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What the Symbols Have to Say About the Church

By ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

IT is not difficult to turn to the index of a modern edition of the Book of Concord and to discover therein the passages in the Lutheran Symbols which talk more or less explicitly about the church. That it is quite possible to read into these passages a very wide range of presuppositions is clear from the way in which different theologians have been claiming our church's Symbols in support of quite divergent, if not actually contradictory, opinions. But the articles of our creedal statements that the editors have headed, "Of the Church," or that bear similar titles are not all that the Book of Concord has to say about the church. In the roughly 250,000 words in the Lutheran Symbols there are about 800 references to "church" or a related term. Many of these are significant, if not decisive, for the construction of an ecclesiology of the Symbols.

It is a sound principle of interpretation that a document should be understood in the sense that the words conveyed to the people by and for whom it was originally written. To this principle the Formula of Concord (Ep Summary Concept 8) clearly commits us when it declares that the Creeds and the Fathers are witnesses of the manner in which those who were living at the time understood the Sacred Scriptures concerning the controverted issues. We are to understand and confess the Symbols in their original historic sense — that is, in the sense which the words and terms had when the documents in question were formulated, and not in the sense which some of the words and terms may subsequently have acquired through the dialectic of controversy. Thus we must not read into the Catholic Creeds as pre-Reformation documents the sense with which the Reformers may have invested certain of their terms;

similarly we must not read into the particular creeds of the sixteenth century the sense with which subsequent systematizers of Lutheran doctrinal insights invested certain terms. It is worth keeping in mind that the Symbols were all written before 1580 and that the categories of the authors are not necessarily those of the evangelical Scholastics of the next century.

The reader who embarks with us on our quest will search in vain for certain familiar terms and categories in which we have learned to think and to talk systematically about the church. Nowhere do the Symbols describe the church either as *visibilis, sichtlich, sichtbar*, or as *invisibilis, unsichtlich, unsichtbar*. Far less is there an antithesis between a "visible church" and an "invisible church." Again, the reader will not find the *Kirche-Ortsgemeinde* antithesis, nor will he find a church *improprie dicta* opposed to the church *proprie dicta*, for while *proprie dicta* occurs several times, the closest that the Symbols come to the *improprie dicta* of the later dogmaticians is the term *large dicta* which AP X 10 derives from canon law. Furthermore, he will not find the familiar division into the "Church Militant" and the "Church Triumphant"; there is one casual passing reference to an "eternal church (*ewige Kirche*)" in the Formula of Concord (SD II 50), but otherwise the only church that the Symbols concern themselves with is the church that exists on earth in time. Again, we do not find "church" used as a synonym of what we mean by "denomination." The Smalcald Articles (Part Three VIII 4) speak of "the Pope's Church," but that is an ironical reference; and there is one reference to "our church (*unsere Kirche*)" in the Formula of Concord (SD X 3), but this may be an editorial oversight, inasmuch as the official Latin translation tacitly corrects it to "our churches." Another aspect that receives no stress is the description of the church as the bride of Christ—the sole explicit reference, a quite peripheral and unoriginal one, turns up in a collect of the *Traubüchlein* (16), which complete editions of the Book of Concord include as an appendix to the Small Catechism.

The Symbols come to us out of three clearly defined periods. For our purpose the first period begins in the second century and ends in the eighth. The *terminus a quo* is the remote ancestor of our Baptismal ("Apostles'") and Eucharistic ("Nicene") Creeds

which we find in the Ethiopic version of the *Epistula apostolorum*; the *terminus ad quem* is the Bobbio Missal (*Saec.* VII/VIII) and a manuscript, *De singulis libris canonicis scarapsus* (710—724), of St. Priminius of Reichenau, which are the earliest witnesses to the present—that is to say, the medieval—developed form of the Baptismal Creed. The second era falls into the second quarter of the sixteenth century, from 1528 to 1537; here we shall find it convenient to take up separately the documents that come from the pen of Martin Luther of holy memory—the Large and the Small Catechism and the Smalcald Articles—and those which come predominantly from the pen of Philip Melancthon—the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, and the Tractate on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope. The third era comes during the seventies of the sixteenth century, 1573 to 1579, and includes the Epitome and the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord and the Preface to the Christian Book of Concord.

I

A reference to "the holy church" enters the creeds at a very early date. The five-article creed in the Ethiopic version of the *Epistula apostolorum* (dated by scholars between 130 and 170)¹ confesses the Father, the Lord of the whole world, and Jesus Christ, our Savior, and the Holy Ghost the Counselor, and the holy church, and the forgiveness of sins (5). In the early North African baptismal rite between 198 and 200 Tertullian knows a necessary "mention of the church."² The Church Order (around 215) of the Roman anti-Pope St. Hippolytus, as reconstructed from the Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Latin translations of the Greek original, included the question to the candidates for Holy Baptism: "Do you believe in the Holy Ghost in the holy church?"³ Back in Africa, St. Cyprian of Carthage (died 258) in an undated letter to Januarius interprets the baptismal question thus: "When we say, 'Do you believe in eternal life and remission of sins through the holy church?' we mean that forgiveness of sins is not granted except in the church."⁴ The creed of Marcellus of Ancyra (Ankara), set forth in the letter that he wrote to Julius of Rome in 341, reads at this point: "And in the Holy Ghost, holy church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of flesh, life eternal."⁵

The present Baptismal Creed of the Western Church is immediately of Old Gallican origin, but it draws — so it would seem — rather heavily on Eastern sources. Thus the earliest form of the "Apostles' Creed" which contains the words *sanctam ecclesiam catholicam* is that which we can reconstruct from the *Competentibus ad baptismum instructionis libellus quintus de symbolo* (about 400) of Bishop Niceta(s) of Remesiana (Bela Palanka).⁶

In the Creeds ἐκκλησία designates the church that adhered to the Apostolic tradition and traced its history genetically back to the holy Apostles, in contrast to the upstart heretical sects that claimed to possess the "correct" (that is, untraditional) interpretation of the written Scriptures. In the Creeds the term likewise designated the church in contrast to the sects that under Pneumatic and Enthusiastic leadership schismatically separated themselves from the church in their revolt against the sometimes less than morally perfect organizational administration.

The ἐκκλησία is the New Testament counterpart, the heir, and the fulfillment of the Old Testament לִהְיוֹת, which the Septuagint version renders ἐκκλησία. It is the church being realized *in actu*, in worship, especially in Eucharistic worship. Since ἐκκλησία is a ready-made designation in Koine Greek (where it designates any kind of assembly) and in the LXX (where it designates both an assembly and the *Kultgemeinde*), catechists and preachers ought not to stress the etymology from ἐκ and καλέω, making ἐκκλησία identify a company of people called out from the *massa perdit*a of the sinful world.

One of the prophetic Old Testament predicates of the New Testament church is holiness. St. Paul — following Old Testament precedent — calls the Christians ἅγιοι, often in a technical sense where the term is about the equivalent of "church members." The term survived in this sense for about a century, when it became ossified in a few formulas, like τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις in the Eastern Orthodox liturgy, until the Reformation, "saint" being reserved as a title for individuals of heroic virtue. The term ἁγία ἐκκλησία turns up for the first time in the title of the Letter of St. Ignatius of Antioch (died 117) to the Trallians, in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Vision I, i, 6; I, iii, 4), which was written between 96

and 150, and in the title of the *Martyrdom of St. Polycarp of Smyrna* (156). In the creed the term is linked in the commentaries with the remission of sins on the one hand, while on the other it almost becomes a synonym for "Catholic." Thus the *Explanatio symboli ad initiandos*, a set of notes based on an extemporaneous instruction which St. Ambrose of Milan (333?—397) gave to candidates for Holy Baptism when they were having the actual text of the Baptismal Creed imparted to them, has this: "In *holy Church* and in *forgiveness of sins*: Believe therefore with faith that all your sins are forgiven. Why? You have read in the Gospel that the Lord says: 'Thy faith hath made thee whole'" (9).⁷ On the other hand, St. Cyril had pointed out in his *Catechetical Lectures* (347/348) that the word ἐκκλησία can mean any kind of assembly and that therefore the term "holy" has been prefixed to differentiate the Catholic Church from "the meetings of the heretics, the Marcionites, and the Manichaeans."⁸ In the same vein, St. Augustine has this comment on the words "holy Church" in *De fide et symbolo* (393): "Unless the Christian Faith gather men together into a society in which brotherly love can operate, it remains less fruitful. Hence we believe *the holy church*, that is to say, *the Catholic Church*. Heretics and schismatics also call their congregations churches. But heretics do violence to the Faith by holding false opinions about God; and schismatics, although they believe as we believe, have broken away from brotherly love by wicked separations. Wherefore heretics do not belong to the Catholic Church which loves God; nor do schismatics, for the church loves its neighbor, and easily forgives his sins because it prays to be forgiven by Him who has reconciled us to Himself, blotting out all past transgressions and recalling us to new life."⁹ A decade later Rufinus of Aquileia in his *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum* (about 404) expands St. Cyril's references with additional specifications, interpreting the words "holy church" to require belief "in the existence of one holy church, that is, a church in which there is one Faith and one Baptism, and in which we believe in one God the Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, and one Holy Ghost," a church which is "without spot or wrinkle of treachery," and therefore different from the "churches"—actually "congregations of the malignant"—formed by Marcion, Valentinus,

"Ebion," Mani, Arius, Paul of Samosata, Photinus, Eunomius, Donatus, Novatus, "and the rest of the heretics."¹⁰

The church is first called "Catholic" in St. Ignatius' Letter to the Smyrnaeans (8, 2) — "wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church" — and in the *Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, which is addressed to "the parishes of the Holy and Catholic Church everywhere" and which refers to the "Catholic Church throughout the inhabited (world)" (8, 1; 19, 2). In Latin we find the term in the Muratorian Fragment (3) from the second or third century and in Tertullian (155?—222?). The term begins its development by being purely descriptive. *The church exists wherever a church exists*; the Catholic Church is the sum total of all the Christian communities and nothing more. By the end of the second century, however, the emphasis has begun to shift, and the additional connotation of "orthodox" has come to associate itself with the term "Catholic" over against the localized heretical aberrations. "Catholicity" next comes to be regarded as a necessary attribute of the church; as the church spreads out over the Mediterranean world and past its borders, this is looked upon as the expression of an inevitable destiny, and the universality of the church in subsequent decades is elaborated to cover not only geographical, political, and ethnic extension but also social comprehensiveness and the scope of the sins which the church condemns, remedies, and forgives.

