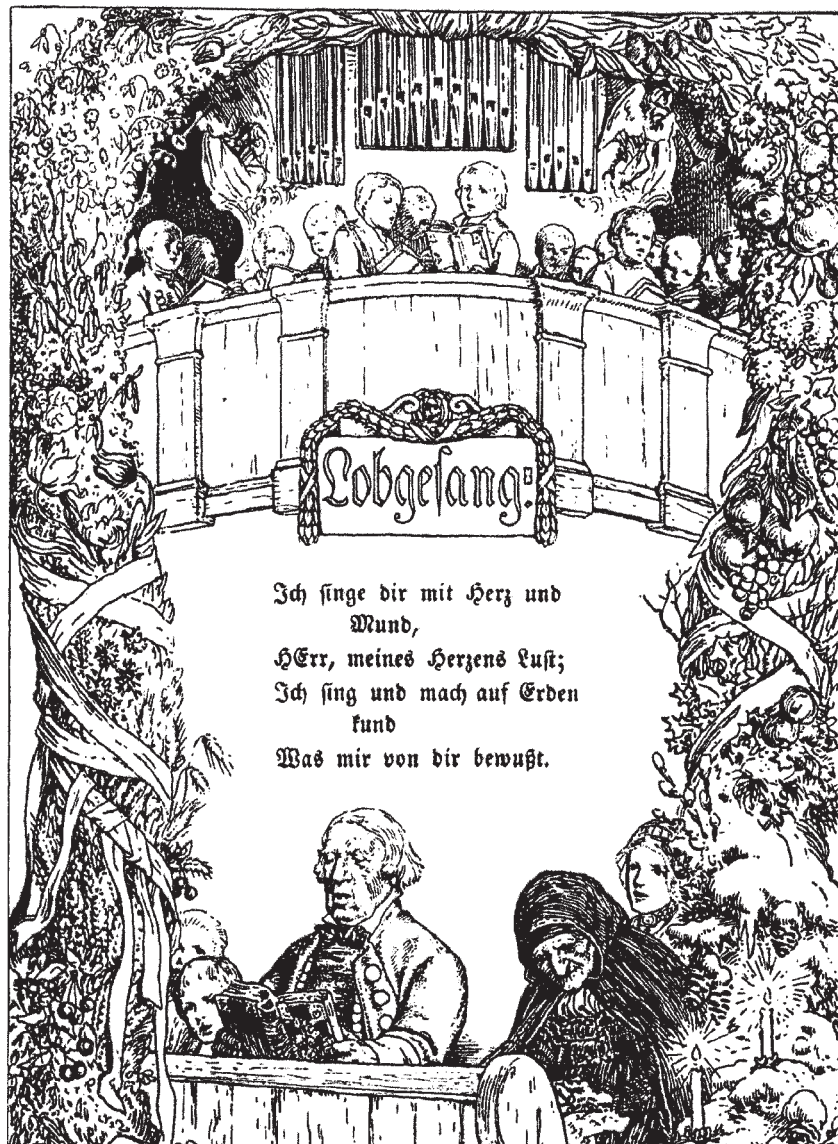
“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

