

SOME 16TH CENTURY THESES BASED ON ARTICLES 5, 7, AND 8 OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

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(Translated by Philip K. Press)

Translator's note: Aegidius Hunnius was born on December 21, 1550, and died April 4, 1603, at the age of 52 years, 3 months, and 14 days. He carried on much of his work at the University of Marburg in the Hessian *Landeskirche*. In 1592 he was called to Wittenberg and died there in 1603.

His *Disputations*, here being offered for the first time in English, are of interest to us today for various reasons. It is for example said of us in the Wisconsin Synod that we are teaching NEW things in connection with the doctrine of the Church. The charge has been made that we do not understand the 5th Article of the *Augsburg Confession*. This article, it is said, restricts the Ministry to the local congregation only, *nur, tantum*.

We also are told that the term *Ecclesia particularis* is to be restricted to the local congregation. As far as I can tell this idea has been adopted by many because they have relied too much on Dr. F. Pieper. In his discussion of the doctrine of the Church Dr. Pieper first has A., The Church Universal—*De Ecclesia Universali*. Then in the other major division, B., he speaks of Local Churches—*De Ecclesiis Particularibus*, and has the subtitle, Nature of the Local Church or Congregation. He never, so far as I can see, discusses anything else but the local congregation—*Ortsgemeinde*—under the term *Ecclesiis Particularibus*.

And yet under this term—*Ecclesia particularis*—Hutterus in his *Compendium* and in his *Loci*, J. Gerhard in his *Loci*, Walther in his edition of Baier's *Compendium* and Hollaz understand both the local congregation and the larger church body. Hunnius has this definition of the term also.

These theses are being offered NOT to prove that our Synod is correct in its presentation of the doctrine of the Church. Let one rather study the Scripture for that. But these disputations are presented to show our position is NOT new. It accords with the position of the dogmaticians and the *Augsburg Confession*.

I want to thank Professor Vogel of our Seminary for correcting the translation and for other suggestions. Any comments of mine in the theses themselves will be in brackets.

Augsburg Confession Article V: Of the Ministry

That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake.

They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 45).

Disputation X Concerning the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments

1. Having spoken of justification and its causes, and among these faith, the *Augsburg Confession* in Article five now explains to us by what means faith is conferred.
2. First it must be noted what Paul says that not all men have faith, II Thessalonians 3.

3. For the depraved nature of man does not bring faith with it, since every imagination of its heart is altogether evil; and since it is a bad tree, it cannot bear good fruits nor from itself bring forth faith toward God.

4. And so no remaining powers have been left to us by which we ourselves should be strong enough to bring about faith in us. Yes, if only we could, but we cannot ourselves as of ourselves think anything good, II Corinthians 3, since we are dead in sins to spiritual good (one of which is faith), Ephesians 2.

5. Therefore faith must be poured into us by another principle from above and as it were from heaven.

6. For it is God alone who gives to will and to do, Philippians 2. As it is written: It is given unto you on account of Christ not only that you believe in him, but truly also that you suffer for his sake, Philippians 1.

7. Hence faith is called a work of God, John 6, where Jesus responded to the Jews, who asked: What should we do that we might work the works of God?: This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

8. Hence faith is listed as one of the charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians 12.

9. Moreover God works faith in us, not immediately (except in little children who are through necessity excluded from the usual means of faith and regeneration*), but mediately.

10. For the Confession says that the ministry of teaching the Gospel and offering the Sacraments has been instituted that we might lay hold on this faith. For through Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith. [Here one should note that our Synod has always said that the Ministry is of divine institution.]

11. Further, when here the “Word” is mentioned, through which the Holy Spirit is given, by whose work faith is produced in men’s hearts, this is taken by synecdoche, that is of the Gospel and not of the Law.

12. For the Law clearly commands faith in the First Commandment of the Decalogue, but it does not impart it, nor is it an instrument by which the Holy Ghost kindles faith, but rather a means by which the Holy Spirit incites contrition, exposes and condemns sins and among them the very unbelief forbidden by the First Commandment. For the law works wrath, Romans 4, and by it is the knowledge of sin, Romans 3 and 7.

13. Hence Paul writes in Galatians 3: This only would I learn of you: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?

14. And so by the preaching of faith (which is a paraphrase of the Gospel) the Holy Ghost is conferred, who works to incite faith in us and consequently by means of this faith salvation itself.

15. For that reason Scripture proclaims two things in connection with the word of the Gospel: first that from the preaching of the word faith originates and secondly that by such faith the salvation of souls and eternal bliss are conferred.