From pre-Reformation times until the end of the nineteenth century, Western Christendom — including the authors of the Lutheran particular symbols — held that the Baptismal Creed described the church as a *sanctorum communio*. While interpretations differed in detail, *sanctorum* was consistently taken as a masculine and *communio* received a predominantly corporative interpretation. The evidence that has accumulated during the last two generations seems, however, to indicate the possibility that: (1) *sanctorum communio* was not originally an apposition to *sancta ecclesia catholica*, but a separate article of the creed; (2) *sanctorum* is not masculine, but neuter, and hence to be translated not "saints," but "holy things," that is, either the Holy Eucharist or the sacraments in general; (3) *communio* does not mean "communion with the saints" nor does it designate a society or community, but it refers (like "one baptism for the remission

of sins" in the Eucharistic Creed) to the benefits that God confers upon those who participate in the Holy Eucharist (or the Sacraments generally).¹¹

Ultimately, while to this writer the evidence for "communion of holy things" seems to be much stronger than the evidence for "communion of saints," both interpretations come out not too far apart. Even those who defend the latter interpretation must concede that "it can scarcely be doubted that *Communion of Saints* means much more than 'Church' in the creeds."¹² However the term is explained, *communio* must be taken in a dynamic rather than a static sense. It is a sharing, a taking part with other Christians, in the holy things that make them one, rather than a mere abstract being in association with other individuals. It is logically possible to think of the church as it is in an infinitesimally small moment of time. Theologically and actually it is not possible to do so. For in the church we live, we are part of a process, we are being justified before God by God; there is a constant forgiveness of the sins that we—who are simultaneously sinners and holy people—are constantly committing, and we who are being constantly declared holy by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith are constantly becoming holier by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith.

The "Nicene" Creed in the form in which we use it before the altar adds two other predicates of the church, "unity" and "apostolicity." The original Nicene Creed of 325—based in turn upon an earlier baptismal confession—ended: "And in the Holy Ghost." This implied no lack of awareness of the church, for to the Creed as received the Council of Nicaea added this damnatory clause: "The Catholic Church anathematizes those who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, and that before He was begotten He was not, and that He came into being out of the things that are not, or who affirm that He is of a different ὑπόστασις or οὐσία or is created or changeable or alterable."

Whether the "Nicaenoconstantinopolitanum" stems from the Council of Constantinople of 381 or not is immaterial for our purpose. It was officially adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 in substantially its present form, including the affirmation of faith in "one, holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church."

The "Nicene" Creed thus affirms the substantial unity of Christendom. This, it should be noted, is not an administrative or organizational unity, which the church of that time did not know except on a regional basis, but a unity of Sacraments, of worship, and of confession. All Christian churches had the same Eucharist, the same Baptism, the same system of discipline, the same ministry, the same Scriptures, the same Canon of Truth, the same tradition, and in these they had access to the same Christ, the same Holy Ghost, the same Father. The unity was not created by men — although churches and individuals could recede from it by schism, heresy, infidelity, and apostasy. The unity of the church was a *datum*, something given by God.

The apostolicity of the church was likewise an affirmation of the church's historic character. Actually it was a commitment to the Apostolic ministry, not in the sense of a theory of Apostolic succession through an unbroken chain of episcopal consecrations, but in the sense of a traceable linkage of ministerial tradition to a church founded by one of the Apostles. This served as at least a partial guarantee of the authenticity of the message proclaimed in the church, in contradistinction to the upstart schisms and heresies that adulterated the Christian message with human additions sanctified by the judicious citation of Scripture texts. The *purpose* of this commitment was the conservation of the Apostolic message and the Apostolic Sacraments, although the *accent* was upon the sacred ministry as a means to this purpose, an accent that we find recurring in Article V of the Augsburg Confession. It remained for a later generation to transform the sacred ministry from a means into an end and to cite the Fathers of this period in a sense which they did not intend. At the same time, "apostolicity" is an empirical characteristic of the church.

Thus the Baptismal and the Eucharistic Creeds agree in their conception of a dynamic church which is simultaneously on the one hand empirical and phenomenal, perceptible with the bodily senses, and on the other hand spiritual, perceptible only in its effects.

This is likewise the conception of the Church Fathers of this period — including such significant contributors to developing ecclesiology as St. Cyprian of Carthage and St. Augustine of Hippo. The church which they envision falls into none of the neat cat-

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egories that modern denominational ecclesiologists have constructed. It is a church that meets for instruction, for worship, for witness, for the administration of Holy Baptism, for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and for the exercise of church discipline. It is an organized church, with metropolitans and bishops and synods and priests and deacons and lesser orders of clergy from subdeacons to porters, and a laity. It is a historical church, with both an oral and a written doctrinal tradition going back to the holy Apostles, a rule of faith, a pattern of worship, a history of martyrs and confessors, and a growing body of theological literature. At the same time it is a supernatural, spiritual phenomenon, a breaching of the prison of time by the eternal Spirit of God, a living body of true believers, the mother of all the faithful. Its priests and bishops can justify their official status only by the faith of their hearts, the holiness of their lives, and the wisdom of their words; and the truth of their teaching can be tested by its congruence with the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, understood as the church has always understood them.

The significant thing for us is that at this period the church senses no contradiction in the assertion of these at least paradoxical descriptions of herself, and almost any Church Father who discusses the topic at all can be quoted with apparent conclusiveness on behalf of either point of view by anyone who selects his evidence carefully enough.

II

The documents from the second period, from 1528 to 1536—37, which come from the pen of blessed Martin Luther, are all in German.

The plural *Kirchen*, where it stands by itself, usually means church buildings. *Unsere Kirchen* in the Introduction to the Smalcald Articles means ecclesiastical administrative units, which may range in size from a parish to a provincial or territorial church. In the Smalcald Articles (Part Two IV 4) *Kirchen* refers to other national churches: "The churches of the Greek and many other languages . . . to this day have never been under the Pope."

The church is never described as *katholisch* in these documents, although in authorizing Bugenhagen to sign for him Brenz states that in his opinion the Smalcald Articles agree "with the conviction of the true and genuine Catholic Church." Here "Catholic Church"

is the empirical, confessing church. In lieu of *katholische Kirche* we once find *ganze, heilige, christliche Kirche* (SA-II IV 3), when the Pope is accused of endeavoring to corrupt by every means at his disposal the whole, holy, Christian Church. *Heilige, christliche Kirche* occurs more frequently. The Small Catechism simply translates the Latin of the Apostles' Creed: *Ein heilige christliche Kirche, die Gemeinde der Heiligen*. No deliberate alteration of meaning underlies the rendering of *catholicam* with *christliche*, and Luther, who is trying to avoid the use of foreign loan words as much as possible, had good fifteenth-century vernacular precedent. The official Latin version of the Creeds and the catechisms retained *catholicam*, and so have a number of vernacular versions, including the Swedish (*allmännelig*). In teaching the Catechism we should therefore be careful not to suggest that the "holy Christian Church" is in any sense less empirical than the *sancta ecclesia catholica*, or that Lutherans regard the holy Christian Church as being less "Catholic" than other Christians do, or that the rest of Christendom regards the "Catholic Church" as less Christian than we do. If we use the concept *una sancta* as the designation for some kind of nonempirical church that can *only* be believed in and that has no tangible reality, we should realize that this is a systematic construct and that the church which the framers of both the Baptismal and the Eucharistic Creeds confessed is a church that is not only one and holy but also Catholic, and therefore empirical. The translation *Gemeinde der Heiligen* goes back in the vernacular to Carolingian times.

The Large Catechism also refers in the Creed to *eine heilige christliche Kirche*, but uses another word in the apposition, *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*. "A holy Christian Church" in three cases is a quotation of the Creed; one case is of particular interest because it affirms a relationship between the church and the Sacrament of the Altar: "Now the whole Gospel and the Article of the Creed, 'I believe a holy Christian Church, forgiveness of sins, etc.,' is put by the Word into this Sacrament and placed before us" (LC V 32). "The holy Christian Church" will not be destroyed as long as the world lasts (LC IV 50). It can well remain without a visible head and would probably have been better off so, had not such a head been created by the devil (SA-II IV 5).

Christliche Kirche alone occurs some eight times. Individual absolution is an office of the Christian Church (SA-III VIII 2). According to the *Taufbüchlein*, the Christian Church carries the little child to Holy Baptism, confesses before God that the child is possessed by the devil and is a child of sin and disgrace, and prays diligently for help and grace that through Baptism it may become a child of God (2). The Holy Ghost makes us holy through the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and everlasting life (LC II 40, 41). The Papacy—not to be equated with the church which acknowledged the primacy of the Pope—is not a Christian Church; where Christ is proclaimed, there the Spirit makes, calls, and brings together the Christian Church, outside which no one can come to the Lord Jesus (LC II 44, 45). The apposition, *sanctorum communionem*, was added, in Luther's opinion, to indicate what "the Christian Church" is (LC II 49, cf. 37); he thus thinks of it as a post-Apostolic intercalation, a conviction in which the omission of the phrase in the *Commentarius* of Rufinus confirmed him.¹³ It may be noted here that in the thinking of the Middle Ages *sanctorum communio* meant variously the communion of the Holy Sacraments of the church which the saints enjoyed (St. Ivo of Chartres¹⁴; Peter Abelard¹⁵), a sharing of the benefits of the departed saints with the others of the faithful who with the saints form one body (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super symbolum apostolorum*¹⁶), or the church as a corporate society (Amalarius of Trèves¹⁷; Magnus of Sens¹⁸). For Luther it is the community of holy ones in Christ characterized by, and realized in, mutual participation and self-giving. The element of faith is involved in as far as we must believe, sometimes in the face of apparently contradictory evidence, that the church with which we come into contact is one and holy and Catholic and Apostolic. The Holy Ghost creates holiness in us through the Word of God in the *Vereinigung* of the Christian Church (LC II 54). He initiates holiness on earth and increases it daily through these two things, the Christian Church and the forgiveness of sins; after we are dead, He will complete it in the twinkling of an eye and evermore preserve us through the two last things, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting (LC II 59).

"Holy Church" occurs once: The holy church has obviously existed without a Pope for over 500 years at least. This reflects Luther's conviction that St. Gregory the Great was the last Bishop of Rome and Sabinian and Boniface III, St. Gregory's immediate successors, the first Popes.¹⁹

A synonym for "church" is *Christenheit*, which Luther in *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen* (1539) proposed as a substitute translation — along with *christlich Volk* — for the "un-German" and "blind" word *Kirche*.²⁰ In the Large Catechism he suggests that *Kirche* could best be rendered by *eine heilige Christenheit* (II 48). He also uses *Christenheit* as a synonym for *Gemeine* (with which he regularly reproduces the Greek ἐκκλησία in his German Bible), the holy community by which the Holy Ghost until the Last Day brings us to Himself and which He uses to exercise the Word, by which He creates and increases holiness (II 53). In Christendom everything is so ordered that we may there daily receive sheer forgiveness of sins through the Word and the signs, to comfort our conscience and to hold it upright as long as we live here. Our sins cannot harm us in Christendom, where there is sheer forgiveness of sins, both in the sense that God forgives us and in the sense that we mutually forgive, bear with, and raise up one another. But outside Christendom, where the Gospel is not, there is no forgiveness, just as there can be no holiness there (II 55, 56). God has not yet brought His whole Christendom together nor has He fully distributed His forgiveness (II 61, 62). Those who are outside Christendom, whether they be pagans, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites, even though they believed in and adored but one true God, nevertheless do not know how God is minded toward them, cannot promise themselves either love or anything good from Him, and hence remain under eternal wrath and condemnation, for they have not the Lord Christ (II 66).

