

# **We All Believe In One True God**

## **A Summary of Biblical Doctrine**

By: W. H. McLaughlin

Minneapolis, Minnesota

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### **Introduction**

How can the teachings of the Bible be packed into a small book like this? Consider that the entire Bible can be summarized in one word — “Christ.” Consider that its doctrines can be enclosed in the words — “Law and Gospel,” or the simple words (profound they they be) — “Sin and Grace.”

You will grow to appreciate the features of this book that make it so thoroughly Christian, so soundly Scriptural, and so characteristically Lutheran. It is filled with Bible verses; not just references, but verses printed out in their entirety. It is clear, for the Holy Scriptures are clear themselves. It is concise (brief), precise (exact), and incisive (penetrating) in its presentation. Its conciseness is the fruit of many years of faithful teaching in sermons, Bible Classes, confirmation classes (youth and adult), and seminar instruction. Its preciseness can be attributed to the painstaking study and labors so typical of its author. Its incisiveness has one cause only — the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, is a two-edged sword.

You will learn the reason that “theological” words such as “vicarious,” “objective and subjective,” and “imputation” are used, and how they alone express as accurately as possible the simple, yet deep, truths which they convey.

You are about to experience sitting at the feet of a great teacher as his only student, receiving through him, the saving truth that makes you free. I say, a great teacher, because he himself does not intrude upon the matters under discussion. The divine truth is laid before you in a straightforward and unbiased manner. It is instructive, convincing, and comforting, not because of the manner of presentation, but because of the matter that is presented. The manner is indeed pleasant, which adds to the attractiveness, appeal, and usefulness of this little book. Its contents are orthodox (correct-teaching), which is a commendation to the reader, a tribute to its author, and is satisfying fulfillment of a need felt by pastors and teachers who desire an instruction manual, and by maturing Christians who desire a book for review and comfort. May this little book be found and happily used to the fulfillment of that need, to the joy of many souls, and to the ultimate Glory of God.

Sheldon T. Twenge

Ascension of Our Lord, 1978

## **About The Author**

Wallace H. McLaughlin was born on March 29, 1902 at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Wagner Memorial College, Staten Island, New York, and Philadelphia Theological Seminary (Mt. Airy). In 1924 he was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor of Transfiguration Lutheran Church, Philadelphia (United Lutheran Church).

Convinced of the Doctrine of Verbal Inspiration, he entered the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. During 1927–1928 he did post-graduate work (leading to Master of Sacred Theology degree — 1936) at Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri (LC–MS; see note p. 83). From 1927 to 1938 he was the pastor of a mission congregation on mainland China, and Professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, Hankow, China. During the year of 1937 he was joined in China by Lavina Ahrens where they were married on July 4. He was Pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1940–1951.

Convinced of the compromising stance of the Common Confession (1950) he helped organize the Orthodox Lutheran Conference. In 1951 he was elected the first president of the OLC; and between 1952 and 1959 was Professor at the Orthodox Lutheran Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

From 1959 to 1971 he was Pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minnesota (LCR). Upon the dissolution of the OLC and after a period of independence from any church body, he helped organize the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation in 1964. In 1971 he became the first Dean and Theological Professor at the Martin Luther Institute of Sacred Studies, Shepherd, Michigan. In 1974, Dean McLaughlin observed the 50th Anniversary of his entrance into the Lutheran ministry. He served at the Martin Luther Institute until his departure from this life on February 9, 1976.

His convictions he imparted to hundreds of Christians in his pastoral care, and to dozens of theological seminary students. The thousands of individuals, on two continents and in three states (Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Michigan) whom he served in various capacities, know that there was a man, who, though quiet and unassuming, was a mighty instrument in the hand of the Lord, our Saviour, for the presentation and preservation of His eternal Word of Truth.

***Soli Deo Gloria!***

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to

LAVINA

his wife

a true companion and a strong support

in all his joys and sorrows.

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## Preface

The Christian Church has not worked out its teachings by a process of gradual development in the course of time, leading to several historically justified systems of doctrine, among which we Lutherans regard that system contained in our distinctive creeds or confessional writings as preferable to the rest. All that our Confessions teach concerning Christian doctrine every Christian knows and believes, because it is found clearly revealed in the Word of the Prophets and Apostles. And that Word, as it is the means whereby every Christian has been brought to faith, is also the only source from which he draws the truth upon which his faith rests. Biblical truth is God-given truth, and Christian faith is God-given faith. And as God is one, so the truth which He reveals is one, and so the faith which He bestows receives the one truth which He reveals. All Christians do believe in one true God, and they believe what He teaches them in His one true Word. Therefore if all Christians would duly study God's written Word, truly confess with their lips the faith of their heart, and avoid all human teachings which conflict therewith, all Christians would join in the orthodox confession, that is, in the correct confession of the Biblical truth. The writer prays that this little book may through its use of God's Word aid some children of God in making a clear and heartfelt confession of the full truth of God's Word.

W. H. McLaughlin

Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1963

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## I. Holy Scripture

In all ages and in all places every individual who has ever come to faith in Christ has come to such faith through the inspired Word of the apostles, and every one who ever shall believe in Him until the end of time will be brought to faith in no other way. The Savior tells us so in His high-priestly prayer, John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their Word." This being so, no Christian has ever engaged in any "quest for the historical Jesus" somewhere apart from that apostolic Word which first brought Christ to him and brought him to Christ, as Jesus Christ said that it should do. He knows no Christ but the Christ of the Messianic prophecies, of the Gospels, and of the apostolic Epistles.

Knowing the living and true Son of God, his Savior, from Scripture alone, it does not and cannot occur to a Christian, in so far as he is a true believer in Christ, to derive any Christian doctrine from any other source than the written Word of God, or the Bible. Therefore also the teaching concerning the nature and characteristics of Holy Scripture will be sought nowhere else than in Scripture itself. The Christian will believe what the Bible says concerning itself; and he will not regard this as "reasoning in a circle" any more than he would regard it as "reasoning in a circle" to believe that there is a sun in the heavens because he sees it shining there. By the word of the Gospel in Holy Scripture "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

In John 16:13–15 our Lord directs us to the Holy Spirit, whom He will send from the Father, as the only authoritative Teacher of all Christian doctrine: "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

This divine Teacher is the Author of Holy Scripture. The human penmen — prophets, evangelists, and apostles — did not undertake to write Scripture of their own accord, but were “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21), and therefore that which they “spake” (which includes what they spake in writing: “prophecy of the *Scripture*,” v. 20) was from God, whenever they spake by the impulse of the Holy Spirit; He was the real Author of Scripture.

We call Him the real Author because His own Word, in 2 Tim. 3:16, tells us that He *gave* the words of Holy Scripture, breathing them into the hearts of His penmen: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” To the Christian who takes God at His word the thought will never occur that the *writers* were “given by inspiration of God,” and that they then produced the wording themselves with some assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who on occasion supplied content and fitting word. This thought will not occur to the Christian, because he knows no more about inspiration than the Bible itself tells him — and the Bible says nothing about inspired *men*, but only that the *Scripture*, the writing, which consists of words, was “given by inspiration of God.” In the excellent translation of our English Bible, just as in the Greek original, that which was “given by inspiration” is “Scripture,” — “*all Scripture*.”

The emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s authorship of the words of the Bible, which is brought out by the word “Scripture” in 2 Tim. 3:16, is even more strongly stressed in 1 Cor. 2:13, where St. Paul says of his (and the other apostles’) inspired speaking and writing: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”

St. Paul was undoubtedly a very wise and very eloquent man, and all of this splendid natural endowment the Holy Spirit took into His service and employed it according to His will for the accomplishment of His ends. But when St. Paul preached Christ at Corinth (and elsewhere) he neither proclaimed his own wisdom nor chose his own words, as he asserts in 1 Cor. 2:1–5: “I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” Only the divine Word is adequate to produce divine faith, “faith of the operation of God” (Col. 2:12; compare also Eph. 1:19). Those in whom the Holy Spirit through His Word has worked this faith will reject with horror the thought that anything penned by a prophet or apostle in Holy Writ might be just his own idea or at least expressed in language not adequate to the divine thought he was trying to convey. Rather will they who are spiritual acknowledge what the Apostle enjoins upon all his readers in 1 Cor. 14:37: “Let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” The entire Bible, according to its own testimony, which every true Christian accepts at face value, was produced just like the miraculous utterances in other tongues of the apostolic preachers at Pentecost: They spoke “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

A Christian, in so far as he is a Christian, cannot and will not deny “verbal inspiration” when that term is explained, as in our Catechism (Question 10), to mean “that God the Holy Ghost *moved* the holy men to *write*, and *put into their minds*, the very *thoughts* which they expressed and the very *words* which they wrote.” For just this — nothing more and nothing less — is what God’s Word says about itself.

More briefly we may mention the four chief properties or characteristics of Holy Scripture, which will be denied by no one who has acknowledged the Bible to be God’s inspired Word, together with some of the chief proof-passages by which they are established.

That God’s Word carries the divine authority of God Himself, who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), claiming full assent to all its teachings as the only infallible and inerrant source and standard of doctrine, is

acknowledged by all Christians, as by those at Thessalonica, to whom St. Paul writes: “When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). Therefore, as it is written in John 10:35: “The Scripture cannot be broken.”

That the Bible is clear is sufficiently evident from Psalm 119:105: “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” If anything in Holy Scripture seems obscure to a Christian he will lay the blame for this not upon God but upon himself, remembering that not God’s light, but the heart into which it shines, is dark; the sure word of prophecy being called (in 2 Peter 1:19) “a light that shineth in a dark place.”

As to the divine effectiveness of God’s Word to accomplish its purpose in our salvation, we need only refer to Rom. 1:16: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;” and 2 Tim. 3:15: The Scriptures “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The perfection or sufficiency of the Bible for all the Christian’s spiritual needs is proclaimed in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, which declares that Scripture “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Every Christian experiences the truth of our Savior’s words (Luke 11:28): “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it;” and of His blessed promise: “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” John 8:31, 32.

## **II. The Holy Trinity**

“We all believe in one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” So we often sing in our orthodox Lutheran churches. But this statement is not merely a line from a Lutheran hymn; the hymn itself is a metrical form of an ecumenical (or world wide), catholic (or universal) creed which all Christians in the world have confessed since the earliest Christian centuries, which indeed the Christians (or believers in the promised Messiah) believed and confessed even before God’s Son came in the flesh, on the basis of the revelation of this doctrine in the Old Testament. There never has been a child of God, nor ever will be, in whose heart there has not lived this faith in the Father, who sent His Son to be our Savior, to whom the Holy Spirit testifies in the Gospel of our salvation, one eternal God in three coeternal and coequal Persons — and this for the simple reason that, as Luther puts it so forcibly in his “Battle Hymn of the Reformation:” “There’s none other God.” Any so-called “god” aside from the Holy Trinity is an idol of the sinful human imagination and has no real existence. This is the clear statement of Holy Scripture, which all true Christians receive as God’s own Word: “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:23). “All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him” (John 5:23). “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9).

Every Christian believes in one true God, and confesses one only God who is infinite (unlimited), and beside whom, therefore, there can be no other God: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:4, 5). He recognizes in the false worship with which he is surrounded, not only in heathen lands, but in so-called “Christian countries” like our own, that “there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many),” 1 Cor. 8:5; yet he cannot regard any of

this false worship as being really addressed after all to the one true God, because God Himself does not so regard it. It is God who says: "All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens," Psalm 96:5. It is God who says: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God," 1 Cor. 10: 20. All attitudes which are more tolerant than God's Word in this respect, giving "respect" or "reverence" to the worship of other objects than the one true and living God (such as lodge-religion and Boy Scout religion), are recognized by true Christians as manifestations of polytheism (the worship of more than one God), with which they can have no fellowship ("I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils," 1 Cor. 10:20); for every Christian confesses with God's Word: "There is none other God but one," 1 Cor. 8:4.

Every Christian believes in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He finds this triune God (three Persons in one divine Being) revealed on the very first page of his Bible, where God is said to create all things through His Word, that Word being explained in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel as being in the beginning with God, and as being Himself God, through whom all things were made, "and without Him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3). The same Word, we are told in the fourteenth verse of this chapter, "was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." That is our Lord Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary. As for the Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, the first chapter of Genesis tells us that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," thus participating in the work of creation. Later in this chapter (v. 26), in connection with the plan of the Holy Trinity to create man, we are told that God said: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." Of such testimonies to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity the Old Testament Scriptures are full, so that to give a mere listing of them would exceed the limits of this summary. One very familiar passage is the Trinitarian benediction customarily pronounced at the close of our Morning Service, taken from the Book of Numbers, ch. 6, vv. 24-26.

The New Testament is even more clear and explicit in identifying the one true God as three distinct, but inseparable, coeternal and coequal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This manifestation is given in visible and audible form at the baptism of Jesus, where the Word made flesh stands in the Jordan, the Father speaks from heaven, proclaiming Him as His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16, 17). In the baptismal formula, commanded for the use of His disciples until the end of the world, our Lord tells them to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. 28:19, thus naming the three Persons of the one God ("name," not "names") in the customary order. In that benediction, however, which we commonly call the Apostolic Benediction (2 Cor. 13:14), the order of naming the Father and the Son is reversed, thus showing the complete equality, the one Essence or Being, of the three Persons: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." On this and other passages of Holy Scripture is based the admirably clear statement of our "Athanasian Creed:" "And in this Trinity none is before or after other; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are coeternal together and coequal, so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped." Of this faith the concluding sentence of the Athanasian Creed correctly states: "which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved." Please read this entire Creed, as you will find it on page 53 of your **Lutheran Hymnal**.

The personal distinctions within the Holy Trinity are defined in Holy Scripture as follows: The Father eternally begets the Son, and the Son is from eternity begotten of the Father (Psalm 2:7; also the many New Testament passages where Jesus is called the "only-begotten Son of the Father" — knowingly and intentionally falsified in the RSV, but correctly translated from the original Greek in our King James Version); the Holy Ghost from eternity proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 15:26: "Who

proceedeth from the Father;” not, however, from the Father alone but also from the Son, being called “the Spirit of God’s Son” and “the Spirit of Christ,” Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9).

We do not wish to anticipate some later chapters of this book by giving in detail at this place the Scriptural evidence for the Christian faith in the full and perfect deity of each Person of the Godhead. But we may at least mention one passage for each Person. While no false teachers, except the fools who profess to be atheists, deny the Godhead of the Father, yet none except true Christians even know the Father, for there is no God the Father except “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3, etc.): “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him,” John 1:18. Every Christian worships Jesus Christ as true God, equal with the Father: “Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever,” Rom. 9:5. (Here the RSV text deliberately mistranslates, giving the correct rendering of the Greek, in agreement with the KJV, only in a foot-note, though no other translation is at all admissible). Every Christian worships the Holy Ghost as true God, equal with the Father and the Son: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” 1 Cor. 3:16. Certainly the Spirit of God, dwelling in the temple of God, is God. Every Christian believes, confesses, and worships the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, “the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity,” the Triune God.

### **III. The Creation of the World and of Man**

The Christian believes that the Holy Trinity “in the beginning” (when time began) created the heaven and the earth out of nothing. That which is stated in Heb. 11:3 is an article of faith for every true Christian: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

Every Christian receives the first two chapters of Genesis as the Creator’s own historical account of His own work of creation, and hence the only authentic history of creation which is or ever will be available to man. He finds this divine “Natural History” poetically embellished in the divine poetry of Psalm 104, and divinely confirmed and doctrinally expounded in the inspired Prologue of St. John’s Gospel (ch. 1:1–14, especially vv. 1–3).

God’s own account of the history of creation, as He gave it to Moses, clearly reveals the identity of the Creator, the time employed in the work of creation, and the sequence in which the various types of creatures were produced by the creative Word. The first topic, the identity of the Creator, specifically, the truth that the creation is a work of the Holy Trinity as such, not to be distributed among the three Persons or attributed to one Person only, has been treated in the third paragraph of the previous chapter of this book, to which the reader is herewith referred.

The second topic, the chronology of creation, is accurately described by the Creator as a period of six days, each consisting of evening and of morning. This is so before the creation of the sun and other heavenly bodies on the fourth day, as well as after. These are *not* “days of God” (compare 2 Peter 3:8), who exists outside of time in an eternal present, but days of the earth, days of *creation*. What we are to think of the millions of years comprised in the so-called “geological ages” is clear. They are pure fiction, the fabrication of ignorance which insists on speaking of what it cannot know apart from the revelation which it refuses to accept.

The third topic, the sequence of the “six days work,” is outlined in Genesis, chapter one, with a clarity which leaves nothing to be desired. One of the most notable points in this connection is that briefly referred to above, namely, that light, as well as the variation of light and darkness (“the evening and the morning”), existed before those celestial bodies which we are accustomed to regard as the sole source

of the light illuminating our earth were brought into being. All human theories, therefore, which regard the earth's existence as a part of the "solar system" as dependent upon the sun, especially the absurd fable which represents the earth as a particle thrown off from the sun and gradually cooling through countless aeons into the terrestrial globe upon which we dwell, are discredited as having no ground in fact and entirely unacceptable to Christian faith. Those who imagine that the Scripture passages, approximately sixty in number, in which the earth is said to stand still, and the sun and all stars are said to move, may be "interpreted" in such a way as if really the reverse were the case, we may leave to pursue their fruitless endeavors alone. The Christian way is simply to accept Holy Scripture as it reads.

Another exceedingly important point in the sequence of creative activity on the third, fifth, and sixth days is found in the constantly recurring phrases: "after his kind," "after their kind" (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). These phrases, then, are used of the various forms of vegetable and animal life upon which God has bestowed the power of reproducing their kind. According to God's Word He created each species (to use the scientific term which corresponds to the Hebrew word translated "kind") *as a species* and capable of reproducing only its own species. Every "scientific" theory of evolution, which teaches the transition or transmutation of one species into another, is irreconcilable with God's Word, and hence with the Christian faith. That organic evolution is also irreconcilable with the ascertainable facts of nature has been scientifically proved by Christian writers with the specific learning requisite for this task; but such demonstration is beyond the scope of this book, which rests upon Scripture proof alone. Let us only add that we cannot be satisfied with the compromise of so-called "theistic evolution," according to which some writers are willing to admit that God made the world, but assert that evolution correctly describes the "process" of His activity. God tells us in Genesis, chapter one, not only that "God created the heaven and the earth" (verse 1), but also that the "process" or "method" which He used was not organic evolution but the direct and separate creation of each species "after his kind."

The account of the six days work in Genesis 1 and 2 omits any mention of the foremost *invisible* creatures of God, the angels, but Scripture is full of testimonies to their existence, nature, and activities. Since, however, they are creatures of God ("By Him were *all things* created that are in heaven and that are in earth, *visible and invisible*," Col. 1:16), they cannot have been in existence before the first day of creation, when there was only the uncreated eternal God, and they must have been created before the end of the sixth day, since then "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them," Gen. 2:1. The Bible also does not inform us as to the exact time when a large number of the angels rebelled against God, and "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (Jude 6). This must have occurred before the fall of man, since the latter was brought about through the temptation of Satan. The existence, incurably sinful nature, and hopeless abandonment of the fallen angels, or devils, under their prince, "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" (Rev. 20:2), is all clearly taught in Holy Scripture. These evil spirits were also created good and holy (Gen. 1:31: "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good"); but they turned themselves from God of their own accord, and became enemies of God and man.

