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Luther on the Church

Eugene F. Klug

The church most simply defined "is holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd." With this statement in the Smalcald Articles (III, xii) Luther was right on target with the Scriptures. In characteristically artless and uncomplicated manner he stated the boundaries and gave the distinctive properties of Christ's church, His holy body, His faithful fold.

Referring to the Apostles' Creed in his famous treatise of 1539, *On The Councils and the Church*, Luther states that "the Creed clearly indicates what the church is, namely, a communion of saints, that is a crowd [*Hauffe*] or assembly of people who are Christians, a people with a special call," and, therefore, "not just *ecclesia* [assembly], but *sancta catholica Christiana*," that is, a holy and catholic Christian church.¹ "He who does not believe and is not holy and righteous, does not belong to the Holy Christian Church."²

The Lutheran Confessions parallel these definitions very closely. Whether directly written by Luther or not, they in each case show the imprint of his lucid understanding of the true nature of the church. Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession states: "The church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers." The Large Catechism (III, 48 ff.) speaks in this way:

The word *Kirche* [church] means really nothing else than a common assembly, . . . [that is] a Christian congregation or assembly [*eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung*], or, best of all and most clearly, holy Christendom [*eine heilige Christenheit*]. . . The word *communio* ought not be rendered communion [*Gemeinschaft*], but congregation [*Gemeinde*]. It is nothing else than an interpretation or explanation by which some one else meant to explain what the Christian church is, *eine Gemeinde der Heiligen* [a congregation of saints]. . . I believe that there is upon earth a little group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods which it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God.

Very early in his career as Reformer, during the crucial years between 1512 to 1519, Luther had come to clarity on the central article of the Christian faith, the justification of the sinner before God, *sola gratia sola fide*. He had moved away from *theologia gloriae*, the theology of glory, which placed the emphasis on man's efforts in gaining God's favor, as in the monastic system, to *theologia crucis*, which focused on Christ's redemptory, vicarious sacrifice for all sins and all sinners. This was the heart and content of the saving Gospel which underlay membership in Christ's church. Thus, in his treatise on the *Papacy at Rome*, which was an answer to the theologian Alveld at Leipzig, in 1520, Luther very clearly articulated, really for the first time in public writing, a statement concerning the true nature of the church. This was the question: What is it that makes a Christian? Is it adhering to Rome, the structured entity under the papacy? Or is it being under Christ? Luther answered that Christ is the true and only Head of the church and that the church by its very nature is a spiritual community, the sum total of believers built upon Christ, the Head. Moreover, Scripture does not prove anywhere that a certain external church organization has been, or is to be, established. In Luther's mind it was an abuse to call all church affairs and possessions under the Roman aegis "spiritual." The pope cannot give spiritual life and power to his members; not even Peter could do that; only Christ is able, as true Head. How can a mere man, even the pope, rule over a thing which he cannot really understand?³

Rome, Luther noted in his rightly famous *Councils and the Church*, would like "very much to be regarded as the church," but the fact is that "Christians are a people with a special call," "holy," and "God's people," because daily the Holy Spirit cleanses them "per redemptionem, per vivificationem et sanctificationem," that is, through redemption, regeneration, sanctification. So, because the Romanist church was holy by its *own* standards, it was "not entitled to the name 'Christian church' or 'Christian people' " by simple identification, for the Holy Spirit sanctifies His people by faith and through godly living according to His power and His standards. In the Romanist view, Luther stated, you need "just throw a surplice over your head and you are holy in accord with the Roman church's holiness." This was a distorted, substandard view of the church, its membership, and its true holiness.⁴

In his Genesis commentary, completed late in his life (1545), Luther pointed to Abraham (Genesis 15:6) as the spiritual leader of the church in his day and stated that they who believe are the

church.⁵ It all has to do with the “chief article of our faith,” that a man is saved *sola fide*, by faith alone, in the Gospel; for God hears all who plead *sola gratia propter Christum*, by grace alone for Christ’s sake — whether in Abraham’s house or under some tree, it makes no difference.⁶ “We who believe are the church,” like Jacob. “We have the Word and the promise . . . and have been baptized . . . Let us cling to and persist in faith and hope . . . The promise will not deceive us . . . This is the proper and chief doctrine of the church. It has been handed down by the Holy Spirit. The world and the flesh do not know it. It teaches us that we are lords and heirs of eternal life in no other way than the way in which Jacob was an heir of the blessing.”⁷