Since we do not know which of our fellow Christians are false Christians or hypocrites and which are true believers, the Christian must necessarily seek Christendom in the empirical church. This is borne out by the fact that we enter Christendom through Baptism (LC IV 81, 87). Christian education of the young preserves God's Word and Christendom (V 86). Intolerable burdens and loads have been laid on Christendom (*Kurze Vermahnung zu der*

Beicht 1).²¹ Christ has put holy absolution into the mouth of His Christendom (14). Where we have "Christian Church" in the explanation of the Third Article in the Small Catechism, the original has *Christenheit*: "Just as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and hallows the whole of Christendom on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the right and only faith, in which Christendom He daily forgives all sins liberally to me and all the faithful" (SC II 5). The *Taufbüchlein* prays that the candidate, having been separated from the number of the unbelieving, may be preserved dry and safe in the holy ark of Christendom (14). The Pope is not by divine right the head of all Christendom (SA-II IV 1); before the rise of the Papacy the bishops of all Christendom, like the Apostles before them, ruled the church jointly (SA-II IV 9).

Kirche by itself occurs rarely in the Catechisms, more frequently in the Smalcald Articles. In the former it often refers to the church building (LC I 90; II 48; III 7; *Traubüchlein* 1, 2, 6). Luther wants to derive *Kirche* from the Greek *κνρία*, a false etymology (LC II 48). *Kirche* — that is, the Biblical *ἐκκλησία* — means an ordinary assembly and ought to be specified as a Christian community or a holy Christendom (ibid.). The Holy Ghost accomplishes our sanctification through the community of saints or Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and eternal life, by first of all leading us into His holy community and depositing us in the womb (*Schoß*) of the church, through which He preaches to us and brings us to Christ (LC II 37).

In the introduction to the Smalcald Articles a French visitor is described as having expected to find among the Lutherans of Wittenberg no church, no government, no marriage (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 411, line 4). We cannot carry out all the injunctions God has given us in the church, in government, and in the home (p. 413, line 15). Holy Communion is the common Sacrament of the church, which no individual ought to use for his private devotion and play with at his own pleasure outside the fellowship of the church (SA-II II 9). (This is the famous passage which rejects the pretense that private Masses are justified because they give the celebrant an opportunity to receive the blessed Sacrament; it would thus seem that in Luther's mind the fellowship of the

church is most fully realized when the Christian community celebrates the Holy Eucharist.) The Pope is the bishop or rector only of the church at Rome (SA-II IV 1). The Papacy exercises no useful function in the church, and the church must remain and exist even without the Pope (SA-II IV 6). *Kirche* is sometimes an administrative subdivision of the Catholic Church (SA-II IV 8, 9; X 3). Yet it also designates the Catholic Church as such. Thus the church is best governed when we all live under Christ and the bishops keep diligently together in harmonious teaching, faith, Sacraments, prayer, works of charity, and so forth (SA-II IV 9). The Pope let himself be hailed as Lord of the Church (SA-II IV 13). He came to the aid of the poor church by inventing indulgences (SA-II IV 24); the irony is even heavier when Luther declares that what the Pope and his church decided and pronounced was to be regarded as Spirit and right (SA-III VIII 4). The church baptizes (SA-III V 4) and exercises the Office of the Keys (SA-III VII 1). Under no circumstances (*beileibe nicht*) must confession or absolution disappear from her midst (SA-III VIII 1). True Christian excommunication involves not admitting manifest and obstinate sinners to the Sacrament of the Altar or other communion with the church (SA-III IX). Even though papal bishops will not teach, baptize, administer the Holy Communion, or perform a single work or office of the church, and persecute those called to these offices, the church must not remain without clergy (SA-III X 2).

The title of Smalcald Articles, Part Three, Article XII, reads: "Of the Church." In the article occurs the famous manifesto: "We do not concede that [the Papalist adversaries] are *the* church, and indeed they are not." The antithesis must be kept in mind. The adversaries profess to be *the* church and condemn as heretics all those not in communion with the Pope. That overweeningly proud insistence is here rejected categorically. By the same token, "we shall not listen to what they command or prohibit in the name of the church." It is in the context of this antithesis that the following statement must be interpreted: "A child of seven years"—the canonical minimum age of reason—"knows what the church is, namely, the holy believers and the 'lambs that hear the voice of their Shepherd.'" This is clearly not an exhaustive

definition of the church; the sense of Luther's declaration is that the church is conditioned by adherence, not to the Roman See but to Christ.

An equivalent of *sanctorum communio* occurs only in the Catechisms, usually as quotations from the Baptismal Creed (SC II; *Taufbüchlein* 25; LC Second Introduction 13; II 47, 49). It is once equated with "the Christian Church" (LC II 37), once described as a gloss or commentary on "the Christian Church" (II 49).

The documents under consideration do not explicitly relate the kingdom of God—about which they have much to say—to the church. Taking the statements about the kingdom of God or of Christ in these documents together (notably SC Introduction 23; II 4; III 7, 11; LC II 24, 30, 31; III 51, 53, 54), we can summarize thus: The kingdom of God is more inclusive than the church, because while the church exists in time, the kingdom of God is eternal. The church is the eschatological kingdom of God in its temporal aspect, but the line that divides the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan cuts across the church and even across the individual believer. It is to *Christians* that Luther says: "Thus you are still every day in the midst of the kingdom of the devil (*unter des Teufels Reich*), who does not rest day or night to catch you unawares, so that he can kindle unbelief and evil thoughts in your heart against . . . all the commandments of God" (LC I 101). In its essence our flesh is lazy and inclined to evil, even though we have accepted God's Word and believe (LC III 63).

For the unity of the church the reference in Smalcald Articles, Part One, to the Lutherans and the Romanist party as *wir zu beiden Teilen* may be significant. Of the church's holiness the Smalcald Articles say that it depends not on vestments or humanly instituted ceremonies but that it consists "in the Word of God and the true faith" (SA-III XIII).

As we have seen, we initially enter the church, that is, Christendom, by Baptism (LC IV 2, 81); without Baptism and the Holy Eucharist there can be no Christian (LC IV 1). By the same token, we must be baptized, or we cannot be saved (LC IV 6). The survival of the church through the centuries is evidence that infant Baptism is pleasing to God; by way of example Luther cites Saint

Bernard of Clairvaux from the eleventh century and Jean Charlier de Gerson and St. John Hus from the fourteenth (LC IV 50). Denial of the effectiveness or validity of infant Baptism overthrows the article: "I believe a holy Christian Church, the community of the saints, and so forth" (LC IV 51). Because children have been baptized and received into Christendom, they should also participate in the fellowship of the altar (LC V 87). The minimum requirement for admission to the blessed Sacrament in the sixteenth century was to have achieved the use of reason and to have an intelligent mastery of the text of the Decalog, the Creed, the Our Father, and the words of institution of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, without formal explanations (SC Introduction 7—11). In practice, the Lutheran Reformers admitted children to their first Holy Communion at between seven and twelve years of age.²²

The church — *der gemeine Christenstand* (LC I 197) — consists of "preachers and Christians" (LC I 262); rector (*Pfarrherr*) and parishioners (*Pfarrkinder*) (LC Introduction 3); rector and people (SC Introduction 6); bishops, rectors, and preachers on the one hand and hearers on the other (SC Table of Duties). "Rector" is used even of the Pope as Bishop of Rome (SA-II IV 1). Our translation of *Pfarrer* as "pastor" betrays a subtle shift of emphasis away from the concepts of the Book of Concord. "Bishop" and pastor are equated (*Tranbüchlein* 5), reflecting Luther's acceptance of the patristic doctrine that originally priests and bishops constituted a single divine order (SA-III XI 1), which was later differentiated by human authority, and also reflecting his conviction that a parish with a pastor, one or more curates, and one or more congregations constituted an ecclesiastical unit. *Pfarrkinder* has as its correlative the spiritual fatherhood of the clergy, and the Large Catechism teaches that they who rule and preside over us through the Word of God are properly called spiritual fathers (I 158). Parochial jurisdiction is necessary and (divinely) commanded (SA-II III 18).

Luther always preferred the concrete to the abstract term. Hence he never wholly reconciled himself to *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* and retained it in the Large Catechism only because people scent heresy when a word is changed in a familiar formula; he prefers *Gemeine der Heiligen*, a community in which there are altogether

holy people, or, even more clearly, "a holy community" (LC II 49, 50). *Gemeine* is often synonymous with church (II 48), or Christendom (II 52: *Gemeine oder Christenheit*). When we commit ourselves to the *sanctorum communio*, we say in effect: "I believe that there is a holy little group and community of altogether holy people on earth, under one Head, Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, sense and meaning, with manifold gifts, but harmonious in love, without divisions or schisms; of that community I am a part and a member, a partaker and associate of all the gifts it possesses, brought thither by the Holy Ghost and incorporated in it by having heard and by still hearing God's Word" (II 51, 52). The Holy Ghost carries on His work unceasingly until the Last Day; for that work He has ordered a community on earth through which He says and does everything (II 61).

In words reminiscent of St. Cyprian's dictum, "No man can have God for his Father in heaven who has not the church as his mother on earth," Luther describes the Holy Ghost's special community in the world as the mother who conceives and bears every Christian through the Word of God (II 42).

The imparting of the grace of God is not the responsibility only of the sacred ministry; the Gospel gives us counsel and aid against sin through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, as our Lord says in St. Matthew 18, "Where two or three are gathered together, and so forth" (SA-III IV).

In one crucial place the Large Catechism takes *ἐκκλησία* in a neutral sense. In interpreting the so-called stages of admonition, it declares that if the first two steps accomplish nothing, the plaintiff should take the case before the community, that is, either a secular or spiritual court (LC I 280). This has a significant bearing on the relevance of this passage to excommunication.

Two classes of people have severed themselves from the communion of the church: Those who have refused to make use of the means of grace — the sacred ministry of the Word, the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and holy absolution — and those who want to look for and obtain holiness not through the Gospel and the forgiveness of sins, but through their own works (LC II 56).

Summarizing: in the Symbols from Luther's pen we find ascribed to the church such a variety of attributes and activities that we cannot define the church either wholly in empirical terms or wholly in spiritual terms; both descriptions are correct, but neither must be affirmed in such a way that it excludes the other.