Nowhere is the lie of organic evolution more disastrous in its effects than when it is applied (as *all* evolutionists do apply it) to the origin of man. The Biblical teaching concerning the origin of man is crystal clear and sufficiently comprehensive: "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" Gen. 1:26, 27. As "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), this image is not to be looked for in the physical makeup of man (though even in this respect man is incomparably superior to the beast), but rather in his intellectual and moral or spiritual nature. The fullest characterization in Holy Scripture of this

spiritual likeness of man as he was created to his Creator is contained in two passages of St. Paul's Epistles, in which the Apostle speaks of this image of God as it is partially restored, after its total loss in the fall of man, when he is regenerated or converted to faith in his Savior by the Holy Spirit. In this connection the restored image of God is spoken of as "the new man." Col. 3:10: "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in *knowledge* after the *image of Him that created him.*" Eph. 4:24: "Put on the new man, which *after God* is created in *righteousness and true holiness.*"

As Gen. 1:27, quoted above, shows, this image of God was imparted both to man and woman in their creation. This spiritual equality, however, does not rule out a difference in the God-appointed sphere of activity of the sexes and a God-ordained subjection of the woman to the man, as taught in 1 Tim. 2:11–14 with reference to the very order of creation before the fall as well as to conditions as they obtain from that sad event on till the end of time: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

With this "transgression" we begin the next chapter, which deals with the subject of "Sin." Therein we shall perceive the enormous difference between man as he is born into the world today and man as he was created.

#### IV. SIN

All who believe in the one true God, and in His only Son, Jesus Christ, and redemption through His blood, certainly believe the Biblical doctrine of sin. For none can believe in Christ as Redeemer without believing in that from which He redeemed us; and there is no knowledge of Jesus the Savior without the knowledge of sin. Our Lord Himself clearly points out this necessary connection when He says: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matt. 9:12). All saints are poor sinners; all Christians know and acknowledge and lament their sin. Every Christian believer can join St. Paul in confessing: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). The Christian Gospel is for sinners only.

What is sin? The clearest and briefest definition is given in 1 John 3:4: "Sin is the transgression of the law." In the creation God wrote His Law into man's heart; and though this natural knowledge of the Law has been dimmed in consequence of inborn sin (of which you will read more later in this chapter), it may readily be shown that man daily transgresses also that remnant of the divine Law to which his conscience bears witness. That we may be left the more utterly without excuse, God has clearly revealed His Law through Moses, briefly summarizing it in the Ten Commandments, and causes it to be proclaimed to us in order to sharpen our knowledge of His just demands and so deepen our knowledge of sin. Only that which is contrary to God's holy Law is sin; but everything which steps beyond the bounds of this Law, in desire, thought, word, or deed, is sin. "We daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment." (From Luther's Small Catechism. Explanation of the Fifth Petition).

The Bible, however, not only tells us what sin is, but also how sin was brought into the world and what a hold it has obtained upon our nature. The prince of the fallen angels, who "kept not their first estate" (Jude 6), as mentioned in the previous chapter, called the Devil and Satan (Rev. 20:2), seduced our first parents into unbelief and disobedience to God, which radically ruined their nature, depriving them of their concreated righteousness, and so also depriving of righteousness the human nature shared with them by all their descendants, corrupting the stream, as it were, at its source. The devil made a beginning with sin (1 John 3:8: "The devil sinneth from the beginning"), and the consenting will of Adam, the father of our race, brought sin into the world (Rom. 5:12: "By one man sin entered into the

world”). The history of the fall and its immediate consequences is to be read in the third chapter of Genesis.

Romans 5:12, just quoted, continues: “And death by sin.” Death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, is both the immediate and ultimate consequence of sin. “The wages of sin is death,” Rom. 6:23. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” Ezekiel 18:4, 20. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. Genesis 2:17: “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Eph. 2:1, 5: “You . . . were dead in trespasses and sins . . . We were dead in sins.” Temporal death is the separation of the soul from the body. Rom. 5:12: “Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Heb. 9:27: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Temporal death would never have come upon man except as the consequence of sin. Turn to your Bible and read all of Rom. 5:12, noting the chain of cause and effect. Spiritual and temporal death will be followed, unless the guilt of sin is removed from the heart and conscience by faith in Christ, by eternal death. In other words, those who meet temporal death while still in a state of spiritual death will fall into eternal death. Eternal death is the eternal separation of soul and body from God in the torments of hell. 2 Thess. 1:9: “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.” Matt. 25:46: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

The immediate and continuing effect of Adam’s sin upon his descendants is called original or inherited sin. It is the total corruption of our entire human nature. Psalm 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” John 3:6: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” This total depravity of our whole human nature involves both a deprivation or loss to human nature as it was originally created and also an evil inclination or positive evil state and tendency which human nature acquired in the fall and which inheres in the nature inherited by us all. In the fall man lost the original righteousness (“image of God”) in which God had created him, and is thus by nature without true fear, love, and trust in God, destitute of all righteousness: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,” Rom. 7:18. Positively, man is inclined only to evil: “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” Gen. 8:21. Whatever we desire, think, speak, or do, of ourselves, by the prompting of our own original nature, is “only evil continually,” Gen. 6:5. “There is none that doeth good, no, not one,” Rom. 3:12. “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,” Eccles. 7:20.

Looking a little more deeply into the Biblical teaching concerning original sin, we perceive that it embraces two things: hereditary guilt, the guilt of the one sin of Adam which God *imputes* to all men; and hereditary *corruption*, which in consequence of the imputation of Adam’s guilt is transmitted to all his descendants through the natural descent from the first fallen pair. In short, original sin means that we are both *counted guilty* of Adam’s sin and *inherently corrupt* in our own inherited human nature. The Scripture proof for the first (imputed guilt) is clearly furnished by Rom. 5:18a: “By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation,” and Rom. 5:19a: “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” If this *imputed guilt* should seem harsh to us, let us recall that it is the correlative of the precious doctrine which lies at the heart of the way of salvation, the doctrine of the *imputed righteousness* of Christ. To perceive this connection between the Scriptural doctrine of original sin and our blessed hope of forgiveness, life, and salvation look at Rom. 5:18, 19 in its entirety: “Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” The Scripture proof for the second (inherited corruption) is Psalm 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,” and John 3:6: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Only this Bible teaching, which every Christian will and must believe on the basis of God’s Word, is a factual and realistic description and explanation of human nature as it actually is. Every system of

education and every psychology of human behavior which fails to recognize these basic truths is utterly unrealistic and woefully at variance with the facts of experience as well as with the truth of Scripture.

Original sin is the prolific source of all actual sins. It is the underlying cause of which all sorts of actual sins are simply the natural result. Actual sins are variously classified in accordance with Scripture, the most familiar categories under which they are grouped being expressed by the terms: sins of commission (see James 1:15) and sins of omission (see James 4:17). Summing up, we may define actual sin as every act against a commandment of God in thoughts, desires, words, and deeds — which will be found to be in harmony with our Lord's statement, recorded Matt. 15:19: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." It is important that Christians, by examining themselves in the mirror of God's Law, perceive ever more clearly the deep inward corruption of the thoughts and desires of their hearts, lest they fall into a Pharisaic externalism which regards only such crass outward transgressions as, when detected, are punishable by human law as being serious sins, while comparatively disregarding the far greater host of damnable sins which remain hidden in the depths of the heart. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:12–14.

The next chapter deals with the "only hope for sinful mortals:" Saving Grace.

## V. Saving Grace

Grace is love. But this specific term does not denote love bestowed upon an object worthy of such love and rightly entitled to it, as the love of husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend. Grace is love bestowed upon the unworthy. Specifically, the saving grace of God is His divine forgiving love bestowed upon poor unworthy sinners. Every Christian believes in this divine grace, for Christianity is the religion of grace, and Christian faith is trust and confidence in the saving grace of the triune God.

The Biblical doctrine of grace presupposes the sinful condition of all men by nature, of which we spoke in the previous chapter of this book. Being conceived and born in sin and utterly unable to help themselves out of this condition, all men are in need of grace. The Law way to salvation is closed to sinful mortals, as we read: "As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse" (Gal. 3:10). The grace way to salvation is therefore the only hope for sinful mortals. Thus divine grace is absolutely necessary to every man if he is to be saved from the eternal punishment justly due to his sins. "We are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them;" but we pray "that He would grant them all to us *by grace*; for we daily sin much and indeed *deserve* nothing but punishment." We can neither by our own efforts induce God to give us a Savior nor by our own reason or strength believe in Him or accept by faith the Savior whom God has bestowed. We can certainly do *nothing* for our own salvation, and therefore God's grace must do *all*: "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). Thus divine grace is absolutely *necessary* for our salvation. But no "necessity" of bestowing grace must be ascribed to God. The very nature of grace, as bestowed on those who have no claim upon it, implies that it must be "free," so far as God is concerned — freely bestowed by His good pleasure. Yet God's free grace is as universal as man's need for it.

We may now, on the basis of Scripture testimony, define saving grace as the gracious favor or forgiving love (forgiveness of sins) which God for Christ's sake has in His heart toward all sinful mankind, and which moved Him to do everything that was necessary in order to save us from sin and

Satan, make us His children, and take us to heaven. This grace is attested in the Gospel and is to be believed by all men on the authority of the Gospel.

The grace of God, as we have said, is free grace. We have done and can do nothing to merit it. Yet God did not bestow it arbitrarily, in such a way as to violate His immutable justice. Rather did His grace move Him to provide a way to reconcile His own just anger against sinful men by the vicarious sacrifice of His own Son, so that without violating His justice He might lay His anger by and give free course to His grace. “We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24–26). Thus God’s grace both provides the Savior and is based upon the Savior’s work. To imagine a forgiving love of God toward men aside from “the cost,” as Luther calls it, namely, the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, is not the Christian doctrine of grace but a completely heathenish and unscriptural dream. When God in His merciful forbearance, even before Christ came in the flesh, refrained from punishing the sins of believers in the promised Messiah, He did so only on the basis of that sacrifice which was to be offered by “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), through whose death upon Calvary God’s righteousness was declared and His justice vindicated, showing that He could be and is both just and the Justifier of sinners. Saving grace is always grace *for Christ’s sake*.

It is surely already sufficiently evident that divine grace is not something poured *into us* and inherent *in us*, as the Papists falsely teach, but a gracious disposition *in the heart of God*. Therefore grace is contrasted with our works and with everything which is ours. When we say that God bestows His grace on us we mean that He exercises His forgiving love toward us. Grace agrees with faith, for it is by faith that we receive God’s grace, that is, believe that God is gracious to us: “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed” (Rom. 4:16). Grace is opposed to works: “And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace” (Rom. 11:6). Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.” Galatians 2:16: “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” So diametrically opposed to saving grace is the attempt to be justified before God by works that St. Paul, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, warns the Galatians: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). Of course this does not mean that the doctrine of grace hinders the doing of good works. On the contrary, it produces good works which flow from faith as a thank-offering for God’s grace. In fact only the believer in salvation by grace without works can ever do any good works, for only the believer in God’s free grace has escaped the dominion of sin: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the Law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).

Having considered the central meaning of divine grace, as God’s way of salvation, in contrast to all humanly contrived work-righteousness, we may now proceed to enumerate the characteristics of saving grace, as they are enumerated in Holy Scripture:

A. Saving grace is grace in Christ. As grace is denied when human merit is *united* with it (Rom. 11: 6, quoted above), just so grace is abrogated if it is *severed* from Christ’s vicarious satisfaction. Saving grace is always based upon “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). Of this we have also spoken at some length above.

B. Saving grace is universal grace. We have already said that God’s free grace is as universal as man’s need for it. It is most important that we hold this truth fast. For if even one human being were excluded from God’s gracious will of salvation, each one whose conscience has been aroused by God’s Law to a knowledge of sin would necessarily conclude that he himself must be that unhappy being; and thus

faith in God's grace would be impossible. Holy Scripture proves the universality of God's saving grace in three classes of texts:

a). Texts which say that God's grace extends to all men: Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared" (marginal reading of the KJV). 1 Tim. 2:4: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son." 1 John 2:2: "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

b). Texts which say that God's grace extends to each and every man: 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Ezek. 33:11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

c). Texts which say that God's grace extends also to those who ultimately perish: 2 Peter 2:1: "Even denying the Lord *that bought them*, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction." Matt. 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often *would I* have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not*." No soul of man is ever lost because of a deficiency in God's grace, but only because of his rejection of the grace which is meant for him too.

C. Saving grace is serious and efficacious grace. God has truly set His heart on the conversion of all men and puts His full power into the means of grace to effect His purpose. Christ has commanded His church to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15), and it is His will "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). And the Holy Ghost earnestly seeks to engender faith in the Gospel in all who hear the Gospel (see Matt. 23:37, quoted above) and to preserve faith where it has been enkindled (Phil. 1:6). Therefore the reason why so many hearers of the Gospel never come to faith is not due to God's passing them by or to any lack of serious effort on the part of the Holy Spirit, but always and only to their persistent resistance to His gracious operation: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51).

When the Christian hears or reads or thinks of the universal, serious, and efficacious saving grace of God in Christ Jesus, his heart must break forth in joyful song:

"By grace! This ground of our salvation,  
As long as God is true, endures:  
What saints have penned by inspiration,  
What God by His own Word assures,  
What all our faith must rest upon,  
Is grace, free grace, through His dear Son."  
(Cf. **Lutheran Hymnal**, Hymn 373, stanza 5)

## VI. The Person of Christ

“What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?” This most important question is asked by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Matt. 22:42). The Pharisees whom He interrogated failed to give an adequate answer to His question; for their reply: “The son of David,” though true, is only half of the truth. Simon Peter, by illumination of the Holy Ghost, had given the right answer when Jesus examined His disciples on the doctrine of His Person at Caesarea Philippi, for he had confessed: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). The confession that He is “the Christ,” the Lord’s Anointed, includes, according to the uniform tenor of Old Testament prophecy, the recognition of Him as the Son of David; and the further confession that He is the Son of the living God gives expression to the divine mystery which David himself acknowledged when he called Him “Lord” (Psalm 110:1; Matt. 22:44). The correctness of this answer to the question: “Whom do ye say that I the Son of man am?” (Matt. 16:13, 15) was acknowledged by Jesus in the words: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:17). Everyone who has been taught of God makes the same answer.

Luther gives this same answer in his Small Catechism: “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.” And every Christian of all ages, including the believers who lived in the days before God’s Son came in the flesh, agrees in this confession concerning the God-man. David, for instance, not only calls Him Lord, in the One Hundred Tenth Psalm before quoted, but he also clearly expresses his faith in the two-fold nature of this Lord, in 2 Samuel 7:19b, as correctly translated from the Hebrew in Luther’s German Bible: “This is the manner of a Man who is the Lord Jehovah.”

The blessed season of Advent and Christmas has its place in the Church Year for the special purpose of stressing this all-important Bible teaching of the Incarnation, or the coming of the eternal Son of God into the flesh. Therefore only a Christian knows the meaning of Christmas. And every Christian who kneels in worship at the manger of Bethlehem does know and confess the doctrine of the Incarnation, even though he may be unacquainted with many of the technical terms in which orthodox theology has from the earliest ages of the New Testament Church confessed and taught this divine truth. Contrary to my general practice in this little book on the principal doctrines of our Christian faith, I shall in the subsequent paragraphs of this chapter employ the very words of a great teacher of our Church, Dr. Franz Pieper, in the second volume of his *Christian Dogmatics* (English translation), pp. 57, 58, only eliminating a few technical terms which he introduces for the purpose of demonstrating that the truths they express are known and confessed even by Christians to whom these terms are unfamiliar, as long as they adhere to the Christian faith expressed in the simple words of Holy Scripture:

“It is an altogether false assumption that the Christian Church arrived at the true knowledge of the Person of Christ only in the course of time, and that before the ecclesiastical terms were coined this knowledge was lacking. Luther is perfectly right when he sets forth that the true doctrine of the Person of Christ was known and believed in Christendom from the very beginning, before any council passed any resolution, *on the basis of the clear statements of Scripture*. All that our Confessions teach concerning the Person of Christ every Christian knows and believes because it is found clearly revealed in the Word of the Prophets and Apostles.

“The Christian believes that there are two natures in Christ, for he reads or hears that the eternal Son of God became man through the Virgin Mary (Gal. 4:4, 5; John 1:1, 2, 14). He does not doubt the unity of the Person, for he reads in Scripture that one and the same Jesus presents Himself as the Son of Man and the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13–17). He entertains no doubt about the real communion of natures, for Scripture tells him that the fulness of the Godhead dwells not beside, but in the human nature of Christ as in its body (Col. 2:9). He believes, on the testimony of Scripture, that the Lord of

Glory was crucified (1 Cor. 2:8) and that this gives to the suffering and death of Christ its value (Rom. 5:10; 1 John 1:7).

“The Christian further believes, on the testimony of Scripture, that to Christ was given, here in time, according to His human nature, omnipotence, omniscience, etc. (Matt. 28: 18; Matt. 11:27; John 3:34, 35). The thought is foreign to his mind that the omnipotence, omniscience, etc., of which Scripture speaks, may designate merely ‘finite, great gifts.’ And when Christ promises His Church that *He* will be with her always even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:20), he cannot but think of this Savior as being present, not without and outside of His human nature, but with and within it, i.e., he ascribes to Christ also according to His human nature omnipotence, omniscience, and, equally so, omnipresence.

“And when Scripture states that the Son of God appeared in the flesh to destroy, through His activity in the assumed flesh, and through the assumed flesh, the works of the devil, and to save mankind (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14, 15), the Christian understands this to mean exactly that Christ performs His official acts as Prophet, Priest, and King not beside, but in and through, the assumed human nature, i.e., according to both natures.

“He repudiates the notion that the finite is not capable of the infinite, for Scripture has convinced him that the Son of God did actually become partaker of flesh and blood, that therefore the Infinite has been united with the finite into one Person. This short summary, based on clear Scripture passages, contains the entire doctrine of Christ’s Person in its farthest reaches — and all of it is intelligible to every Christian.”

As a clinching demonstration of the main thesis of this entire book: that Lutheran doctrine is simply Christian doctrine, which every true Christian, as a Christian, believes, let me present a quotation from a Christian theologian, who does not belong to the Lutheran Church but to a denomination which officially disputes against the doctrine of the Person of Christ presented in our Lutheran Confessions, in which he shows the vital necessity of just this Biblical doctrine for our faith in Christ as our Redeemer.

Dr. Alan A. MacRae, President, Faith Theological Seminary (Bible Presbyterian), Philadelphia, Pa., in “The Reformation Review,” July, 1956, pp. 202, 203: “Man is a sinner and must suffer eternally if God is to be just. Man is powerless to save himself. It is he who must pay the penalty of sin, and no other can justly pay it. It would take an eternity of suffering for any man to pay the penalty of his own sin. He could not possibly redeem anyone else. God, however, is not only just, but also loving. His great heart yearns for man’s salvation. His power is limitless. But this power can accomplish nothing, unless it can be made available to man. God cannot forgive man’s sin and still remain a just God, unless man himself first pays the penalty that is due. Man must pay the penalty but lacks the power. God has the power, but it is man who must pay. How, then, can man be saved?

“The second person of the Trinity entered the womb of a virgin and she conceived a son. The eternal One took on Himself human flesh. He was God, the infinite One. He was God, the sinless One. He had no sin of His own which must be dealt with. As man, He could pay the penalty of sin. As God He had the power to make this payment. Through the miracle of the Virgin Birth the God-man came into existence, and only thus could we be saved. All that we need for salvation is simple faith in the atonement of Christ. He, the sinless One, died for our sins. But if we are truly saved, we will go on to become true servants of God, and to do this we must understand something of the infinite mystery of the Incarnation. Only through the Virgin Birth could the power of the infinite God be made available to man in his dire need. The Virgin Birth is vital to belief in a Christ who is capable of being our Redeemer.” The above quotation is Biblical, Lutheran, i.e., Christian, doctrine.