Jacob’s sons were far from models of piety, including Judah through whom the promised Messiah would come; but the ancient promise, reaching back to God’s gracious Word to Eve (Gen. 3:15), nonetheless was there because of God’s faithfulness. Luther, therefore, rightly notes: “To be the church and to rule and teach men for their salvation, to be in the people of God and in the number of Abel and the servants of God — this is the primogeniture,” in a truly preeminent sense.⁸ “The church is not wood and stone but the assembly of people who believe in Christ.”⁹ The Scriptures which bring us Christ are really, in comparison to the Savior Himself, but the “diapers of Christ.” This role by no means demeans them, but rather underscores the truth that the Gospel opens up the Scriptures or is their heart.

Perhaps one of the sharpest, most polemical writings of Luther against the corrupt, deceitful pretension of the Roman papacy came towards the end of his life when all hope of a genuinely free council to the Reformation’s charges had faded. It was his *Against the Roman Papacy — An Institution of the Devil* (1545).¹¹ The pope “has conjured horse manure into our mouths,” Luther cries, and expects us to swallow it, when the pope claims that he is supreme lord over all, secular and religious, that popes are beyond recall or deposing, that the pope bestows kings with their power to rule. Luther’s concentration, of course, was on the effect that such pretentious bombast had upon the church. Christ, he stated, has only one church in the world, as we confess in the Creed, because “wherever there is a church, anywhere in the whole world, it still has no other gospel and Scripture . . . baptism and communion . . . faith and spirit . . . Christ and God . . . Lord’s Prayer and prayer . . . hope and eternal life, than we have here in our church in Wittenberg. . . . Everything belonging to the church is equal,” except for the gifts which God bestows upon His church

and individuals in it variously.¹² "Christendom has no head and can have none except the only Son of God, Jesus Christ," and "the dear Lord knows of no more than one church in the whole world."¹³

To the essence of the church belong these attributes: it is *una*, or one, numerically and also in unity; *sancta*, or holy; *apostolica*, or apostolic, built on the apostles' doctrine; and *catholica*, universal or catholic, embracing true believers everywhere throughout the world who are tied to and built on Christ by faith. Luther summed it all up in his extremely popular *Personal Prayer Book* of 1522, in which he described the ingredients of the Christian's faith and life. As regards the church he wrote:

I believe that throughout the whole wide world there is only one holy, universal, Christian church, which is nothing other than the gathering or congregation of saints — pious believers on earth. This church is gathered, preserved, and governed by the same Holy Spirit and is given daily increase by means of the sacraments and the word of God.

I believe that no one can be saved who is not in this gathering or community, harmoniously sharing the same faith with it, the same word, sacraments, hope, and love; and that no Jew, heretic, pagan, or sinner can be saved along with this community unless he becomes reconciled with it and unites with it in full agreement in all things

I believe that there is forgiveness of sin nowhere else than in this community and that beyond it nothing can help to gain it — no good deeds, no matter how many or how great they might be; and that within this community nothing can invalidate this forgiveness.¹⁴

The church is *una*, or one, even as Christ is one, who is the Head over the one Body.¹⁵ Its oneness has no cracks or fissures; for though it has "many members, yet the many members do no divide the unity,"¹⁶ states Luther in his Romans commentary (6:12). In his "Great Confession" of 1528, on the Lord's Supper, he compares the unity and communion of the earthly elements, bread and wine, with the heavenly, the true Body and Blood of Christ, to "the unity of Christians in one spiritual body of Christ through one spirit, faith, love, and the cross, etc."¹⁷ "But the words used in connection with this sacrament," he wisely cautions, in the same context, "shall and must express with simplicity what they say," lest their meaning be lost by turning or causing them to have some sort of symbolic sense or function.

