

The Third Part of Martin Luther's Great Confession Concerning Christ's Supper (1528)

A Theological Last Will and Testament

Luther on Theology on the Judgment Day

I see that schisms and errors are increasing proportionately with the passage of time, and that there is no end to the rage and fury of Satan. Hence lest any persons during my lifetime or after my death appeal to me or misuse my writings to confirm their error, as the sacramentarian and baptist fanatics are already beginning to do, I desire with this treatise to confess my faith before God and all the world, point by point. I am determined to abide by it until my death and (so help me God!) in this faith to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence if any one shall say after my death, "If Luther were living now, he would teach and hold this or that article differently, for he did not consider it sufficiently," etc., let me say once and for all that by the grace of God I have most diligently traced all these articles through the Scriptures, have examined them again and again in the light thereof, and have wanted to defend all of them as certainly as I have now defended the sacrament of the altar. I am not drunk or irresponsible. I know what I am saying, and I well realize what this will mean for me before the Last Judgment at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let no one make this out to be a joke or idle talk; I am in dead earnest, since by the grace of God I have learned to know a great deal about Satan. If he can twist and pervert the Word of God and the Scriptures, what will he not be able to do with my or someone else's words? ^{27a1}

The Trinity

First, I believe with my whole heart the sublime article of the majesty of God, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons, are by nature one true and genuine God, the Maker of heaven and earth; in complete opposition to the Arians, Macedonians, Sabellians,²⁷² and similar heretics, Genesis 1[:1]. All this has been maintained up to this time both in the Roman Church and among Christian churches throughout the whole world.

Christology

Secondly, I believe and know that Scripture teaches us that the second person in the Godhead, viz. the Son, alone became true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit without the cooperation of man, and was born of the pure, holy Virgin Mary as of a real natural mother, all of

²⁷¹ This paragraph is quoted in the *Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, VII, 29 ff.

²⁷² Of the heresies listed here only Arianism is mentioned by name in the *Book of Concord*, e.g. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. I. Cf. p. 120, n. 198, above. Macedonianism, named after Macedonius, a fourth century archbishop of Constantinople, affirmed that the Holy Spirit is less than divine, not one of the divine persons; this view was condemned at a council at Alexandria in 362 and subsequently. Sabellianism, a third century form of Modal Monarchianism, treated the terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not as distinct divine persons but simply as different modes or even successive phases of the one God. It was Arius' accusation of Sabellianism against his bishop which opened the controversy leading to the Council of Nicaea, 325, where both Arianism and Sabellianism were excluded.

which St. Luke clearly describes and the prophets foretold;²⁷³ so that neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit became man, as certain heretics have taught.²⁷⁴

Also that God the Son assumed not a body without a soul, as certain heretics have taught,²⁷⁵ but also the soul, i.e. full, complete humanity, and was born the promised true seed or child of Abraham and of David and the son of Mary by nature, in every way and form a true man, as I am myself and every other man, except that he came without sin, by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary alone.

And that this man became true God, as one eternal, indivisible person, of God and man, so that Mary the holy Virgin is a real, true mother not only of the man Christ, as the Nestorians teach,²⁷⁶ but also of the Son of God, as Luke says [1:35], “The child to be born of you will be called the Son of God,” i.e. my Lord and the Lord of all, Jesus Christ, the only, true Son by nature of God and of Mary, true God and true man.

I believe also that this Son of God and of Mary, our Lord Jesus Christ, suffered for us poor sinners, was crucified, dead, and buried, in order that he might redeem us from sin, death, and the eternal wrath of God by his innocent blood; and that on the third day he arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, Lord over all lords, King over all kings and over all creatures in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, over death and life, over sin and righteousness.

Humanity and Original Sin

For I confess and am able to prove from Scripture that all men have descended from one man, Adam; and from this man, through their birth, they acquire and inherit the fall, guilt and sin, which the same Adam, through the wickedness of the devil, committed in paradise; and thus all men along with him are born, live, and die altogether in sin, and would necessarily be guilty of eternal death if Jesus Christ had not come to our aid and taken upon himself this guilt and sin as an innocent lamb, paid for us by his sufferings, and if he did not still intercede and plead for us as a faithful, merciful Mediator, Savior, and the only Priest and Bishop of our souls.