III

When we turn to the Symbols composed by Philip Melancthon, a problem arises in the Augsburg Confession; here both the German and the Latin versions are equally authoritative, but frequently the plural of the one version corresponds to a singular in the other. Thus the marriage of priests would not seem to be disadvantageous to the churches (AC XXIII 17 Latin); the German has *gemeine christliche Kirche*. Burdens are laid on the churches (AC XXVIII 42); the German has *die Christenheit*. The right kind of ordinances are appropriate for churches (AC XXVIII 55); the German has *die christliche Versammlung*. There is to be no disorder in the churches (ibid.); the German has *Kirche* (compare likewise the Latin and German in AC XXVIII 28, 42).

"Churches" and "church" are also interchangeable in the Apology, Article XXIV, 44—51; the adversaries regard decorated altars, candles, and statues as ornaments of the churches, but the true ornament of the church does not consist of candles, golden vessels, and similar ornaments—appropriate as they are—but pious, useful, and clear instruction, the devout use of the Sacraments, ardent worship and such things.

"Churches" sometimes means national or provincial churches (Tractate 12). Sometimes "churches" means the lay congregations as distinguished from the clergy (Ap IV 243). Over against the bishops, "churches" means the parishes with their clergy and lay congregations (AC XXVIII 22; compare both German and Latin). When the canonical bishops are enemies of the Gospel, the churches retain the right to call, elect, and ordain (Tractate 66), and they are forced with the participation of their own pastors (*adhibitis suis pastoribus*) to ordain pastors and ministers (72). The churches in the territories of the Smalcald League have cause enough why they will not acknowledge the papal ordinaries as their bishops (Tractate 79). The Council of Nicaea decreed that the bishops

should be elected by their churches (Tractate 13), in contrast to the Pope's insistence in the sixteenth century that he alone could appoint bishops (ibid.). Again, it was anciently decreed that one bishop should ordain the ministers in many churches (Tractate 64). The impious Romanist bishops misuse the relief funds of the churches; thereby they defraud the church (Tractate 83).

"Our churches" is a common self-designation of the evangelical party. Of special interest is the statement: "In our churches there are no Anabaptists," where "churches" is equivalent to "geographical parishes" (Ap IX 2).

We find references to the "Roman Church," that is, the Western Church (AC Epilog to XXI; Ap. X 2), the "Latin" Churches (Ap XXII 4; Tractate 14, 15); the "West" (Tractate 14); the "East" (Tractate 12, 16); the "Greek," that is, the Eastern, Church (Ap X 2), as well as to its national churches (Ap XXII 4; Tractate 15) and parishes (Ap XXIV 6). There is also a reference to the "Roman establishment" (*status Romanus*) (Ap XII 126).

The logical opposite of the territorial church is the Catholic Church. The Lutherans depart in their teaching in no way from the Catholic Church or even from the Roman Church (AC Epilog to XXI) — the conjunction of Catholic and Roman in contrast significantly identifies the Catholic Church as the totality of organized Christendom, with the Roman-Western Church a part thereof. The Lutherans dissent in no article of faith from the Catholic Church (AC Preface to XXII); in teaching, in dogmas, and even in ceremonies they receive nothing contrary to the Catholic Church (AC Epilog to XXVIII 5). The papalist bishops ought to rescind regulations contrary to the custom of the Catholic Church (AC XXVIII 72). In all these cases the German has *gemeine christliche Kirche*; in the second last case, the *editio princeps* had *heilige gemeine und catholica christliche Kirche* (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 136, line 19).

In the controversial doctrine of original sin the Apology stipulates that its opinion is not alien either to the Sacred Scriptures or the Catholic Church (II 32), or, more explicitly, Christ's Catholic Church (51). Similarly, the Lutherans' custom of holding on every holy day one common or public Mass, at which not only the celebrant but also members of the worshiping congregation

receive the blessed Sacrament, is nothing against the Catholic Church (XXIV 6).

It is in the light of all these passages that we must interpret Apology, Article VII, 10: "The Creed says 'Catholic Church,' lest we understand the matter as if the church were an external political organization of certain people, rather than people scattered through the whole world, who agree with reference to the Gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Ghost, and the same Sacraments."

The Creed requires us to believe that there is a holy Catholic Church, but the impious are certainly not a holy church. The apposition that follows, *sanctorum communio*, is to be regarded as explaining what "church" signifies, namely, an assembly of holy people who have among themselves an association (*societatem*) of the same Gospel or the same teaching and the same Holy Ghost who renews, hallows, and governs their hearts (Ap VII 7).

In place of "Catholic" the Apology sometimes uses "Universal." The Lutheran teaching on justification before God by faith agrees with the Sacred Scriptures, the holy Church Fathers, and the Universal (*universa*) Church of Christ (IV 389). The Lutheran teaching on repentance affirms things true, pious, salutary, and necessary to the Universal (*universa*) Church of Christ (XII 3). The Lutheran teaching on good works contains comfort for the Universal Church (XX 9). Lutherans concede that the saints on earth pray for the Universal Church in general, and so do the saints in heaven, among them the blessed Virgin Mary (XXI 9, 10, 27). The consensus of the Prophets must be adjudged the consensus of the Universal (*universalis*) Church, and we concede neither to the Pope nor to the church the authority to contravene this prophetic consensus (XII 66).

Tota ecclesia may mean the same as *catholica* or *universa(lis) ecclesia*, although in this case the time aspect is more prominent. The whole church contradicts the adversaries when they say that the tinder (*fomes*) of original sin is a neutral thing (Ap II 42). The whole church asserts that we cannot satisfy the Law (Ap IV 66). The whole church confesses that eternal life is given by mercy, and by way of evidence St. Augustine, St. Cyprian, and the fathers are appealed to (Ap IV 322). On justification before God

by faith (Ap IV 338; XXVII 13) and on the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Holy Eucharist (Ap X 4), the Lutheran teaching is that of the whole church, in proof of which both Western and Eastern authorities are appealed to in the latter instance. The whole church throughout Europe knows what snares the Constitution *Omnis utriusque sexus* has laid for consciences (Ap XI 7). The Pope cannot by divine right be over the whole church, because the church—that is, the part represented in the College of Cardinals—elects him (Tractate 20), although he asserts his judgment ahead of that of the councils and the whole church (40).

In Apology, Article XXII, however, *tota ecclesia* means all orders in the church in contrast to a part of them. Christ instituted both parts of the blessed Sacrament not for part of the church—the presbyters alone—but for the whole church (1, 2, 4).

In the German Augsburg Confession *christliche Kirche* usually corresponds to the simple Latin *ecclesia*. The imperial invitation to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 expressed the hope that as the whole empire is under one Christ, its member estates might once more live in "one association, church, and unity," as the German put it, or, "in one *ecclesia Christiana*, unity, and concord," according to the Latin (AC Introduction 4). Thus, too, the German of Articles VII and VIII reads:

It is also taught that there must at all times be and remain a holy Christian Church, which is the assembly of all the faithful among whom the Gospel is preached in purity and the Holy Sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel. For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian Church, that therein the Gospel is preached according to a pure understanding and the Sacraments are administered in accordance with the divine Word. And it is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church that humanly instituted ceremonies be everywhere uniformly carried out, as St. Paul says to the Ephesians in the fourth chapter: "One body, one Spirit, as you have been called to one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism."

Likewise, although strictly the Christian Church is nothing else than the assembly of all the faithful and the holy people, nevertheless, because in this life many false Christians and hypocrites remain among the pious, the Sacraments are uniformly efficacious,

even though the priests through whom they are administered are not pious, as Christ Himself says: "The Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses and so forth." (AC VII 1 through VIII 2, German.)

"Christian Church" describes the historic church, in which the priests were married (AC XXIII 10, German; the Latin reads "ancient church"); which profited by the skills and knowledge imparted in the monastic schools (AC XXVII 15, German); which the teaching about monastic perfection has scandalized (AC XXVII 48); in which justification before God by faith ought to be taught (*ibid.*); which has ordained Sunday for corporate worship (AC XXVIII 60); and the unity of which is not impaired by changes in human ordinances (AC XXVIII 74). The corresponding Latin portions all read merely *ecclesia*.

"Church of Christ" occurs frequently in the Apology. Sectaries who hold a doctrine of God other than that of the Sacred Scriptures and Nicene orthodoxy are outside the church of Christ (I 2). It must retain the Gospel (IV 120, 400; XX 44). It must not neglect the doctrine of justification before God by faith (Ap IV 377, 389). Christ, the Prophets, and the Apostles define it differently from the kingdom of the Pope (VII 27). Membership in it does not depend on national styles of dress (VII 34). Unbaptized children are outside of it; outside of it, too, there are neither Word nor Sacraments, because Christ gives rebirth through the Word and Sacraments (Ap IX 2). It has always felt that remission of sins is given gratis (Ap XX 14).

In the Augustana *Christenheit* reproduces not only the plural *ecclesiae* (AC XXVIII 28, 42) but also the singular *ecclesia*. According to St. Gregory, differences in humanly instituted ceremonies do not impair the unity of the *ecclesia/Christenheit* (XXVI 44); in it pious and learned persons have condemned the vicious lust of the bishops for political power (XXVIII 2); the bishops have burdened it with the slavery of the Law (39); they have given the impression that it needed a Levitical priesthood as in the Old Testament (62); these errors have woven themselves into it because the teaching of justification before God by faith was not clearly set forth (*ibid.*).

The Apology discusses the "signs" or "notes" of the church quite extensively in Article VII. These notes are the Word, the public

profession of faith, and the Sacraments; hypocrites and evil persons are members of the church according to the external association of these signs (4, 19, 28). These notes identify the church as being a real society of true believers and righteous people scattered throughout the world; it is not a mere Platonic state (*Platonica civitas*), which has only ideal existence (20). In this connection, it may be noted that the Zwinglians made out the chief role of the Sacraments to be a means of identifying Christians; the Lutherans made this a minor function of the Sacraments (AC XIII 1). Some argued that to assign to the Sacraments a constitutive function in relation to the church prejudices the unique role of faith; the Apology answers that faith does not exclude the Word of God and the Sacraments, that faith is conceived out of the Word in the words of the Gospel and in the Sacraments and that accordingly we are to adorn the sacred ministry of the Word to the maximum extent (Ap IV 73).