## VII. The States of Christ

Every Christian believes that when the eternal Son of God, “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity,” came into the flesh, became “true man, born of the Virgin Mary,” He entered into human flesh not without, divested of, His divine attributes, but with all His divine attributes intact; for it is written: “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). The fullness of the Godhead does not exclude but includes omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, etc. Therefore it will not enter the believing mind to suppose that Christ in His state of humiliation should have lost possession of anything pertaining to His Godhead, to His divine nature, much less that He should have laid aside that Godhead as such. If, as some false teachers have ventured to assert, Christ laid aside His divine nature when He humbled Himself and reassumed it when He entered His state of exaltation, then He is not and never was the God-man, and the personal union, so clearly taught in Scripture, as we saw in the preceding article, would never have taken place. The Christian position over against such an error is clearly defined in 1 John 4:2, 3: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

Whoever believes “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” will therefore not be tempted to suppose that He abdicated His throne on high when He came on earth to die or that the Infant born in Bethlehem is other than the Godhead veiled in flesh. This “veiling,” then, cannot consist in the loss of anything that is essentially His from eternity, but only in the temporary and voluntary refraining from the full use through His human nature of those divine attributes which were communicated to His human nature when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

In full accordance with this Scriptural teaching on the Person and States of Christ, we read in two of the most precisely worded answers in the Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism commonly used among us the following definitions: “Christ’s State of Humiliation consisted in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ did *not always* and *not fully use* the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature. Christ’s State of Exaltation consists in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ *always and fully uses* the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature.” (Answers to Questions 134 and 148). Thus it is entirely clear that the difference in the States of Christ does not in any way affect His possession of divine attributes but only His use of them, and that even in this respect the difference is not one of use and non-use but of full use and partial use according to the human nature. No change whatever is brought about in the divine nature either by the humiliation or by the exaltation (“I am the Lord, I change not,” Mal. 3:6).

While all this, however, may be, and indeed must be, entirely clear to the Christian on the basis of Holy Writ, there is still a possibility that one may unwittingly confuse Christ’s humbling Himself with the incarnation itself, since the two coincide in time. But this confusion would logically lead to a consequence which no believing Christian would be willing to draw, namely: If Christ’s humbling Himself consisted in His becoming man, then His exaltation would consist in His ceasing to be man. This inference would contradict everything that Scripture says concerning Christ’s coming into the flesh, which produced an eternal union between the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and our human nature. It is Jesus, who “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” who now intercedes for us at the throne of the Majesty on high (Heb. 4:15). “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). And when He comes again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead those who brought about His death “shall look on Him whom they pierced” (Zech. 12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7). Yes indeed, the incarnation, which took place at a definite time in the days of Herod the Great, at the time of the census ordered by Emperor Augustus, lasts unto all eternity. Now it is quite conceivable that God’s Son might (if He had so chosen, and if that had

accorded with His plan for bringing about our redemption) have become man without any humiliation whatsoever, as He shall come again at the last day “in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (Matt. 25:31). Our Lord’s humiliation did not consist in His becoming man but in the *manner* in which He became man and in the sort of life He led and the kind of death He died as a man upon the earth. The state of humiliation, beginning, as it does, at the very same moment at which the incarnation took place, does, nevertheless, logically *follow after* the incarnation and is consequent upon it.

The logical sequence of incarnation and humiliation is taught most clearly in that great passage, which more than any other in Scripture teaches us all we need to know of the States of Christ, Phil. 2:5–11; for there, as in the definitions quoted from our Catechism, we are told that both humiliation and exaltation took place in and according to the human nature of Christ, which prior to the incarnation did not exist. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“Being in the form of God” does not refer to the Son’s eternal divine existence before the incarnation, but it means that when the Son of God was made man, divine attributes, majesty, and glory were given to the human nature. This “form of God,” then, He actually possessed throughout His state of humiliation. Occasionally, as in His miracles, He gave men a glimpse of this form of God, but as a general rule men who came into casual contact with Him in His earthly life did not perceive this in Him but regarded Him as an ordinary man like other men, or at best as a great prophet like one of the prophets of old or a teacher come from God (Matt. 16:13, 14; John 3:2). The glory which His disciples saw in Him (John 1:14) was seen with the eyes of faith. And this hiding of His glory was His own voluntary and purposeful act, for a full manifestation of His divine glory during His earthly ministry would have impeded the great work He had come to do in suffering and dying as our Substitute. Christ’s conduct in refraining from the full use of His divine attributes through His human nature in His state of humiliation is described in Phil. 2:6 by the peculiar phrase: “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” This expression refers to a common practice of those days. When a victorious general returned in triumph from foreign wars with abundance of booty and captives, he would parade through the streets of Rome with his army, displaying the spoils of battle, and thus make a public show of the trophies and slaves which had been taken from the enemy. “To consider as a robbery,” then, is simply, in the speech of our day: “to make a show of,” “to show off.” Christ was really throughout His state of humiliation “in the form of God,” and hence “equal with God.” But He did not make a show of this equality with God. Although He was “in the form of God” He appeared to men in “the form of a servant;” although He was “equal with God” He was “found in fashion as a man.” Thus the humiliation of Christ took place in His human nature (which alone could be either humiliated or exalted, the divine nature being unchangeable), and it consisted in this, that in His human nature He did not always make full use of the divine attributes that had been imparted to this nature (as nothing could be imparted to the divine nature, which from eternity possesses all things). This being clearly understood from Phil. 2:5–8 with regard to the state of humiliation, it is very easy to see from Phil. 2:9–11 that the state of exaltation, which also has reference to the human nature only, is simply the reverse of what has just been described. The divine majesty, which His human nature possessed from the very moment of its conception in the womb, was and is fully manifested through this nature in His state of exaltation (beginning with the descent into hell), in which He, also in His human nature, makes unrestrained use of the divine attributes given to His human nature from the beginning of its existence. “As the humiliation was the non-use of divine majesty, the exaltation is the full use thereof.”

To speak in detail of the several acts of Christ's humiliation: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried;" and of His exaltation: "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" — this would indeed be a delightful task, but it would lead far beyond the limits to which this brief summary of Christian doctrine has confined itself. We shall therefore proceed, God willing, to consider in the next chapter of this book the Office and Work of Christ, especially His Priestly Office, specifically the Vicarious Atonement, as wrought by His active and passive obedience.

### VIII. The Vicarious Atonement

The fundamental doctrine of Biblical Christianity which forms our topic is usually treated, in more detailed presentations of Christian doctrine, as a subheading under the general subject of Christ's three-fold office: a). His prophetic office, in which He during the days of His flesh by word and deed proclaimed Himself as the Son of God and the Savior of the world, and throughout the ages as supreme Prophet stands behind all prophets, evangelists, and apostles through whom He has revealed Himself, as well as all preachers of the Gospel who proclaim His truth in its purity in full accord with inspired Scripture; b). His priestly office, in which He, both priest and sacrifice, in His active and passive obedience offered Himself without spot to God as the one atoning sacrifice for the sins of all men (the specific theme of this present exposition), and still intercedes for us at the throne of grace; c). and His kingly office, which as kingdom of power extends over all creatures, as kingdom of grace embraces Christ's Church militant upon earth, and as kingdom of glory rules the Church triumphant in heaven, including the holy angels, unto all eternity.

We now concentrate our attention upon the central act of the office and work of Christ for our salvation, as sketched above: His vicarious atonement or substitutionary satisfaction for all sinners, which He carried out, as our High Priest, in His spotless life and His innocent sufferings and death for us. We offer first a brief definition of the vicarious satisfaction, which we shall then analyze into its component parts, as a convenient frame-work for the grouping of the precious Scripture texts upon which this central doctrine of our most holy faith is based.

Definition: *Vicarious satisfaction means that Christ vicariously (in the place of man) rendered to God, who was wroth over the sins of man, a satisfaction which changed His wrath into grace toward men.*

1. The immutable justice of God which pronounces the sentence of eternal damnation upon all transgressors of His Law, the wrath of God against sin and sinners. It is only upon the dark background of the wrath of God ("It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. 10:31) that we can rightly appreciate the wonderful work of Christ for our salvation. "If, when we were enemies" (lying under the enmity and wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. 1:18), "we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). There is no more fearful declaration of the wrath of God against sinners than the awful sufferings of Christ, the spotless Son of God, when He, taking the place of sinners, subjected Himself to that wrath which is our rightful lot and took our curse upon Himself. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10). This is the situation of *every one* of us, guilty before God, His enemies, hated by God, lying under God's wrath, or the curse of His Law. To deliver us from this wrath and curse, the guiltless Savior took our guilt upon Himself, *put Himself in our place*, becoming our Substitute, and thus made Himself subject to the avenging justice of God. When God's Son became our Substitute, and the guilt of our sin was thus charged to His account, or "imputed" to Him, God "spared not His own

Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32). “*It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief*” (Is. 53:10). That is the meaning of the profoundly Scriptural lines in Thomas Kelly’s great Lenten hymn (No. 153 in **Lutheran Hymnal**):

“But the deepest stroke that pierced Him  
Was the stroke that Justice gave.”

That is also the meaning of Isaiah 53:4–6: “Surely *He* hath borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But *He* was wounded for *our* transgressions, *He* was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon *Him*; and with *His* stripes *we* are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all.” All this came upon Him because “He was numbered with the transgressors” (compare Mark 15:28 and Luke 22:37); “and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).

2. The willing obedience of Christ in accepting the obligation in man’s stead both to keep the Law and to bear the punishment the Law exacts of the transgressors. The three passages of Scripture which (especially in the original Greek) bring out this substitutionary idea most clearly are Matt. 20:28 and Mark 10:45 (identical in wording): “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (literally: “in the place of many,” “in the stead of many”); also 1 Tim. 2:6: “Who gave Himself a ransom for all” (literally: “a substitutionary ransom for all”).

As our willing Substitute and Redeemer Christ rendered full obedience in two respects: a). *By doing* — by keeping perfectly *for us* the Law of God, which we were obligated to keep but unable to keep; b). *By suffering*, by enduring *for us* the full penalty of our transgressions, by suffering for us in His infinite Person, as the God-man, during the days of His flesh and especially in those last bitter hours upon Calvary, all that we should have suffered throughout eternity in hell. The very voice of this unimaginable and infinite suffering of the God-man as our Substitute is heard in His fourth word from the cross: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Psalm 22:1; Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

“Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather;  
And Adam’s sins have swept between the righteous Son and Father;  
Yea, once Immanuel’s orphaned cry His universe hath shaken,  
It went up single, echoless: ‘My God, I am forsaken!’  
It went up from the Holy’s lips, amid His lost creation,  
That of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation.”  
(Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “Cowper’s Grave.”)

This is indeed the very suffering of hell itself when He for our sins is forsaken. And this suffering of which He could say at the end of those three dread hours of darkness: “It is finished” (John 19:30), was truly equivalent to the eternal suffering of all sinners in hell, because of the infinite Person of Him who suffered. This equivalence of the infinite God-man’s suffering, which He finished and brought to an

end in a few hours, to the eternal suffering of finite man in a living death which never ends, is beautifully expressed in the following little poem on “The Crucifixion” by Alice Meynell:

“Oh, man’s capacity  
For spiritual sorrow, corporal pain!  
Who has explored the deepmost of that sea,  
With heavy links of a far-fathoming chain?  
“That melancholy lead,  
Let down in guilty and in innocent hold,  
Yea, into childish hands delivered,  
Leaves the sequestered floor unreached, untold.  
“One only has explored  
The deepmost; but He did not die of it.  
Not yet, not yet He died. Man’s human Lord  
Touched the extreme; it is not infinite.  
“But over the abyss  
Of *God’s capacity for woe* He strayed  
One hesitating hour; what gulf was this?  
Forsaken He went down, and was afraid.”

The Scripture testimony to this willing obedience of our Savior is fittingly divided, as before mentioned, into two groups of texts:

a). His obedience by *doing*, commonly called the *active obedience*: Matt. 5:17: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to *fulfill*.” (N.B. “Fulfilling” the Law means *keeping* it, obeying the commandments of God. This we were obligated to do, but could not do because of our sinful corruption. This Christ, being Himself God, was not obligated to do, but did for us, as our Substitute). Gal. 4:4, 5: “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” The eternal Son of God, the *Lawgiver*, became incarnate, born of a woman, in order that He might come down *under the Law* with us, and in our stead render that perfect obedience to the Law which we were unable to render.

b). His obedience by *suffering*, commonly called the *passive obedience*: Gal. 3:13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Deut. 21:23). Compare Gal. 3:10 (Deut. 27:26), quoted above, that you may fully understand why and for what purpose Christ had to become a curse if we were to be redeemed from the curse, and was willing to become a curse for us. 2 Cor. 5:14: “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” On this text Dr. Walther remarks: “This is a golden text, which shines with the radiance of the sun even in the luminous Scriptures. Since the death which Christ died for all is a death for the purpose of reconciliation, it is the same as if all had suffered death for this purpose. It follows, then, that, without entertaining the least

doubt, I can say with perfect assurance: *'I am redeemed; I am reconciled; salvation has been acquired for me.'* ” (“Law and Gospel,” trans. by Dr. Dau, p. 274; compare also p. 374). 2 Cor. 5:19: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” (N.B. The “Word of reconciliation” is the Gospel of the finished atonement, the unconditioned Gospel of the redemption of all men). 1 Peter 3:18: “Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” 1 John 2:2: “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

3. God lays His anger by. The vicarious satisfaction which Christ rendered by His active and passive obedience has resulted in appeasing God’s wrath against men, has set aside God’s judgment of condemnation and put in its place a judgment of universal justification. God has forgiven all the sins of all men for the sake of Christ’s substitutional obedience and death, and has sealed this universal amnesty by raising Him from the dead. As His condemnation was the penalty for our sins meted out to our Substitute (“the stroke that Justice gave;” “the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” Is. 53:6; “He was delivered for our offenses”), so when He was justified (from our sins, not His own, for He had none) by His resurrection from the dead, this was really our justification, the assurance that God was fully satisfied with the satisfaction He had rendered for us, that for Christ’s sake our sins *are forgiven*: Rom. 4:25: “He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” Rom. 5:18: “Therefore as by the offense of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One (Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” In conclusion, 2 Cor. 5:21: “He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

“He shows to man His treasure  
Of judgment, truth, and righteousness,  
His love beyond all measure,  
His yearning pity o’er distress,  
Nor treats us as we merit,  
But lays His anger by.  
The humble, contrite spirit  
Finds His compassion nigh;  
And high as heaven above us,  
As break from close of day,  
So far, since He doth love us,  
He puts our sins away.”

(**Lutheran Hymnal**, Hymn 34, stanza 2)

## IX. Conversion

Every Christian believes that he became one by a gracious act of God, that God made him a believer, gave him his faith, even as we read, Philippians 1:29: “Unto you *it is given* in the behalf of Christ, not only *to believe on Him*, but also to suffer for His sake.” No Christian approaches God as did the Pharisee in the parable with the boast: “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are” (Luke 18:11), as though in him there were something to recommend him to God’s favor, but every Christian prays with the publican: “God be merciful unto me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Here, if anywhere, there is surely unanimity among all Christians, in their heart of hearts confessing: “I, a sinner, saved by grace.” And yet in the field of theological disputation there has occurred a very wide divergence of opinion on this very point, and controversies have raged and still rage even within the “Lutheran” Church on this vital and fundamental doctrine of conversion. Of this, however, we may be sure, that, regardless of what monstrous notions of human cooperation in coming to Christ may be set down upon paper by blind leaders of the blind, even these men, if indeed they still are Christians at heart, forget all that when they come to God in prayer, and confess: “All that I was, my sin, my guilt, my death, was all mine own; all that I am I owe to Thee, my gracious God, alone.”

What, then, is conversion? Conversion is the bestowal of faith. God gives us faith, and thereby converts us. In Acts 11:21 we read: “A great number believed and turned unto the Lord,” that is to say (as indicated by the construction of the verbs in the original Greek), “in coming to faith they were converted unto the Lord;” their conversion consisted in the kindling of faith in their hearts through the preaching of the Gospel. And no man can by his own reason or strength, by anything whatever in himself, come to faith in Christ: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.”

The efficient cause of conversion, the Bestower of faith, is God alone. Man does not accomplish, but undergoes conversion. The Scripture proof for the truth that God alone by His almighty grace, without any cooperation whatever on the part of the man being converted, effects or accomplishes conversion is so abundant and so clear that our purpose will best be served by a simple listing of the main passages without comment, and without any further attempt at classification than merely to distinguish the proofs for the negative (that man can not and does not accomplish his own conversion or assist in it) and the proofs for the positive fact that God’s grace alone works conversion in us:

### a). Negative:

John 6:44: “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.”

1 Cor. 2:14: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

### b). Positive:

Phil. 1:29: “For unto you it is given ... to believe on Him.”

Eph. 1:19, 20: “Who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.”

Col. 2:12: “Ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God” (i.e., “through the faith which God wrought” — compare preceding passage), “who hath raised Him from the dead.”

2 Cor. 4:6: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Thus we see that the working of faith in man’s heart, dead as it is to God by nature (Eph. 2:1, 5), is as mighty a work of God as the raising of Christ from the dead, that the creation of the light of faith in

man's sin-darkened heart (1 Cor. 2:14) is as mighty a work of God as His commanding the light to shine out of darkness on the first day of creation.

The means through which God effects conversion is the Gospel, the Word of reconciliation, the good news of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, which produces faith in the forgiveness of sins that it proclaims. The Law cannot convert, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20), not of grace and forgiveness. Yet without the preparatory work of the Law, breaking up the fallow ground of the hard and sinful heart (Jer. 4:3), the life-giving fructifying seed of the Gospel will never find lodgment there. For, as our Savior tells us (Matt. 9:12): "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Without the knowledge of sin there is no knowledge of the Savior. The knowledge of sin is produced by the preaching of the revealed Law of God from Holy Scripture, and is made effectual in the heart by the Holy Spirit through the terrors of conscience and despair of one's own righteousness unto contrition, as a divine act upon the sinner preparatory to conversion. Or at times God undertakes through outward events, adversity (Luke 15:14–18; Acts 16: 26ff; Psalm 119:71) or even prosperity and outward blessing (Rom. 2:4; Luke 5:8), to produce the broken heart into which He will pour the consolation of the Gospel. But in any event it is not the Law but the Gospel which produces faith. For this many Scripture proofs can be offered, of which we list the following:

Rom. 10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (this being the preferred reading of the manuscripts; the reading of the received text, "Word of God," being less specific, though in this context pointing also to the Gospel).

John 5:39: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (Christ).

John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their Word" (through the Apostolic preaching of the Gospel).

The inner motions of the heart which go to make up conversion are: a), the terrors of conscience which arise from the knowledge of sin engendered by the Law (Acts 16:29, 30, and other passages referred to in the preceding paragraph in connection with the preparatory work of the Law); and b). the trust of the heart in the gracious promise of forgiveness extended to man in the Gospel (Acts 16:31, and other passages referred to in the preceding paragraph in connection with the production of faith by the Gospel). Not until the despair induced by the Law has been overcome by faith in the Gospel has conversion taken place; but in the very moment in which Gospel comfort takes the place of the terrors of conscience God has accomplished conversion in the heart.