I herewith reject and condemn as sheer error all doctrines which glorify our free will,²⁷⁷ as diametrically contrary to the help and grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. Outside of Christ death and sin are our masters and the devil is our god and lord, and there is no power or ability, no cleverness or reason, with which we can prepare ourselves for righteousness and life or seek after it. On the contrary, we must remain the dupes and captives of sin and the property of the devil to do and to think what pleases them and what is contrary to God and his commandments.²⁷⁸

Thus I condemn also both the new and the old Pelagians²⁷⁹ who will not admit original sin to be sin, but make it an infirmity or defect. But since death has passed to all men, original sin must

²⁷³ Cf. Luke 1:26 ff. With the Middle Ages generally, Luther found the virgin birth foretold in other prophecies besides Isa. 7:14, e.g. Isa. 9:6 (cf. *WA* 40^{III}, 680), but eventually he rejected most of those interpretations as farfetched.

²⁷⁴ The second and third century Patripassians (Monarchians) Noetus and Praxeas, opposed by Tertullian, taught the absolute unity of God in such a way as to affirm that the Father in the person of Jesus suffered on the cross. Montanus, a second century prophet, claimed to be the incarnation of the Holy Spirit.

²⁷⁵ Apollinaris in the fourth century taught that the Word assumed human flesh and biological life (*psuchē*) but not a human higher soul or mind. Apollinarianism was condemned in the 370's.

²⁷⁶ On Nestorianism see p. 212, n. 75, p. 292, n. 218.

²⁷⁷ Luther is thinking particularly of Scotist and Occamist scholasticism, cf. *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, 1517. LW 31, 9 ff., and Erasmus' humanism, cf. *Bondage of the Will*, 1525. LCC 17, 101 ff. Erasmus in turn influenced many of the left-wing reformers.

²⁷⁸ This paragraph is quoted in the *Formula of Concord*. Solid Declaration, II, 43.

²⁷⁹ Pelagianism is condemned in the *Augsburg Confession*, Arts. II and XVIII. Pelagius, a fifth century heretic opposed especially by Augustine, taught that man's salvation was due to the faithful exercise of his free will. Though Pelagianism was

be not merely an infirmity but enormous sin, as St. Paul says, “The wages of sin is death” [Rom. 6:23], and again, “Sin is the sting of death” [1 Cor. 15:56]. So also David says in Psalm 51[:5], “Behold, I was conceived in sin, and in sin did my mother bear me.” He does not say, “My mother conceived me with sin,” but, “I—I myself—I was conceived in sin, and in sin did my mother bear me,” i.e. in my mother’s womb I have grown from sinful seed, as the Hebrew text signifies.

On Monastic Orders

Next, I reject and condemn also as sheer deceptions and errors of the devil all monastic orders, rules, cloisters, religious foundations, and all such things devised and instituted by men beyond and apart from Scripture, bound by vows and obligations,²⁸⁰ although many great saints have lived in them, and as the elect of God are misled by them even at this time, yet finally by faith in Jesus Christ have been redeemed and have escaped. Because these monastic orders, foundations, and sects have been maintained and perpetuated with the idea that by these ways and works men may seek and win salvation, and escape from sin and death, they are all a notorious, abominable blasphemy and denial of the unique aid and grace of our only Savior and Mediator, Jesus Christ. For “there is no other name given by which we must be saved” than this, which is Jesus Christ [Acts 4:12]. And it is impossible that there should be more saviors, ways, or means to be saved than through the one righteousness which our Savior Jesus Christ is and has bestowed upon us, and has offered to God for us as our one mercy seat, Romans 3[:25].²⁸¹

It would be a good thing if monasteries and religious foundations were kept for the purpose of teaching young people God’s Word, the Scriptures, and Christian morals, so that we might train and prepare fine, capable men to become bishops, pastors, and other servants of the church, as well as competent, learned people for civil government, and fine, respectable, learned women capable of keeping house and rearing children in a Christian way. But as a way of seeking salvation, these institutions are all the devil’s doctrine and creed, 1 Timothy 4[:1 ff.], etc.

The True Holy Orders, The Three Estates

But the holy orders and true religious institutions established by God are these three: the office of priest, the estate of marriage, the civil government.²⁸² All who are engaged in the clerical office or ministry of the Word are in a holy, proper, good, and God-pleasing order and estate, such as those who preach, administer sacraments, supervise the common chest, sextons and messengers or servants who serve such persons. These are engaged in works which are altogether holy in God’s sight.