16. Here reference must be made to the testimonies of Holy Writ which ascribe this efficacious operation to the preached and heard word, yes, also to the word that is written, read, and meditated upon. [One should read #16 in connection with #10. Hunnius understands the Ministry of which the *Augsburg Confession* speaks as including the word preached, heard, written, read, and mediated upon.]

17. So the evangelist John calls to mind that John the Baptist came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men THROUGH him might believe, John 1. [The word THROUGH is printed in capitals in the original.]

18. And in John 17 the Savior prays thus: Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me THROUGH their word. [THROUGH in capitals in the original.]

19. In Romans 1 Paul writes: I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

20. And again Romans 10: Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. [Here one should bear in mind what J. Gerhard has to say on the preached and written word. He says: “*Sicut per scripturam verbum non desiit esse divinum, ita quoque non desiit esse efficax conversionis et salutis organum, proinde quod Rom. X, 17. fides ex auditu esse dicitur, id non accipiendum est exclusive, ut auditus verbi praedicati*”

* We find this statement puzzling in view of the fact that also Hunnius must have recognized Baptism as “the usual means of faith and regeneration” for children. —Editor.

opponatur lectioni verbi scripti, sed inclusive, ut per verbum non solum auditum, sed etiam lecture Deus ad fidem et salutem efficax statuatur, cum idem sit et maneat verbum, sive praedicetur et audiatur, sive scribatur et legatur, unde notanter dicit Johannes de historia evangelica in literas redacta, adeoque de tota vet. et nov. scriptura: haec scripta sunt, ut credatis. Job. XX v. ult. haec scribimus vobis, ut gaudium vestrum sit perfectum I Job. 1, 4. Ergo etiam ex scripto Dei verbo per lectionem et meditationem ad usum translato fides et spirituale gaudium, et consequenter salus aeterna hauriri potest.” “Just as by writing the word does not cease to be divine, so also it does not cease to be an efficacious organ of conversion and salvation. Hence when Romans 10, 17 says that ‘faith is from hearing,’ this should not be understood *exclusive* so that the hearing of the preached word is opposed to the reading of the written word, but *inclusive*, so that not only through the heard word, but also through the read word God is established as efficacious for faith and salvation since it is and remains the same word, be it preached and heard or written and read. Whence it is that John, significantly enough, says of his written Gospel as well as of the entire Old Testament Scripture: ‘These things have been written that you might believe’ (John 20:31). ‘We write these things to you that your joy might be perfect’ (I John 1:4). Therefore also from the written word of God that has been put to use by reading and meditation, faith and spiritual joy and as a consequence eternal salvation can be received.” Cotta Edition, Tom. II, p. 284, Locus I, Chapter 17, #365.]

21. For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, I Corinthians 1.

22. So one reads here and there in Acts that by the preaching of the apostles men were converted and enlightened to the faith of Jesus Christ, as for instance the Jews and Proselytes, Acts 2; the eunuch, Acts 8; Cornelius and his household, Acts 10; Lydia, Acts 16; and others.

23. For the Gospel is not a dead letter but the words of eternal life, John 6. It is an incorruptible seed which brings forth fruit in those who hear it and keep it in a good heart, Luke 8, from which seed we are reborn to life eternal, I Peter 1.

24. The word is enough since it can make a man wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, II Timothy 3, and since it can save our souls, James 1.

25. It is written in I Corinthians 4 that St. Paul begat his Corinthians in Christ Jesus through this word of the Gospel. And therefore he writes to his Timothy: You will save yourself and those who hear you, I Timothy 4.

26. Therefore the error of the Schwenkfeldians must be condemned, for they assert that God does not work faith or salvation by the heard and preached word but regenerates and saves us by immediate power. [Our Confession is not in favor of the preached word as opposed to the written and read word but is in favor of the preached, heard, written, and read word as opposed to NO MEANS AT ALL. in too many church bodies today one can get his theology almost anywhere so long as it is not from the Word of God.]

27. For although we do not deny that Christians are taught by God, John 6, nevertheless that must be taken in no other way than that God teaches them mediately through His Word.

28. For just so St. Paul explains, who, asserting that the Thessalonians, I Thessalonians 4, are divinely taught, sets it forth in this way in the preceding: Our Gospel, he says, came to you not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, I Thessalonians 1.

29. And again: We thank God, that when you received the word from us, by which word you learned to know God, you received it not as the word of men, but, as it truly was, the word of GOD, which effectually works also in you. [GOD in capitals in the original.]

