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## The Earliest Christian Congregations at Rome and at Antioch.

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The very first congregation which was founded after the coming of our Lord was that at Jerusalem. Not, indeed, as though there had not been a congregation in the sense in which He speaks of it, Matt. 18, 19, 20, before. Just as soon as the Lord called His first disciples, John 1, 35—51, He had a small congregation of believers, which had all the rights and privileges of a regular congregation. This band of believers, moreover, during the time of the Lord's ministry, grew in numbers to embrace a total of more than five hundred for the entire country of Palestine, 1 Cor. 15, 6, and some 120 in Jerusalem alone, Acts 1, 15. Yet the formal organization of the first Christian congregation may be said to have taken place on and after the first Day of Pentecost of the New Testament Church. The date of this event may be fixed, with a fair degree of certainty, on the basis of a few passages, one of which is Luke 3, 1, 2. Since Tiberius, who became emperor of Rome in the year 14 A. D., had been coregent of Augustus for a few years, the fifteenth year of his reign was the year 27 A. D. This date agrees with the other facts which are noted by Luke; for Pilate became procurator of Judea and Samaria in the year 26 A. D., being subject to the legate of Syria. The ministry of Jesus, therefore, began in the year 27 A. D., shortly before the Passover; for John describes his first journey to Jerusalem after his baptism in chapter 2 of his gospel. It is now generally assumed that the Passover-festival at which Jesus suffered death was the fourth of His public ministry. It was, therefore, in the year 30 A. D. that the first Christian congregation was established at Jerusalem. The history of this congregation up to the outbreak of the Jewish war has been described quite frequently. But concerning two of the other early congregations of the apostolic age conditions are not quite so favorable, and much contradictory material has been published. It may be

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# The Twenty-Eighth International Eucharistic Congress.

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## 2. The Eucharistic Congress a Glorification of the Idolatry of the Mass.

No doubt, Protestant readers will ask, "How are we to judge this gorgeous display of papistical propaganda?" So far the Protestant press has not given the matter much attention. But that replies and criticisms will be forthcoming is absolutely certain. It is to be feared, however, that the majority of Protestants will fail to see just why these Eucharistic Congresses are so utterly objectionable. No doubt, the Catholic Church will gain increased political and social influence from this stupendous exhibition of external power. Its grip upon its own people will doubtless also be increased. Nevertheless, it is not, in the main, for these reasons that Lutheran writers should oppose the Eucharistic Congress. Both the *Catholic Encyclopedia* and *America* have stressed the fact that "the Eucharist is the central fact of Catholic worship, that upon this doctrine of the Eucharist the whole structure of the Catholic faith is built and that all else is incidental." The Eucharistic Congress, therefore, has for its main purpose the glorification of the Mass, the cardinal doctrine of the Romanistic creed, "the be-all and the end-all of Catholic devotion and practise." We must consequently consider the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning the Eucharist, or the Mass. Only as we understand that doctrine and fully perceive the idolatry of the Mass, can we truly judge what these spectacular pageants really mean which are staged from year to year.

Now, in studying the Catholic doctrine concerning the Mass, euphemistically called the Eucharist, we need not plow up new ground. Against the idolatry of the Mass Dr. Luther in his day directed his fiercest onslaughts. In the *Smalcald Articles* he writes: —

"The Mass in the Papacy must be *the greatest and most horrible abomination, as it directly and powerfully conflicts with this chief article* [of redemption and justification], and yet above and before all other popish idolatries it has been the *chief* and most specious. For it has been held that this *sacrifice or work of the Mass*, even though it be rendered by a wicked and abandoned scoundrel, frees men from sins, both in this life and also in purgatory, while only the Lamb of God shall and must do this, as has been said above. Of this article nothing is to be surrendered or conceded, because the first article does not allow it."

The reasons why Luther calls the Mass the *greatest and most horrible abomination* and so fiercely opposes it are the following:—

"First, it is a *pure invention of men* and has not been commanded by God. Hence, to this invention apply the words of Christ: 'In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' Matt. 15, 9.

"Secondly, it is also an *unnecessary thing*, which can be omitted without sin and danger.

"Thirdly, the Sacrament can be received in a better way and more acceptable to God, yea, the *only blessed way, according to the institution of Christ*.