Again, all fathers and mothers who regulate their household wisely and bring up their children to the service of God are engaged in pure holiness, in a holy work and a holy order. Similarly, when children and servants show obedience to their elders and masters, here too is pure holiness, and whoever is thus engaged is a living saint on earth.

condemned at councils in Ephesus, 431, and Orange, 529, subtle versions of this doctrine of self-salvation persistently reappeared. Luther objected to Zwingli’s conception of original sin, cf. p. 16, n. 7, as well as that of the modernist scholastics and the humanists.

²⁸⁰ Cf. *Address to the Nobility*, 1520. LW 44, 179 ff.; *On Monastic Vows*, 1521. LW 44, 251 ff.

²⁸¹ The term “mercy seat,” *propitiatorium* (cf. Luther’s gloss on Rom. 3:25 in *Commentary on Romans*, 1515–1516. WA 56, 37 f.) is more accurately referred to Heb. 9:5, cf. Exod. 25:17 ff.

²⁸² Luther does not always name the “orders,” i.e. the basic social units, in just this fashion. Cf. *Large Catechism*, Fourth Commandment, 158, and Melancthon’s *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XVI.

Moreover, princes and lords, judges, civil officers, state officials, notaries,²⁸³ male and female servants and all who serve such persons, and further, all their obedient subjects—all are engaged in pure holiness and leading a holy life before God. For these three religious institutions or orders are found in God’s Word and commandment; and whatever is contained in God’s Word must be holy, for God’s Word is holy and sanctifies everything connected with it and involved in it.

Above these three institutions and orders is the common order of Christian love, in which one serves not only the three orders, but also serves every needy person in general with all kinds of benevolent deeds, such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, forgiving enemies, praying for all men on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc.²⁸⁴ Behold, all of these are called good and holy works. However, none of these orders is a means of salvation. There remains only one way above them all, viz. faith in Jesus Christ.

For to be holy and to be saved are two entirely different things. We are saved through Christ alone; but we become holy both through this faith and through these divine foundations and orders. Even the godless may have much about them that is holy without being saved thereby. For God wishes us to perform such works to his praise and glory. And all who are saved in the faith of Christ surely do these works and maintain these orders.

What was said about the estate of marriage, however, should also be applied to widows and unmarried women, for they also belong to the domestic sphere. Now if these orders and divine institutions do not save, what can we say about the effects of the devil’s institutions and monasteries, which have sprung up entirely without God’s Word, and further, rage and contend against the one and only way of faith?

The Holy Spirit

Thirdly, I believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is one true God and proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son, yet is a distinct person in the one divine essence and nature. By this Holy Spirit, as a living, eternal, divine gift and endowment, all believers are adorned with faith and other spiritual gifts, raised from the dead, freed from sin, and made joyful and confident, free and secure in their conscience. For this is our assurance if we feel this witness of the Spirit in our hearts, that God wishes to be our Father, forgive our sin, and bestow everlasting life on us.

These are the three persons and one God, who has given himself to us all wholly and completely, with all that he is and has. The Father gives himself to us, with heaven and earth and all the creatures, in order that they may serve us and benefit us. But this gift has become obscured and useless through Adam’s fall. Therefore the Son himself subsequently gave himself and bestowed all his works, sufferings, wisdom, and righteousness, and reconciled us to the Father, in order that restored to life and righteousness, we might also know and have the Father and his gifts.

But because this grace would benefit no one if it remained so profoundly hidden and could not come to us, the Holy Spirit comes and gives himself to us also, wholly and completely. He teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has been manifested to us, helps us receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it. He does

²⁸³ *Amptleute* are civil officers in general. The title *Cantzler* not only means “chancellors” at court but also includes many of their underlings in embassies, etc. *Schreiber* (scribes) include prothonotaries, notaries, and other state officials in small localities.

²⁸⁴ The medieval church had commended the “seven acts of mercy,” consisting of the six acts mentioned in Matt. 25:35 f., plus burying the dead.

this both inwardly and outwardly—inwardly by means of faith and other spiritual gifts, outwardly through the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar, through which as through three means or methods he comes to us and inculcates the sufferings of Christ for the benefit of our salvation.