Conversion therefore, that is, the creation of faith in the grace of God, takes place in that moment in which the Holy Ghost, after rousing the terrors of conscience, kindles a spark of faith in the heart of the sinner, or awakens a desire for the grace of God in Christ. The preparation for conversion may extend over a longer or shorter period of time, but not so conversion itself; it always takes place instantaneously. There is no intermediate state between the state of sin and the state of grace, between spiritual death and spiritual life, between being in an unconverted state and being converted. Scripture rules out any such intermediate state by recognizing only two classes of men, in such passages, for instance, as John 3:6, 18, 36, and Mark 16:16. Since according to Scripture no such intermediate state exists, all possibility of man contributing something of his own toward the blessed result is completely ruled out. The moment there is the least spark of spiritual life, of longing for grace, of turning toward God, in a man's heart, God has already converted him, and that by grace alone, without any cooperation on man's part.

Despite the fact, however, that in every case converting grace works with all the power of divine omnipotence (see Eph. 1:19; Col. 2:12; 2 Cor. 4:6, above, in positive Scripture proof for the fact that God's grace alone works conversion in us), nevertheless man can still prevent his conversion. In Matt.

23:37 our Lord says, with tears, of the lost inhabitants of Jerusalem whom He willed to save: "I would . . . but ye would not." In Acts 7:51 St. Stephen addresses the hardened foes of the Gospel: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost."

Of the mysterious fact that God's omnipotence is in this instance resistible, Luther says about all that may be said in accordance with Scripture in his familiar axiom: God operating through the means of His Word can be resisted (Matt. 11: 28; 23:37; compare also Luke 14:18dash;20), but God working in His unveiled majesty (Matt. 25:32, 33) is irresistible. When Christ shall summon all nations before Him when He comes in His glory at the last day and shall separate them unto their eternal destinies none shall say: "I pray thee, have me excused," nor shall any run away and hide. We must conclude, then, that God's converting grace is indeed omnipotent, but still not irresistible. If any should object that this statement is illogical, we shall merely reply that a Christian's standard of judgment with regard to God and divine tilings is not human logic but Holy Scripture — and God forbid that we ever permit our thoughts and speculations to go beyond the Word of our God!

The "daily repentance," which is such a prominent part of our Christian life of sanctification, as expounded in Luther's Small Catechism (last two questions on Baptism, dealing with its significance) is sometimes, not incorrectly, spoken of as a continuous conversion. It is so spoken of, for instance, in Matt. 18:3. But Scripture sharply differentiates between conversion in this sense and the conversion by which an unbeliever is brought to faith.

But also in the usual sense of conversion, as the transition from unbelief to faith, the possibility of a re-conversion, a repeated conversion, is clearly taught in Scripture. On the one hand, Scripture clearly teaches that a true believer may fall from grace and lose his faith. Luke 8:13 speaks of those "which for a while believe." 1 Tim. 1:19, 20 speaks of Hymenaeus and Philetus who "concerning faith have made shipwreck." In well known narratives we are told how David in the Old Testament and Peter in the New Testament fell away from faith, and were later restored. On the other hand, Scripture explicitly teaches that those who have fallen away from faith may be reconverted. Ezek. 18:31, 32 and 33:11 call upon the wicked who at one time have been God's children to return to the Lord in repentance. David (2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51), Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:1 Iff.), Peter (Luke 22:61, 62; especially verse 32), underwent a second conversion.

A lengthy chapter could here be added on the synonyms of conversion, but we shall be contented with merely listing them, with a brief reference to the significance of each, and a Scripture text in which it is used. **Regeneration** speaks of conversion as a second birth more blest, in which those who by nature were children of Adam have been reborn unto a lively faith as children of God. See 1 John 5:1 and John 1: 12, 13. **Quickening** or spiritual resurrection speaks of the conversion of those who by nature were spiritually dead ("dead in trespasses and sins," Eph. 2:1) to the spiritual life of faith. See Col. 2:12; Eph. 1:19, 20; 2:5–8. **Illumination** speaks of conversion as the kindling of the spiritual light of faith in the hearts of those who by nature were spiritually blind, that walked in darkness and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death (1 Cor. 2:14; Is. 9:2). See Eph. 5:8; Acts 26:18; 1 Peter 2:9. **Calling** speaks of conversion as that return to God which is effected by the call of the Gospel, kindling faith in the heart. See Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:26; 2 Tim. 1:9; and again, 1 Peter 2:9. **Repentance**, especially when used not of the daily repentance, but of that contrition and faith whereby the lost and condemned sinner is first brought into communion with God, is also a synonym of conversion. See Luke 13:3,5; 15:7.

All that has so far been said in these nine chapters has been leading up to the central article of the Christian faith, which shall be treated, God willing, in our next chapter: "Justification, Objective and Subjective."

## X. Justification, Objective and Subjective

It may appear from the title in the line above as though this chapter on the “doctrine of the standing and the falling church,” the most fundamental doctrine of all, were departing from the principle of avoiding in this book the technical terminology of theological discussion. We intend, however, no real departure from this principle, any more than in previous chapters on “The Holy Trinity” and “The Vicarious Atonement.” While it is true that Holy Scripture does not use the terms “objective” and “subjective” in its presentation of the doctrine of justification, it does present this doctrine in some passages as a non-imputation or forgiveness of the sins of the whole world, pronounced by God on the basis of Christ’s vicarious atonement, without reference to the faith of the individual or prior to such faith (as, for instance, 2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:18; 4:25), and in other passages as a non-imputation or forgiveness of the sins of the individual, grasped by personal faith (as, for instance, Rom. 3:28; 4:5, 16), this Scriptural distinction being then conveniently designated by the terms objective or universal, and subjective or personal, respectively. We are accustomed to use the term “objective” concerning truths which are valid apart from human appropriation or acceptance of them, whereas those same truths are “subjectively” appropriated when an individual becomes aware of them and applies them to himself by a believing acceptance of them. There can be no possible conflict when these terms are applied to the justification of the sinner before God, as though they indicated “two kinds of justification.” For if the truth of the justification of all men before God were not objectively valid before its appropriation by the individual, then there would be no justification for his believing acceptance to grasp, no basis upon which his personal faith could rest. We cannot believe something which is to *become* true by our believing it, if and when we do believe it; but we can only truly believe that which is already a fact before we believe it, and thus offers a firm basis for a well-grounded faith. “Faith” in that which is not a fact, not objectively true, is not well-grounded faith, but a delusion, “wishful thinking” or self-deception.

That faith, which, as we considered in the preceding chapter, is wrought in us by God (Col. 2:12; Eph. 1:19), is firmly based upon the fact that we are justified, that our sins have been forgiven. Justification, just like its opposite, condemnation, is a judgment of God (Rom. 5:18, 19). It is a judicial act of God in which He, as the Judge of all, pronounces a verdict of acquittal upon all sinners. Thus it is an act of God outside of us, not, like conversion, within us. As His previous sentence of condemnation imputed the guilt of Adam’s sin to all men or charged it against them: “As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” . . . “as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom. 5:18a, 19a); so now His sentence of acquittal imputes the merit of Christ to all men or credits it to their account: “Even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” . . . “so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5: 18b, 19b). On this entire subject compare the fourth chapter of this book, treating of sin, especially the portion which deals with original sin. On the basis of the Scripture evidence adduced we may now define justification, according to its negative and positive sides, as follows: “Justification properly consists in the non-imputation of sins, or their forgiveness, to the sinner, which is the negative side; and the imputation of Christ’s perfect righteousness, as though it were his own, which is the positive side.” (Dr. C. H. Little in **Lutheran Confessional Theology**, p. 149, quoted by E. W. A. Koehler in **A Summary of Christian Doctrine**, p. 146).

Once the essential nature of justification as the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is fully understood, we can have no difficulty in grasping the significance of objective and subjective justification, the one being the declaration that God has in His heart forgiven all sins of all men on the basis of Christ’s vicarious atonement, which comes to us in the promise of the Gospel, the other the transmission of the effect of this declaration to all men in whose heart He works faith to receive and appropriate it. Thus objective justification may be specifically defined, again, in the words

of Dr. Little: "Objective justification is God's declaration of amnesty to the world of sinners on the basis of the vicarious obedience of Christ, by which He secured a perfect righteousness for all mankind, which God accepted as a reconciliation of the world to Himself, imputing to mankind the merits of the Redeemer." (Dr. C. H. Little in **Disputed Doctrines**, p. 60, quoted by E. W. A. Koehler in **A Summary of Christian Doctrine**, p. 147). The fully adequate Scriptural basis for this definition is found in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." This "Word of reconciliation" is nothing else than the Gospel. It brings to us the blessed tidings that God *is* reconciled to us (all men), that He does not impute trespasses unto the whole world, or, in other words, forgives all sins of all men in His heart; and this reconciled heart of God He opens up and declares unto us in the Gospel, the Word of reconciliation. This is the message which all true ambassadors of God bring to us in God's name, for real and genuine Gospel preaching consists in proclaiming to sinners the fact of the forgiveness, the fact that the world is reconciled unto God. So the Apostle goes on to tell us in verse 20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." It is just that simple — the Gospel tells us that *God is reconciled to us* (objective justification), and works in us the faith by which *we, on our part, are reconciled to God*, or accept His reconciliation and forgiveness (subjective justification). Precisely the same truth is brought us in Rom. 5:18, 19, which we have fully considered above. Rom. 4:25 is another powerful proof text for objective justification: "Christ was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." He was delivered up into the hands of wicked men, crucified and slain, not for His own offenses (as He "knew no sin," 2 Cor. 5:21), but for the offenses of the whole world; so when He was raised again from the dead He was justified or declared free from the sins for which He died, not His, but the sins of the whole world; and this justification is our justification.

We may close our discussion of objective justification and lead over to the discussion of subjective justification by a definition which includes both, in the words of Dr. E. W. A. Koehler (**A Summary of Christian Doctrine**, Second Edition, p. 149): "Justification is that forensic" (judicial) "act of God, by which He, on the basis of the perfect vicarious atonement wrought by Christ, declared the whole world to be justified in His sight (objective justification), and transmits and imputes the effect of this declaration to all whom He brings to faith by the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace (subjective justification)."

Thus the indispensable prerequisite of justification by faith is objective justification; for no one can *believe* that he is justified, or that his sins are forgiven, unless they actually *are* forgiven, and God tells him so in the Gospel promise. As was shown in the previous chapter, God works faith in the forgiveness of sins through the Gospel, which is the Word of reconciliation, or the good news that our sins are all forgiven. And he who believes it has it. This is stated in very simple terms in Romans 3:24, 28: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." From the wording of these two passages of Scripture has arisen the convenient formula commonly used in the Church for purposes of instruction: "We are justified before God, or our sins are forgiven, by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, without the deeds of the Law." "By grace" shows the *source* of our justification in the gratuitous forgiving love or gracious favor of God toward poor sinners, which led Him to form the wondrous plan of our salvation. "For Christ's sake" indicated the meritorious cause of our justification, since on the basis of Christ's vicarious atonement God can remit sins without violating His immutable justice. "By faith" points to the means whereby we receive and take hold of the forgiveness of sins offered us in the means of grace, for faith is nothing more than the hand which receives God's benefits, and is by no means a matter of our "doing our part" or fulfilling some stipulation or condition. "Without the deeds of the Law" rules out every work, merit, or deserving on man's part, even faith itself considered as a work of man; for it is not the act of believing but *that which we believe*, namely, the Gospel promise of

forgiveness for Christ's sake, which saves us, and thus the function of faith is purely instrumental and in no way meritorious. A particularly strong and beautiful passage to prove that God's judgment of acquittal or justification depends not at all on any quality or condition in man is Rom. 4:5: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness." Finally, summing up the testimony of the passages quoted from St. Paul's great Epistle to the Romans, we have this wonderful testimony from his Epistle to the Ephesians (ch. 2, vv. 8, 9): "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

The doctrine of justification is the central doctrine of the Christian religion, whereby it distinguishes itself from all man-made religions whatsoever. That upon which we have insisted throughout this little book: that all true Christians, and not only orthodox Lutherans, really accept these doctrines in their hearts, even though through faulty instruction or other reasons they may not have attained to a clear expression and confession of them, is supremely true of this doctrine of justification; for by personal faith in *this* teaching of Holy Scripture a man becomes and remains a Christian. Every Christian who ever lived, is now alive, or will yet be born shares this faith; and every doctrine of Holy Scripture either leads up to this doctrine of justification, or is directly involved in it, or flows from it.

We close by quoting an eloquent paragraph of Dr. Pieper and one of Dr. Luther under the heading: "All Christians Believe in Justification by Faith." "There is a great diversity among Christians. Some are strong in their faith, others weak. Some have an excellent knowledge of the Christian doctrine, others are woefully deficient in this respect. There are orthodox Christians and heterodox Christians. But there is full accord among Christians on the doctrine of justification. All Christians are at one in believing that God forgives their sins by grace, for Christ's sake, without any merit of their own. For it is this faith that makes the Christian."

That all Christians of all ages and all lands are one in the article of justification is thus set forth by Luther: "The faith that we obtain the forgiveness of sins solely for Christ's sake by faith has been the faith of the Fathers and prophets and all saints from the beginning of the world; and it has been the doctrine and teaching of Christ and the Apostles, who were commissioned to spread it in all the world. And it is to this day, and will be to the end, the unanimous understanding and voice of the whole Christian Church, which always in one mind and with one accord has confessed and fought for this article, that only in the name of the Lord Jesus forgiveness of sins is obtained and received. And in this faith they have been justified before God and saved."

Most assuredly the Lutheran Church is not a sect. Confessing justification by faith without the deeds of the Law clearly and unambiguously against any and every perversion of it, Luther and the Lutheran Church do not represent a faction in the Church, but are the mouthpiece of all Christendom on earth.

## **XI. Sanctification**

Sanctification in the wider sense (as used, e.g., in the heading of the Third Article of the Creed in Luther's Small Catechism) comprehends the entire work of the Holy Spirit, by which He leads the sinner unto eternal life, including the bestowal of faith, justification, sanctification as the inner transformation of man, perseverance in faith, and the complete renewal on Judgment Day. In its narrower sense, in which the term is commonly used, sanctification refers only to that part or phase of the Spirit's work by which He incites and directs believers to live a godly life, that is to say, it designates the internal spiritual transformation of the believer which *follows* upon justification. It is in this sense that the word "sanctification" is used in this chapter.

As the Holy Spirit produces justifying faith in our hearts through His work of conversion, so also it is the Holy Spirit who produces holiness of life in us through His work of sanctification. Yet these two works of the Holy Spirit must be sharply distinguished and regarded in proper sequence in all our thinking, in order to avoid such confusion as would imperil and even destroy our Christian faith. Indeed the confounding of justification with sanctification, or placing sanctification before justification, is the chief root of error with regard to the way of salvation. Hence it behooves us to give careful heed to such passages as the following from the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in order that we may clearly grasp the Biblical order and relation of these two doctrines. In Romans 6:22 we read: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God" (namely, by justification), "ye have your fruit unto holiness" (sanctification). Again, in Romans 6:18, 19: "Being then made free from sin" (namely, by justification), "ye became the servants of righteousness. . . . Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (sanctification).

There is, then, a most essential difference between sanctification and justification. With regard to justification it is rightly said: "All our righteousness is outside of us; justification is an action not *in* man, but *with regard* to man." But sanctification in the narrow sense is *in* man, an *inherent* righteousness of life and works, in contrast to the *imputed* righteousness given in justification.

That sanctification does consist in such an *inward* moral transformation is shown by those Scripture passages in which man is described as the *object* of sanctification according to his essential parts (body and soul). In 1 Thess. 5:23 we read: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body" (or: your whole spiritual being, with relation to both soul and body) "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, in 2 Cor. 7:1: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." So 1 Cor. 6:20: "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Most significant and comprehensive of all is the great summary of the motivation and nature of sanctification in Romans 12:1, 2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Thus we have seen that there is an inseparable connection between justification and sanctification. But that connection is always stated in such a way as to make it clear that sanctification is the consequence and effect of justification, never in the reverse order. The so-called "psychological connection" between justification, which is a judicial act of God outside of us whereby He graciously for Christ's sake acquits us and pronounces us innocent in His sight, and sanctification, which is an inner transformation of our own hearts and lives, is very easily grasped if we bear in mind that God's judgment of acquittal is published in the Gospel, "the word of reconciliation," and that the justifying faith, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, there grasps it and makes it our own. In this way our apprehension by faith of God's great act of love, revealed in the good tidings of salvation, through Christ, produces in our believing hearts true love for God and the desire to do His will: "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Thus "faith worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). We have already said that the Holy Spirit works sanctification, as taught in Rom. 8:9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Now, after what has been said concerning the relation of justifying faith to sanctification, we may state the truth of the divine agency in sanctification quite precisely, as follows: "The Holy Ghost, as the efficient cause of sanctification, works through faith as His instrument."

The cart is placed before the horse by all who make "ethical" actions of man, human good works or holiness, a prerequisite for obtaining eternal salvation; whereas, according to Holy Scripture, God's free gift of salvation, revealed in the Gospel and accepted by faith, is the cause and motivation of all

works which are good in His sight. The perversion or reversal of this divine order is correctly explained in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, (III, Of Love and the Fulfilling of the Law), paragraph 144, Triglot, p. 197, as being due to the dream of natural human reason that human works merit remission of sins and justification: “This opinion of the Law inheres by nature in men’s minds; neither can it be expelled, unless when we are divinely taught.”

In the proper divine order, however, as revealed in Scripture, the regenerate and justified child of God does cooperate, howsoever weakly, yet (according to the new man) willingly, with the Holy Spirit in sanctification. The Holy Spirit, who without any cooperation whatsoever on our part converted us, prompts our cooperation in sanctifying us. Conversion is a purely divine work, instantaneous and not admitting of degrees, in which God gives life to the spiritually dead; sanctification is a divine work, progressive in its nature, in which God works in and with those upon whom He has conferred spiritual life. Thus the question as to who effects sanctification receives a threefold answer: a). God produces sanctification by His infinite power, as we see from 1 Thess. 5:23,24: “*The very God of peace sanctify you wholly.... Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.*” b). The Christian cooperates in sanctification, as we see from 2 Cor. 6:1: “We, then, *as workers together with Him*, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” c). The working of God and the working of the new man are not coordinated, but the latter always subordinated to the former, as we see from 2 Cor. 3:5: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;” and John 15:5: “Without Me ye can do nothing.” Therefore our Formula of Concord (Th. D., II, para. 66, Triglot, p. 907) is careful to warn us: “This is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him, and that as soon as God would withdraw His gracious hand from him, he could not for a moment persevere in obedience to God. But if this were understood thus, that the converted man cooperates with the Holy Ghost in the manner as when two horses together draw a wagon, this could in no way be conceded without prejudice to the divine truth.”

We next inquire as to the “inner motions,” or what actually takes place, in the process of sanctification, both in its negative and positive aspects. By faith in Christ a “new man” has been born; but in this life the Christian retains his sinful nature, the “old man.” Sanctification consists in the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man. Eph. 4:22, 24: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man; ... and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Col. 3:9, 10: “Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”

The *means* by which sanctification is effected, strictly speaking, is only the Gospel, not the Law. “The Law is said *to be written* into the hearts in sanctification (Jeremiah 31: 33), but the Law is not said *to write* anything. The writing takes place through the *Gospel* alone. By the same means by which alone we are *regenerated*, by it also we are *renewed*. Now we are regenerated by the Gospel alone. Therefore we are also renewed by the Gospel alone. This does not deny that the Law renders some service in sanctification” (Carpzov, quoted by Dr. Pieper). The Law, however, never motivates sanctification, but it serves only in a secondary and auxiliary capacity — by keeping alive in us the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20), for where the knowledge of sin ceases there also faith in the forgiveness of sins has come to an end; by serving as a guide and rule for a God-pleasing life, for God can be served only in the works which He has commanded (Matt. 15:9); and by keeping the flesh, which tends to hinder our sanctification, in subjection (1 Cor. 9:27).