30. Therefore the Thessalonians are on that account God-taught, because they learned to know God from the preached word just as obviously the Christians, to whom John writes, are said to be taught by unction or the Holy Spirit, although it was evident that they had been converted to faith by the ministry of the apostles.

31. For although the minister with all his preaching without the increase which God gives cannot bring so much as the slightest help toward the salvation of men, as the apostle says: Neither he who plants, nor he who waters, is anything, but God who gives the increase, I Corinthians 3;

32. Yet on the other hand God does not want to work salvation without the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, if you consider His usual action, but He wants to be efficacious through the work of ministers.

33. So although nothing is to be ascribed to men which belongs to God, nevertheless the ministry is not to be robbed of its efficacy, nor is the work of ministers ineffectual in the Lord.

34. According to that: Who is Paul? who is Apollos? but ministers, BY WHOM ye believed, I Corinthians 3. [BY WHOM in capitals in the original.]

35. And so he calls himself and his colleagues in the Apostolic office, laborers together with God or God's fellow workers, I Corinthians 3.

36. What has been said of the Word until now, the same will have to be applied to the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

37. In John 3 Christ testifies that God through Baptism is efficacious for the regeneration and salvation of men, saying: Verily, I say to you, except a man be born of WATER and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. [WATER in capitals in the original.]

38. No less pertinent are the illustrative testimonies of the Apostle Paul, that we are baptized into the death of Christ, Romans 6, that through Baptism we have put on Christ Jesus, Galatians 3, that Christ sanctifies his Church cleansing it with the washing of water by the word, Ephesians 5, that God according to his mercy saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Titus 3, and that Peter, agreeing with Paul, says that the water of Baptism saves us, I Peter 3.

39. The Lord's Supper is also a medium for confirming and preserving faith, since it also seals grace and salvation.

40. This the promise, added to the words of the Supper, declares: Which is given for you, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. But these things will be discussed more fully in the disputations on the sacraments.

41. Further, no one should conduct this office of teaching and administering the sacraments in the public assembly of the Church unless called.

42. This call is twofold, on the one hand immediate, on the other mediate .

43. The immediate call, as was the call of the prophets and apostles, came either by the voice of God without any ministry or intervention of men, or through men, to be sure, but nevertheless the obvious designation of God himself preventing.

44. Elisha is designated a prophet by the voice of God, but then is called through the ministry of Elijah, I Kings 19.

45. The call of the rest of the teachers, pastors, and ministers of the Church is mediate. [What is meant by "teachers"? The original has "Doctor." Luther in a *Vorlesung* on I Timothy comes in 3:2 to speak of the *Episcopus*. He calls him a Doctor and then says: "*Non est officium episcopi, ut doceat in pulpito, sed sic agat, ut discipulus erudiatur....*" It is not the office of a bishop to teach in the pulpit, but he should conduct himself so that the student is edified (WA 26, 52, 11–28). These men understood "Doctor" as part of the ministry of which Article five of the *Augsburg Confession* speaks. It is not proper to try to restrict this ministry to the parish ministry only.]

46. To be sure also this mediate call is not human but clearly divine. For they who by the apostles were constituted as ministers of the churches are pronounced by the Holy Spirit to be overseers, to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with his own blood, Acts 20.

47. In this way Paul commands Titus to ordain elders in every city on the island of Crete, Titus 1.

48. On the other hand, Luther's call to the common ministry of teaching was mediate, but to that singular work of revealing the Antichrist it was more than mediate, you might almost say heroic, and as it were a mixture of mediate and immediate.

49. As far as the efficacy of the ministry is concerned, it does not depend on the belief or unbelief of the minister, but it is dependent upon the ordination of God, who through his instruments, the Word and the Sacraments, wishes to be efficacious, in whatever way and by whatever life and morals the person of the minister has been prepared.

50. Surely if either the substance or power of the Word and Sacraments would depend on the quality of the ministers, who could be certain whether he had heard the true Word, received true Baptism and had partaken

of the legitimate Sacrament of the Eucharist, since indeed the minister may conduct himself outwardly in any manner whatsoever and yet be a hypocrite in his heart? For this reason one would not only have to doubt of the means of salvation, but then inwardly would have to despair of salvation itself.

51. Therefore to turn away this danger of desperation and ruin it must be most firmly stated that the Word of God remains the Word of God and is, by the power placed into it by God, effective for salvation by whatever man it is preached. The same thing holds true of the sacraments.