There is Only One Gospel, On Baptism

Therefore I maintain and know that just as there is no more than one gospel and one Christ, so also there is no more than one baptism. And that baptism in itself is a divine ordinance, as is his gospel also. And just as the gospel is not false or incorrect for the reason that some use it or teach it falsely, or disbelieve it, so also baptism is not false or incorrect even if some have received or administered it without faith, or otherwise misused it. Accordingly, I altogether reject and condemn the teaching of the Anabaptists and Donatists, and all who rebaptize.²⁸⁵

The Sacrament of the Altar

In the same way I also say and confess that in the sacrament of the altar the true body and blood of Christ are orally eaten and drunk in the bread and wine, even if the priests who distribute them or those who receive them do not believe or otherwise misuse the sacrament. It does not rest on man's belief or unbelief but on the Word and ordinance of God—unless they first change God's Word and ordinance and misinterpret them, as the enemies of the sacrament do at the present time. They, indeed, have only bread and wine, for they do not also have the words and instituted ordinance of God but have perverted and changed it according to their own imagination.²⁸⁶

The Holy Christian Church

Next, I believe that there is one holy Christian Church on earth, i.e. the community or number or assembly of all Christians in all the world, the one bride of Christ, and his spiritual body of which he is the only head. The bishops or priests are not her heads or lords or bridegrooms, but servants, friends, and—as the word “bishop” implies—superintendents, guardians, or stewards.²⁸⁷

This Christian Church exists not only in the realm of the Roman Church or pope, but in all the world, as the prophets foretold that the gospel of Christ would spread throughout the world, Psalm 2[:8]; Psalm 19[:4]. Thus this Christian Church is physically dispersed among pope, Turks, Persians, Tartars, but spiritually gathered in one gospel and faith, under one head, i.e. Jesus Christ. For the papacy is assuredly the true realm of Antichrist, the real anti-Christian tyrant, who sits in the temple of God and rules with human commandments, as Christ in Matthew 24[:24] and Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2[:3 f.] declare; although the Turk and all heresies, wherever

²⁸⁵ Cf. *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520, LW 36, 57 ff., and *On Rebaptism*, 1528, LW 40, 229 ff., and *Augsburg Confession*, Art. IX. The Donatists were a rigorist sect in North Africa, originating in the fourth century, who insisted that the holiness of the church must be judged in terms of the moral purity of its members, and that the ministerial acts of an unholy priest were invalid. Baptism in the orthodox church therefore was invalid, and converts from that church had to submit to a true baptism. What the Christian Roman empire thus considered “rebaptism” was made punishable by death in the Code of Justinian, as subversive of Christian society itself, and on that basis the sixteenth century “Anabaptists” were persecuted.

²⁸⁶ This paragraph is quoted in the *Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, VII, 32. Cf. also *Augsburg Confession*, Arts. X and VIII.

²⁸⁷ Cf. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. VII. On the word “bishop,” see *Answer to Goat Emser*, 1521, LW 39, 154 f.; *Misuse of the Mass*, 1522, LW 36, 155 ff.; and *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXVIII.

they may be, are also included in this abomination which according to prophecy will stand in the holy place, but are not to be compared to the papacy.²⁸⁸

In this Christian Church, wherever it exists, is to be found the forgiveness of sins, i.e a kingdom of grace and of true pardon. For in it are found the gospel, baptism, and the sacrament of the altar, in which the forgiveness of sins is offered, obtained, and received. Moreover, Christ and his Spirit and God are there. Outside this Christian Church there is no salvation²⁸⁹ or forgiveness of sins, but everlasting death and damnation; even though there may be a magnificent appearance of holiness and many good works, it is all in vain. But this forgiveness of sins is not to be expected only at one time, as in baptism, as the Novatians teach, but frequently, as often as one needs it, till death.²⁹⁰

Confession and Absolution

For this reason I have a high regard for private confession, for here God's word and absolution are spoken privately and individually to each believer for the forgiveness of his sins, and as often as he desires it he may have recourse to it for this forgiveness, and also for comfort, counsel, and guidance. Thus it is a precious, useful thing for souls, as long as no one is driven to it with laws and commandments but sinners are left free to make use of it, each according to his own need, when and where he wishes; just as we are free to obtain counsel and comfort, guidance and instruction when and where our need or our inclination moves us. And as long as one is not forced to enumerate all sins but only those which oppress him most grievously, or those which a person will mention in any case, as I have discussed in my *Little Book on Prayer*.²⁹¹

But the pardons or indulgences which the papal church has and dispenses are a blasphemous deception, not only because it invents and devises a special forgiveness beyond the general forgiveness which in the whole Christian Church is bestowed through the gospel and the sacrament and thus desecrates and nullifies the general forgiveness, but also because it establishes and bases satisfaction for sins upon the works of men and the merits of saints, whereas only Christ can make and has made satisfaction for us.²⁹²

Prayer for the Dead

As for the dead, since Scripture gives us no information on the subject, I regard it as no sin to pray with free devotion in this or some similar fashion: "Dear God, if this soul is in a condition accessible to mercy, be thou gracious to it." And when this has been done once or twice, let it

²⁸⁸ From 1520 on (cf. *Address to the Nobility*, LW 44, 133) Luther's writings regularly identified the papacy with the Antichrist. On the Turk, see *War Against the Turk*, 1529. LW 46, 181, 196.