The church is *sancta*, or holy, because it is built on Christ, hence through Christ.¹⁸ By and of itself “it knows that it can err and blunder and that it must amend and change such blunder and error according to God’s Word, which alone cannot err.”¹⁹ Not by one’s own work or effort, therefore, but by God’s doing it is holy, for “nothing is holy unless it has the Word and name of God.”²⁰ So, when I say, “I believe in the holy church,” Luther explains, I am stating that this is true not “if I look at my own person or that of my neighbor, but if I look at Christ, who is the Propitiator and Cleanser of the church; then it is completely holy.”²¹ This latter statement is recorded in Luther’s Galatians commentary, often called the “Magna Charta of Christian Liberty.” The word “church,” after all, is a spiritual word, Luther notes in his *Commentary on the First Epistle of Peter*, and its holiness is tied to these truths: that “you have the Word of God”; that even He is yours”; that “you have become truly pious and holy through Christ.”²² This is stated in the context of I Peter 2:9, and the fact is that Christians constitute a holy priesthood because Christ “wants to have a spiritual body, that is, the Christian congregation”; and thus “only those are the holy and spiritual priesthood who are true Christians and are built on the Stone,” which is Christ.²³ With reason Luther could say in 1530, as he writes his commentary on his most beloved psalm (118):

I hope that by this time almost everybody knows that whoever prides himself on being a Christian must also take pride in being holy and righteous. Since Christendom is holy, a Christian must also be righteous and holy, or he is not a Christian. All Scripture calls Christians holy and righteous, as does also this verse [20]. This is not boastfulness; it is a necessary confession and an article of faith . . . The whole Christian Church is holy, not by its own work but in Christ and through Christ’s holiness, as St. Paul says: “He has cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word” (Eph. 5:26). Anyone who hesitates to boast and confess that he is holy and righteous is actually saying: “I am not baptized. I am not a Christian. I do not believe in Christ. I do not believe that Christ died for me. I do not believe that He took away my sins. I do not believe that His blood has cleansed me, or that it can cleanse me. In short, I do not believe a word of what God has declared of Christ and all Scripture testified.” What kind of person thinks or says such things?²⁴

Indeed, what person could ever speak in that way, to denigrate what God Himself has made holy through Christ’s precious blood

and sacrifice? The church's and the individual Christian's holiness is real, as real as Christ's atoning sacrifice for sin is real.

The church, moreover, is *apostolica*, or apostolic, not by virtue of fabricated claims of some unbroken line of succession from the apostles to the present-day clergy, as a kind of higher spiritual estate, but simply because it is built on the doctrine of the apostles (and prophets). These, Luther says, "are the mountains of God and the cedars of God."²⁵ Theirs was the God-inspired Word on which the Lord would build His church.

Christ's church is also *catholica*, catholic or universal, in that it enfolds all true believers. With justice "we are concerned," states Luther, "that the authority of the holy catholic church stand unimpaired."²⁶ Luther's name is often coupled to the tragic dissolution of the unity of the medieval church under the Roman banner. Nothing was farther from the truth. He was not rebel. If he was, he was an obedient rebel who put loyalty to God's Word ahead of party loyalty or ecclesiastical structure. Moreover, he saw through the fictitious claim to catholicity made by Rome. In his "Great Confession" he expressed his faith in the church's existence and its true catholicity in clearest terms. This statement is the immediate precursor of the Schwabach Articles of 1529 (October), and these, in turn, of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. Hence its great importance and pertinence here:

I believe that there is one holy Christian Church on earth, that is, the community or number or assembly of all Christians in all the world, the one bride of Christ, and His spiritual body of which He is the only head. The bishops or priests are not her heads or lords or bridegrooms, but servants, friends, and — as the word "bishop" implies — superintendents, guardians, or stewards.

This Christian Church exists not only in the realm of the Roman Church or pope, but in all the world, as the prophets foretold that the gospel of Christ would spread throughout the world, Ps. 2:8; Ps. 19:4. Thus this Christian Church is physically dispersed among pope, Turks, Persians, Tartars, but spiritually gathered in one gospel and faith, under one head, that is, Jesus Christ.²⁷

At the same time, then, as Luther explained the right meaning of catholicity as regards the church, he also placed his finger squarely on the right way of looking upon its ecumenicity. There is no other church than the one that is built upon the Cornerstone, Christ! It is as wide and broad as the world is wide and

broad; but it is as narrow and restricted as the Rock on which it stands, Christ.