Much discussion has taken place on the *necessity* of good works. That good works are not necessary *for salvation* is evident already from the fact that salvation precedes any possibility of doing good works, and that we are justified by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, *without the works of the Law*

(cf. Rom. 4:6–8; Eph. 2:8, 9). Also the plea that good works, though not necessary to *obtain* salvation, are necessary to *retain* it, or necessary to the preservation of faith, is contrary to Scripture. While it is true that evil works may destroy faith (1 Tim. 1:18–20; 2 Tim. 2:16–18, etc.), it is not true that good works preserve faith. On the contrary, good works do not sustain faith, but faith sustains good works (1 Peter 1:5). However, although good works are *not* necessary *unto salvation*, they certainly are *necessary*. Who would dare to assert that what God wills is unnecessary? But “this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). The new man does God’s will freely and gladly from the heart, but this willingness and freedom from the coercion of the Law does not in any way detract from his acknowledgment of the necessity of obedience to God’s command. “And this is His commandment, that we should ... love one another, as He gave us commandment” (1 John 3:23).

Strive as we may to increase in sanctification, it remains *imperfect* in this life. Justification is always perfect, admitting of no degrees; but sanctification is progressive. Holiness of life is not the same in all believers; not even in the same person does it always continue on the same level. The righteousness of faith, which is the imputed righteousness of Christ, is perfect, but the righteousness of life, inhering in the believer, is imperfect. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians exhorts that “as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded” (Phil. 3:15), as he himself was minded, namely: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: ... but this one thing I do, ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3: 12–14). If anyone should delude himself that he had already attained perfect sanctification in this life, he would thereby have abandoned the Christian faith, which is faith in the forgiveness of sins. Scripture brands perfectionism as a lie, especially in 1 John 1:8, 10: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.” Nevertheless sin must not “reign” over the Christians, that they should “obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12), for that is incompatible with their state of grace, and would drive out the sanctifying Spirit, who will not permit the flesh to predominate over the new man in the hearts of those whom He inhabits and controls. Thus Rom. 6:14 states emphatically: “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” And 1 John 3:9 describes the Christian *according to the new man* (“whosoever is born of God”) as maintaining dominion over the old man. The fact that sanctification in this life will always be imperfect must not be put forward as an excuse for the neglect of sanctification. The true Christian strives for perfection, as in the passage quoted above from Philippians, in which “perfection” is taken in the sense of “striving after perfection.”

The subject of the quality and quantity of good works, which necessarily belongs to a complete discussion of sanctification, can (in order not to exceed the limits of this chapter) be treated here only in outline form:

1. The *quality* of Christian good works is seen particularly in two characteristics:
  - a). They are done according to the norm of the divine Law (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7).
  - b). They are done out of a willing spirit, from love to God and our neighbor (Rom. 13:10; Matt. 22: 37, 39; Rom. 12:1).
2. In *comparing the quality* of Christian good works with the so-called “good works” of unbelievers, we find that the latter are mere “civil righteousness” which has no value in the spiritual sphere. Hence:
  - a). Unbelievers, though they “do by nature the things contained in the Law” (Rom. 2:14), yet remain “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1) and “alienated from the life of God” (Eph. 4:18), “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).
  - b). Good works of Christians, on the other hand, though deficient both as to conformity with the Law and as to willingness of spirit, are yet highly praised in Scripture (e.g., Col. 1:4). The reason for this

praise is that Christians continually receive by faith remission also for those sins which taint their good works (1 John 2:1,2: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins”).

3. The quantity of good works according to God’s will (Gal. 6:9, 10; Titus 3:8, 14; 1 Tim. 6:18, etc.), in contrast with the deficiency in our actual practice, is a constant admonition to repentance, as well as an incitement to strive for growth in sanctification. Legal specifications, such as one-seventh of our time, one-tenth of our income, etc., having ceased in the New Testament, the higher goal as to the quantity of good works is that to which “the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14). Cf. 2 Cor. 9:6, 7; 1 Cor. 16:2.

The *reward* promised to the good works of Christians, both for time and for eternity (1 Tim. 4:8) is strictly a reward of grace. Dr. Pieper well says: “He who hands in a *bill* to God on the basis of his works, thereby hands in his request for dismissal from the Kingdom of God, since in the Kingdom of God only *grace* counts.” On this whole subject of the reward of grace study the conversation between the Lord and Peter in Matt. 19:27–30, and the illustrative parable, Matt. 20:1–16. The good works produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians are of great *value*, for: 1). they are done according to the norm of God’s will; 2). God is the real Source of them (Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:6–11; Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:10); 3). they are external testimonies of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (Luke 7:47; 1 John 3:14); indeed, 4). they are worth more than heaven and earth (Rev. 14:13; Matt. 5:12; 19:29; 10:42; Gal. 6:9); and therefore, 5). Christians are so earnestly admonished to perform them that Scripture presents the performance of good works as the ultimate purpose of our life on earth (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5; Titus 3:8, 14; 1 Tim. 6:17ff.).

Three special topics in connection with sanctification, which are well worthy the study and contemplation of all Christians, cannot be entered upon at this time, namely, the Christian’s cross, the place of prayer in the Christian life, and that glorious hope of life eternal which gives to the Christian life on earth its goal and its deepest significance.

Finally, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1,2).

## **XII. The Means of Grace**

In the last three chapters we have been discussing God’s way of salvation for men, in particular the doctrines of conversion, of justification, and of sanctification. In the next three chapters we intend, God willing, to direct our attention to the *means* or instruments which God employs to bring about conversion or the bestowal of justifying faith, thus making man a believer, and which He also uses to produce the sanctification of the believer. This we shall discuss first in general, in this chapter on the means of grace, with special attention to the primary means of grace, the Gospel, and shall then direct our attention in particular to each of the two Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Subsequent chapters on the Church, and the Ministry, through which the means of grace are administered among men, will be followed, finally, by studies of the Election of Grace, and the Last Things.

In treating the means of grace we must always bear in mind the Biblical doctrine of universal objective justification, as taught in 2 Cor. 5:19, for this accomplished justification is the *content* of the means of grace. God has forgiven all men’s sins, and by the means of grace He conveys to us this forgiveness. 2

Cor. 5:19: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; *and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*” The last words of this Scripture passage refer to the means of grace; for the Gospel, or good news that our sins are graciously forgiven for Christ’s sake, which is the primary means of grace, is that “Word of reconciliation” referred to in the text just quoted.

The Gospel is a means of grace in every form in which it reaches men: as preached (Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:47: “remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations”), as written or printed and read (John 20:31: “These are written, that ye might believe;” 1 John 1:4: “These things we write unto you, that your joy may be full”), as declared in absolution, general or individual (John 20:23: “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them”), as pictured in symbols or types (John 3:14, 15: the brazen serpent in the wilderness), or as pondered in the heart (Rom. 10:8: “The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart”) — also in the holy Sacraments, as connected with the water of Baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16) and with Christ’s true body and blood in the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19, 20; Matt. 26:26–28).

All means of grace, the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, have the same purpose and the same effect. As surely as Baptism is a means of regeneration (“the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,” Titus 3:5), so surely the word of the Gospel works regeneration (“being born again ... by the word of God,” 1 Peter 1:23). As certainly as Christ gives us His true body and blood in the Lord’s Supper, so sure it is also that He names as purpose of this wonderful gift the assurance and attestation that God is graciously disposed toward those who eat and drink, because of the body given and the blood shed by Christ: Luke 22:19; Matt. 26:28 (“given and shed for you for the remission of sins”). In perfect agreement with this Scripture teaching, the Confession of our Church states: “Of the use of the Sacraments they teach that the Sacraments were ordained ... to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them” (A. C., XIII, Trig., p. 49).

The great importance of the Christian doctrine of the means of grace is evident from the Scriptural teaching that God wills to bestow the forgiveness of sins for Christ’s sake and faith in this forgiveness, regeneration unto spiritual life and all spiritual gifts connected with it, only through the means of grace which He has ordained, namely, through the Word of the Gospel and the Sacraments. It is noteworthy that, although many erring denominations theoretically deny the effectiveness of the means of grace and teach that God’s grace operates without means, they nevertheless most inconsistently continue to use these means (or at least some of them), and that God uses His means of grace, also in their hands and mouths, to bring men to faith and preserve them in faith, thus producing and maintaining the one true faith in the hearts of His real Christians in spite of Satan’s delusions. We need only adduce a few of the many strong statements of Holy Scripture to prove that God does indeed in His Word emphasize the efficacy and importance of the means of grace in kindling and sustaining Christian faith:

John 17:20: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me *through their Word.*”

1 Peter 1:23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God,* which liveth and abideth for ever.”

Titus 3:5: “According to His mercy *He saved us, by the washing of regeneration,* and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Mark 16:15, 16: “Go ye into all the world, and *preach the Gospel* to every creature. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*”

Luke 24:47: “Repentance and *remission of sins should be preached* in His name among all nations.”

Notice that this text does not speak of preaching *about* the remission of sins, but simply *preaching remission of sins*. The preaching of the Gospel conveys and bestows the remission of sins. And no remission of sins is to be found elsewhere than in the Gospel.

Through the means of grace alone God chooses to deal with us unto our salvation, to bestow His gifts of forgiveness, peace, joy, and everlasting life. By this we do not mean to say that God *could not* operate in our hearts without such external means, nor that He *has not* in certain exceptional cases done so (see Luke 1:15, 41, 44). But what we do assert is that when, under terrors of conscience, we seek assurance of God's grace, He has bound us to the objective Word of the Gospel and to the Sacraments, and has not referred us in this situation to an immediate internal illumination of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit chooses to work through the means of grace. In them He is at home and at work; and, knowing this from Holy Scripture, we shall not seek Him and His gracious operations elsewhere. The Apostolic teaching and practice agrees with the Scripture testimony cited in the previous paragraph, for they do not encourage men to expect the Holy Spirit to light on them without means, but enjoin them to seek grace and salvation in the means of grace:

Acts 20:32: "I commend you to God, *and to the Word of His grace.*"

Acts 2:38: "Repent and *be baptized* every one of in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"

1 Peter 3:21: "*Baptism doth* also now *save us.*"

Thus Holy Scripture teaches both that faith and regeneration are the work of divine omnipotence and that this divine power is exerted through the outward means of the Word and Baptism.

If we are clear on the Scriptural doctrines of universal objective justification and the means of grace, we shall have no difficulty with the Scriptural teaching concerning the means of grace in the form of *absolution*, as we find it in the words of our Lord recorded in John 20:23: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." For absolution is simply a special form of proclaiming the *Gospel*, namely, the announcing of the forgiveness of sins to one or more persons upon their confession of sins, either by a public servant of the Church or by a lay Christian. Absolution is based solely on the fact of God's reconciliation to the world by the perfect satisfaction of Christ and on the divine command (John 20:21; Luke 24:47) in Christ's name to proclaim the remission of sins provided by Him. Our attitude toward the means of grace, also in form of absolution, really reveals, as Luther has written, whether we take the Word God has given to His Church to be God's Word, or whether we regard His Word in the mouth of a fellow-man to be merely a man's word. The administration of the external means of grace by our fellow-men and fellow-sinners is one of the most marvelous demonstrations of God's gracious condescension and love for poor sinners which leads Him so richly to provide means and ways to assure us of His grace and the forgiveness of our sins.

A few words must be added as to the reason why prayer, deeply as we appreciate the privilege of such access to our heavenly Father, must not be placed on a level with the Word and the Sacraments as a means of grace. To regard prayer as a means of grace (as so many do) would be coordinating incongruous things. Word and Sacrament are the means through which God deals with us men, that is, imparts to men the remission of sins earned by Christ, and through this bestowal creates and sustains faith in them. Word and Sacraments are, as Luther was accustomed to say, something God does to us. By prayer, on the other hand, believers are doing something toward God. Prayer obtains the remission of sins as an exercise of faith, which is man's hand stretched out to receive God's benefits, not as a means of grace, which is God's hand stretched out to bestow His benefits.

The important Biblical doctrine of the distinction between Law and Gospel, which has already been virtually treated, under another name, in the article of justification, should be at least briefly presented

also in connection with the doctrine of the means of grace. For, strictly speaking, not the Law, but the Gospel alone, is a means of grace. God indeed prepares a man's heart for the bestowal of His grace by the Law, just as a farmer prepares the ground for the sowing of seed by breaking it up with the plow, but He never bestows the gracious forgiveness by means of the Law. Romans 3:20: "Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin." The Law, in the proper sense of the word, is that Word of God in which God demands of men that in their nature, thoughts, words, and acts they conform to the standard of His commandments, and pronounces the curse on those who fail to comply. The Gospel, in the proper sense of the word, is that Word of God in which God promises His grace for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction to such as have not kept the divine Law. Law and Gospel have indeed something in common — both are the Word of God; both apply to all men; and both are to be taught side by side in the Church and by the Church up to the Last Day.

But as to their promises, as to the persons to whom each is to be preached, and as to the sources from which they are known, Law and Gospel are opposites. The Law's promises are conditional, and therefore beyond our reach, since we are unable to fulfill the condition (Gal. 3:12; Luke 10:28). The Gospel's promises are gratuitous, without any condition attached. The Law pronounces the righteous man righteous; the Gospel pronounces the unrighteous man righteous; Rom. 4:5: "justifieth the *ungodly*." "The Law is to be preached to secure sinners, the Gospel to terrified sinners," as, with slight variations in wording, all orthodox expositions of the Catechism have ever taught. And this Catechism teaching is firmly based on the Word of God, e.g., Rom. 10:4, Luke 4:18: "To preach the Gospel to the poor." The Gospel is to be recognized as the "higher Word," which is to be God's final Word for the terrified sinner. While the natural man still knows the Law, no thought of the Gospel has ever come of itself to even the wisest and (in the sphere of *civil* righteousness) most righteous of men. Contrast Rom. 2:14, 15 with 1 Cor. 2:6–10. Neither Law nor Gospel can be dispensed with in the practice of the Church or of the individual Christian, for the following reasons: 1). Only the sinner whom the Law has brought to a knowledge of his deserved condemnation will in faith accept the remission of sins offered in the Gospel. 2). The Gospel furnishes and presents man with the very fulfillment which the Law demands. 3). The Gospel with its verdict of justification must supersede or "devour" the Law with its verdict of condemnation. 4). Also after a man has become a Christian he still cannot do without the use of the Law; for he is not yet entirely a new man, but still has the old Adam dwelling in him. According to the new man the Christian needs the Law in *none* of its three uses (as a curb, a mirror, and a rule), according to the old man in *all*.

(N.B. The above presentation, especially the brief treatment of the distinction between Law and Gospel, has been in large part condensed and simplified from Dr. F. Pieper's masterly presentation in his *Christian Dogmatics*. The remaining six chapters will lean heavily upon my translation of unpublished lectures delivered in the German language by the sainted Dr. Pieper in the fall semester of 1927–28, when I sat at his feet in his Dogmatics class).

### **XIII. Holy Baptism**

That Baptism is not a human invention, but a divine ordinance to be observed until the last day, is plainly taught by Holy Scripture: Matt. 28:19, 20: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" and also Mark 16:15, 16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Only if we hold fast the truth that Baptism is a divine ordinance do we recognize that in Baptism, though it is performed through men, God Himself deals with us.

To a real Baptism belong, as visible signs, water (Eph. 5:26: “the washing of water”) and its application to a human being. To substitute some other liquid for water is frivolous and makes the Baptism uncertain. The application of water may take place not only by immersion, but also by pouring or sprinkling, since the Greek word “baptize” in the usage of Scripture means not only immersion, but denotes every kind of washing, as is evident, for instance, from Mark 7:3,4 and Luke 11:37, 38. In Mark 7:3 the verb “wash” is used, for which in verse 4 the verb “baptize” is substituted (correctly translated in our KJV by the same English word as used in the preceding verse), and even “baptisms of tables” (better: “couches,” upon which people reclined at the table) are mentioned. In Luke 11:37, 38 the Pharisee marveled that Jesus had not first “baptized” before eating. This does not refer to any immersion or bathing before the meal, which was not a Jewish custom, but to the customary washing of the hands, as referred to in Mark 7:3: “The Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not.”

More important than the mode of applying the water is that which makes Baptism “not simple water only” but a Sacrament. That which makes the application of water a means of grace, a means of the forgiveness of sin, is God’s Word, that is, God’s command to baptize and the promise of the remission of sins connected therewith; or, as Luther puts it in his Small Catechism, “Baptism is the water comprehended in God’s command and connected with God’s Word.” In Eph. 5:25, 26 we read of Christ that He cleanses the Church “with the washing of water by the Word” (literally: “in the Word”). God’s Word is, as it were, the container (Luther’s “comprehended in” means “wrapped up in”), whereby the application of water becomes a purification from the guilt of sin. St. Augustine put this relation very simply when he said: “The Word comes to the element and it becomes a Sacrament.” Compare Luther’s answers, in the Small Catechism, to the two questions: “What is Baptism?” and: “How can water do such great things?”

In answer to the question as to which baptisms performed in other denominations we should recognize as valid and which we must regard as no baptism, we answer: Denominations in which the Word of God does not come to the element do not administer Christian Baptism. That is the case with all Unitarian bodies, since they deny the Holy Trinity (thus not only making their so-called “baptism” invalid, but definitely placing themselves outside of the Christian Church), and Baptism in the name of the triune God belongs to the essence of Baptism, Matt. 28:19: “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” On the other hand, we recognize the Baptism of the Roman Church and of the Reformed Churches (unless they have succumbed to Unitarianism) as valid, since they confess the triune God. The errors of these denominations in the doctrine of Baptism do not concern the essence but the fruit and effect of Baptism.

We rightly hold fast to Baptism in the name of the triune God, with the express naming of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, since faith in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is that faith whereby the Christian religion is distinguished from all false religions. On the basis of Scripture we distinguish between natural and Christian knowledge of God. There is a natural knowledge of God, namely, that derived from the works of creation (Rom. 1:20) and from the Law of God which even since the fall is not entirely eradicated out of the heart of man, Rom. 2:15, 16. But the natural knowledge of God does not go beyond the knowledge that there is an eternal, almighty, and holy God, who rewards the good and punishes the evil; and the result of this natural knowledge of God is a bad conscience, since man becomes aware in his conscience that he has transgressed the Law of God (Eph. 2:12). The Christian knowledge of God, on the other hand, which is derived only from the revelation of God in His Word (from the Holy Scriptures), has as its content the truth that the one true eternal God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the result of this knowledge is a good conscience,

since Scripture not only teaches that in the one God there are three Persons, but also that the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to be the Redeemer, that the Son refused not to give His life into death to cancel the guilt of men, and that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to work faith in the forgiveness of sins obtained by the Son of God. When we apply this to Baptism we must say that we have in Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost an expression of the faith and confession whereby the Christian religion is distinguished from all non-Christian religions. Therefore we hold immovably fast to the Trinitarian formula of Baptism given in Matt. 28:19.