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

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

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





*“Paul Gerhardt’s ‘Rejoice My Heart Be Glad and Sing’
by Rudolf Schäfer*

The Hymn of the Day

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

The Sermon

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

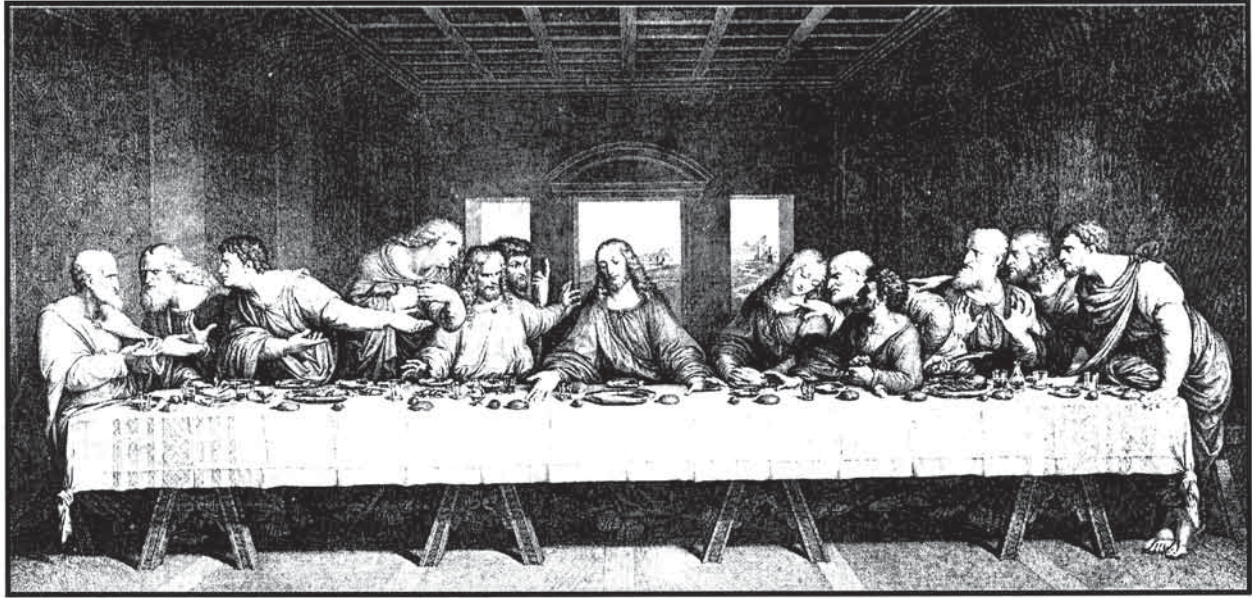


“Preaching in the Lutheran Church” by Lucas Cranach the Younger

The Votum

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

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



“The Last Supper” by Leonardo di Vinci

THE SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

The Offertory

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

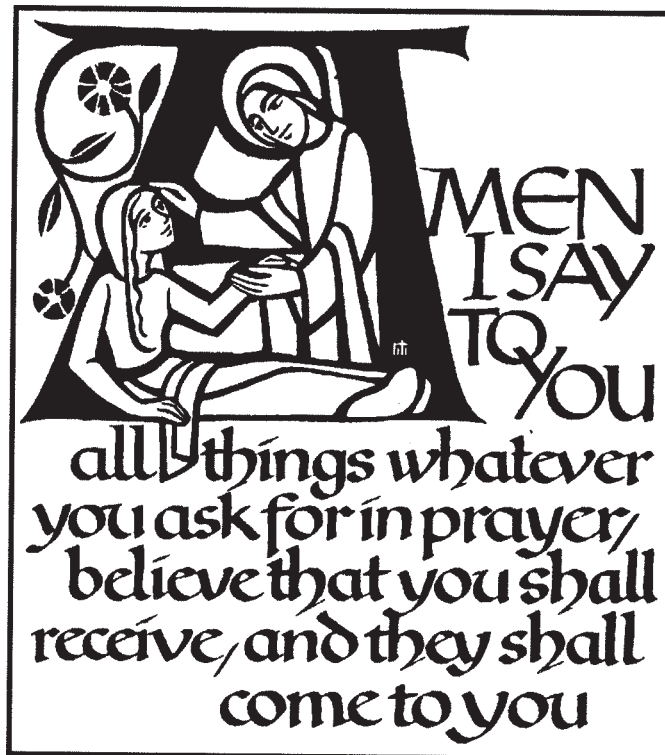
As we prepare to bring our offerings forward to the Lord’s Table, and anticipate the celebration and distribution of the Sacrament, the congregation sings the “*Offertory*” to express our gratitude for all of God’s blessings, dedicate ourselves to Him, and request His continued blessing upon us. The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