According to the Scriptures, says Melancthon, the church in the strict sense is that assembly of the Spirit-filled holy people and true believers in the Gospel of Christ in which the Gospel is correctly taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered (AC VII 1, Latin; Ap VII 1, 16, 28). In principle it is an association of faith and of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of its constituents (Ap VII 5), but it is also, though not exclusively (*tantum*), a body politic (*politia*) of good and evil people, an association of external matters and rites like other bodies politic (Ap VII 5, 29). With St. Paul we distinguish it from the people of God in the Old Testament in that the church is a spiritual people, that is, a people of God separated from the pagans not by civil ordinances but by the rebirth of the Holy Ghost (Ap VII 14, 16). The church in a true sense and in contrast to the kingdom of the devil is the kingdom of Christ (Ap VII 16, 17). While the evil members of the church are not the church, yet because the kingdom of God has not yet been revealed, they are mixed into the church, have the association of the external signs, and even bear offices in the church (Ap VII 17, 28). The church strictly is the pillar of the truth, but among its members will be weak persons who will erect perishable structures of straw upon the foundation, without, however, overthrowing the latter (Ap VII 20).

The church is built not on the authority of men, but on the sacred ministry of that confession of St. Peter in which he affirmed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Therefore our Lord is addressing St. Peter in the latter's capacity as a minister of Christ when He says: "Upon this rock," that is, upon this ministry (*super hoc ministerium*) (Tractate 25).

The church has its existence in time. It existed in the past, for the holy fathers wrote in the church (Ap IV 400). The church exists now. It will exist as long as the world stands (*perpetuo*, glossed by the German *alle Zeit*, should not be translated "for ever"; AC VII 1). The things that were done among the people of Israel were examples of those things that should take place in the future church (Ap IV 395). No matter how infinitely great the number of her wicked members may be, the church exists, and Christ will give her those things that He has promised (Ap VII 9); one of these promises is that the church will always have the Holy Ghost (21).

The church depends on Holy Baptism; if infant Baptism were invalid, the Holy Ghost would not be imparted, no one would be saved, and the church would disappear (Ap IX 3). Christ begets us anew through the divine, that is, spiritual, seed of the Word, not a *carnale semen* (Ap VII 14).

It is righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Ghost that make us living members of the church (Ap VII 13; compare Ap IV 135; IX 2). The Apology quotes Nicholas of Lyra with approval: "The church is not made up of people on the basis of either their ecclesiastical or secular power and rank . . . but of those persons in whom is a true knowledge and confession of the faith and of the truth" (Ap VII 22). Yet the membership of the church includes pious, learned, and great men (AC XXVIII 2, 18); the situation of the times is reflected in the statement that Christian kings and princes are the chief members of the church (Tractate 54).

To safeguard the insight that the Sacraments do not depend for their validity on the faith or morals of the ministrant, the Lutherans condemn both the Donatists and the Lollard followers of John Wiclif for teaching that people sinned if they received the Sacraments from unworthy priests in the church (AC VIII 3;

Ap VII 29, 30). Especially if they are not excommunicated, hypocrites and evil persons are members of the church according to the external association of the signs of the church (Ap VII 4, 9, 17); the church is aware of the impious teachers and wolves who will rage about (*grassantur*) within the church of the future (21).

Frequent reference is made to the customs (*Brauch, mos, exemplum, consuetudo*) of the church (AC XXII 4; XXIII 18; XXIV 35; Ap XXII 7; Tractate 70), of which some (like onerous episcopal legislation, the corporate invocation of the saints, and monastic vows) are of recent origin (AC XXVIII 72; Ap XXI 13; XXVII 66). The Sacrament of the Altar received the name of Eucharist in the church (Ap XXIV 76). The church instituted confession (AC XXV 12, German; the Latin has canon law say *humani iuris esse confessionem*). Yet individual absolution must be preserved and not be allowed to fall into disuse in the church (AC XI 1, German, where the Latin has *in ecclesiis*; Ap XI 1); it would be impious to take individual absolution out of the church (Ap XII 100).

While the church cannot dispense from a Commandment of the Decalog (AC XXVIII 33), the church did ordain the Lord's Day for public worship (60). Ceremonies and traditions in the church come in for frequent discussion (AC XXVI 15, German; XXVIII 11, 30, 39, Latin, where the German has *Christenheit*; Ap XV 31; XXIV 92; Tractate 11). The Lutherans want to retain the existing canonical form of church government, with its various grades of bishop and priest, even though these distinctions were made by human authority (Ap XIV 1, 2), as well as the ancient traditions made in the church for the sake of tranquillity and good order (AC XV 1; XXVI 40, 43, 44; XXVIII 53, 55, German, where the Latin has *ecclesiis*; Ap IV 234, 288; XV Title, 1, 13, 22, 38; XXVIII 15). The tranquillity and good order aimed at is not only or even chiefly within the parish or diocese, but at the level of provincial, national, and interecclesiastical relationships. The traditions cover everything from the order of service, the calendar, and the customary vestments and ceremonial to the disciplinary canons and the organization and administration of the church. The differences between the Eastern and the Western Church, as

well as between the Lutheran territories and other Western provinces—at least at the level of the ordinary layman, priest, and bishop—were regarded by the Augsburg Confession as being primarily in the realm of custom and tradition rather than in the realm of doctrine (AC Epilog to XXI 2: *Tota dissensio est de paucis quibusdam abusibus, qui sine certa auctoritate in ecclesiis irreperunt*).

The church has had to bear the sacrilege of private Masses offered as propitiatory sacrifices for too many centuries (AC XXIV 18). The church has never required holy confirmation and extreme unction as absolutely necessary to salvation (Ap XIII 6). The church has suffered an injustice in connection with Holy Communion under one kind (Ap XXII 16).

Instruction in the church on faith and its righteousness, on Christian liberty, and on repentance is essential (AC XX 8, Latin, which twice has *ecclesia*, one occurrence of which is reproduced in the German by *christlich Wesen*; XXVI 20; XXVIII 48; Ap IV 119; XII 73; XV 32; XX 2; XXI 40, 44; XXVIII 7; see also Ap Introduction 16, 17; IV 83, 392; VII 20, 21; XII 66; XIV 4; XX 6; XXIV 65; XXVII 27; XXVIII 24). The church pronounces judgments on issues within the limits of the divine revelation (Ap XII 66, 67); XXII 15, 17; XXIII 68). She did not condemn the marriage of priests in the days of Jovinian (Ap XXIII 67); in the era of the Ecumenical Councils she did not recognize the primacy or superiority of the Bishop of Rome (Tractate 17). By refusing to submit to the judgment of Councils and of the whole church the Pope is making himself God (Tractate 40) and identifying himself as the apocalyptic Man of Lawlessness; and in refusing to have the controversy between the Lutherans and the Papalists judged in the prescribed fashion (*rite*), he is taking the right to judge away from the church (Tractate 49; compare 56).

The church is a confessing church (Ap IV 322, 344); during Whitsunweek she sings from the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* the stanza, *Sine tuo numine nihil est in homine, nihil est innoxium* (AC XX 40, Latin); she prays in collects that end with the formula, "Through Christ, our Lord" (Ap IV 385); she preaches and administers the Sacraments through the sacred ministry, in that

through the vocation of the church Christ calls men to act in His name and in His stead (Ap VII 28; XII 104). Hence no one should teach or preach publicly or administer any Sacraments in the church without a vocation in the prescribed order (*ordentlich; rite*) (AC XIV). The church has the right (*ius*) and the command to call, elect, select, appoint, and ordain sacred ministers, and no human authority can wrest this right from the church (Ap XIII 12; Tractate 67, 72). In a case of necessity — the example cited is an imminent shipwreck — even a layman (*etiam laicus*) can absolve and, by implication, baptize, since the keys are given to the whole church (Tractate 72). The Symbols at this point seem to argue that the whole church has all the powers of the sacred ministry, which she ordinarily imparts to those whom in compliance with God's will she calls, elects, and ordains. In these powers in a case of extraordinary necessity even a layman shares to the extent that an emergency requires.

Christ commanded St. Peter to rule the church by the Word (Tractate 30), yet the church is over the ministers (11). The concept of local jurisdiction is present but not stressed (Ap XII 106). An interesting passage is Tractate 65: "It is manifest that ordination imparted by a pastor in his own church (*a pastore in sua ecclesia*) is valid by divine right (*iure divino ratam*)."

Thus the Symbols imply that candidates for the sacred ministry are ordained in the church of the ordinator.

The church administers holy absolution through the clergy (AC XII 2; Ap XII 20; Tractate 24, 60, 68). She administers discipline (Ap XII 7, 21, 120, 121; XV 39). Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession is a discussion of the *potestas ecclesiastica*, *Kirchenregiment*. The Symbol treats it as a real *potestas*, as real as the other *potestas* there discussed, the *potestas civilis*, although it operates on a different basis, with different means, for different ends.

Errors and vices have insinuated themselves into the church through lay ignorance, pastoral negligence, and satanic malice (AC XXIV 15, Latin; XXVI 1, 3; XXVII 48; XXVIII 62, Latin, where the German has *Christenheit*; Ap VII 32; XII 141; XIII 23; XVI 4; XX 4; XXI 40; XXVIII 16). The adversaries are disturbing the church with their impious dogmas (Ap XXI 43;

XXIII 2; XXIV 92). The bishops are dividing the church (Ap XIV 2). The church suffers in being deprived of part of the Sacrament (Ap XXIII 6 *bis*). In the fourteenth and succeeding centuries darkness has been imported into the church through the canonical legislation of Boniface VIII, which has been a great plague to the church (Tractate 34, 37). Endless perils threaten to destroy the church (Ap VII 9). The church's welfare is something to be sought (Ap Introduction 16; XX 6; XXI 42), although the adversaries are not concerned about it (Ap XXI 42, 43). The pretensions of the Papacy are pernicious to the church (Tractate 4, 55, 59). The monks and bishops are defrauding the church by misusing the financial resources that she has to carry on her work (Ap XXVII 6; Tractate 80, 81, 83). Antichrist reigns within the church (Tractate 39, 40).

An instructive passage is Apology, Article IV, 232. In Colossians 3, when St. Paul speaks about ἀγάπη, he is not thinking of personal perfection, but of the mutual organizational integrity of the church; so he commands that love be practiced in the church, lest the church burst into various schisms and factions and heretical movements arise out of the schisms. The sequence of events here sketched is significant; even more so is the fact that the Apology here espouses the sound patristic interpretation of ἀγάπη as the maintenance of fraternal concord within the church at every level rather than the practice of individualistic affection and charity. There are heretical movements in the historical church, many of them the result of the *odium doctorum* (242).

Faith is directly or indirectly involved in all the descriptions of the church strictly considered, but it is not in every case explicitly referred to: *Congregatio sanctorum in qua evangelium pure docetur et recte administrantur sacramenta* (AC VII 1, Latin; Ap VII 16); *congregatio sanctorum et vere credentium* (AC VIII 1); *congregatio sanctorum qui vere credunt evangelio Christi et habent Spiritum Sanctum* (Ap VII 28); *congregatio sanctorum qui habent inter se societatem ejusdem evangelii seu doctrinae et ejusdem Spiritus Sancti, qui corda eorum renovat, sanctificat, et gubernat* (Ap VII 7); *die Versammlung aller Gläubigen, bei welchen das Evangelium rein gepredigt und die heiligen Sakrament*

laut des Evangelii gereicht werden (Ac VII 1, German); die Versammlung aller Gläubigen und Heiligen (AC VIII 1).