52. So it was not necessary for the saints in the Old Testament, when they wanted to be certain as to the verity of a legitimate and efficacious circumcision, to investigate at length how the persons by whom they were circumcised measured up, whether they were pious or not.

53. So Christ himself, when speaking in Matthew 23: The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, do, obviously declares that their ministry, in so far as they sit in Moses' seat and proclaim and teach Moses' doctrine, is not ineffective, otherwise he would not command them to be heard, Matthew 23.

54. So Judas preached the same Gospel of the kingdom as the other apostles did, nor did his preaching lose its efficacy for the conversion of men, Matthew 10.

55. So in short when Paul himself writes in I Corinthians 9: I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway, he is making it very clear that some preacher can preach the Gospel to others unto salvation, even though he turns out to be reprobate, lacking a proper faith.

56. Nor is the argument of the fanatics valid: What one does not have, one cannot confer on others: Unbelieving preachers do not have the Holy Spirit; therefore they cannot confer Him upon others.

57. For however much it is true that they personally do not have the grace of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless God by the power of His ordination joins the grace of the Holy Spirit to the office which they carry on and dispense, lest the preaching of the true Word of God and the dispensation of the true Sacraments be despoiled of their effect.

58. For although a man, unregenerate and merely natural, does not perceive those things which are spiritual, I Corinthians 2, whence it would seem to follow that what he does not understand, that he cannot teach to others, nevertheless one must here by accurate study distinguish between a knowledge of the letter and of the spirit.

59. To be sure, unbelieving and unregenerate ministers of the Church are destitute of that knowledge which is called spiritual, since the knowledge which they have of the Gospel is not in them living and salutary so far as they personally are concerned.

60. Meanwhile because they have a literal memorized knowledge of Christianity, they certainly can teach others: If the Holy Spirit would consent to their instruction from the revealed word, He joins His efficacy in the souls of the hearers to this instruction as to an organ divinely instituted by Himself.

Finis

Augsburg Confession

Article VII: Of the Church

Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.

And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, etc. [Ephesians 5:5, 6](#) (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 47).

Disputation XII Concerning the Church

1. The Church, about which we are now to debate, is always to be judged by visible signs—the worship of God, the outward preaching of the Word, the rites of the sacraments taking place before our very eyes, and so here is called visible.

2. Moreover, it is always considered also in a more restrictive sense, in which God and the Shepherd of souls, Jesus Christ, view it, having a view of the very faith of the heart, and thus knowing *a priori* His sheep, as the Savior asserts, John 10.

3. In the first sense the Church is visible to us and is defined as the congregation of the called, gathered around the Word of God and using the Sacraments.

4. In the second sense it is invisible to us, known to God alone, and is defined as the body of believers or of those predestinated to eternal life. [The *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (PRE³) in the article on Hunnius has the following: “*Ferner führt er die Unterscheidung der sichtbaren und unsichtbaren Kirche in die lutherische Dogmatik ein.*” And it is well known that it is said that the 17th century dogmaticians are responsible for this distinction. Luther supposedly knew nothing of this. Yet in 1521, writing against Catharinus, Luther can say the following: “*Igitur sicut Petra ista sine peccato, invisibilis et spiritualis est sola fide perceptibilis, ita necesse est et Ecclesiam sine peccato, invisibilem et spiritualem sola fide perceptibilem esse: oportet enim fundamentum esse cum aedificio eiusdem conditionis, sicut dicimus: ‘Credo Ecclesiam sanctam Catholicam,’ at fides est rerum non apparentium.*” Therefore just as that rock, without sin, invisible and spiritual is perceptible to faith alone, so also it is necessary that the Church, without sin, invisible and spiritual be perceptible to faith alone: For the foundation should be of the same material as the building, just as we say: ‘I believe the holy Catholic Church,’ but faith has to do with things not seen (WA 7, 710, 1–5. St. L. 18, 1445). In the 1555 German translation by Justus Jonas of Melanchthon’s *Loci Theologici* one reads the following: “*Weil aber die Widersacher schreien, wir reden von einer unsichtbaren Kirche, und suchen Ausflucht, will ich weiter sagen von der sichtbaren Kirche.*” It is not in any way scholarly to keep on saying that the 17th century dogmaticians are responsible for the distinction between visible and invisible in the doctrine of the Church.]

5. The *Augsburg Confession* clearly discerns that there will always be one Catholic Church, as also the article of the Apostles’ Creed has it.