The Offering

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

The Prayers

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



The Preface

PASTOR: *The Lord be with you.*

PEOPLE: *And also with you.*

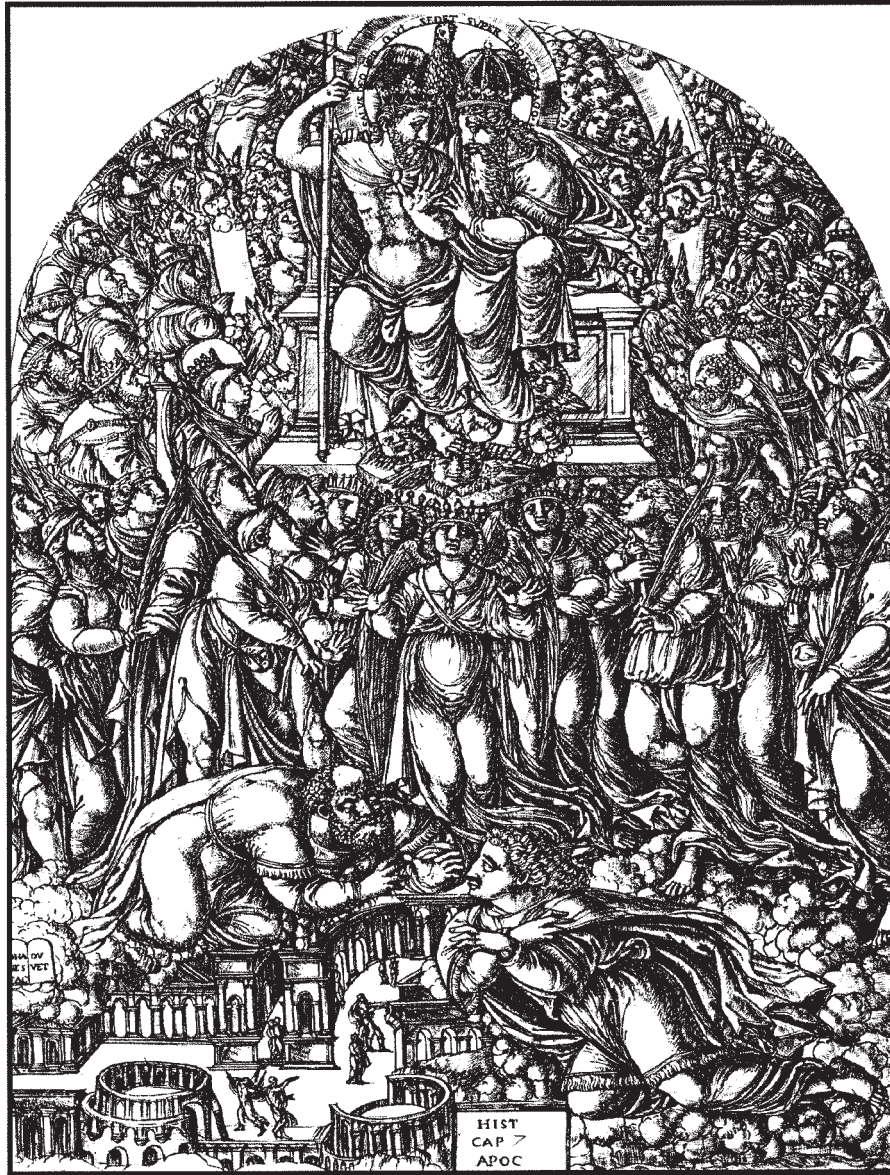
PASTOR: *Lift up your hearts*

PEOPLE: *We lift them to the Lord.*

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

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

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