The true church consists not, as the Romanists boasted, in their having “the numbers and the strength,” nor in the appearance of being the apostles’ successors,” nor in “having governed the church so long,” nor “in cultivating a great holiness and the worship of God.” Both sides could argue in this way, Luther says, on who is the true church; but the only arbiter of this question is Christ Himself. Both sides might also claim to have the Holy Spirit, Luther says, but the true church will be known in accord with Christ’s promise: “When the Comforter comes, whom the Father will give you through intercession, you will surely know Him and have Him with you. Why? Because He will preach solely of Me and will tell you all that I have from the Father. And this you shall proclaim publicly by word of mouth. Now if you accept and preach this message, then you surely have and know the Holy Spirit, who alone glorifies Me through your lips and your office.”²⁸

Moreover, as Luther adds in the same context, “then it will be found that the great multitude, which boasts of being the church and of having the Holy Spirit, who preaches through it, is a false proclamation and a lying spirit, the devil’s church and vessel, even though it decks and adorns itself with names like God, Holy Spirit, and Christendom.”²⁹ Because of this silencing of the Gospel in its midst, the Romanists, Luther avers, may claim “that they are the church and that the church cannot err,” but the facts are that it was “John Hus and Jerome of Prague,” whom they (the papalists) condemned, who “were true and holy members of the holy church.”³⁰ This significant judgment occurs in Luther’s commentary on Genesis 6:3 as he distinguishes between the “sons of God” (believers) and the unbelieving “daughters” or children “of men.”³¹

It is characteristic of the royal priesthood of believers, who constitute the church, that they be “prophets or sons and pupils of the prophets.” This does not mean, cautions Luther, “that future events [are to] be revealed to us,” as some *Schwaermer*, or charismatic spirits, claim. “For the office of a prophet,” in the broad sense here intended by Luther, “it is enough that we understand Scripture and are able to teach others and also to help one another with prayers.”³² “Therefore the name ‘prophet’ belongs equally to all Christians, and he who denies this also denies that he has been baptized and has been instructed through

the Word.”³³ Men like Elijah and the other prophets of God in the Old Testament has the Spirit in a unique manner, Luther allows; but they “did not have a different Spirit,” for we have their Scriptures through which the Spirit deals with and instructs us.

Everything turns on the church’s relationship to the Gospel. It is this fact which justifies the term “universal Christendom,” because “the gospel alone is accepted by Christians throughout the world.”³⁴ The citizens of Christ’s church or kingdom are earthly, but the kingdom itself is heavenly, not perishable, but enduring, “the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, truth and peace, joy, righteousness, safety, salvation, and all good” — because of the Word, which endures, like Christ; it is like silver and gold, not clay.³⁵

Knowledge of Christ and church membership go hand in hand “as a result of [God’s] promise and because of pure mercy.”³⁶ Adam and Eve were the first members of the church because they trusted God’s promise concerning the Messiah.³⁷ This promise continued down through the patriarchs and God’s chosen people, but God’s “accidental mercy” reached out to those outside this stem too — for example, outside the stem of Judah.³⁸ Cain lacked spiritual blessing because he rejected the promise. It is believers or the “church that has the promises of grace which are eternal.”³⁹

Where faith in the promise is lacking there is no church. The unbelieving heart cannot be in the church, even though it “put on a right and believing face,” for “the church is one in spirit,” and a perverse heart is *incurvatus in se*, turned in on itself; and unbelievers or hypocrites cannot belong to Christ. Those that rejected the Gospel at Christ’s time were not in the church. “For the prophets and the Gospel come together in one faith, in one spirit, in the root of truth, in one humility,” Luther states as he draws Old and New Testament believers together in one entity, and “the church dwells in this life in the midst of two mountains,” the Old and New Testaments.⁴⁰ “The body of the church will be full, fat, and crammed with members who are sound and full of faith” through the “efficacy of the Word.”