6. For just as there is one Shepherd and so also one flock, Ezekiel 34, John 10, so there is one Church collected from Jews and Gentiles, after Christ, having broken down the middle wall of partition between them, has made both one, as the apostle writes, Ephesians 2.

7. For although there are said to be many particular churches, distinct as to places, regions, provinces, as well as kingdoms of Christendom (Acts 14, 15, 16; Romans 16; I Corinthians 7 and 16; Revelation 1, 2, 3; and frequently elsewhere), nevertheless there is only one Catholic Church, which includes all these particular churches or daughters in its fold; clearly because of this very thing it is called Catholic, because it is the mother of particular churches, as well as because it is Christian, because it is not heretical, because it is the custodian of the Catholic doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and finally because it is joined to no people, race, or place peculiarly. [Nothing could be plainer than Hunnius’ understanding of the term *Ecclesia particularis*. It could be a local congregation or a larger church body. Once again Melanchthon: “*Und diese (Heiligen) sind nicht zu suchen bei den Titeln Papst oder Bischof, sondern wo das Evangelium recht erkannt und gelehrt wird, es heissen Kirchen, Schulen, Stadt oder Dorf.*”]

8. Moreover it can be seen on what things that unity of the Church, of which the *Augsburg Confession* speaks, rests.

9. And first of all, for constituting this unity, a communion with the head is required, which head is Christ Jesus, Ephesians 1 and 5.

10. Also the unity of the Spirit (is required) through whom we are grafted into the society of the mystic body under the one head Jesus Christ.

11. Also a consensus in doctrine is required, or the unity of faith, on the basis of which we are one in Christ, one in truth, John 17, and one in the same mind and in the same judgment, I Corinthians 1.

12. Also the tie of love is required, which is the bond of perfectness, Colossians 3, uniting all Christians at the same time into one perfect body, so that as members of one and the same body they agree beautifully in their mutual conversation and edification.

13. All this the apostle includes when, in describing the unity of the Church and that communion of saints, he says: Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

14. Moreover the statement in the *Augsburg Confession* that for the unity of the Church it is sufficient to consent concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments is not opposed to the communion of the Spirit and the mystic body but much rather included in it.

15. However, it is opposed to the fictitious unity which the papists urge and imagine to be situated in a congruence of ceremonies.

16. To be sure as far as the sacraments are concerned, they are rites and ceremonies required for the substance of Christianity.

17. However, in the remaining ceremonies, which are not commanded by the Word of God but which subserve the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, we say that one characteristic is necessary, namely order, that all things be done decently and in order, just because God is not the author of confusion but of order. In the meantime whatever pertains to these or those rites, just as their congruence does not produce the unity of the Church, so also their divergence neither disturbs nor breaks up the Church.

18. Therefore, the primitive Jewish Church at the beginning of Christianity had all things common. Furthermore, it still observed Mosaic ceremonies. Nevertheless, different customs were henceforth practiced in the churches of the Gentiles. Yet on that account no schism was occasioned, nor was the unity of the Church broken.

19. And so, Victor, the Roman bishop, was most properly taken to task by Irenaeus, when he condemned the churches of the East for not celebrating Easter on the same day as the western churches.

20. For no one should judge us in meat or drink or in regard to a holy day or a new moon or the sabbath, Colossians 2.

21. And this presumption in prescribing laws for the Church of God in matters of adiaphora is nothing else but mere tyranny, ripping to shreds that article of evangelical doctrine which has to do with Christian liberty.

22. From such tyranny also the doctrine of devils proceeded under the rule of the Roman Antichrist, namely the prohibition of marriage and of meats: which the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit foretold as a sign of the Antichrist and his kingdom and a mark which would not in the least be deceitful.

23. Although therefore for various reasons it was hoped, as far as such things could come about, that an exact conformity in ceremonies would exist in the churches of the *Augsburg Confession*, nevertheless until now it was not necessary to fabricate some necessity for such a course, nor is it prudent. Let this therefore be the first thing that comes into consideration in the exegesis of this article.

24. The second is that which the Confession attributes to the Church, that it is called holy and this from the article of the Apostles' Creed in which we confess that we believe a holy Church.

25. To be sure it is holy not because the Church in this life is no longer burdened with sins or infirmities.

26. For the complaint common to all the saints teaches the opposite, Job 9 and 15; Psalm 19, 32, 38, 130, 143; Proverbs 20; Ecclesiastes; Isaiah 64; Romans 7; John. Also the examples of sins in Aaron, David, Peter, and other saints show this.