²⁸⁹ On Luther's understanding of this famous dictum of Cyprian see *Large Catechism*, Creed, Art. III, 56, where Luther closely connects the church with the forgiveness of sins.

²⁹⁰ Novatian, a third century rigorist, insisted that once baptized, a Christian could not be forgiven a grave sin. Some Left-Wing Protestants revived this teaching, cf. *The Keys*, 1530. LW 40, 374. The *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XII, condemns Novatianism.

²⁹¹ This paragraph was added by Luther when Part III of this treatise was issued separately. On private confession see *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 86 ff.; *The Sacrament—Against the Fanatics*, 1526. LW 36, 354 ff.; the two *Catechisms*, and *Augsburg Confession*, Arts. XI and XXV.

²⁹² A full year before posting his *Ninety-five Theses*, Luther had publicly criticized the current indulgence doctrine. In the *Theses*, 1517, and the *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*, 1518 (LW 31, 25 ff., 83 ff.) Luther questioned the propriety of the practice and the clarity of the doctrine; by late 1520 he rejected indulgences in principle, cf. *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 11; *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles*, 1521. LW 32, 33 f., 64 f.

suffice. For vigils and requiem masses and yearly celebrations of requiems are useless, and are merely the devil's annual fair.²⁹³

Purgatory

Nor have we anything in Scripture concerning purgatory. It too was certainly fabricated by goblins. Therefore, I maintain it is not necessary to believe in it; although all things are possible to God, and he could very well allow souls to be tormented after their departure from the body. But he has caused nothing of this to be spoken or written, therefore he does not wish to have it believed, either. I know of a purgatory, however, in another way, but it would not be proper to teach anything about it in the church, nor on the other hand, to deal with it by means of endowments or vigils.²⁹⁴

Invocation of the Saints

Others before me have attacked the invocation of saints, and this pleases me. I believe, too, that Christ alone should be invoked as our Mediator, a truth which is scriptural and certain. Of the invocation of saints nothing is said in Scripture; therefore it is necessarily uncertain and not to be believed.²⁹⁵

Extreme Unction

If unction were practiced in accordance with the gospel, Mark 6[:13] and James 5[:14], I would let it pass. But to make a sacrament out of it is nonsense. Just as, in place of vigils and masses for the dead, one might well deliver a sermon on death and eternal life, and also pray during the obsequies and meditate upon our own end, as it seems was the practice of the ancients, so it would also be good to visit the sick, pray and admonish, and if anyone wished in addition to anoint him with oil, he should be free to do in the name of God.²⁹⁶

Marriage and Ordination, and Sacraments

Neither is there any need to make sacraments out of marriage and the office of the priesthood. These orders are sufficiently holy in themselves.²⁹⁷ So, too, penance is nothing else than the practice and the power of baptism.²⁹⁸ Thus two sacraments remain, baptism and the

²⁹³ A requiem mass (*seelmesse*) is celebrated on the anniversary, of decease; a vigil is a commemoration on the eve of the anniversary. Luther had questioned the celebration of masses for the dead in Thesis 83 of the *Ninety-five Theses*. LW 31, 32; he sharply criticized the practice in *Address to the Nobility*, 1520. LW 44, 180 f.

²⁹⁴ On Luther's reinterpretation of purgatory see *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*. Thesis 15. LW 31, 125 ff., and *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles*, esp. Arts. 4 and 37. LW 32, 31 f., 95 ff.

²⁹⁵ Precursors in criticizing the cult of saints included high ecclesiastics, e.g. Gerson, popular preachers, e.g. Berthold of Regensburg, would-be reformers, e.g. Huss, humanists, e.g. Erasmus. On Luther's critique see *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*, Thesis 58. LW 31, 212 ff., *Fourteen Consolations*, 1520. LW 42, 121 ff. Cf. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXI. Matters treated in these four paragraphs above are crisply criticized by Luther as a "vermin-brood and poison of idolatries" begotten by the "dragon's tail," the mass, in *Smalcald Articles*, 1537, II, Art. II, 11 ff.; cf. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXIV.

²⁹⁶ Cf. *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 118 ff.