This true church is, of course, a spiritual assembly, but it has its corporeal counterpart. However, not every assembly which purports to be the church is really so, but the believers only — thus the wheat without the chaff, a holy kingdom, not a secular.⁴¹ The church’s holiness, strength, and magnificence, which no one really sees but God, has to do with faith. “The reason for this is this rule, that we are not righteous by our works, but righteous

works are done by us who have first become righteous" by faith.⁴² The members of the church are sinners still, but sinners who know and trust in their Savior.

Work-righteous "saints" would be intolerable in Luther's book, and he frankly says: "God preserve me from a Christian church in which everyone is a saint," that is, in a perfectionist, Pelagian way.⁴³ "I want to be and remain in the church and little flock of the faint-hearted, the feeble, and the ailing, who feel and recognize the wretchedness of their sins, who believe in the forgiveness of sins, and who suffer persecution for the sake of the Word which they confess and teach purely and without adulteration."⁴⁴ Even more strongly Luther asserts concerning such counterfeit "saints": "He [Christ] admits no saint; He blows them all away . . . If sinners enter, they do not remain sinners. He spreads His cloak over their sins and forgives."⁴⁵ The point simply is that Christians are personally imperfect, though they are perfect, pure, and righteous in Christ. Sins are always latent in God's saints; but they do not dominate, even though at times they break out, much to the believing sinner's sadness and remorse. But there is forgiveness in God through Christ!

It is this Word of Forgiveness, the Gospel, that builds or creates the church, not the church the Word. Luther notes how God focused Adam's attention on His Word in connection with the trees in the garden of Eden. "Here we have the establishment of the church before there was any government of the home and of the state" by the Word of God.⁴⁶ Since the Hebrew word used in Scripture speaks of God "building" for Adam his helpmeet, Eve, it occurs to Luther that she is analogous to the church, which is also built by God.⁴⁷ Moreover, God's purposes for His church are far-ranging: "Because the church is established by the Word of God, it is certain that man was created for an immortal and spiritual life."⁴⁸ "Not the stones, construction, gorgeous silver and gold make a church beautiful and holy," Luther therefore concludes, "but the Word of God and sound preaching," even as with Abram.⁴⁹ Then, as now, and at David's time the church must be seen as "established by the fingers of God"⁵⁰ and not by the fingers of men.⁵¹

God's Word may seem like a feeble instrument for building, but it is not. However quietly God the Holy Spirit works through the Word, He will have His children. Yes, "God desires to have children," even though at times it appears as though God were "sterile" and unable to beget children, Luther observes in

commentary on Isaiah 66. In fact, "He will have a very large number of children in all nations."⁵² It is faith which God's Word prompts, and faith believes even when it cannot see the reason for doing so, like Abraham.⁵³

Those who think that the church consists of certain usages, ceremonies, and orders, are replacing "I believe" with "I see," Luther states;⁵⁴ and he reminds his readers that in the Creed we confess, "I *believe* in the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints."⁵⁵ Precisely because of his faith which trusts God's promises, "Abraham is described as a friend of God who talks intimately with Him; and God as his friend is pleased with everything he does."⁵⁶ In the same context Luther notes that it was faith in God's Word that determined that only two out of the original mass of adults who left Egypt would enter Canaan, Joshua and Caleb.

Nothing is "more precious," "nothing better," in the eyes of God than His beloved, His church.⁵⁷ Outside of it there is no salvation, as is the case of "those who forsake the church," since "outside there certainly is no repentance or remission."⁵⁸ Luther is, of course, speaking of the *una sancta*, not some earthly claimant to such status, as the Roman church. He heightens his pitch even more by averring that the true church, the *una sancta*, cannot err and has no fault. This he states in conjunction with his *Theses Concerning Faith and Law* (1535),⁵⁹ but he repeats it at many places.⁶⁰ In Thesis 61 he states: "After the apostles no one should claim that he cannot err in the faith, except only the universal church."⁶¹