“Baptism is a work, not which we offer to God, but in which God baptizes us, i.e., a minister in the place of God; and God here offers and presents the remission of sins” (Apology, Triglotta, p. 389, 18). That this statement of our Confession is Scriptural we see from Acts 2:38 and from the fact that Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is Baptism in the name of the God who is gracious to sinners. The same is witnessed by clear Scripture passages such as the following: Acts 22:16: Ananias says to Saul, whose hands are stained with the blood of Christians: “Be baptized, and wash away thy sins” — and this Baptism does, not only in individual cases, but to the whole Christian Church in general, Eph. 5:25, 26: “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.” And as the Word of the Gospel by offering the forgiveness of sins also works faith and is thereby a means of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23), so is this also the case with Baptism, according to Titus 3:5. The reader may find it most helpful, as the writer has for many years past, to store in his memory, according to their Biblical sequence, the following eight proof passages for the important truth that Baptism regenerates and saves: Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26, 27; Eph. 5:25, 26; Titus 3:5–7; 1 Peter 3:20, 21.

Because Baptism offers the forgiveness of sins, therefore it is also an instrument of the Holy Ghost for awakening and strengthening the faith of the Christians (John 16:14), for regeneration and renewal (Titus 3:5), for implanting into the Christian Church (1 Cor. 12:13), for the hope of eternal life (1 Peter 3:21). He who denies that Baptism is a means of the forgiveness of sins makes out of Baptism, *so far as he is concerned*, a human work. In itself it of course remains what Christ has made it, a true means of grace. But the denial of the divine efficacy of the means of grace always imperils the chief article, of salvation by faith in Christ, for it takes away from faith at least part of its foundation and robs the Christian of the comfort which the means of grace offer him.

What Luther and the Lutheran Church teach concerning the relation of faith to the means of grace we may summarize as follows: First, without faith there is no salutary *use* of Baptism. Secondly, he, however, who bases faith upon *faith* instead of upon the means of grace, thereby apostatizes from Christianity, because he holds God to be gracious not upon the basis of the forgiveness of sins which Christ gained for us through His vicarious satisfaction, but upon the basis of a supposed or real good quality in himself. In the case of infant Baptism, the faith which relies upon God’s grace bestowed in Baptism, is engendered by the Baptism itself.

Baptism is not to be *repeated*, but it is to be *used* throughout the Christian life for comfort (Gal. 3:26, 27) and for sanctification (Rom. 6:4). Particularly is the use of Baptism for comfort throughout the Christian life taught in 1 Peter 3:21: “Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.”

Both children and adults are to be baptized. Infant Baptism was the rule in the Christian Church from the beginning, since Baptism took the place of the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, according to Col. 2:11, 12, where Baptism is called “the circumcision of Christ.” From this fact it is also clear why infant Baptism, like other self-evident matters (for instance, the admission of women to the Lord’s Supper), is not specifically prescribed. But it is implied in the record concerning the Baptism of whole

families (Acts 16:15: Lydia and her household; Acts 16:33: the jailer and all his). The assertion that children do not believe, and therefore cannot be baptized, contradicts Matt. 18:6; 1 John 2:13; and especially Mark 10:14. There is no participation in the Kingdom of God without faith, but those who believe not are damned (Mark 16:16). In Luke 18:15 the little ones who are brought to Jesus are specifically called “infants.” The fact that Christ commands to baptize “all nations” (Matt. 28:19) is sufficient to prove that infants must be baptized, for we dare not make a restriction which He does not make. That we baptize adults only when they have been instructed and come to faith, is likewise done upon the basis of Scripture, Acts 8:36–38. Baptism of inanimate objects (bells, ships, ect.) is a mockery of Baptism.

Pastors administer Baptism as called public servants of the congregation of believers. But since all Christians are the original possessors of the sacraments, therefore, in case of emergency when the services of an orthodox pastor cannot be obtained, lay Baptism — also by women — is a right and duty. See 1 Cor. 3:21–23. That the command, Matt. 28:19, 20, concerns not only the Apostles but also the Church of Christ until the last day, is evident from v. 20b: “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

As to the necessity of Baptism, we must hold that only the contempt of the Sacrament damns anyone, not the mere lack or deprivation of it. This is so, because also through merely hearing and believing the Word of the Gospel, sin is forgiven and regeneration is effected, Luke 24:47; 1 Peter 1:23. John 3:5 relates to the despising of Baptism, as is evident from Luke 7:29, 30. Converts who desire to be baptized, or parents who desire to bring their children to Baptism, if life be suddenly cut off by an act of God, depriving them of the opportunity of Baptism, may take comfort in the mercy of God.

A final note on the Baptism administered by John the Baptist may be added, since some strange thoughts on this subject are current, as though this Baptism was essentially different from Christian Baptism. Also John’s Baptism was, according to Mark 1:4, a “Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (and thus just like Christian Baptism, Acts 2:38), a means of the remission of sins and hence also a means of regeneration, as Christ Himself asserts in John 3:5 (“born of water and of the Spirit”), for there He is speaking of John’s Baptism. From this fact, it is evident that John’s Baptism, aside from its preparatory nature in pointing to a Savior who was immediately to appear rather than one who had finished His saving work, was essentially equivalent to New Testament Baptism.

#### **XIV. The Lord's Supper**

Like Baptism, the Lord’s Supper is a divine ordinance to be observed till the end of time. That it is a divine ordinance and command is evident from Luke 22:19 and 1 Cor. 11: 24, 25: “This do in remembrance of Me;” and that this command is in effect till the last day is evident from the “till He come” of 1 Cor. 11:26.

The Lord’s Supper has in common with private absolution and Baptism, the individual assurance of the forgiveness of sins. What is peculiar to the Lord’s Supper is the confirmation of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, by the imparting of the body of Christ given for us, and of the blood of Christ shed for us. The sequence of Baptism, as the Sacrament of initiation, and the Lord’s Supper, as the Sacrament of confirmation, is similar to the relation between circumcision and the Passover in the Old Testament, no person being permitted to eat of the Passover unless previously circumcised (Exodus 12:48).

The Scriptural doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, based upon the words of institution, is that bread and wine *and* body and blood of Christ are present in such a way that with the bread Christ’s body and with

the wine Christ's blood is distributed and received in a *unique* union which takes place only in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and hence is fittingly called a *sacramental union*. This is the Lutheran doctrine, and it is also the doctrine of the Christian Church for centuries before the invention by the Roman Church of the fiction called "transubstantiation", or the denial by the Reformed Churches that the true body and blood of Christ are present in accordance with His words.

The papistical teaching that bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ through the consecration of a Romish priest is refuted by the fact that after the consecration, bread and wine are still named as present, 1 Cor. 11: 26, 27, 28. The Reformed teaching, that the body and blood of Christ are present in the Lord's Supper only in representation, or symbolically, not really, is refuted by the fact that Christ expressly describes the body, which He distributes to be eaten with the mouth in the Lord's Supper, as "My body which is given for you" (Luke 22:19), and expressly describes His blood, which He distributes to be drunk with the mouth in the Lord's Supper, as "My blood which is shed for many" (Matt. 26:28). Also the word "communion," in 1 Cor. 10:16, proves the presence both of the bread and wine (against the Papists) and also of the body and blood of Christ (against the Reformed). The Lutheran doctrine proves itself to be Scriptural by the fact that it lets the words of institution stand as they read.

So completely is the doctrine of the Lord's Supper expressed by these words, as they stand in Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23–25, that we need only transcribe them in order to state our doctrine, as follows:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in 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."

Luther rightly said, in maintaining this Biblical doctrine, that he had no need to prove his text, since it stands in Scripture. Only those whose doctrine is not that of the Christian Church, as given in Scripture, need to offer complicated explanations of what they think these words ought to mean, or seek supports for their error in other passages of Scripture which do not treat at all of the Lord's Supper. A simple test, which anyone can apply to those who profess to believe the doctrine of the Christian Church concerning the Lord's Supper, is to put the question: "What do unworthy communicants, if such should come to the altar where the Lord's Supper is being rightly administered, receive?" The only correct answer is: "The true body and blood of Christ — but to their condemnation" (1 Cor. 11:27–29). If the answer should be: "Only bread and wine" — then you may know that the one who returns such answer does not believe the body and blood of Christ are *truly present* in with and under the bread and wine, even though he professes to believe that the *worthy* communicant in some way receives Christ's body and blood by faith. The presence of the Lord's body and blood in His Supper depends on His Word, not on our faith.

The *benefit* we derive from the Lord's Supper, however, is received through faith. Since the purpose of the Lord's Supper is the individual imparting or assurance of the forgiveness of sins, and this assurance can be received only by faith, therefore only the truly believing communicant obtains this benefit. The Savior, by imparting His body and blood in the Lord's Supper, desires to call forth in every communicant the thought that through the atoning death of Christ, he has a gracious God, that is, that he has the forgiveness of his sins. Hence Luther says: "I love it with all my heart, the precious, blessed Supper of my Lord Jesus Christ, in which He gives me His body and blood to eat and to drink also orally, with the mouth of my body, accompanied by the exceedingly sweet, precious words: 'Given for you, shed for you.' "

We are equally concerned about maintaining the truth of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ, orally received by all communicants wherever the Lord's Supper is administered in accordance with His institution, and about the believing eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore Lutheran congregations and pastors are very careful in their stewardship of the Sacrament to observe the apostolic practice of "close communion," excluding those who cannot or will not examine themselves, who either do not know or do not believe that they receive Christ's true body and blood in the Sacrament and that this is given and shed for them for the remission of sins. By the grace of God we have enough love, even for our unbelieving or misbelieving fellow-men, to restrain them, to the best of our knowledge and ability, from receiving the Lord's body and blood to their condemnation, "not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:29). The Lord administered His Supper not to the public but to His disciples.

A few further details in connection with the Lord's Supper may receive mention in closing:

- 1). The few verbal variations in the four records of the words of institution (no difference whatever in the substance of what the words say) may easily be accounted for by the fact that our Lord no doubt spoke the words more than once as He went from one to another of the disciples in administering each element.
- 2). The earthly elements designated in Scripture, in with and under which the Lord gives us His body and blood, are bread, baked of flour and water, and wine, the fermented juice of the grape. No substitution may be made for either. While the word used for "bread" in the Greek New Testament does not apply exclusively either to wheat, rye, or barley, etc., to leavened or unleavened bread, yet we know from the fact that the Lord's Supper was instituted after the pa-sover meal that the bread on hand and used was unleavened, and so our Church is accustomed to use unleavened wafers. The phrase used to designate the wine in the Greek New Testament, "fruit of the vine," admits of no other meaning, according to its linguistic usage, than fermented juice of the grape; and hence the substitution of "grape juice" in which the natural process of fermentation has been artificially arrested, is not legitimate.
- 3). There is no Scriptural basis for the idea that the sacramental union takes place aside from the act of eating and drinking. Christ says: "Take eat; this is My body." "Drink ye all of it; this is My blood." Hence the reservation or carrying about of the consecrated "host" (the meaning of the word in Latin is "victim," and it refers to the wafers used in the Sacrament) is no Lord's Supper but a mockery of the Lord's Supper, and the worship of the host is idolatry. Hence we know what to think of the "Eucharistic congresses" of the Romanists.
- 4). The Romish perversion of God's great gift to us in the Sacrament into a "sacrifice" which the priest offers to God to atone for the sins of the living and the dead is a blasphemous denial of Christ's one atoning sacrifice on Calvary. The attempt of "high-church Lutherans" and other high-churchmen to intrude some sort of "sacrificial" significance into the Lord's Supper is a Romanizing tendency. The Lord's Supper is one of the three means of grace, all of which have the same purpose and effect, to offer, convey, and seal to us the grace which Christ has merited, and therefore should not be exalted above the other means of grace. To do so is a Romanizing tendency. It is the Word which gives effectiveness to both the Sacraments.
- 5). The Lord's Supper is not effected (made effective or valid) by the character of the one who administers the Lord's Supper; also not by the faith and piety of the recipients of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is effected solely by the institution of Christ, which includes the command of Christ to celebrate the Lord's Supper till the last day (Luke 22:19: "This do in remembrance of Me") and, connected with this command, the promise of the real presence: "This is my body. This is My blood." We have an analogy to the continuous effectiveness of the Lord's institution at *our* celebration of the Lord's Supper in the continuous effectiveness of the divine creative word in the realm of nature, "Let

the earth bring forth grass and herbs.” That a Christian congregation in our time intends to celebrate the Lord’s Supper instituted by Christ it declares through the *consecration*, whereby it sets the elements of bread and wine apart from ordinary use and designates them to be bearers of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. See 1 Cor. 10:16: “The cup of blessing which we bless.”

The great blessings bestowed upon us in the Lord’s Supper should induce Christians to desire it frequently, to prepare for it carefully, and to use it devoutly in faith.

## XV. The Church

It will be of advantage to treat our theme under two main headings, in accordance with the usage of Scripture, which employs the term “church” in two (and only two) significations: A. The Church Universal; B. Local Churches.

**A. The Church Universal.** The *nature* of the Christian Church, in the primary significance of the term, as referring to the one holy Christian Church (invisible) of our Creed, may be defined as follows: The Christian Church consists of men (people) who believe in Christ, that is, believe that God forgives them their sins for the sake of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction. This definition is clearly given us by Scripture in Acts 5:14 (cf. Acts 2:47): “*Believers* were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” With this our Confession fully agrees, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession speaking of the Christian Church as: “men scattered throughout the whole world who agree concerning the Gospel.” All unbelievers, whether they are openly godless or hypocrites, are not a *part* of the Church, but are only mingled with the Church according to external association. The Scripture proves this by describing all unbelievers, whether heathen or Jews, as dwelling-places and workshops of the devil, “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:1–3). The designations which Holy Scripture predicates of the Church do not fit unbelievers, for instance, “house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15), “temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you” (1 Cor. 6:19), “body of Christ, fulness of Christ” (Eph. 1:23). In short, there is no substitute for faith in Christ as a means of entrance into the Christian Church, also not the administration of offices. Pastors, elders, school teachers, students, professors, presidents, visitors, who do not in their hearts believe on Christ as their Savior, are outside the Church. To believe on Christ or the Gospel is to have faith in the article of justification by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, without the deeds of the Law. Hence Luther says of this article that it *alone* brings forth, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the Church, and without it the Church of God cannot subsist for one hour.

The *attributes* of the Christian Church, according to Holy Scripture, are: invisibility, unity, holiness, universality, and apostolicity.

a). The Church is **invisible**, because faith in the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, which faith makes a person a member of the Church, is known only to God, but is invisible to the eyes of man. 1 Kings 8:39: “For Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.” Luke 17:20, 21: “The kingdom of God cometh *not with observation*: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is *within you*.” See also Acts 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:19. The means of grace, which have been falsely called the visible side of the Church, are the means ordained by God for the production and preservation of faith, and hence *marks of the Church*, that is, they show where upon earth, according to God’s promise (Is. 55:10, 11), the Church is to be found; but they are not a part of the Church, since the Church consists only of believing *people*.

b). The Church is one, John 10:16: “one fold,” or better: “one *flock*,” since all members of the Church “agree concerning the Gospel,” and therefore “one faith” (Eph. 4:5; Gal. 3:28: “ye are all one”) is

common to all.

c). The Church is **holy**, 1 Peter 2:9: “an *holy* nation;” in the first place, entirely and perfectly holy through the righteousness of Christ imputed to *faith*, Rom. 4:5: “his faith is counted for righteousness;” in the second place, incompletely holy through the inherent righteousness of *life*, Rom. 6:14: “sin shall not have dominion over you,” every member of the Church being under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit who dwells within believers (John 14:17: “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”).

d). The Church is **universal**, for it embraces the believers in the Lord of all times, among all peoples, and in all places. Acts 10:43; Gal. 3:6; Mark 16:15, 16. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Art. XII, par. 66) calls attention to the fact that Acts 10:43 gives expression to the real “consensus of the Church” when it declares: “To Him give all the prophets witness.” “I verily think that if all the holy prophets are unanimously agreed in a declaration (since God regards even a single prophet as an inestimable treasure), it would also be a decree, a declaration, and a unanimous strong conclusion of the universal, catholic, Christian, holy Church, and would be justly regarded as such.”

e). The Church is **apostolic**, in the sense of holding fast to the apostolic doctrine. Acts 2:42: “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ *doctrine* and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Eph. 2:20: “Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone.”

**The dignity and glory of the Church** is seen in the fact that her members, as such, are subject only to Christ, that they are the possessors of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and indeed of all things.

a). Her members, as such, are subject to no man, but only to Christ, Matt. 23:8; 1 Cor. 7:23: “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.” With this the command to “obey them that have the rule over you” (or better: “guide you”), “and submit yourselves” is not in conflict. For the obedience of Christians to their teachers is limited to God’s Word which the teachers proclaim; and if they teach otherwise than God’s Word teaches, then God’s command to the hearers is: “Avoid them!” (Rom. 16:17).

b). The members of the Church, or the believers, are the original possessors of the means of grace, 1 Peter 2:9; Matt. 28:19, 20, and consequently of the *keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, Matt. 18:18, which assertion is not refuted but confirmed by Matt. 16:18, 19, because according to the context the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are given to Peter, not in his character as an apostle, but inasmuch as he *believes* in Christ.

c). The members of the Church, or the believers, possess *all things*, 1 Cor. 3:21, 22: “all things are yours.” In their interest, and indeed *by* them, the whole world is ruled, Rom. 8:28. It is, moreover, a Scriptural axiom that the Christians, as the “body of Christ,” do with Christ all that He does. The Scripture proof for this assertion we have in Psalm 2:8, 9, compared with Rev. 2:26–28.

### **How is the Church founded and preserved?**

a). God creates and preserves the Church according to His *grace*, Col. 1:12–14, and according to His *omnipotence*, Eph. 1:19–23. Those who teach that conversion and salvation are dependent not only upon God’s grace but also upon the different conduct of man or his lesser guilt in comparison with others, become guilty, by such teaching, of doing as much as in them lies to overthrow the foundation of the Christian Church, for the Church lives by grace alone.

b). God creates and preserves the Church not without means but by the means of grace. Hence Scripture also ascribes the working of faith to the men who administer the means of grace. Rom. 10:17: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” 1 Cor. 4:15: “I have begotten you through the Gospel.” Hence it is said in Gal. 4:26 that the Christian Church, the Jerusalem which is above, is

the mother of us all (that is, of all members of the Christian Church). Those who teach an operation of the Holy Ghost without means do as much as in them lies to destroy the foundation of the Christian Church, for the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (of the *Word*), Eph. 2:20.

c). The State, with its external power, is neither a means nor an auxiliary means for the building of the Christian Church. The reason that we must maintain this assertion is that faith in Christ comes not through external power, but only through the Gospel. Therefore all those who want to employ the power of the State as an auxiliary means for the building of the Christian Church are acting foolishly and contrary to Scripture.

**B. Local Churches.** Scripture speaks of the Church not only in the singular (Eph. 5:25: “Christ loved the Church;” John 10:16: “one flock”) but also in the plural with designation of the place where the churches are located, for example, 1 Cor. 16:19: “the churches of Asia.”

The *nature* of the local church or congregation may be defined as follows: The Christian local congregation is the congregation of *believers* or *saints* which is gathered about Word and Sacraments at a particular place. The address of the Corinthian congregation reads, 1 Cor. 1:2: “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, *to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.*” Also the functions which are entrusted to the local congregations presuppose *faith*. Col. 3:16: “teaching and admonishing one another ... singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Rom. 16:17: Judging doctrine and avoiding false teachers. Matt. 18:15: Admonishing and exercising church discipline.