27. But not on that account either is the Church called holy because it no longer has any admixed hypocrites. For the parables of the Savior and the example of the Church of all times teach the contrary. God willing, this will be examined more fully in the next disputation.

28. But it is called holy, first of all, because of the imputed holiness of the obedience of Christ, who by God the Father was made for us righteousness, wisdom, and redemption and thus sanctification, I Corinthians 1, Jesus truly sanctifying the Church, cleansing it with the washing of water by the word, Ephesians 5.

29. Then it is called holy with respect to the new obedience and adhering sanctity, worked by the Holy Ghost, by whose power and guidance the believers purify themselves from every impurity of flesh and spirit, perfecting their sanctity in the fear of God, II Corinthians 7.

30. Nevertheless this sanctity is only begun and is imperfect in this life and is perfected in the life to come.

31. By this epithet, that the Church is said to be holy, it is set apart from all other unbelieving people, who neither know God nor call upon His name.

32. For the Holy Spirit dignifies with such titles those alone who are at home in the assemblage of the Church, calling them sanctified through Christ Jesus, called to be saints, beloved of God, a chosen generation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people which came into the possession of the Lord. To assign these titles to Turks, present day Jews, or unbelieving peoples would be an obvious absurdity.

33. And then the Confession says that the Church will abide to all eternity. This in opposition to the lies of the papists.

34. For the papist objected that unless the papacy of the previous age would be held to have been the true Church of those times, then it would without fail follow that no Church would have existed in bygone ages anywhere in the world. The *Augsburg Confession* replied that the Church of God remains to all eternity, and therefore (it wanted to state this publicly) was not destroyed in previous ages but had remained all together, although under the tyranny of the Roman Antichrist it did not flourish openly but according to the prophecies of the Holy Ghost was thrown out into the wilderness by the fulminations of the beast, Revelation 12.

35. Then the prophecies of Christ, the prophets, and apostles were fulfilled: For they had unanimously foretold that such a seduction would take place that were it possible even the elect would be led into error: Those Pseudochrists and Pseudoprophets arising, Matthew 24: The son of perdition, that man of sin, the Antichrist sitting in the temple of God, II Thessalonians 2, and that well-known whore, mystic Babylon (the Roman Church) with her draught of fornication corrupting the earth and intoxicating the races and peoples of the earth, Revelation 13:17, 18.

36. In the meantime in the midst of this papal darkness God always preserved the remaining saints according to the election of grace, although they were as little known to men as those seven thousand of whom the divine oracle informed Elijah, I Kings 19.

37. There were always some who openly spoke against the Roman throne: as a consequence they were killed by the Roman Babylon, drunk on the blood of saints and the martyrs of Jesus, Revelation 17.

38. There were many who, in the last agony, forsaking confidence in works and rejecting the other straw of papistical errors in the fire of temptation and testing, rested by true faith in the one and only mercy of God made known by the sufferings and death of the Son and were saved. This is easy to demonstrate from the garden of the soul. [Prof. Vogel has kindly suggested Jeremiah 31:12 as a possible reference: "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; *and their soul shall be as a watered garden;* and they shall not sorrow any more at all."]

39. There were also infants, not the least part of the Church of those times, who, planted into Christ by Baptism, were abruptly taken from this life before their hearts could be perverted by the errors and seduction of antichristian unbelief.

40. And so during those very sad times the Church was always preserved and the promise of Christ was fulfilled: Upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, Matthew 16.

41. Whatever questions remain to be examined in the explanation of this article are reserved for the next disputation proposed on the eighth article of the *Augsburg Confession*.

Finis

Article VIII: What the Church Is Augsburg Confession

Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the saying of Christ: The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, etc. [Matthew 23:2](#). Both the Sacraments and Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men.

They condemn the Donatists, and such like, who denied it to be lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the Church, and who thought the ministry of evil men to be unprofitable and of none effect (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 47).

Disputation XIII Concerning the Evil Men and Hypocrites Admixed to the Church

1. Excellent and illustrious are the eulogies with which Holy Scripture so often adorns the assembly of the called, gathered here on earth by Word and sacraments, calling it the Church, the bride of the Son of God, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, I Peter 2, the house of the living God, I Timothy 3, the assembly of the saints, Psalm 89, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High, Psalm 46, a chosen generation, I Peter 2, a peculiar people, Titus 2. Hence the *Augsburg Confession* on the basis of the Apostles' Creed also called the Church holy in the preceding article. Lest these titles now be taken in an erroneous sense, that very thing was made abundantly clear in that article.