It is in the same set of theses that the famous dictum occurs concerning those who might try to twist the Scriptures against Christ or the faith in any way. Luther states in Thesis 49: "If the adversaries press the Scriptures against Christ, we urge Christ against the Scriptures." Lest modern detractors of the Bible take comfort from this statement, they should not that Luther will also reverse the dialectic in favor of Scripture's indisputable authority: "Stick to the Word of God. Ignore every other — whether it is devoid of Christ, in the name of Christ, or against Christ, or whether it is issued in any other way."⁶² It is self-evident that Luther connects errorlessness with things of God's own special creation, like the Word, and so also the *una sancta*, the holy Christian church. Should anyone try to substitute something else, or claim such errorlessness for an earthly, human agency, Luther advises: "You should answer: It is true, the Christian Church cannot err; but listen, dear friend, let us note which is the true

Christian Church.”⁶³

Nothing serves quite as well to portray the church’s true nature as the Scripture’s own picturesque figures of speech. These are graphic etchings which immediately conjure up in the reader’s mind what it is that belongs to the church’s true nature. With his vast knowledge of Holy Writ nimbly at work, Luther is able to lead the reader swiftly and engagingly from one description to the other.

The church is Christ’s mystical, or spiritual, body;⁶⁴ the kingdom of heaven;⁶⁵ the kingdom of God;⁶⁶ the kingdom of Christ;⁶⁷ the bride⁶⁸ (“These are great and incomparable words, to hear that Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom and the church is the bride”⁶⁹); seemingly the widow of Christ (in view of the condition which the church appears to have in the world);⁷⁰ the ark;⁷¹ Canaan, the land of promise;⁷² God’s pleasure garden (“David . . . paints a fine picture of it. It has His inexpressible treasure: the holy Sacraments, the dear Word, with which it instructs, governs, restores, and comforts His flock.”⁷³); God’s flock;⁷⁴ God’s dove;⁷⁵ our mother⁷⁶ (“It is our mother hen and we are its chicks.”⁷⁷); Sarah;⁷⁸ the building, or temple, of the Lord;⁷⁹ a royal priesthood;⁸⁰ Mount Zion;⁸¹ the Body of Christ, strong and feared by Satan;⁸² a hospital;⁸³ a seemingly forsaken spouse (but Christ actually stands by her);⁸⁴ Jerusalem;⁸⁵ the vineyard of the Lord.⁸⁶ Luther sums up these glorious titles, by which the church is known, in a beautiful statement on Psalm 65:

The psalmist gives a number of names to the same church. “Zion,” because it observes heavenly things; “Jerusalem,” because it has peace and perceives it; “courts,” because it is the preparation of future glory and the entrance to it; “house” of God, because God dwells in it; “temple” because God is worshiped in it; “earth,” because it is a pilgrim in this life; “river” of God, because it gushes forth from God continually with ever new believers that are born. As from a fountain the waters flow forth constantly, so the saints are born of God in His Word. (Our Fountain is Christ, our Head.) “Fields,” because the church has been spread abroad among all nations and made manifest to the whole world; “wilderness,” because it despises the things that are in the world; “valley,” because of humility; “sheep,” because of a constant self-offering and mortification. Again, “the crown of the year of goodness,” because it will stand until the end of the world; “tilled field,” because it is cultivated and always bears the fruit of merits. You can look for others if you like.

Also, the church is likened to "hills," because of the excellence of the righteousness raised above human nature. Add a fifteenth, namely, that is "sprouting," because it is always in bloom and never withers through sluggishness and lukewarmness."⁸⁷

Finally, as regards symbolic names of the church Luther senses a very interesting allusion, which ought not be omitted, in Psalm 68: 31: "The church is symbolized by the name "Ethiopia," as is sufficiently clear because of the blackness of sin and because the church confesses itself to be black. The Jews, however, are called Lebanon, because they regarded themselves as white and holy, while the church says: 'I am black but beautiful' (Song of Solomon 1:5), that is, because I acknowledge myself to be black, I am beautiful. For he who sins justifies God in His words (Ps. 51:4) and thus gives glory to God, and by that very fact he is now himself already righteous. 'I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And Thou forgavest, etc.' (Ps. 32:5) Therefore to confess sin and to be righteous are the same thing."⁸⁸