This *congregatio* or *Versammlung* is the *vera ecclesia*. "True church" here has no denominational implication. The hypocrites and evil ones are associates (*socii*) of this true church according to the external rites, but they are not a part of the living body of Christ, as even the adversaries had conceded in agreeing that the wicked were dead members of Christ's body (Ap VII 12). St. Matthew (3:12) teaches that the true church will be separated from the people of the Jews (Ap VII 19). The true church is a pillar of the truth and does not err from the foundation (Ap VII 2). Wherever the true church is, there is necessarily the right of choosing and ordaining sacred ministers (Tractate 67). The one reference in the Symbols to the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers asserts that St. Peter's word, "You are a royal priesthood," pertains to the true church; and since it alone has the priesthood, it certainly has the right to choose and ordain sacred ministers (Tractate 69). It should be noted that the priesthood is the common possession of the church and that individuals share in the common priesthood *as members of the church*, the new Israel.

The true church is also the body of Christ, and Christ is the church's Head (Ap VII 5, 12, 29; compare IV 400; Tractate 67). The *corpus Christi* has as its counterpart a *corpus diaboli* (Ap VII 29).

The distinction between the church in the strict sense (*proprie dicta*) and the church in the broad sense (*large dicta*; the Symbols do not use the term *improprie dicta*) was not new in the sixteenth century (Ap VII 28; compare 16). Canon law spoke of the church in the broad sense of the term as comprising good and bad people and affirmed that the evil ones were in the church *nomine sed non re*, whereas the good people were in the church *re et nomine* (Ap VII 10).

The church is in a real sense the kingdom of Christ (Ap VII 16 *bis*, 17), although we cannot in this world equate the two (Ap VII 13, 17—19, 21). Because the kingdom of Christ is not revealed, the impious are mixed in with the church and hold offices in the church. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom which consists in knowledge of God, fear of God, and faith in God and

which is equated with the perfection of the Gospel and eternal life (Ap XVI 2, 7; XXVII 27). Christ by means of His Spirit is always giving life to His kingdom, whether it be revealed or whether it be hidden under the cross, for Christ is the same, who is now glorified, whereas before He was afflicted; with this the parables of Christ agree (Ap VII 18, 45). The kingdom of Christ in the empirical church is clearly scattered throughout the whole world, and today there are many churches in the Orient who seek neither ordination nor confirmation of orders from the Bishop of Rome (Tractate 16).

The unity of the church (*unitas ecclesiae*) is carefully differentiated from the organizational integrity of the church (*communis integritas ecclesiae*) and harmony in the church (*concordia, caritas, tranquillitas in ecclesia*). The use of *Einigkeit* in the German Book of Concord for both *unitas* and *concordia* has obscured this differentiation, although even here the genitive *der Kirche* is used where *Einigkeit* means *unitas* and the prepositional phrase *in der Kirche* is used where *Einigkeit* means *concordia* or its synonyms. Justus Jonas' paraphrase of the Apology, Article IV, 232 and 234, appears to be an exception, but the context, as well as the term *integritas*, clearly indicates that the external integrity of the church is intended. It was at this point that one of the sharpest differences arose between the evangelicals and the papalist adversaries. To the true unity of the church, said the former, it is enough to agree with one another in the teaching of the Gospel and in the administration of the Sacraments, and it is not necessary that human traditions—among which they included the polity of the church—be everywhere alike (AC VII 2; XXVI 44, quoting St. Gregory; XXVIII 74; compare Ap VII 33, 34, 46; XV 18). In setting up these minimum requirements for the church's unity, the Lutherans were not contemplating a humanly devised, external unification; they were talking about true, that is, spiritual, unity, without which faith cannot exist in the heart or the heart cannot be righteous before God (Ap VII 31). "Spiritual" in the vocabulary of the Symbols means "worked by the Spirit of God," hence the quotation from Ephesians 4 in Augsburg Confession, Article VII.

The objective of human institutions, ordinances, and ceremonies is organizational integrity and external union (or at least inter-

communion) at the individual and corporate levels in the bonds of fraternal charity. Whereas *unitas* is God-given, Christians have a role in this lesser, external unification. If love were practiced, the churches would be made tranquil and peace would come to the State (Ap IV 236). The key words are (*bonus*) *ordo*, (*gute*) *Ordnung* (AC XV 1; XXVI 40; Ap IV 288; XV 1, 13; XXVIII 15), frequently coupled with *tranquillitas*; *integritas* (*communis*) (Ap IV 232, 234); *concordia* (AC Introduction passim; Ap IV 232); *dilectio* (*ibid.*); *reconciliatio* (AC Introduction 19, Latin); and εὐταξία (Ap XV 22). (Compare AC Epilog to XXI, German.)

The opposite of *concordia* and *integritas* is *dissensio*, *Zwiespalt* (AC Introduction 2, 6, German; Ap XII 90); *schisma*, *Trennung* (AC XXVI 43; XXVIII 78; Ap IV 232; VII 49; XXIII 59; Tractate 72); and *Unordnung* (AC XXVIII 55). The division between the papalist and Lutheran parties is at this stage a *dissensio*, a *schisma*; it has come about through the withdrawal of the Lutherans from obedience to the canonical bishops by the action of the Lutherans in ordaining priests of their own, but for this the impiety and tyranny of the bishops must be blamed (Tractate 72). Beyond schism lie factions and heresies (AC IV 232). In the use of the term "heretic" here (as in Ap IV 242), there is still primarily a sense of its etymological significance, "sectary, division maker," although elsewhere (AC I 5; Ap XXIV 96 of Arius for his Arianism) it is used of those who denied a cardinal doctrine of the faith.

We have thus seen that in the Melancthonian documents the term "church" is used in a vast variety of ways that cannot be reduced to any simple pattern. The problem that we have here is real. The resolution of the problem may lie in the Apology, Article VII, 19. Christ, says Melancthon, is talking about the way the church looks (*de specie ecclesiae dicit*) when He says: "The kingdom of heaven is like a net or like ten virgins." He would teach us that the church is covered up (*tectam*) by the vast number of evil people, so that this scandal does not offend the pious and so that also we might know that the Word and the Sacraments are effective even if they are ministered by evil people.

Summarizing: In this world we can hope to know only the church in her present aspect, hated by her foes, betrayed by the false sons

within her pale, sore oppressed by the vast number of evil persons in her membership, rent asunder by schisms, distressed by heresies, weeping amid the toil and tribulation and tumult of her warfare. To want to know any other kind of church is presumption, a hankering after a *theologia gloriae* instead of the *theologia crucis* that is our earthly lot. The case of the church is parallel to that of the individual Christian. When we look at one another, each sees the other person in his unesthetic twentieth-century garb, with annoying mannerisms and habitual sins, with the constant dying of his mortal flesh apparent in wrinkling skin, trifocal spectacles, balding pate, hoarse voice, and the symptoms and syndromes of the ailments he describes. That person will be completely different in the resurrection, so completely different that our past experience furnishes no basis, according to the Scriptures, for imagining what he will be—or what even in this moment he really is in the sight of the heavenly Father, who, as He looks upon that person, sees him "in Christ."

IV

The ecclesiology of the Formula of Concord is significant not because it adds anything substantially new to the ecclesiology of the older Symbols—it does not—but because it comes out of a period in which the ecclesiological problem had been intensified by the march of events. The schism between the Lutheran and the papalist parties had hardened. The Scholastic theology against which the blessed reformers had protested had achieved an organizational embodiment at the Council of Trent in the Roman Catholic Church. The Lutheran movement had barely been rescued from disintegration by the valiant efforts of the theologians and princes. In the areas affected by the more radical reformations the fragmentation of Western Christianity was going on apace.

The plural *Kirchen* occurs frequently in the Formula. The introductions to the Formula and to the Book of Concord refer to "the churches in which the Apostles themselves planted the pure and unalloyed Word of God" (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 4, line 43; p. 743, line 30). The term is used in a very general sense in Article X, when it is stipulated that the churches will not condemn one another because of difference in ceremonies when one has more or less of them (FC SD X 31). The sense is equally

general in the declaration of Article VII that although our Lord spoke the words of institution but once, they are nevertheless effective down to the present day and until His advent and they bring about the presence of His body and blood in the Eucharist of the churches—which the Latin renders very significantly *per omnes mensas ecclesiae*, “throughout all the altars of the church” (FC SD VII 78). Provincial and national churches are clearly meant in the references to “entire churches within or outside the Holy Empire of the German Nation” in the introductions (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 11, line 55; p. 756, line 5). A similar intention seems to be present in the reference to the pious and innocent people also in those churches “which have, to be sure, not come to an agreement with us” (*ibid.*, p. 12, line 8; p. 756, line 19), and in the reference to the electors, princes, and estates which had permitted their churches to be reformed in accordance with the Word of God (FC SD Introduction 3).

Kirchen is used with specific reference to the Lutheran churches (FC SD VII 111), described as the churches of the Augsburg Confession (FC SD Summary Concept 2, 8; SD II 2, 73; SD VII 41), the pure churches (FC SD Summary Concept 9), the evangelical churches (FC SD Introduction 7; Summary Concept 11), the Reformed churches, which through their adoption of the Augsburg Confession are differentiated from the Papists and from other rejected and condemned sects and heresies (FC SD Summary Concept 5), the Christian churches (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 14, line 7; p. 760, line 3; FC SD Introduction 3), and “our churches” (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 4, lines 23 et passim; p. 756, line 10; p. 758, line 20; FC SD Summary Concept 10). Only once is there a reference in the Formula—or anywhere else in the Symbols—to *unsere Kirche*; it occurs in Article X, where the adversaries of the truth are pictured as suppressing the pure doctrine either through force and coercion or through some slippery device and making it easy once more to insinuate their false doctrine into “our church” (FC SD X 3). This may not be the recognition of the denominational character of the Lutheran Church that it appears on the face of it to be. It may be a typographical or editorial error. The Latin significantly has the plural that we should otherwise expect, *ecclesias nostras*, and the German would become plural

by the addition of an "n." Furthermore, the Leipzig-Altzelle Interim of December 1548, which is the document that precipitated the Adiaphoristic Controversy settled by Article X, affected only one territorial church, the Church of Saxony.