"Fourthly, since such innumerable and unspeakable *abuses* have arisen in the whole world from the buying and selling of masses, that Mass should by right be relinquished, if for no other purpose than to prevent abuses.

But this is not all. Luther continues:—

"In addition to all this, this dragon's tail, I mean the Mass, has begotten numerous vermin-brood of *manifold idolatries*.

"First, *purgatory*. Here they carried their trade into purgatory by masses for souls and vigils and weekly, monthly, and yearly celebrations of obsequies, and finally by the Common Week and All Souls' Day, by soul-baths, so that the Mass is used almost alone for the dead, although Christ has instituted the Sacrament alone for the living. Therefore purgatory and every solemnity, rite, and commerce connected with it is to be regarded as nothing but a specter of the devil. *For it conflicts with the chief article, which teaches that only Christ, and not the works of men, are to help set free souls.* . . .

"Secondly. From this it has followed that evil spirits have exercised their malice by appearing as the souls of the departed and with unspeakable lies and tricks demanded masses, vigils, pilgrimages, and other alms. All of which we had to receive as articles of faith and to live accordingly; and the Pope confirmed these things, as also the Mass and all other abominations. . . .

"Thirdly, the *pilgrimages*. Here, too, masses, the remission of sins, and the grace of God were sought, for the Mass controlled everything. Now, it is indeed certain that such pilgrimages, without the Word of God, have not been commanded us, neither are they necessary, since we can have these things in a better way and can omit these pilgrimages without any sin and danger. . . .

"Fourthly. Fraternities [or societies], in which cloisters, chapters, vicars have assigned and communicated (by a legal contract and sale) all masses and good works, etc., both for the living and the dead. This is not only altogether a human bauble, without the Word of God, entirely unnecessary and not commanded, but also contrary to the chief article, 'Of Redemption.' Therefore it is in no way to be tolerated.

"Fifthly. The relics, in which there are found so many falsehoods and tomfooleries concerning the bones of dogs and horses that even the devil has laughed at such rascalities. . . . But the worst is that they have imagined that these *relics had to work indulgence and the forgiveness of sins as a good work and service of God*, like the Mass, etc.

"Sixthly. Here belong the precious indulgences granted, but only for money, both to the living and the dead, by which the miserable Judas, or Pope, *has sold the merit of Christ*, together with the superfluous merits of all saints and of the entire Church. All these things are not to be borne and are not only *without the Word of God*, without necessity, not commanded, but are *against the chief article*. *For the merit of Christ is obtained, not by our works or pence, but from grace through faith, without money and merit, and is offered, not through the power of the Pope, but through the preaching of God's Word.*"

Luther's arguments may be summarized as follows: First. The popish Mass, or Eucharist, is the greatest and most horrible abomination of the Antichrist because it is a thorough perversion of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ. Instead of using it in accordance with Christ's institution, as a means of grace, by which God graciously offers, conveys, and seals to the believer the merits of Christ, the papists have changed it to a *sacrifice* for the sins of the living and the dead. Secondly. This has been done to serve and promote the damnable doctrine of salvation by work-righteousness, which conflicts with, and subverts, the chief article of the Christian faith — justification by grace through faith in the merits of Christ. Thirdly. The Pope claims to be sole dispenser of Christ's merits, although in the Gospel Christ offers, conveys, and seals to all sinners the merits of Christ's vicarious death. Hence Luther writes: —

"If it were possible for them to concede to us all the other articles, yet they could not concede this. As Campegius said at Augsburg that he would be torn to pieces before he would relinquish the Mass, so, by the help of God, I, too, would suffer myself to be reduced to ashes before I would allow a hireling of the Mass, be he good or bad, to be made equal to Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior, or to be exalted above Him. Thus we are and remain eternally separated and opposed to one another."

Here Luther touches the heart of the whole matter. The Pope has abrogated Christ, His merits, His Gospel, and His Sacraments, all of which have been divinely instituted and given for the con-

solution of poor sinners; and besides, he exalts himself above God by building a new way of salvation upon the ruins of the shattered Gospel, a way thoroughly paganistic.