The local church is a *divine institution*. That the formation of local congregations is a divine ordinance is established both by direct and indirect Scripture proof, a.) The direct proof is derived from the fact that God has commanded the Christians who live in one place not only to read God’s Word but also to establish among themselves the office of the public ministry and to hear the publicly preached Word, Titus 1:5: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order *the things that are wanting*, and ordain elders in every city, *as I had appointed thee.*” (N.B. Paul did not give orders on his own authority, but only in accordance with a *divine ordinance*), b.) The indirect proof is derived from the commission to the local congregation of certain functions which themselves are exercised by divine command, for instance, the exercise of church discipline on the part of the congregation (Matt. 18:17: “Tell it unto the church”), congregational celebration of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11: 17: “ye come together”), etc. The uniting of local congregations into synods, conferences, etc., is only an *ecclesiastical* ordinance, that is to say, it is left to Christian liberty, since there is no command of God to this effect in Scripture.

The distinction between *orthodox and heterodox local congregations* is Scriptural, because it is God’s ordinance that in all local congregations only God’s Word should be taught and heard, 1 Peter 4:11: “as the oracles of God.” Where there exists a deviation from the apostolic doctrine we are dealing with an organization which is disobedient to God, and here Romans 16:17 and Matthew 7:15 are to be applied in practice. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15). The much ridiculed terminology, “orthodox churches” and “heterodox churches,” is Scriptural. Erring communions originate and persist contrary to divine ordinance. In order to hinder the origination and perpetuation of such heterodox groups Paul commands Timothy, 1 Tim. 1:3, to “charge some that they teach no other doctrine” at Ephesus, and enjoins the Roman congregation to separate from such as deviate from the apostolic doctrine, Rom. 16:17. If doctrinal discipline is exercised against false teachers who arise in its midst (Acts 20:30, 31) the congregation or fellowship of congregations in which such discipline is maintained thereby retains its orthodox character, but if such discipline is neglected it forfeits its orthodoxy.

There are indeed children of God also in heterodox churches. There are members of the Christian Church also in heterodox communions *if* and *because* so much of the Word of God is still taught, heard, and read there, that men can thereby come to the knowledge that they deserve damnation (through the Law) and may come to faith in Christ as the Savior of sinners (through the Gospel). A Biblical example of this situation is the Samaritan church, which, according to John 4:22, was a heterodox communion, but in which, according to Luke 17:16, there could also be found believers. (N.B. The man's gratitude was the fruit of faith in the Messiah, v. 19; but his knowledge of the Messiah had come to him from the Scriptures which he found fulfilled in Jesus). The truth of this matter is that every man who by the operation of the Holy Spirit believes on Christ the Savior of sinners is a child of God, regardless of the church body with which he is *outwardly* connected.

But God's own recognition of His children also in heterodox communions does not permit orthodox Christians to practice fellowship with the heterodox. Church fellowship with the heterodox is strictly forbidden in Scripture, Rom. 16:17. *Civil* fellowship with errorists or unbelievers is not forbidden by God's Word, 1 Cor. 5:10; but church fellowship or religious fraternization with the heterodox is strictly prohibited by God, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 10, 11: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." The greeting here forbidden is not the civil greeting but that of brotherhood in the faith. Church fellowship with the heterodox (unionism, syncretism) is the cause of the wretched divisions in the Christian Church which offer such a serious offense to the world and to weak Christians.

By the word "*schism*" a division within the church is designated which should *not* occur, and is therefore sinful, for instance, a separation because of differences in church ceremonies, terminology, etc., in general, because of such things as are neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. The Lutheran Church repudiates such sinful divisions in the Seventh Article of the Augsburg Confession.

Christian congregations may in Christian liberty establish associations with sister congregations of the same faith, in which they are represented by delegates in accordance with stipulations agreed upon among the participants. But such a "representative church" does not exist by divine ordinance, and hence there are no individual persons (supreme head of the church, supreme head of the state) nor any college of persons either within a single congregation or among several congregations (board of elders, synodical delegates, council, board of directors, etc.) who can determine ecclesiastical matters in such a way that the *consciences* of the Christians should be bound thereby. For in the Christian Church *God's Word* is the only authority which binds consciences. Matt. 23:8, 10: "One is your Master." Therefore councils, synods, etc. have only advisory power, not any autonomous judicial power ("jurisdiction") or legislative power.

The question may arise whether we may vote on any question at all in the Christian Church. The answer is that we may, but with this distinction: a). In matters of doctrine we vote not to *establish* doctrine, but to determine whether all have recognized the Christian doctrine in a point of controversy, b). In matters of indifference (matters not determined by the Word of God) we vote in order to determine what the majority holds to be fitting, while the minority then yields to the majority, or conversely, the majority yields to the minority for love's sake.

## **XVI. The Ministry**

The nature of the public ministry may be defined as follows: Under the office of the public ministry we understand the proclamation of the Word of God together with the administration of the Sacraments *by commission of a Christian congregation*. The establishment of the public ministry always presupposes

the commission of a congregation; and the very word “public,” as used in this connection, has reference to the Christian *public*, or congregation, which stands behind the public minister, and through whose agency God has made him a minister by means of the divine call extended to him. He is a public servant, or minister, because of that definite Christian public, or congregation, on whose behalf, by whose commission, and as whose representative, he exercises all the functions of his ministry, both in house to house visitations and in the pulpit. The minister can no more divest himself of his public character, as representative of his congregation, when admonishing a sinner in private or comforting an individual Christian in distress, or administering Communion at the bedside of a sick person, or officiating at a burial, than he can when he stands in the pulpit or ministers at the altar. Always and everywhere, when performing the functions of his office, the minister acts as the representative of Christ and of the Christian congregation which has called him to function in its behalf in accordance with the revealed Word and will of God, and hence is at all times responsible to Christ and the congregation for every act which he performs in such capacity.

The commission of the congregation is expressed by the word inaccurately rendered in our King James Version of Acts 14:23 as “ordained,” a word which has no connection with the act of “ordination” spoken of elsewhere in the New Testament. The difference between the word used in Acts 14:23, and which refers to the conducting of an election by a show of hands (in its only other occurrence in the Greek New Testament, 2 Cor. 8:19, it is correctly rendered “chosen” in our KJV), and the New Testament word for ordination (as used, for instance, in 1 Tim. 4:14 and 2 Tim. 1:6) is that the former means, literally, “stretching out of hands” (to vote in an election), while the latter means “laying on of hands.” Thus the office of the public ministry is conveyed by the *call* of a Christian congregation which results from the *choice*, or election, of a certain individual to exercise the official functions of the ministry by commission of the congregation.

Besides the public ministry which is committed or delegated to an individual by the call of a congregation we must hold fast to the *divine* institution also of that ministry which is enjoined upon all Christians in 1 Peter 2:9; 3:15; and Col. 3:16 (not in a public capacity, but as a personal spiritual endowment or spiritual priesthood, which is inseparable from personal faith in Christ), which neither *should* nor *can* be superseded by the public ministry.

Also *missionaries* in the field of foreign or home missions are in the public ministry, even when congregations have not yet been formed in the field of their labors; for behind the missionary stand Christian congregations which by *God’s* command send out missionaries, Matt. 28:19, 20.

As to the relation of the public ministry to the spiritual priesthood of all Christians, as taught, for instance, in 1 Peter 2:9, we must hold that the public ministry is *distinct* from the spiritual priesthood for the following reasons: a), because the public ministry requires a *special call* from a congregation for its legitimate exercise; b). because a special *aptitude to teach* is requisite in order to serve an entire congregation with the Word of God: 1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Cor 12:29 (“Are all teachers?”); and a special holiness of conversation is needed in order to be an example of life to the congregation, 1 Peter 5:3. The catalogue of qualities which should be found in a pastor is given (with very slight variations) in two passages in St. Paul’s “Pastoral Epistles,” which are so important both to pastors (that they may always be conscious of what God requires of them) and to their flock (that they may know what they may rightly expect of their pastor, and the qualifications which are requisite in one to be called to this holy office) that we shall here devote the space to print them out in full.

1 Timothy 3:2–7: “A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well in his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?) not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the

devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Titus 1:7–9: “A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”

The public ministry is not a human, but a divine institution. What do we mean by calling the ministry a divine institution? Under the divine institution of the public ministry we understand the fact that it is not left to the *option* of the Christians who live in a certain place whether they wish to establish the office of the ministry among them or not, but they have a divine command to do so. This command is found in Titus 1:5, where we read, with reference to the purpose of leaving Titus in Crete: “*that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain*” (the word used in the original means “establish,” and has nothing to do with the laying on of hands) “*elders*” (here in the sense of “preaching elders,” or pastors, “elder” being the usual New Testament name for the local pastor) “*in every city*” (city by city, wherever congregations had come into existence), “*as I had appointed thee.*” The word “appoint” is used in the sense of “command, charge, give order,” a common usage of the word in King James English and in full accord with the Greek original. Since Paul was not accustomed to issue orders on his own authority (compare 2 Cor. 8:8: “I speak not by commandment,” and v. 10: “herein I give my advice, for this is expedient for you”), we must regard this command of Paul to Titus as being given by divine authority, and hence as proof for the divine institution of the ministry. Also the expression “the things that are wanting” indicates that a congregation in which the office of the ministry was not yet established lacked something which was essential to its divinely ordained form. That it was also *apostolic practice* to establish the office of the parish pastorate in each individual congregation we see from Acts 14:23, cited above, which may be plainly translated from the original: “When they had conducted elections for pastors (elders) in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed.” This is also the teaching of our Lutheran Church in accordance with Holy Scripture. In the Smalcald Articles we read (Triglotta, p. 523, par. 67): “Wherever the Church is, there is the authority (command) to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers.” See also Smalcald Articles, page 507, par. 10 (in translation from the German text): “The office of the ministry proceeds from the general call of the apostles.” Therefore if any one were to ask us where the words of institution for the office of the ministry are to be found, we should reply, with our Church, that they are to be found in Matt. 28:19, 20. To put it in the words of Dr. Walther (**Walther and the Church**, p. 72): “The divine institution of the ministry of the New Testament appears from the call of the holy apostles to the ministry of teaching by the Son of God, as recorded Matt. 10; 28:18–20; Luke 9:1–10; Mark 16:15; John 20:21–23; 21:15–17 (‘Feed My sheep’), and of the seventy disciples, as recorded Luke 10:1–22.”

As to the necessity of the public ministry, we must regard this necessity, like the necessity of receiving the Sacraments, as not absolute but relative. The public ministry is not absolutely necessary for salvation, because faith in Christ can be created and preserved also through the reading of Scripture and the functioning of the spiritual priesthood. However, an *abuse* of this truth occurs when Christians do not diligently hear God’s Word in the public preaching, when the pastors do not diligently prepare their sermons, and when congregations and pastors do not diligently make provision for the education of preachers and teachers. As not the deprivation but the contempt of the Sacraments damns, so we may say also of the public ministry, in accordance with Luke 10:16: “He that heareth you” (preachers of God’s pure Word) “heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me.”

The incumbents of the office of the public ministry form no special spiritual order superior to that of the Christians, like the priests of the Old Testament, but are *officers* (public servants) among the Christians. Therefore we call the incumbents of the public ministry not “spiritual” or “priests,” because these titles, according to the Scriptures of the New Testament, belong to all Christians (see 1 Peter 2:5, 9; 1 Cor. 2:15). Scriptural names of the incumbents of the office of the public ministry have reference either to their relation to God or to their relation to the Christian congregation, a). With relation to God: “ministers of Christ” (1 Cor. 4:1); “servant of the Lord” (2 Tim. 2:24); “steward of God” (Titus 1:7). b). With relation to the Christian congregation: “your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5). An incumbent of the office of the public ministry therefore occupies a twofold position of service; he is the servant of Christ and of the congregation. However, he is not fifty per-cent Christ’s servant and fifty per-cent the congregation’s servant, but one hundred per-cent Christ’s servant and therefore also one hundred per-cent the congregation’s servant. This does not mean serving two masters. For in serving the congregation, which in its call requires him to perform his office in complete accord with the Word of God, he is not serving *men*, but *Christ* Himself, as Paul writes, Gal. 1:10: “If I yet pleased *men*, I should not be the servant of *Christ*.” Only if the congregation should demand, contrary to the provisions of the divine call, that their pastor serve them otherwise than God’s Word teaches, would the pastor be confronted with a situation in which, in order to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), he would have to leave the service of such a congregation. Since the congregation is the *original possessor* of the power of the keys, and hence the means of grace (Matt. 18:17–20), and by divine command *delegates* the public administration of the means of grace to competent persons (Acts 14:23), therefore the administration of these delegated powers remains under the supervision of the congregation, Col. 4:17. In this respect it is stated in the Smalcald Articles (Triglotta, p. 507, par. 11): “The Church is above the ministers.”

Since the Christian Church is an absolute monarchy, in which Christ through His Word has sole dominion, Matt. 23: 8–10, there results therefrom a double truth: a). With regard to the *authority* of the servants of the Church, obedience is due them when they teach God’s Word, Heb. 13:17; Luke 10:16; but obedience is to be refused when they depart from God’s Word, Rom. 16:17. b). With regard to the *relation* of the servants of the Church to one another, all superiority and subordination is not of divine but only of human right, for by divine right all are equal. In Luke 22:24–26, when the disciples of Christ strive about rank, Christ answers them: “Ye shall not be so,” adding the instruction that there are superiors and subordinates only in *worldly* kingdoms.

At this point we quote with great satisfaction, in accordance with our aim of demonstrating the agreement of Lutheran doctrine with universal Christian Biblical doctrine, the testimony of a great Bible scholar who belonged to the Anglican or English Episcopal Church, where it is commonly taught that there are three distinct and divinely ordained orders or ranks of the clergy, namely bishops, priests (or presbyters), and deacons. Henry Alford remarks on 1 Tim. 3:1 (“If a man desire the office of a bishop,” etc.): “The ‘bishops’ of the New Testament have officially nothing in common with our bishops. The identity of the ‘bishop’ and ‘presbyter’ (or ‘elder’) in apostolic times is evident from Titus 1:5–7.” In connection with Acts 20:17 (“called the *elders* of the church”) and verse 28 of the same chapter, and referring to the same persons (“take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *bishops*”), Alford points out the unfairness of translating the Greek word for “bishops” in the latter verse as “overseers,” whereas in every other passage of the New Testament where it occurs it is translated “bishops.” If it had been uniformly rendered, as it ought to be, in Acts 20:28, then, says Alford, “the fact of elders and bishops having been originally and apostolically synonymous might be apparent to the ordinary English reader, which now it is not.”

The public ministry is the highest office in the Christian Church. As the local congregation is the only divinely instituted society in the Christian Church (societies outside the congregation, such as synods,

and societies within the congregation, such as young men's, young ladies', ladies guilds, men's clubs, etc., are only human ordinances), so also the office of the public ministry is *the only divinely instituted public office* in the Christian Church. Auxiliary offices within the congregation can according to need be branched off from the office of the ministry (elders, teachers, almoners, etc., Acts 6), but these remain under the supervision and responsibility of the pastor according to Acts 20:28: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to *all the flock*, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops." In this sense Luther calls the office of the public ministry "the highest office in Christendom."

At least a few lines must be added here with reference to the Scripture doctrine concerning the Antichrist; for it is here, and not in the treatment of "the last things," that this doctrine belongs. Nothing in Scripture suggests that either the rise or the revelation of the Antichrist is to take place at the end of the world, though indeed his *final destruction* will be accomplished by "the brightness of Christ's coming" (2 Thess. 2:8). The Scripture warnings against the Antichrist form an appendage to the doctrine of the ministry for the reason that the Antichrist described in 2 Thess. 2:3–12 represents the grossest perversion of the office of the public ministry. He "sitteth in the temple of God," that is, in the Christian Church, and claims to be "the vicar of Christ," and in that capacity to rule the church on earth as a visible monarchy, setting himself above all divine authority ("Object of worship") and divinely ordained authority in the kingdoms of this world (civil rulers in this respect being rightly "called gods," as in Psalm 82:6, cited John 10:34, as those who "are sent by God for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well," 1 Peter 2:13, 14), as though Christ had abdicated the throne of His Church upon earth or absented Himself from His dominion in this world (2 Thess. 2:4). Yet the whole rule and authority of Antichrist is nothing but the supreme apostasy from the central article of Christian doctrine — justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, without the deeds of the Law — which the papal sect curses in the Sixth Session of its Council of Trent, especially canons 11, 12, and 20. Compare 2 Thess. 2:3, where the Holy Spirit calls the rule of "that man of sin," "the son of perdition," by the name of "the *apostasy*" ("falling away"). If anyone should fail to recognize that all these marks or criteria of the Antichrist, including the "power and signs and lying wonders" of 2 Thess. 2:9, are completely fulfilled in the Roman papacy, and in it alone, or should imagine the possibility of a still greater apostasy than the cursing of the central doctrine of Christianity and substituting a human authority for that of Christ — then such a person would show such ignorance of the chief enemy of our holy faith as would be inexcusable in a teacher of Christians, or would expose his failure to appreciate the supreme importance of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Finally, the suggestion that the Antichrist is not assuredly identifiable would tend to make Scripture's solemn warning not to let ourselves be seduced by Antichrist vain and unprofitable for Christ's people.

As the blessings of the Gospel ministry are dear and precious to us, so vigilantly must we guard against the seductions of its counterpart, the Roman Antichrist.

N.B. For further information on the subject of the closing paragraphs see Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. IV (Triglotta, pp. 471–477), and "Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope" (Triglotta, pp. 503–521); also "Brief Statement," Art. 17 (par. 43); and finally, "Our Confessional Platform," by Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, Art. 6, d.

## **XVII. Election of Grace**

The doctrine of the election of grace, or eternal predestination, has been revealed for the comfort and assurance of faith of cross-bearing Christians. It is not a speculative doctrine but eminently practical. All human perversions of this doctrine, however, which depart from the truth of Scripture, *are* the result of speculation, and do *not* impart comfort, but produce either doubt and despair or carnal

security. Neither is this doctrine one which is remote from practical Christian life and experience, or which lies on the periphery of Christian teaching, but rather one which, *as it is taught in Scripture*, squares with the experience of every true Christian, and is most closely entwined with the central doctrines of our most holy Faith. For from the Scripture passages which treat of eternal election we learn that God has *from eternity* resolved to do for His Christians what He has effected in them *in time*. Hence we may define the election of grace as the act of God by which from eternity out of pure grace for Christ's sake and by way of the means of grace He has decreed to bestow those blessings on the Christians which through His call they now enjoy, namely, conversion, justification, sanctification, and preservation in faith. This definition is derived from Rom. 8:28–30, which reads: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Here we have an unbroken and unbreakable chain from the first link, "whom He did foreknow," in eternity before the world was, to the last link, "them He also glorified," in eternity when this present world shall be no more. To anyone acquainted with the Greek language the verb which is translated "foreknew" plainly implies a "knowledge with affection and effect" or "knowledge as His own." But also to the attentive reader of the English Bible the connection in which this word is used and the series of consequences flowing from it conveys the same assurance. For Scripture assures us that God by His omniscience from eternity knows all *about* everyone; but not everyone is by God's ordination conformed to the image of His Son, and through conversion and justification led unto eternal glory. Moreover this text does not speak of *anything* that God knew *about* men — their faith, piety, perseverance, etc. — but it says: "*whom* He did foreknow, *them* He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son ... *whom* He did predestinate, *them* He also called: and *whom* He called, *them* He also justified: and *whom* He justified, *them* He also glorified." The object of the verb "foreknow" and of all the verbs is *personal* not *factual*. The text does not speak of *what* He foreknew *about* the people of His choice, but that He foreknew the *people themselves* as His own and chose them to be His own, and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son, and called or converted them to faith in His Son, and through such faith justified them, and finally glorified them (the past tense used futuristically, because that future glorification is as certain as though it had already occurred, as indeed it is already accomplished in God's timeless purpose). And this chain of consequences is unbreakable. Every one whom He has in eternity foreknown as His own, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son; and every one whom He has thus foreordained, He also calls; and every one whom He has thus called or converted, He also justifies; and every one whom He has thus chosen, foreordained, converted, and justified, He will assuredly glorify. Not one of His elect can ever be lost. What a glorious comfort!