There are two references to the "universal orthodox church of Christ (*allgemeine rechtlebrende Kirche Christi*)" in the introductions (*Bekennnisschriften*, p. 3, line 46; page 742, line 11). Here the authors have in mind the historic orthodox church of the entire past. Specifically, the passage says that the evangelical churches recognized the doctrinal content of the Augsburg Confession as being the ancient consensus which the universal orthodox Church of Christ had believed and defended against many heresies and errors. With the qualification "primitive (*erste*)" and "ancient (*alte*)," the orthodox church is the church of the patristic era, when the Creeds were being formulated; the Formula rejects and anathematizes all heresies and errors which were rejected and condemned in the primitive, ancient orthodox church (FC SD Summary Concept 17).

Significantly, it is in Articles VII (on the Holy Eucharist) and VIII (on the Person of Christ) that we have references to the *whole* church. The Sacramentarian enthusiasts are poking fun in an inappropriate and poisonous fashion at the Lord Jesus Christ, at St. Paul, and at the whole church (FC SD VII 67). The similes used by the whole ancient church to illustrate the personal union of the two natures in our Lord are cited (FC SD VIII 64), and the Lutheran theologians appeal to the consistent rule of the whole ancient orthodox church that the two natures were conjoined in a personal union (57, 59, 61, 64).

"The Christian Church" is the historic church. The Catholic Creeds are clear and consistent denials of all those heresies which arose in the Christian Church (FC SD Summary Concept 4). In opposition to the anathematized heresy of Paul of Samosata, who denied the deity of our Lord, the Christian Church has always and simply believed and held that our Lord is both God and man (FC SD VIII 17). So, too, the pure doctrine of the Christian Church is appealed to in affirming the positive theses of Articles III (On the Righteousness of Faith) and IV (On Good Works) over against the negative antitheses (FC Ep III 3; IV 5) and again

in setting forth the teaching about the Person of Christ (FC Ep VIII 4). "The Christian Church" includes the contemporary empirical church; we do not understand St. Matthew 28:19 as asserting that only the deity of our Lord is present with us in the Christian Church and community (*christliche Kirche und Gemein*) (FC SD VIII 77).

With one exception, *Christenheit* as a designation of the church occurs in the Formula only in quotations from the Catechisms; the exception is the description of anti-Trinitarianism as a new sect, previously unheard of in Christendom (FC Ep XII 29).

The Catalog of Testimonies sheds some light on the concept of the church in the minds of the authors of the Formula when it draws an interesting distinction by appealing to the ancient pure church and the Fathers (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 1103, lines 5, 11, 28; p. 1104, lines 1, 6; p. 1114, line 1) or the holy Fathers of the ancient pure church (*ibid.*, line 42). (The Latin uses the comparative *purior*, the "purer" church and fathers.)

The adjectival use of *Kirchen* in combinations is infrequent but instructive. We have *Kirchendiener* (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 8, lines 4, 25; p. 12, line 23; p. 748, line 35; p. 749, line 17; FC Ep XII 12; SD I 58; XII 16) in contexts that indicate that "ministers of the church" is clearly a technical term for the clergy, in distinction to teachers in *ludi* and *scholae* and theological professors, who could, like Melancthon and Chemnitz at Wittenberg, be laymen. *Kirchendienst* (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 759, line 10; FC Ep XII 22; SD XII 30) is the sacred ministry, "the Word preached and spoken." *Kirchengebräuche* occurs in the title of Article X in the Epitome and Solid Declaration. *Kirchenlehre* occurs in the phrase *dieser Kirchenlehre halber* (rendered instructively in the Latin as *doctrinae capita in nostris ecclesiis hactenus proposita*) with reference to the Smalcald synod of 1537, which considered what was to be presented at the projected Council of Mantua with reference to the Evangelical position (FC SD VII 17). *Kirchenlehrer* designates "Doctors of the Church" (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 755, line 8; FC Ep VII 15; SD V 3; VIII 22; IX 1).

Gemeinschaft, "communion," occurs in Article VII. In contrast to Luther's conception of the meaning of *spiritualiter* as referring to the intangible and illocal mode of Christ's presence whereby He

neither occupies nor vacates space, the Sacramentarians understand *spiritualiter* as meaning nothing more than the "spiritual" communion brought about when in spirit the truly faithful are by faith incorporated into Christ the Lord and become true "spiritual" members of His body (SD VII 104). A little farther on there is a reference to the godless epicureans and mockers of God's Word who are in the external communion of the church.

The church is viewed as a clearly historical and empirical phenomenon in passages that speak of the "primitive" church, that is, the church of the post-Apostolic period (FC Ep Summary Concept 3), or the "ancient" church, that is, the church which, assembled in the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431, the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, and subsequent ecumenical and interprovincial councils, appealed to the Council of Nicaea and its Decree and Creed as a dependable and defensible witness to the truth (FC SD Summary Concept 5). A parallel passage embodies the observation that the ancient doctors of the church before and after Chalcedon in discussing the Incarnation frequently used the term *mixtio* as a synonym for *unio personalis* (FC SD VIII 18); they have in mind such men as SS. Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine. In contrast to the professors of heresy and false doctrine, the church of the era of the Catholic Creeds is described as the orthodox and genuine (*wahrhaftig*) church (FC Ep Summary Concept 3).

Kirche is sometimes a very general term. A criterion to be employed in judging humanly instituted rites and ceremonies is their probable usefulness (FC SD X 30) for building up (*Erbauung*) the church (9). Christ is present with His church and community on earth as Mediator, Head, King, and High Priest (FC SD VIII 78).

Kirche is a territorial church when St. Paul is described as recommending the article concerning Christian liberty most earnestly to his church in Galatia (FC SD X 15). The empirical church is obviously meant when the superscription of the Catholic Creeds declares that they are unanimously used (*einträchtiglich gebraucht*) in the church (*Bekenntnisschriften*, pp. 19, 21). The church has ministers who conceivably are not themselves regenerate,

renewed, righteous, and pious (FC Ep XII 27). A church should not anathematize another because of a difference in quantity of humanly instituted ceremonies, as long as a united consensus exists in the doctrine and in all the articles thereof and in the right use of the Holy Sacraments (FC Ep X 7). Certain doctrinal positions are to be preserved with great diligence in the church (FC Ep V 2), whereas some other articles and tenets are intolerable (FC Ep XII 3; SD IV 2, 40). Unnecessary and unprofitable theological wrangling can confuse the church (FC SD Summary Concept 15). The church, according to her circumstances, can in Christian liberty elect to make use of one or more humanly instituted ceremonies (FC Ep X 12). The idea can be entertained in the church that human ordinances and institutions are divine worship or a part of it (FC Ep X 8). Such human ordinances have been introduced into the church in the interest of good order, Christian discipline, and evangelical well-being in the church (FC Ep X 1; SD X 1, 7). Such ordinances can be foisted on the church by coercion (FC SD X 15). The church is co-ordinated with such empirical phenomena as the state (*Polizei*), the government (*Regiment*), and the home (*Haushaltung*) (FC SD XII 2, 9).

There is no observable expansion of meaning when the church is described as the Church of God. The preaching of both the Gospel and the Law has existed in the Church of God from the beginning of the world and ought to continue to the world's end (FC SD V 23, 24). Heresies and errors contrary to the Catholic Creeds have been introduced into the Church of God, but we formally reject them (FC Ep Summary Concept 3). The publication of the Apology was designed to forestall the insinuation of anathematized errors into the Church of God under the pretext of the Augsburg Confession (FC SD Summary Concept 6). Confusion of Law and Gospel could reopen a door to the Papacy in the Church of God (FC SD V 27). In the pre-Reformation Church of God great controversies had occurred (FC SD Introduction 4). Uncertainty on the part of her clergy as to the substantial or accidental character of original sin will never help the Church of God achieve permanent peace (FC SD I 58). The issues decided by the Formula are of such importance that the rejected opinions neither can nor should be tolerated in the

Church of God, much less defended or supported (FC SD Introduction 9). The enthusiasts are to be censured with all earnestness and energy for denying that God uses the means of grace in the work of sanctification and are not to be tolerated in the Church of God (FC SD II 80). The Church of God is to be protected against the Christological heresy of Zwingli's *alloeosis* doctrine (FC SD VIII 38). Blessed Martin Luther has extensively reminded the Church of God what one should believe about ceremonies (FC SD X 24). The rule, *Nil habet rationem sacramenti extra usum a Christo institutum*, is a useful one in the Church of God (FC SD VII 86). The article of election provides glorious evidence that the Church of God will exist and persist against all the gates of hell; it also teaches which the right Church of God is, so that we shall not be scandalized by the great prestige of the false church (FC SD XI 50). The use of the "form of sound words" will obviate much quarreling and will preserve the church (Latin: the Church of God) from much scandal (FC SD IV 36).

The only reference to the church which suggests that she extends beyond time is a passing comment in Article II; by the public proclamation of the holy, sole-saving Gospel of God's eternal Son, our only Savior and Sanctifier Jesus Christ, God is gathering an eternal church for Himself out of the human race and works in the hearts of men true repentance and knowledge of sins and true faith in the Son of God, and God wills to call men to eternal bliss, draw them to Himself, convert, beget them anew, and hallow them through no other means than through His holy Word, in that we hear it preached or read it and in that we use the Sacraments according to His Word (FC SD II 50). "Church" is probably used in this passage in an imprecise sense.

The identity of the church with the people of God in the Old Testament is implied but not stressed (FC SD I 45; V 23, 24).

The church as the body of Christ likewise receives no emphasis. Article VII *rejects* the Sacramentarian Eucharistic theory set forth in the following undocumented quotation: "The bread is the communication of the body of Christ, that is, the bread is that by which the association with the body of Christ, that is, the church, takes place; or, the bread is the means by which the faithful are united to Christ, just as the Word of the Gospel, which is laid hold of

by faith, is a means whereby we are united to Christ spiritually and are inserted into the body of Christ, that is, the church" (FC SD VII 59). The scope of this rejection is obviously not the identification of the church with the body of Christ, but the exclusive reference of a passage (1 Cor. 10:16) which speaks of the Eucharistic body of Christ to a spiritually conceived mystical body of Christ.

The *Einigkeit* that the Formula contemplates is not the *unitas ecclesiae* of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII. While the same noun is used in both cases in German, the Formula never uses it with the genitive *der Kirche*, nor does the Latin translation of the Formula ever render *Einigkeit* with *unitas*. Instead the Latin uses such words as *consensio* (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 4, line 38, *consensus* (FC Ep X 7), *pacificatio* (*ibid.*, p. 8, line 35), and *concordia* (*inter doctores ecclesiae* for *der christlicher Lehrer Einigkeit*, *ibid.*, p. 7, lines 13—15; again *ibid.*, p. 15, lines 6—13, where the *Einigkeit/concordia* embraces non-Lutheran princes and estates; and FC SD Summary Concept 1, 14, where basic, enduring God-pleasing concord in the church is spoken of). The church is thus conceived of as an empirical entity larger than any intercommunicating segment. The oft-quoted passage in the Summary Concept article takes on new significance if this fact is kept in mind: "Basic, enduring concord in the church requires above all things that people have a succinct, unanimous concept and form, containing the common succinct doctrine which the churches of the true Christian religion confess, drawn together out of the Word of God, just as the ancient church universally had her specific symbols for this purpose. But such acceptance should not be given to private documents, but to such books that have been set forth, approved, and received in the name of the churches that confess one teaching and religion." (FC SD Summary Concept 1.) In place of *Einigkeit* one finds on occasion another term, such as "peace" (I 58). The opposite of this *Einigkeit* is represented by "divisions" (*Zweispaltung*, *Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 747, line 6; FC SD I 58; or *Spaltungen*, *Bekenntnisschriften*, page 6, lines 49, 57; p. 13, line 41; FC SD Introduction 7; Summary Concept 19; rendered in Latin as *dissidia*, *distractiones* and *dissensiones*). These

terms are the ones used to describe the differences that have arisen among Lutheran theologians and that the Formula is trying to compose.