2. In the previous disputation we touched on the question as to where this sanctity, which is attributed to the Church, comes from, namely from the imputed holiness of the obedience of Christ, who was made for us sanctification by God the Father, I Corinthians 1, sanctifying His Church and cleansing it by the washing of water by the word, Ephesians 5, yes, washing it with His blood and sanctifying it with His Spirit, I Corinthians 6.

3. Nevertheless on that account it is not true that each and everyone who is in the assembly of the called participate in that sanctity: For since the sanctity of the obedience of Christ does not come to us except by imputation and since there certainly is no imputation except by faith, Romans 4, and since (as regards inchoate sanctity) none are sanctified by the Spirit of God except those who believe and are led by His Spirit, because of all this it is manifest that all those who have neither faith nor the Holy Spirit, even though they are in the assembly of the Church, cannot be called saints.

4. There truly are many in the Church (which can be ascertained from the fruits) who have no faith, of which there are usually two classes: Some are hypocrites, who indeed consent as regards doctrine, better, pretend that they consent, and in outward behavior conduct themselves so that they have the appearance of piety but deny its power, II Timothy 3, who jolly well glory outwardly but not in the heart, II Corinthians 5. Some are openly wicked and persevere in sins against conscience, or if sometimes they show remorse over great wickedness, nevertheless they relapse into their former unbelief, as a dog to his vomit and as a sow that was washed reverts to her wallowing in the mire, II Peter 2.

5. This state of the Church Christ graphically depicts for us in many parables, as the fourfold seed, the wheat and the tares, the net cast into the sea, containing good and bad, Matthew 14. The same thing John the Baptist says in the parable of the pile of wheat not yet winnowed of chaff, Matthew 3 and Luke 3.

6. Therefore the title of sanctity is not to be extended to those who have not by faith put on the holy Christ of the saints nor are led by the Spirit of Christ.

7. When here Holy Writ calls the whole assembly holy, that comes about because the assemblage of the called is a workshop and (as Isaiah says, chapter 3) a forge of the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, since He does not wish to sanctify the Church except in this assembly of the called and to cleanse it by the washing of

water by the word and to present it to himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, Ephesians 5.

8. Then too the whole assembly is called holy because the Holy Spirit looks at those who really are saints within that assembly, because of whom the external assembly itself of the Church is denominated holy by reason of a synecdoche quite frequent in the Bible.

9. Similarly a wheat pile, not yet cleansed of chaff by winnowing, is surely called a pile of wheat, it being an apt term not because of the chaff but because of the better part of the pile, namely the wheat; and just as it does not follow from that synecdoche of Scripture that unbelieving hypocrites in the Church are saints.

10. So the Israelite people (says Luther) is called the possession of God even though the greater part of it always belonged to the devil and the smaller part to God.

11. It is the same thing when Paul calls the Galatians and other citizens Churches of God, yes, in fact he called the Corinthians the sanctified in Christ in spite of the fact that among them were fornicators, the like of which could not be found among the heathen, to whom surely the title Church, properly so called, did not belong nor the eulogy of sanctity, I Corinthians 1 and 5.

12. To these I add the following: The Antichrist himself, the son of perdition and man of sin, who is opposed to and exalts himself above everything which is called God, II Thessalonians 2, is said to sit or rule in the temple of God itself, that is, in the Church.

13. Really, what is more absurd than to call the Antichrist himself a member of the Church? Yet nevertheless that temple in which he, that wretched man, was to have obtained his seat is called the temple of GOD, and surely for no reason than the presence of the remaining true members of the true Church, whom even under the rule of the Antichrist God does not want to destroy. [GOD in capitals in the original.]

14. Why? because Paul himself in his day writing indiscriminately to churches and converted citizens could call them saints and sanctified even though at that time the Antichrist would work in them the mystery of iniquity, II Thessalonians 2. Because if therefore those churches could be called holy, in which the antichrists themselves began to rule, and obviously these antichrists were not holy, then it is manifest both that the sanctity attributed to the Church does not belong equally and promiscuously to all the called and that wicked and good have always been admixed.

15. We have especially wanted to make this clear about the Roman Church so that no one can deny what the true seat of the Roman Antichrist is in which today there are and in the past times have been true and living members of the Church; and this is perceivable in infants, in many martyrs put to death by the Roman whore, Revelation 17, as well as in many converted by the work of the Holy Spirit in the moment of death, as we have said in the preceding disputation.