*“The Host Arrayed in White Before God’s Throne in Heaven”
by Jean Duvet - 1561*

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

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

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

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



“With Angels and Archangels” by Rudolf Schäfer

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



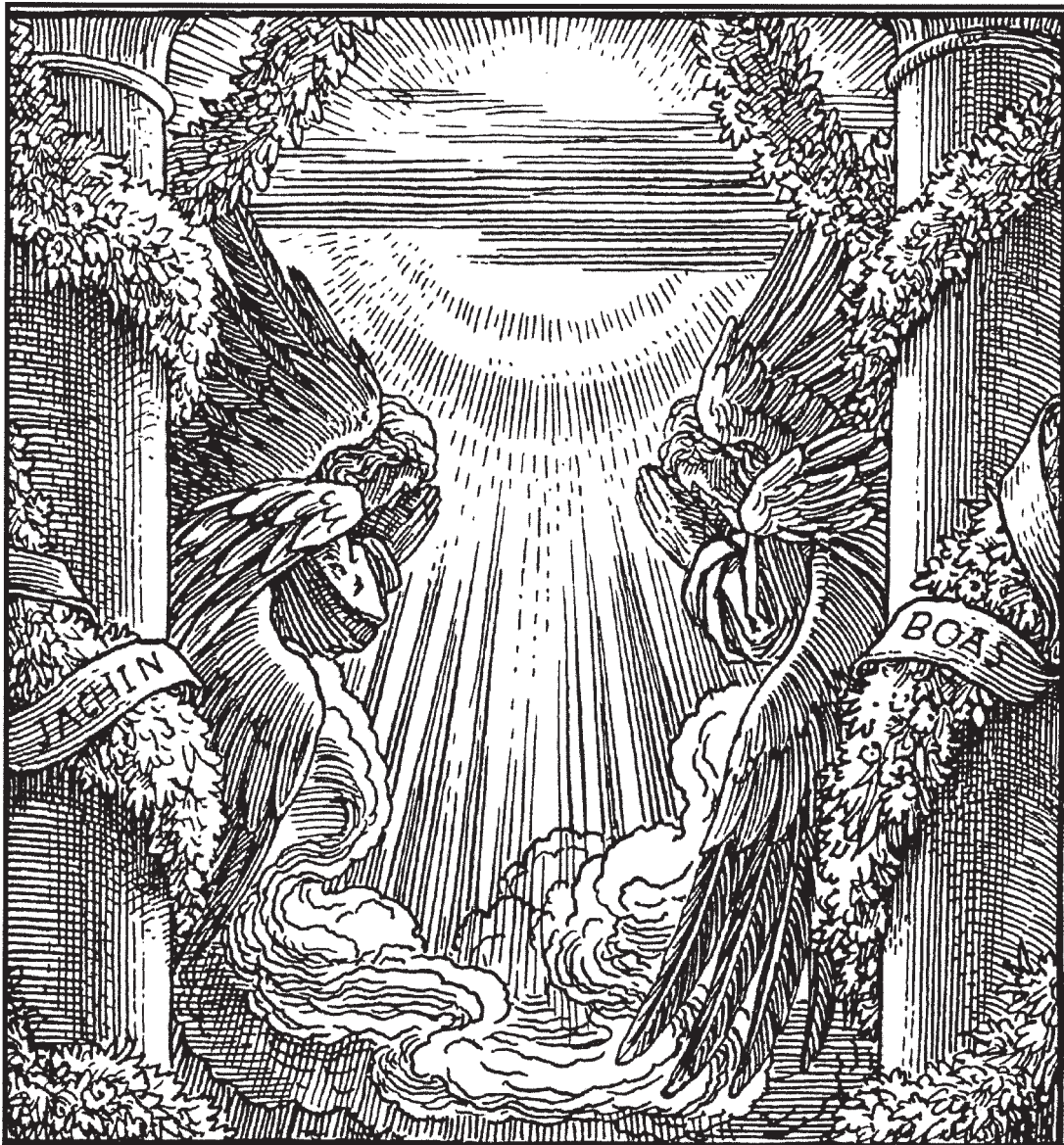
“Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts” by Rudolf Schäfer