Christ will preserve his church. It is very dear to Him.⁸⁹ Because it is built on Christ, who is its Cornerstone,⁹⁰ the church will endure forever.⁹¹ The false church will not so endure.⁹² God's flock and its doctrine persist; God strengthens and upholds it against all foes, against Satan and Satan's kingdom, in all time of trouble.⁹³ Many claims are made, falsely, by those who "boast of being God's people" or "Abraham's children" spiritually, but the fact is that "only those who hear My Word" are God's children in truth.⁹⁴ It is these whom He will preserve. To boast that you are God's creature, will not save you. God made the River Elbe, He made apples, He made trees, He made you; but that will not save you. What counts is to belong to Christ by faith in Him. "This is the glory of the church, that it has no teacher and bishop but Christ who alone rules over His church through His Spirit and His Gospel."⁹⁵

FOOTNOTES

1. *Luther's Works*, American Edition [*LW*] (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-), 41, p. 143; *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe [*WA*] (Weimar, 1883-), 50, pp. 624f. Cf. *Explanation of the Ninety-five Theses* of 1518, *LW* 31, 216, 246; *WA* 1, 608, 625; also *Commentary on Psalm 117*, *LW* 14, 22f.; *WA* 31, 240ff.
2. *Commentary on Psalm 118*, *LW* 14, 92; *WA* 31, 164.
3. *LW* 39, 65-73; *WA* 6, 292-297, *Papacy at Rome*.
4. *LW* 41, 143ff.; *WA* 50, 624ff.

5. *LW* 3, 19; *WA* 42, 561.
6. *LW* 4, 54-65 *passim*; *WA* 43, 173-181.
7. *LW* 5, 184ff.; *WA* 43, 555.; cf. *LW* 6, 10; *WA* 44, 6f.
8. *LW* 7, 265; *WA* 44, 496.
9. *LW* 52, 39; *WA* 50¹, 139.
10. *Ibid.*; cf. *LW* 7, 281; *WA* 44, 508.
11. Cf. H.G. Haile, *Luther* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 295ff. for a sharply critical essay of Luther's blast against the papacy.
12. *LW* 41, 358; *WA* 54, 284.
13. *LW* 41, 327, 332; *WA* 54, 259, 263.
14. *LW* 43, 28; *WA* 10², 393f.; cf. *LW* 37, 275, *WA* 26, 411.
15. *LW* 14, 303; *WA* 5, 40; cf. *LW* 5, 223; *WA* 43, 582.
16. *LW* 25, 106; *WA* 56, 119.
17. *LW* 37, 275; *WA* 26, 411.
18. *LW* 5, 214; *WA* 43, 576.
19. *LW* 13, 383; *WA* 31¹, 423.
20. *LW* 17, 373; *WA* 31², 550, *Commentary on Isaiah*.
21. *LW* 26, 285; *WA* 40, 445.
22. *LW* 30, 7; *WA* 12, 262.
23. *LW* 30, 52; *WA* 12, 306.
24. *LW* 14, 93f.; *WA* 31¹, 166f.
25. *LW* 11, 197f.; *WA* 3, 608f.
26. *LW* 26, 65; *WA* 40¹, 131.
27. *LW* 37, 367; *WA* 26, 506. See also Wilhelm Maurer, *Luther und das Evangelische Bekenntnis* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970), pp 62ff.
28. *LW* 24, 126f.; *WA* 45, 575f., *Sermons on John's Gospel*.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *LW* 2, 20f.; *WA* 42, 276f.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *LW* 3, 364; *WA* 43, 136.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *LW* 35, 151; *WA* 10², 90.
35. *LW* 12, 103ff., 66f.; *WA* 45, 212f.; 40, 276f.
36. *LW* 1, 300f.; *WA* 42, 221.
37. *LW* 13, 90; *St.L.* 5, 748.
38. *LW* 1, 302; *WA* 42, 222.
39. *LW* 1, 305; *WA* 42, 224f.
40. *LW* 11, 288-291, 324-332; *WA* 4, 135ff., 177ff.
41. *LW* 11, 372ff.; *WA* 4, 239ff.
42. *LW* 11, 264ff.; *WA* 4, 111ff.
43. *LW* 22, 55; *WA* 46, 583.
44. *Ibid.*