16. Nor is it right that the Jesuits here sing their triumph before the victory, namely, that the Roman Church is the true temple of God, and that defectors from the true Church are those who defect from the Roman Church inasmuch as, if, hypothetically speaking, the pontiff were the Antichrist, he would have his seat at Rome in the temple of God: For the Roman Church is called the temple of GOD by a synecdoche, which we explained above, namely, in so far as in the Roman Church the true temple of GOD is present, that is, the true and invisible Church. [GOD in capitals in the original.]

17. Therefore the Roman Church is called God's temple, not in so far as it is Roman or in so far as it consists of pontiff, bishops, and clerics, but in so far as up till now there are some in it which have not fornicated with that Babylonian whore.

18. This very thing the Romanists have in common with the Jews, who cried: The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, Jeremiah 7. The same thing they also have in common with the Pharisees and Scribes, of whom Christ himself said that they sit in Moses' seat, Matthew 23. Now then (according to Chrysostom) just as the "seat," or office, does not make a priest, neither does a place sanctify a man. Whence it is that just as neither the Jews in the Lord's temple, nor the Pharisees by the seat of Moses, so also the Romanists have not been made one whit better or saintlier by the temple of God.

19. In fact, they are in the Church just as the chaff is in the pile: it must be winnowed out and burned in the fire, Matthew 3 and Luke 3, and just as the wedding guest without the nuptial garment had on that account to be thrown out into outer darkness, Matthew 23.

20. Whence it is sufficiently clear how the pontiff and other unbelievers and hypocrites are in the Church, and in what way the Church is holy, and how it is a decorous and immaculate bride, against the Donatists and Catharists, who contrary to Holy Writ deny that wicked are admixed to the Church and attach these titles equally to all the called.

21. Because truly, as we have already shown, the Church in this world always has hypocrites admixed and because very often they who also conduct the services, preach the Word, and dispense the sacraments are such hypocrites, it is asked whether the ministry of the Word and sacraments is efficacious and also whether we are permitted to use it, if it is conducted and carried on by wicked men.

22. Here we rightly respond with the *Augsburg Confession*: Yes, we are permitted to use the sacraments so long as the sacraments are left by them as sacraments: for if they are corrupted in their essential parts, they are no more sacraments but the old rubbish of sacraments.

23. So they who in former years were under the papal yoke could rightly use the Baptism of the papists, even though they indeed defiled Baptism with certain traditions, but in such a way that by these traditions they did not corrupt the essentials of that sacrament.

24. As regards the Lord's Supper it is something else again, because the essentials of the sacrament were finally corrupted by the antichristian tyranny so that our forebears, who used the mutilated Lord's Supper in the papacy, are to be excused somewhat, but not altogether, provided they finally died as believers in the merit and faith of Christ.

25. In the light of our time another thing is added, why we should leave that Church of malignancies and should not use their sacraments: First we should abstain from their Baptism lest by this token and note of our confession we fornicate with the whore. We should separate ourselves clearly from her. Nor is it lawful to use the Lord's Supper among them, on the one hand because of the reason just given and on the other because the corruption and mutilation of that sacrament has been brought to light by the Word of God.

26. *Per se* therefore the sacraments and the Word are efficacious on account of the institution and command of Christ, nor does the unbelief of man make void the faith of God, Romans 3; hence in so far as the Word and sacraments are not essentially corrupted, they lose none of their efficacy through the hypocrisy of those who administer them.

27. Thus it is utterly impossible to defend Beza, who said he would rather be baptized by the devil, occupying the office of the ministry, than by a female Christian. One should rather refute Beza's opinion: for our Confession is speaking expressly of the called in the Church. Moreover in eternity the right of the call does not belong to the devil nor could he so (as hypocrites now are) be admixed to the Church in eternity.

28. If they, speaking hypothetically, assert this thing, namely if the devil were in the ministry so that at the same time he were in the number of the called, then they would run into a ridiculous contradiction, for on the one hand it is impossible that he who is the devil is not the devil, and on the other hand it is also impossible that the devil could in any way be included among the called.

29. Rather here we should argue against such people: Because the sacraments do not lose their efficacy even though administered by wicked men, therefore much less will Baptism lose its efficacy if it is administered by a female Christian in a time of necessity since here there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, as the blessed Apostle Paul affirms, Galatians 3.
So much on the eighth article.

[Disputation XII was added to complete the series on the Church and the Ministry. Still does not thesis 25 apply today to people in those Lutheran Church bodies where our heritage of true Scriptural teaching is being persistently set aside?]