Of this Luther complains also in his tract *On the Abuse of the Mass*, where he writes:—

“Whom should it not deeply pain and hurt in his heart that these cruel murderers of the soul darken the ineffable love of God and weaken the assurance of our hearts and destroy our confidence and set up for divine love the wrath of God, for faith, works, and thus make us timid and uncertain in all we do? For by changing the Mass into a sacrifice, do we not become uncertain whether our sacrifice is pleasing to God? There is not one among those that go to Mass who can say: I am sure that my sacrifice is pleasing and acceptable to God; they go about in an uncertain delusion, sacrifice Christ always, and do not know where they are at, because they *remove the promises of the true God and are led to and fro by uncertain sacrifices and works*. Moreover, whosoever offers sacrifice would *reconcile* God; but whoever would reconcile God regards Him as angry and not gracious. And whoever does that expects of Him no grace, no mercy, but only fears His judgment and verdict. But whoever would go to the Sacrament worthily must believe and be altogether confident that he has a gracious, merciful God, and that God loves him most ardently, and that He has given to him His highest and most precious treasure. And there is no thing more opposed to, and against, the blessings and fruits of the Sacrament than this papistical doctrine and these perverted consciences, which believe that God is angry and must be reconciled by this sacrifice; who, indeed, if He were not so gracious and merciful, would not have poured upon us such so rich a treasure and so precious a gift.”

Again:—

“Do you not see that all who offer this sacrifice [of the Mass] practise idolatry? For they have in their Sacrament *not the true God*, but make and invent for themselves an idol of their own hearts, who is *angry and must be reconciled*, who nevertheless cannot and would not be in this Sacrament. But God is truly angry with you if you do so believe; for you have no faith in the Sacrament, that is, in the promise of Christ; and you are truly a *heathen and a Jew*, and only a Christian by name and title.”

Again:—

“Here you see clearly that no work of satisfaction nor the sacrifice of reconciliation is profitable; *only faith in the body given and the blood shed for you reconciles you*. Not as if faith in itself reconciles, but it apprehends and obtains the reconciliation which Christ has made for us. *Much less can your foolish work or sacrifice, which is made without Christ and without faith, obtain from God anything except great wrath and displeasure.*” (St. L. Ed., XIX, 1115 ff.)

It has been said that those who do not love God cannot love their neighbor. That is true of the Roman Catholic Church. It does not love God, for it perverts God's Word, abolishes the redemptive work of Christ, and in the sacrifice of the Mass has

adopted a worship which is not only vain, but diabolically blasphemous. The Tridentine Canon on the Mass reads: "If any man shall say that the sacrifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving . . . and that it is not propitiatory, or that it profits only the receiver, and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for their sins, . . . let him be accursed." Such is the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the Mass; such is its perversion of the exceedingly comforting and assuring doctrine of the Holy Supper. From this it is clear that the Church of Rome cannot love those who appeal to it for help and salvation. For them it has no Gospel of grace in Christ Jesus, who "was once offered to bear the sins of many." Heb. 9, 28. The sinner who approaches the altar of the Mass must do it with fear and trembling, knowing that he there faces an angry God, whom he must satisfy by his works. The Cross of Christ, which bids all sinners rejoice in salvation, is hidden under the veil of paganistic philosophy, so that it terrorizes rather than consoles. The dying sinner is not told the assuring message of Calvary: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise!" The Church of Rome damns all those who assert certainty of salvation through faith in Christ. The religion of Rome, therefore, is a religion of gloom and fear, of terror and horror. Its demand is that the sinner must work out his salvation by his good works, even by such diabolical contrivances as the sacrifice of the Mass and purgatory; but he is never told that he has done enough, or that he can ever do enough to atone for his sins. All is suspense, agony, and brutal uncertainty. Heathenism holds no greater terror for the dying sinner than Rome.

We can understand the glitter and the pomp which are to be displayed at the next Eucharistic Congress. The Eucharist, or Mass, which that Congress will celebrate and extol is a foul pit of corruption, a satanic invention of Antichrist, which annuls the Gospel, eliminates the merits of our Savior, and renders void Christ's whole work of redemption. It is well for Roman Catholics to hide its real character from the view of intelligent men trained in the Word of God; the only way to impress the multitude is by just such lying deceptions and vain trickeries as the Eucharistic Congresses are. The glitter and shimmer, the ostentation and commotion, the gatherings of priests and people, the idolatry and blasphemy — what a striking imitation of the time when, under Jezebel the harlot, Israel worshiped Baal!