45. *LW* 23, 318; *WA* 33, 510, *Sermons on John's Gospel*.
46. *LW* 1, 103ff., 115; *WA* 42, 79f., 87.; cf. *LW* 14, 55; *WA* 31¹, 84f.
47. *LW* 1, 132; *WA* 42, 99.
48. *LW* 1, 104; *WA* 42, 79.
49. *LW* 2, 334; *WA* 42, 500.
50. *LW* 10, 88f.; *WA* 3, 82.
51. *LW* 13, 301; *St. L.* 5, 1003.
52. *LW* 17, 405ff.; *WA* 31², 576f.
53. *LW* 2, 266; *WA* 42, 452; cf. *LW* 13, 286; *St. L.* 5, 987.
54. *LW* 27, 85; *WA* 40², 106.
55. *LW* 42, 162f.; *WA* 6, 131f.
56. *LW* 3, 31; *WA* 42, 570.
57. *LW* 4, 6f.; *WA* 43, 139.
58. *LW* 29, 227; *WA* 57³, 224f.
59. *LW* 34, 113; *WA* 39¹, 48.
60. Cf. *LW* 41, 194f.; *WA* 51, 479ff.
61. *LW* 34, 113; *WA* 39¹, 48.
62. *LW* 22, 451; *WA* 47, 165, *Sermons on John's Gospel*.
63. *WA* 28, 263f.; quoted in E. Plass *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), I, p. 265.

64. *LW* 25, 53; *WA* 56, 60; *LW* 35, 51; *WA* 2, 743.
65. *LW* 1, 233; *WA* 42, 174.
66. *LW* 42, 37ff.; *WA* 2, 95ff.
67. *LW* 1, 240ff.; *WA* 42, 279; *LW* 11, 12f., 226ff.; *WA* 3, 532; 4, 77.
68. *LW* 1, 233; *WA* 42, 174; cf. *LW* 11, 509; *WA* 4, 373f.
69. *LW* 12, 263; *WA* 40², 560f.; cf. also *LW* 15, 193; *WA* 31², 588; *LW* 22, 440; *WA* 47, 156; see also Plass, I, pp. 789, 805.
70. *LW* 31, 237; *WA* 1, 620.
71. *LW* 2, 68, 152; *WA* 42, 310, 368.
72. *LW* 9, 118; *WA* 14, 643.
73. *LW* 12, 173ff.; *WA* 51, 290f.
74. *LW* 13, 11; *WA* 8, 12.
75. *LW* 13, 14; *WA* 8, 14f.
76. *LW* 13, 14; *WA* 8, 14; *LW* 17, 104; *WA* 31², 342f.; *LW* 26, 441; *WA* 40¹, 664.
77. *LW* 10, 391; *WA* 3, 446.
78. *LW* 26, 443; *WA* 40¹, 667.
79. *LW* 13, 269; *WA* 41, 126; *LW* 15, 282; *WA* 54, 40f.; *LW* 16, 76; *WA* 31², 53.
80. *LW* 14, 32; *WA* 31¹, 251.
81. *LW* 14, 326ff.; *WA* 5, 57f.; *WA* 16, 28f.; *WA* 31², 20.
82. *LW* 15, 242ff.; *WA* 31², 716ff.
83. *LW* 17, 66; *WA* 31², 312.
84. *LW* 17, 237; *WA* 31², 444f.
85. *LW* 18, 119; *WA* 13, 119.

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86. *LW* 22, 314; *WA* 47, 43.
 87. *LW* 10, 314; *WA* 3, 372.
 88. *LW* 10, 350; *WA* 3, 409.
 89. *LW* 2, 256; *WA* 42, 444; *LW* 3, 160f.; *WA* 42, 663.
 90. *LW* 14, 96; *WA* 31¹, 173.
 91. *LW* 13, 88f., 285; *St.L.* 5, 742.
 92. *LW* 16, 40; *WA* 31², 28.
 93. *LW* 3, 16f., 160f.; *WA* 42, 569, 663; *LW* 6, 52; *WA* 44, 37; *LW* 33, 227, 287;
WA 18, 743, 782.
 94. *LW* 23, 384f.; *WA* 33, 623f.
 95. *LW* 16, 212; *WA* 31², 150.