The break with that part of the medieval church which submitted to the papal hierarchy and became the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent is described as *Trennung* (*schismata*) (FC Ep Summary Concept 4). The verb is used in the statement: "It is a difficult thing to separate oneself from so many lands and people and to affirm a particular teaching" (FC SD X 23). This would seem to make the actual schism between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church begin with the rejection of the papalist bishops' authority and withdrawal from intercommunion with them. The decisive break can probably be dated to the Colloquy of Worms. The members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy are described as "enemies of the holy Gospel" (FC SD X 2) and as the adversaries (*Gegenteil*) of the Lutherans (XII 3).

For the opinions of those who refuse to accept the evangelical position the Formula uses such terms as "errors" (in the case of the enthusiasts, FC Ep II 13), "heresy" (for the denial of the deity of our Lord, FC SD VIII 17, and other false doctrinal systems rejected by the Catholic Creeds, FC SD Summary Concept 14), "heresies and sects" (to cover all those with whom the Lutherans were not in communion, FC SD Summary Concept 5), and "sects" (for sixteenth-century anti-Trinitarianism, FC Ep XII 29).

If there is a word in the Formula that corresponds to the developing concept of "denomination," it is *Religion*, both in compounds (*Religionsverwandte*, *Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 7, line 12; *Religionsstreite*, *ibid.*, p. 6, line 30; FC SD XI 95), and in its simple uncompounded form. The Lutherans claim *Religion* for themselves (*Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 6, lines 7, 11; p. 15, line 25), reserving "opinion" for the adversaries (*ibid.*, p. 6, line 8). *Religion* describes the historic Christian faith (FC SD Introduction 1), which was abominably eclipsed under the Papacy but cleansed and purified on the basis of the Word of God by Dr. Luther of holy and blessed memory; the Lutheran system (FC SD Summary Concept 20); but also, when qualified by "opposing" or "papistic," the Roman Catholic system (FC SD X 5).

In the church there are laics (FC Ep Summary Concept 5; SD Summary Concept 8) and clerics; the latter, the ministers of the Word, preside over the community of God (FC SD X 10, 25). Together laics and clerics comprise the community of God, *die Gemeinde Gottes* (FC Ep X 10; SD X 27), which the Latin usually reproduces as *ecclesia Dei*. This community exists in space and time (FC Ep X 4; SD X 9), but it cannot be narrowly equated with either a parish or a voluntary local congregation. It has, as the cited passages show, authority to alter humanly instituted ceremonies according to its best lights, as long as it does so in such a way that Christian charity and concern for the weak fellow Christian have full scope (FC Ep X 12; SD X 30). The term is almost interchangeable with "church" (FC SD VIII 77), as the Latin rendering indicates. Refusal to accept the public ministry of the spoken Word and Sacraments, reinforced with the written Word, is contempt both of God's Word and of God's community (FC SD II 57). In Article XII *Gemeinde* is qualified by *rechte christliche* (Ep XII 9, 26; SD XII 34); the combination *rechte christliche Versammlung noch Gemeinde* also occurs (FC SD XII 14). This may reflect the language of the sectarians here condemned.

The Formula commits itself to the ecclesiology of the earlier symbols by citing their expositions of this article with approval (for instance in FC SD V 15; VII 11; X 19—22).

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NOTES

1. On the *Epistula apostolorum* see Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1951), I, 25, 150—153, and the literature there cited.
2. Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 6.
3. Quasten, p. 191.
4. Cyprian, *Epistola LXX ad Januarium*, 2.
5. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion*, LXXII.
6. The text of the Creed of Nicetas is reproduced from A. E. Burn, *Niceta of Remesiana* (Cambridge, 1905), p. lxxxiv, in F. J. Badcock, *The History of the Creeds*, 2d ed. (London: S. P. C. K., 1938), p. 72, and by J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), p. 175.
7. R. H. Connolly (editor), *The Explanatio Symboli ad Initiandos* (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), p. 10.
8. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Κατηχήσεις φωτισμένων*, XVIII, 26.
9. Augustine, *De fide et symbolo*, X, 21 (Burleigh's translation).
10. Rufinus, *Commentarius in symbolum apostolorum*, 39.

11. The first commentator on the Baptismal Creed in modern times to revive the neuter interpretation of *sanctorum* seems to have been the Lutheran scholar Theodor Zahn, in *Das apostolische Symbolum* (Erlangen, 1893), pp. 88 ff. For recent discussions of this question and references to earlier literature, see Badcock, pp. 243—272; Kelly, pp. 388—397; and Werner Elert, *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsächlich des Ostens* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1954), pp. 5—16, 166—181.
12. Kelly, p. 390.
13. W. A., 2, 190.
14. Ivo of Chartres, *Sermo XXIII* (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CLXII, 606): "Sanctorum communionem; id est ecclesiasticorum sacramentorum veritatem, cui communicaverunt sancti, qui in unitate fidei de hac vita migraverunt."
15. Peter Abelard, *Explanatio symboli quod dicitur Apostolorum* (Migne, P. L., CLXXVIII, 629—630): "Sanctorum communionem. Hoc est illam, qua sancti efficiuntur vel in sanctitate confirmantur, divini scilicet sacramenti participatione; vel communem Ecclesiae fidem, sive charitatis unionem. Possumus et *sanctorum* dicere neutraliter, id est sanctificati panis et vini in sacramentam altaris."
16. Kelly, p. 394.
17. Amalarius of Trèves, *Epistola de caeremoniis baptismi* (Migne, P. L., XCIX, 896): "Sanctorum communionem, in vinculo pacis unitatem Spiritus servare credo."
18. Magnus of Sens, *Libellus de mysterio baptismi*, in Kelly, p. 394.
19. W. A., 54, 229—230.
20. W. A., 50, 624—625.
21. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, herausgegeben im Gedenkjahr der Augsburgischen Konfession 1930*, 2d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952), p. 725. This edition (*Jubiläumsausgabe*) is hereafter referred to in this article as *Bekenntnisschriften*.
22. "Bugenhagen, in his introduction to Palladius' Enchiridion . . . combines the examination of children and other communicants in that he declares the words of Luther's Small Catechism to be the confession upon which the child of eight years and the centenarian alike are admitted to the Communion. . . . The children [in sixteenth-century Denmark] were often admitted to the Communion when they were only six to seven years of age." (Edmund Belfour, "The History of the Liturgy in the Lutheran Church in Denmark," in *Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association* [Pittsburgh: The Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906], II, 68—69.) Of Sweden, Oscar Quensel says: "It seems that even eight and nine year olds were seen among the communicants as late as the 1570's" (*Bidrag till svenska liturgiens historia* [Upsala: Akademiska Boktryckeriet, 1890], II, 88). By way of documentation he quotes in note 2 on the cited page a rule of what appears to be the *Kyrkoordning* of 1571: "Again, no children younger than nine or at least eight years [are to be admitted to the Sacrament], because a younger child cannot have the requisite knowledge (*kunna föga beskedh weta*) about the Sacrament." By the end of the seventeenth century, in contrast, German Lutheranism had raised the age of Confirmation (and first Holy Communion), in some cases as high as 15 and 16 (Paul Graff, *Geschichte der Auflösung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1937—1939], I, 326). At the same time we also find an old Lutheran tradition which fixed twelve as the appropriate age in view of the account of the Child Jesus in the Temple at the age of twelve;

it is demonstrable as late as 1750 (Karl Ramge, "Die Sakramentsnot im Hinblick auf Taufe, Konfirmation und Beichte," in *Die Hochkirche*, XIV [1932], 124). Twelve is the age prescribed in the Schwäbisch-Hall Church Order of 1615 (Graff, I, 314). Even as late as the beginning of the last century, children were still being admitted to Holy Confirmation (and Holy Communion) at the age of eight and nine "in many parts of Germany" (Fr. L. Rein[h]old, *Ideen über das Aeußere der evangelischen Gottesverehrung* [Neustrelitz, 1805], p. 179; quoted in Graff, II, 246). It is interesting to note that in his *Institutio christianae religionis* of 1536, John Calvin directed that "puer decennis ecclesiae se offerret . . . teste et spectante ecclesia profiterentur" (quoted in Graff, I, 315, n. 2). While the Leipzig-Altzelle Interim of 1548, which Melancthon helped to draft, directed that Holy Confirmation be imparted to fourteen-year-olds, it explicitly stipulated: "Doch soll diese Zahl der Jahre nicht also verstanden werden, dass nicht die Kinder auch in jüngern Jahren, so sie im Catechismo ziemlich unterrichtet sind, zur Beicht und Sakrament von ihren Aeltern sollen gebracht werden; sondern ihre Aeltern sollen sie zeitlicher zur Beicht und Sacrament gewöhnen, laut des Spruchs: lasset die Kinder zu mir kommen, solcher ist das Himmelreich. Aber die Confirmatio soll geschehen in verständigen Jahren, darin sie ihren Glauben und Zusage besser verstehen." Carl Gottlieb Bretschneider [ed.], *Corpus Reformatorum*, VII [Halle-in-Saxony: C. A. Schwetschke et Filius, 1840], cols. 200—201, 261.) Blessed Martin Luther is cautious on the whole issue; while refusing to affirm the necessity of the Eucharist in the case of children, he says in 1532 of 1 Corinthians 11, 28: "Non autem impedit quin etiam pueris possit sacramentum altaris dari" (W. A., Tischreden, 1, No. 365, p. 157). An undated utterance similarly says with reference to very small children (*kleinen Kinderlin*): "Das ist Unrecht, dass sie es den Kindern nöthig zur Seligkeit achten, das Sacrament reichen; obs wol nicht Sünde sei, denn es S. Cyprianus auch gethan" (W. A., Tischreden, 6, No. 6777, p. 182). But in these passages he presumably has in mind the administration of Holy Communion to children under the age of reason, which contemporary law put at seven years. The entire question of the age of first Holy Communion in the practice of the Lutheran Reformers needs careful investigation.