²⁹⁷ Cf. *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 92 ff., 106 ff. Melancthon would not have been averse to calling ordination, properly understood, a sacrament. *Apology*, Art. XIII, 11. He was less willing to call marriage a sacrament. *Ibid.*, 14 ff. Cf. Sasse, *This Is My Body*, p. 25, n. 10.

²⁹⁸ The Wittenbergers wavered for a long time between acknowledging and not acknowledging absolution—part of the Roman Catholic sacrament of penance—as a third sacrament; see the ambiguity on the subject in *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 18 and 124, and Melancthon's explicit recognition of it in *Apology*, Art. XIII, 4. Luther preferred to subsume repentance under baptism, *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 58 f., 61, 69, 81 ff.; *Large Catechism*, Baptism, 74 ff. Cf. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XII.

Lord's Supper, along with the gospel, in which the Holy Spirit richly offers, bestows, and accomplishes the forgiveness of sins.

The Sacrifice of the Mass

As the greatest of all abominations I regard the mass when it is preached or sold as a sacrifice or good work, which is the basis on which all religious foundations and monasteries now stand,²⁹⁹ but, God willing, they shall soon be overthrown. Although I have been a great, grievous, despicable sinner, and wasted my youth in a thoughtless and damnable manner, yet my greatest sins were that I was so holy a monk, and so horribly angered, tortured, and plagued my dear Lord with so many masses for more than fifteen years.³⁰⁰ But praise and thanks be to his unspeakable grace in eternity, that he led me out of this abomination, and still continues to sustain and strengthen me daily in the true faith, despite my great ingratitude.

Accordingly, I have advised and still advise people to abandon religious foundations and monasteries and their vows and come forth into the true Christian orders, in order to escape these abominations of the mass and this blasphemous holiness, i.e. "chastity, poverty, and obedience," by which men imagine they are saved.³⁰¹ Excellent as it was in the early days of the Christian Church to maintain the state of virginity, so abominable is it now when it is used to deny the aid and grace of Christ. It is entirely possible to live in a state of virginity, widowhood, and chastity without these blasphemous abominations.

Adiaphora and Images

Images, bells, eucharistic vestments, church ornaments, altar lights, and the like I regard as things indifferent. Anyone who wishes may omit them. Images or pictures taken from the Scriptures and from good histories, however, I consider very useful yet indifferent and optional. I have no sympathy with the iconoclasts.³⁰²

The Resurrection and the Last Day

Finally, I believe in the resurrection of all the dead at the Last Day, both the godly and the wicked, that each may receive in his body his reward according to his merits. Thus the godly will live eternally with Christ and the wicked will perish eternally with the devil and his angels. I do not agree with those who teach that the devils also will finally be restored to salvation.³⁰³

Conclusion

This is my faith, for so all true Christians believe and so the Holy Scriptures teach us. On subjects which I have treated too briefly here, my other writings will testify sufficiently, especially those which have been published during the last four or five years. I pray that all godly

²⁹⁹ *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 35 f.; *Treatise on the New Testament*, 1520. LW 35, 75 ff. Cf. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXIV.

³⁰⁰ Luther's reminiscences about his life in Roman Catholicism are collected in Scheel, *Dokumente zu Luthers Entwicklung*, (2nd ed.; Tübingen, 1929); cf. also *WA* 58¹, *Gesamtregister*. Interpretations in Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York, 1950), esp. chaps. 1–3; Rupp, *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms* (Chicago, 1951); Fife, *Revolt of Martin Luther* (New York, 1957), esp. chaps. 6–8, 11.

³⁰¹ Luther here lists the traditional monastic vows; "chastity" here means celibacy Cf. *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 74 ff.; *On Monastic Vows*, 1521. LW 44, 251 ff. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXVII.

³⁰² Cf. Luther's *Eight Wittenberg Sermons*, 1522. LW 51, 70 ff., and his writings against Karlstadt and Münzer in 1524–1525, *LW* 40; and *Formula of the Mass*, 1523. LW 53, 30 ff.

³⁰³ Origen in the third century taught that the devils would ultimately be converted. Though this view was condemned at Constantinople in 553, it was revived in the sixteenth century.

hearts will bear me witness of this, and pray for me that I may persevere firmly in this faith to the end of my life. For if in the assault of temptation or the pangs of death I should say something different—which God forbid—let it be disregarded; herewith I declare publicly that it would be incorrect, spoken under the devil’s influence. In this may my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ assist me: blessed be he for ever, Amen.

Luther’s Works 37:360-372