The Sanctus

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

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

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



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



“Our Father” by Lucas Cranach

The Lord’s Prayer

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

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

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



“Deliver Us From Evil” by Lucas Cranach



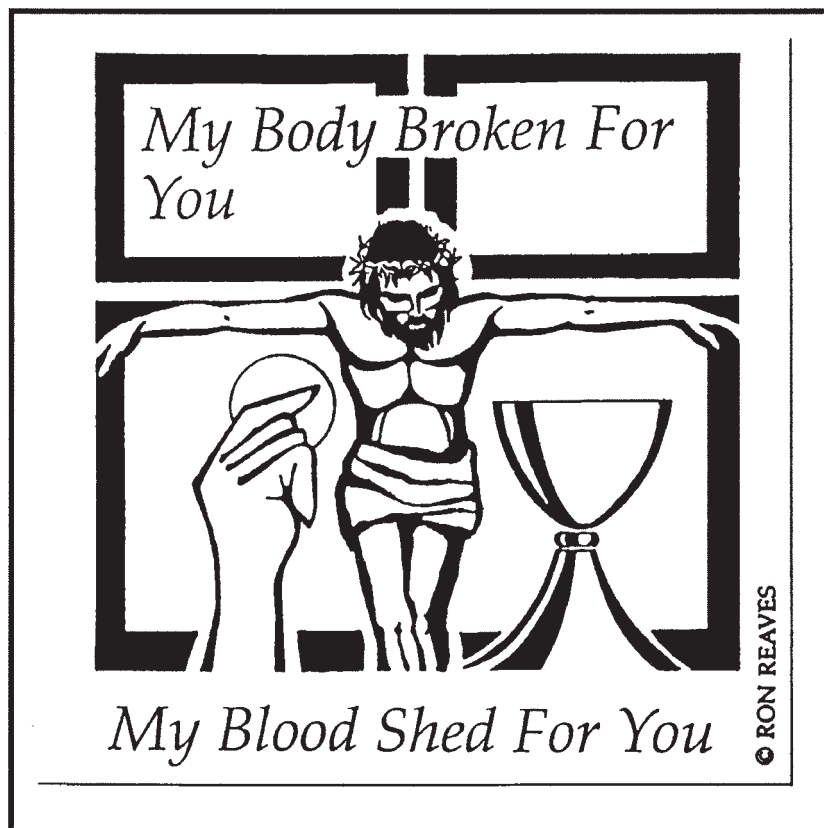
“This Is My Blood For You” by Eduard Gebhardt