Thus Scripture traces back to eternal election as its *cause*, in the first place, the sum total of spiritual blessings imparted to Christians in time, Eph. 1:3–6: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved;" secondly, and specifically, their call, 2 Tim. 1:9: "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;" thirdly, their conversion or their faith in the Gospel, Acts 13:48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed;" or, as summed up in Rom. 8:28–30, quoted above, their call, justification, and glorification. All these divine dealings are comprehended in the *eternal act* of election. Thus those who have followed through the

previous chapters of this book, or any orthodox presentation of the way of salvation, in orderly sequence up to this point, learn nothing new in the study of this doctrine except that God from eternity purposed to do for His Christians what He effects in them in time. In the doctrine of eternal election a person can go astray only if he has *previously* forsaken the teaching of Scripture regarding the way of salvation, which is a way *of grace*.

It is important, therefore, that we consider eternal election in its proper setting. Scripture states: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13). Here it is taught that election did not occur in a bare manner, as though God without means should have simply appropriated His elect unto Himself by His bare almighty hand. No; the choosing from eternity took place by means of “sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” God thrust His electing hand into the Word of the Gospel; the Gospel is the net by which the elect are plucked from the jaws of the devil.

Thus if we are asked by someone: “Am I elect?” we immediately ask the inquirer: “Do you believe the Gospel?” If he answers: “By the grace of God I do believe the Gospel,” then we shall answer his original question: “You can and should count yourself among the elect.” But if the inquirer raises an objection to our question concerning his faith in the Gospel, in some such fashion as the following: “What has my faith to do with it? If I belong to the elect, I shall and must be saved; but if I do not belong to the elect, I shall and must be lost, *no matter whether I now believe or not*.” then we shall have to answer that we cannot discuss election in this manner, for there is no such absolute eternal election without faith in the Gospel. Election is a comforting doctrine for believers because it assures them that the faith God has bestowed upon them is a carrying out of His eternal purpose of grace. But election is no concern of the unbeliever. He cannot comfort himself with the Scriptural doctrine of election, for there is no evidence that the doctrine applies to him. If he is elect he will be brought to faith. But only after that can he rightly concern himself with the doctrine of election. This practical way of regarding eternal election in connection with God’s revelation of His grace in the Gospel is the only correct and Scriptural way of using this doctrine. So important is this matter to the confessors of our Church who drew up the Formula of Concord of 1577, that they expounded the practical bearing of the doctrine of election in the famous “eight points” in such a simple and direct and clear manner that we are impelled to include the entire quotation (Concordia Triglotta, p. 1069) in this article as a presentation to which every Christian who accepts the *Scriptural* doctrine of election will necessarily agree:

“God in His purpose and counsel ordained:

“1. That the human race is truly redeemed and reconciled with God through Christ, who, by His faultless obedience, suffering, and death, has merited for us the righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life.

“2. That such merit and benefits of Christ shall be presented, offered, and distributed to us through His Word and Sacraments.

“3. That by His Holy Ghost, through the Word, when it is preached, heard, and pondered, He will be efficacious and active in us, convert hearts to true repentance, and preserve them in the true faith.

“4. That He will justify all those who in true repentance receive Christ by a true faith, and will receive them into grace, the adoption of sons, and the inheritance of eternal life.

“5. That He will also sanctify in love those who are thus justified, as St. Paul says, Eph. 1:4.

“6. That He also will protect them in their great weakness against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and rule and lead them in His ways, raise them again, when they stumble, comfort them under the cross and in temptation, and preserve them.

“7. That He will also strengthen, increase, and support to the end the good work which He has begun in them, if they adhere to God’s Word, pray diligently, abide in God’s goodness, and faithfully use the gifts received.

“8. That finally He will eternally save and glorify in life eternal those whom He has elected, called, and justified.”

Who, then, are the elect? The elect are not all men; the elect are not those actually saved *plus* those who “for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13) and “die in their sins” (Ezek. 3:20); the elect are *only* the actually saved children of God, since Scripture teaches that all the elect are surely saved, John 10:27, 28: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” Christ will never allow one who is trusting in Him (not in himself) for preservation in faith to fall from faith. Therefore Christians can and should be sure of their eternal election, for they are addressed as elect in Holy Scripture and are comforted with their eternal election; “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (2 Thess. 2:13); “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:5); “knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God” (1 Thess. 1:4). To the Christians all things must work together for good, “who are the called according to His purpose.”

The way to become sure of one’s eternal election is by faith in the Gospel of Christ, since eternal election is revealed through the Gospel, 2 Tim. 1:9, 10; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14. The Gospel of Christ is a declaration of God’s love to the world, in which the lost sinner is assured that God is not angry with him but loves him, and loves him so much (John 3:16) that He gave His Son to become incarnate, suffer, and die for him. This is the argument of the apostle Paul in Rom. 8:31, 32. Hence also Luther writes: “Behold the wounds of Christ and His blood shed for you, and from these predestination will shine forth.” Indeed a Christian must first have put the Gospel in its manifold attestation (Word of the Gospel, Baptism, Lord’s Supper, Absolution) *out of his sight* before he can be *uncertain* of his election.

The relation of faith to the election of grace is two-fold. In the *eternal* act of election the faith worked by the Holy Ghost is the *means* of election: “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*” (2 Thess. 2:13). “God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by the power of His Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, everything that pertains to our conversion” (Concordia Triglotta, p. 1077, par. 44).

If we ask, however, as to the relation in which the faith which the Christians have in *time* stands to their election, Scripture teaches that their faith is an *effect or consequence* of their eternal election: “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). “The eternal election of God ... is ... a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto” (Concordia Triglotta, p. 1065, par. 8).

The purpose of the doctrine of election is not the denial or restriction of universal grace (for Scripture clearly teaches universal grace, as has been demonstrated in the chapter on “Saving Grace,” Chapter V), but the confirmation of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, as is evident, for instance, from Rom. 9:16: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” Scripture does not teach an election of wrath or predestination to damnation. The Scriptural doctrine of election is the doctrine of the election *of grace*. It belongs wholly to the Gospel. We close with a strong assertion of this truth from the Formula of Concord (Concordia Triglotta, p. 1093, par. 92): “For, as the apostle testifies, Rom. 15:4: ‘Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.’ But when this consolation and hope are weakened or entirely removed by Scripture, it is certain that it is

understood and explained contrary to the will and meaning of the Holy Ghost.”

## XVIII. The Last Things

Under the last things we understand those things which still lie in the future for mankind and the entire world: temporal death, the state of souls between death and resurrection, the return of Christ to judgment, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the end of the world, eternal damnation and eternal life.

**1. Temporal death.** Temporal death is not the annihilation of man, neither according to the *soul* (Matt. 20:28: Christ gave “His life,” or, literally: His soul, “a ransom for many”), nor yet according to the *body* (John 5:28, 29: “All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth”). Temporal death is a separation of soul and body (Luke 12:20: “This night thy soul shall be required of thee;” also see Eccles. 12:7). A good example of the meaning of temporal death is to be found in the words in which Holy Scripture describes the true death of Christ: He “yielded up the ghost” (spirit), “gave up the ghost” (Matt. 27:50; John 19:30).

The cause of death is not an originally defective constitution of human nature, but the *sin of man*. Gen. 2:17: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Rom. 5:12: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” All other causes of death (disease, accident, etc.) are causes of death only on account of sin.

The only liberator from death is Christ, since He paid man’s debt of sin. Rom. 5:10; 2 Tim. 1:10: “Our Savior Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”

With regard to the death of Christians Scripture says: first, that they still die, and thus must still go through the process of dissolution (Rom. 8:10: “the body is dead because of sin”); and second, that they do not die, John 5:24: He (the believer on Christ) “is passed from death into life.” In what sense is this so? The wrath of God no longer rests upon the believer in Christ, and hence the sting of death is removed and the gate of paradise is opened wide, Luke 23:43.

Hence the Scripture gives death many sweet and beautiful names: “to fall asleep,” Acts 7:60; “to depart and be with Christ,” Phil. 1:23; “to be with Christ in paradise,” Luke 23: 43. With these beautiful designations of death every Christian should make himself thoroughly familiar.

**2. The intermediate state.** Only few Scripture passages treat of the state of souls between death and resurrection. The Scripture directs the attention of men primarily to the last day and the following state of eternal blessedness and eternal damnation. But from a few clear passages of Scripture we know: a). The souls of the believers between death and resurrection are in a state of blessed enjoyment of God, with Jesus (Acts 7:59), with Christ (Phil. 1:23), in paradise (Luke 23:43); b). the souls of the unbelievers are in prison (1 Peter 3:19). A “soul-sleep” which excludes the enjoyment of God is to be rejected as contrary to Scripture teaching, for the Holy Spirit through St. Paul teaches that the state of the believing Christian after death is “far better” than in this life (Phil. 1:23), and the promise of being in paradise, which Jesus gives to the dying malefactor as one to be fulfilled “today,” certainly includes a blissful enjoyment of God. Therefore when Scripture and Christian devotional language speak of death as a “sleep,” “asleep in Jesus,” this indicates a sleep which includes the enjoyment of God and being with Christ. The teaching of a purgatory and all other teachings which go beyond these simple statements of Holy Scripture are empty human speculations and blasphemous presumption.

**3. The return of Christ to judgment.** The exact time (day, hour, year) of Christ’s return in glory is

unascertainable by man: “Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt. 24:36; also Mark 13:32). The purpose of this indeterminability is to produce constant watchfulness on the part of men: “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24:42). But Christ has revealed many signs of His return in Holy Scripture, for which the brief summary in Matt. 24:3–14 should be consulted. We may bring these signs under the general concept of abnormal occurrences or world disorders. Such disorders we see with increasing frequency in our times, as follows: a), disorders in the life of nations: wars, famine, pestilences, hostility to Christianity; b). disorders in the realm of nature: earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, in general the revolution of the animate and inanimate creation against man; c). disorders in the church: the rise of false doctrine, and especially of the greatest false teacher under Christ’s name, the Antichrist.

But in addition to the true signs of Christ’s return, which He Himself has given us, men have invented certain fictitious signs, especially two, namely, a still future millennial kingdom of Christ here upon earth, and a still future general conversion of the Jews. Because of the importance of guarding our blessed hope against being diverted from its proper object, we shall devote a paragraph to each of these fictitious signs.

The imaginary millennial kingdom is regarded as a visible kingdom which Christ is to set up here in this world for the space of a thousand years before judgment day. The ideas which are harbored concerning this supposed kingdom vary from the crass notions of a kingdom of earthly blessings in which the Christians will also outwardly and visibly constitute the dominant power in this world, to a vague “hope of better times,” but in every case lack all foundation in Scripture, which represents the last days before Christ’s return to judgment, as times in which faith will scarcely be found upon earth and the cross which Christians must bear at all times will be intensified (Luke 18:8). These dreams are refuted by demonstrating that the Scripture passages to which millennialists appeal are, *in Scripture itself*, referred to the Church of the New Testament, for instance: a). The coming of men to Mount Zion (Is. 2:2–4, etc.) is fulfilled whenever and *wherever* in the world men believe the Gospel (Heb. 12:22ff); b). The coming of peace into the world (Is. 9:5; Is. 11:6–9; Zech. 9: 10) is fulfilled through the coming of Christ into the world and faith in Him (Is. 9:6; Luke 2:14; John 14:27). Scripture expressly warns against conceiving of the peace of the Church in this life as an external peace, Matt. 10:34; Acts 14:22. To interpret the prophecies just mentioned, and even the song of the angels over Bethlehem’s fields on Christmas Eve, as a promise of *international peace* is one of the cruelest hoaxes which false teachers have ever perpetrated against Christians. *International strife* is expressly prophesied by Christ Himself as one of the signs of His final return to judgment and the end of the world. There are not two future visible advents of Christ, one to establish a millennial kingdom, and another a thousand years later at the last day. Scripture expressly counts only two visible advents of Christ in all: a), the advent to take away the guilt of sin, which has taken place; b). the advent to lead the believers into eternal bliss. Heb. 9:28: “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear *the second time* without sin unto salvation.” Scripture also teaches only one still future general resurrection of the dead on the last day, whereas millennialists demand two bodily resurrections, one of the righteous only, at the beginning of the millenium, and the other of the rest of the dead, at the end of the thousand years, at judgment day. John 5:28, 29: “The hour is coming, in the which *all that are in the graves* shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” A few verses before, in the same discourse of Jesus, He speaks of the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5, 6) in the Scriptural sense, as a *spiritual* resurrection, synonymous with conversion or regeneration: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). This *call of Christ to arise spiritually*, that is, to believe the Gospel, is resistible, because during the time of grace Christ works through means. But on Judgment Day (John 5:28) *Christ’s call to the body to arise* works irresistibly, because then “the Son of Man shall come in His glory,” in

uncovered majesty, and therefore works with irresistible efficacy. This bodily resurrection, the only bodily resurrection which is to take place, is the *general* resurrection of all the dead (“all that are in the graves”) at the same “hour.” There is no room to insert a thousand years in the midst of the “hour” of John 5:28. But without a future double advent of Christ and a double bodily resurrection, both of which, as we have shown, are contrary to Scripture, the whole dream of millennialism collapses. The “thousand years” mentioned in Rev. 20:4 refers to a reign of *souls* with Christ in heaven, and has nothing to do with a thousand years reign of persons raised from the dead upon earth. The harmfulness of millennialism consists in the fact that it diverts the hopes of Christians, which should be directed toward heaven (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20, 21; Matt. 5:12), to the earthly glory of an imaginary millennial kingdom.

The other fictitious sign of Christ’s return which constantly accompanies millennial hopes is the expectation of a future general conversion of all the Jews. This is generally supposed to be based upon Rom. 11:25, 26, but actually is based upon the changing of a word in verse 26. Scripture in this passage presents the time of the Gentiles and the time of the Jews as parallel, not successive. But the millennialists substitute for “so” in Rom. 11:26 a “then.” Neither do they take the “all Israel” seriously, for they think only of those physical descendants of Abraham who happen to be living in the world at the commencement of their “millennium,” and by no means of the *entire* spiritual Israel or *all* the elect among the Israelites, who are not only physical but spiritual children of Abraham, to whom the text unmistakably refers. The human opinion of a still future general conversion of the Jews is refuted when we, in the words of Rom. 11:26, allow the “and so” (designation of way and manner) to stand, and do not change it to “and then” (designation of time). “And so” refers back to verse 25, where Paul teaches that Israel is only partially obdurate during the time of the Gentiles, “and so (in this manner) all Israel shall be saved,” namely, the entire spiritual or elect Israel, corresponding to “the fulness of the Gentiles.” Individuals shall continue to be converted, one by one, both among the Gentiles and among the Jews, *and so* all the elect both of Jews and Gentiles shall be brought to faith and salvation before the last day.

In closing this discussion of the signs preceding the return of Christ to judgment, which we have found it necessary, on account of current false teachings, to treat in considerable detail, we may remark that if we confine ourselves to the signs which Christ Himself foretold, it may be confidently asserted that all of these preliminary signs have been already fulfilled, and that hence there is nothing which we need expect to intervene between the times in which we live and the glorious advent of our Savior at the end of the world. We may and should daily and eagerly look forward to His appearing; and yet we have, of course, no guarantee that He will come during our life-time. “That day and that hour” remains hidden from us and will so remain until He comes. True Christians, however, even among those who have been deluded into expecting a millennium, nevertheless, by a happy inconsistency, fix the true faith and hope of their hearts upon the return of their Savior to judge the world *at the last day* and the heavenly glory *thereafter* unto all eternity. And so, also on this much controverted subject, “we all believe in one true God” who will send His Son in the glory of the Father with all His holy angels, at a day and an hour which we know not, to deliver us from this present evil world, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven.

**4. The resurrection of the dead.** The doctrine of the bodily resurrection of the dead is a primary fundamental article of our Christian religion, so that whoever denies it has abandoned the Christian faith and is not a member of the Christian Church. So it was with Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17, 18), with Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19, 20), and with the deniers of the bodily resurrection at Corinth (1 Cor. 15:34). All *Christians* agree in this article of faith. The resurrection of the dead is taught not only in the New Testament but also in the Old. The Scripture proof for this assertion could be adduced at considerable length, but we shall content ourselves at this place with a

reference to the familiar passage, Job 19:25–27. All men, the godly and the ungodly, arise, John 5:28, 29. The resurrection of the body is just as universal as temporal death. Men arise in the same body which they had here upon earth, which is proved by the very word “resurrection,” for that which *rises again* must be identical with that which died, and by the expression “all that are in the graves,” John 5:28. The fashion of the bodies of risen believers is described in 1 Cor. 15:42–44 as “a spiritual body,” which includes “incorruption,” “glory,” and “power.” This also certainly includes the absence of all bodily defects. “They are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30) does not indicate sexlessness, but simply that they shall not marry nor be given in marriage, as Christ Himself says at that place. The fashion of the bodies of the unbelievers after the resurrection is indicated in the words of Daniel 12:2: they “shall awake ... to shame and everlasting contempt.”

**5. The Final Judgment.** Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the Savior of all men, is at the end of the world also the Judge of all men, John 5:22; Acts 17:31. The apparent contradiction between Scripture passages such as Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10 (all men shall be judged) and John 3:18; John 5:24 (the believers shall not be judged) is solved through the distinction of Law and Gospel. We see also from Matt. 25:34–40 that Christ deals with the believers not according to the Law but according to the Gospel, for He makes mention only of their good works (as the fruits of faith), not of their evil works. The purpose of such Scripture passages as Rom. 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:10 is the warning against carnal security.

**6. The end of the world.** The fact that the world will perish is abundantly taught in Scripture, for instance, in Luke 21:33: “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” in contrast to the Word of God which “shall not pass away.” Scripture, however, does not clearly settle the question as to whether this destruction is to be thought of as a total annihilation or only as a transformation. 1 Cor. 7:31: “the *fashion* of this world passeth away,” as well as what St. Paul has to say, Rom. 8:19–23, regarding the deliverance of the creation from the bondage of corruption, would seem to indicate the latter. But the conclusion one reaches on this somewhat obscure point cannot be made a test of orthodoxy.

**7. Eternal damnation and eternal life.** Both facts are placed side by side in Matt. 25:46: The godless “shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” One of these doctrines cannot be denied without denying the other. And neither can be denied, without denying the Christian religion. One who believes in Jesus as his Savior will certainly believe both in that which He has saved him *from* and that which He has saved him *unto* — the eternal blessedness which all believers in Christ shall inherit by His merit. Eternal damnation consists in eternal banishment from God’s presence: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire” (Matt. 25:41). Eternal blessedness consists in the eternal beholding of God: “Come, ye blessed of My Father” (Matt. 25:34); “We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; *for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2).

The End.