The Words of Institution

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

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

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



The Pax Domini

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

PEOPLE: *And also with you.*

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

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



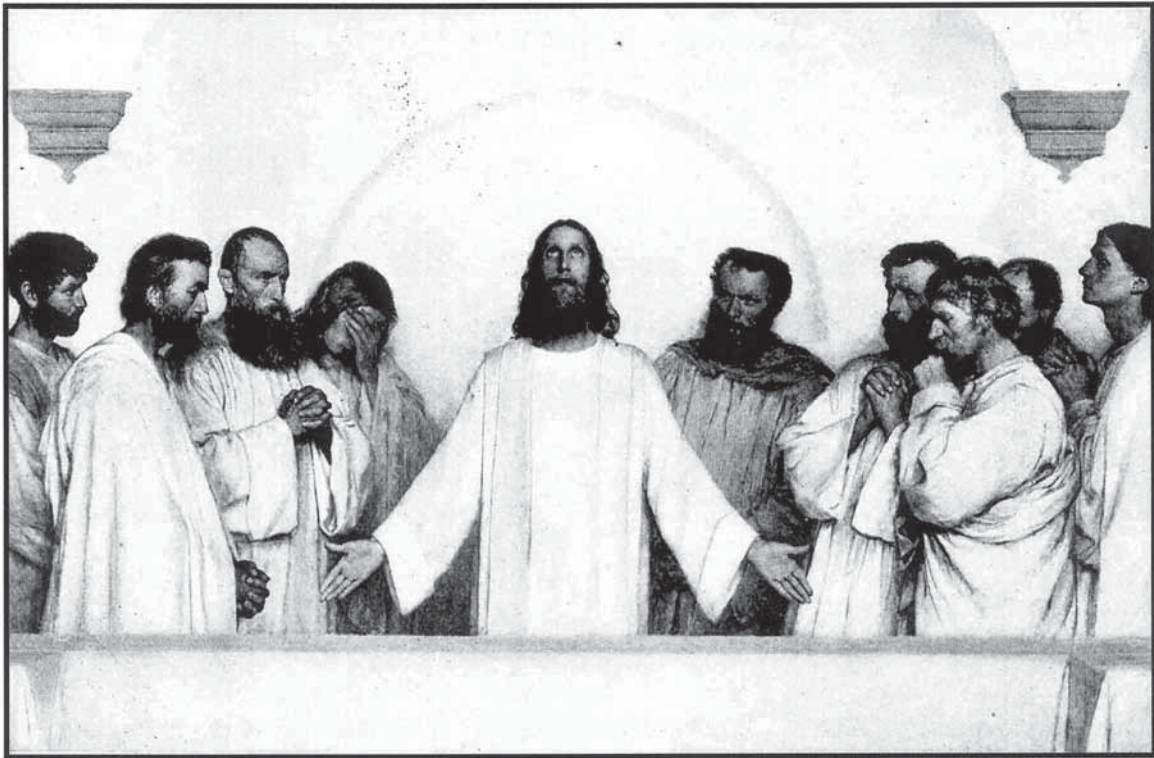
“Behold the Lamb of God” by Ivo Demetz

The Agnus Dei

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

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

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



“Given For You” by Eugene Bernard

The Distribution

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

The Canticle

“Nunc Dimittis”

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



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

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

The Thanksgiving

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

PEOPLE: *Amen.*

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



The Benediction

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

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

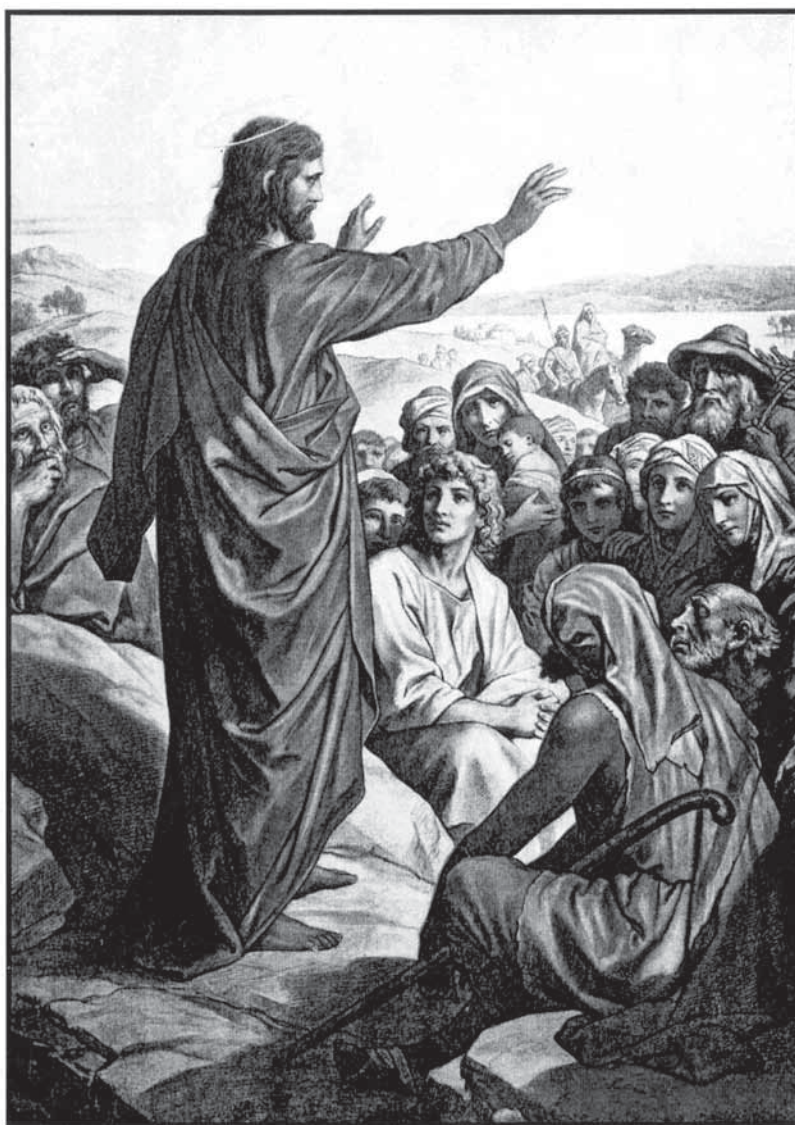
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

PEOPLE: *Amen. Amen. Amen.*

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

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

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



"Jesus Blessing the Multitude" by Heinrich Hoffmann