

**THE ETERNAL WORD: A LUTHERAN CONFESSION
FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

ARTICLE IV

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

I. THE PERSON OF THE SAVIOR

Jesus Christ is true God.

The Bible calls Jesus God by giving him divine names.

It is clear from the Bible that Jesus, the promised Messiah or Savior, is true God. The Old Testament gives him divine names. In Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah prophesies that a virgin will give birth to a son (the Savior) and that the son will be called, "Immanuel." According to Matthew 1:23 the word "Immanuel" means "God with us." In Isaiah 9:6, the prophet calls that son, "Mighty God."

The prophet Jeremiah also assures us that Jesus is true God. He gives Jesus the Messiah a divine name by recording God's message: "'The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness'" (Jeremiah 23:5,6). Jeremiah's activity continued until the fifth month of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah whose name means, "justice of the Lord." Zedekiah did not live up to his name. But the Messiah – a righteous Branch – who would be born as a descendant of King David is the LORD himself and righteous in and of himself. Because Jesus is the LORD God, he could live a perfect life as the substitute of all people and can give righteousness before God to all those who believe in him as their Savior.

The New Testament also gives proof of Jesus' divinity. John 1:1 says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Here "the Word" is not a language that we use to communicate with one another, but one of Jesus' titles. Jesus is called "the Word" because he not only tells us, but also demonstrates who God is, what God's will is, and what God has done for us, etc. (John 1:14). The apostle John clearly writes: "The Word was God."

Another proof of Jesus' divinity from the New Testament is Matthew 16:16. One day Jesus asked his disciples: "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" As their representative, Peter answered,

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus accepted this confession and said to him: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my father in heaven. On this rock (not on Peter, but on Christ whom he confessed) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

The Bible says Jesus has the attributes of God.

The Bible says that Jesus has the attributes of God. On the night he was betrayed, before leaving for the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed the well-known prayer called Jesus' high priestly prayer. In that prayer Jesus said: "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John 17:5). In order to pay for all the sins of all people, Jesus humbled himself according to his human nature at the moment when he was conceived in the womb of Mary. As true God, however, Jesus had the same glory with God the Father.

According to John 21, Peter and some of the disciples went to Galilee. At that time Jesus said to Peter: "Do you truly love me more than these?" Peter answered: "Yes, LORD, you know that I love you" (John 21:15). Because Jesus asked the same question three times, Peter felt sad and said to Jesus: "LORD, you know all things; you know that I love you" (John 21:17). Knowing all things is one of the attributes of God.

The Bible says Jesus does divine works.

The Bible says that Jesus does the works of God. Jesus says in John 10:28-30: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." It is the work of God to give eternal life. Jesus is one in essence with God the Father. That is why he is able to give his followers eternal life as a free gift through faith. That is why he can preserve his followers even from the hands of Satan.

A divine work that St. Paul ascribes to Jesus in his letter to the Colossians is creation. Paul says: "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:16,17). Not only did Jesus create all things but he also holds all things together. St. John and the author of the letter to the Hebrews ascribe the work of creation and preservation to Jesus (John 1:3,10; Hebrews 1:2b, 3a).

The miracles performed by Jesus show that he is true God. John 2:11 records the first miracle

performed by Jesus. At a wedding in Cana, Jesus changed water to wine. Jesus healed a dying child in Capernaum (John 4:46-54). Jesus fed more than five thousand people (John 6:1-14). At the pool of Siloam Jesus healed a man born blind (John 9:1-7). He also healed many more. Jesus did these miracles to reveal his glory as the Son of God (John 3:11; 10:25). Needless to say, the most wonderful miracle done by Jesus is his own resurrection from the dead.

The Bible gives Jesus the honor due to God.

The Bible gives Jesus the honor due to God alone. It is written in John 5:21-23: "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him." Jesus has equal honor with God the Father. That is one of the Bible truths that Christians have believed, confessed, and taught for two thousand years.

Let us note that the author says in Hebrews 1:4-6: "So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? And again, when God brings his first-born into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'" God commanded all the angels to worship his Son, Jesus Christ. This command is not contradictory to the First Commandment because Jesus is the only true God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This command gives Jesus honor due to God. Of course, the Father wants us to honor Jesus as our Lord and our God (John 20:28).

Jesus Christ is true man.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human names.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human names. In his first letter to Timothy, St. Paul speaks of the only mediator: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). In Romans 5:15-19, Paul tells us that all people became sinners because of the trespass of Adam and that all people are declared righteous before God because of the atoning death of "the one man," Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:47, Paul calls Adam, "the first man," and Jesus, "the second man."

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human lineage.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human lineage, and gives the list of ancestors from whom Jesus descended. Paul writes: "Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ"

(Romans 9:5a). As to his human nature, Jesus was a descendant of King David (Romans 1:3). The Gospels of Matthew and Luke record the names of Jesus' ancestors (Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38). God chose Abraham as the father of the Savior and gave him the promise that the Savior would be born from his descendants. As God had promised, Jesus was born as a descendant of Abraham and David.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human birth.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human birth. The angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive a child and give birth to a son (Luke 1:31). After the angel had left her, Mary visited her relative Elizabeth. She heard Mary's greetings and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then, she said to Mary: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear" (Luke 1:42). As Luke records in the second chapter of his Gospel, Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human flesh.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human flesh. The author of the letter to the Hebrews clearly tells us that Jesus took a human body and also why he took it, by saying: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14,15). Jesus became a man, that is, took human flesh and blood to die for all people.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus a human soul.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus a human soul. On the night he was betrayed, after eating his last Passover with his disciples, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane in order to pray to the Father. As a true human being, facing crucifixion was difficult even for Jesus. Jesus expressed his real feelings to his disciples: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38).

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human emotions.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human emotions. The Pharisees did not believe in Jesus as their Savior. They were busy trying to find errors with which to accuse Jesus. Jesus was *angry* with them and deeply *distressed* at their stubborn hearts (Mark 3:5). When Lazarus died, Jesus was deeply *moved* in spirit and *troubled*, and he *wept* (John 11: 33, 35). As was mentioned in the previous section, in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus showed human feelings when he said to his disciples: "My soul is overwhelmed with *sorrow* to the point of death" (Mark 14:34).

The Bible ascribes to Jesus a human will.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus a human will. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus prayed: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my *will*, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42; cf. Matthew 26:39).

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human needs.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus human needs. After his baptism, Jesus was sent to the wilderness according to God's will. There he fasted for forty days and forty nights, and he was *hungry* (Matthew 4:2). On the cross, Jesus was thirsty and said: "I am *thirsty*" (John 19:28).

The Bible ascribes to Jesus a real death.

The Bible ascribes to Jesus a real death. St. John records Jesus' death as follows: "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (John 19:30).

Though truly human, Jesus was sinless.

The Bible ascribes a human nature to Jesus. Jesus had a human body as we have consisting of flesh and blood and bones. However, there is a great difference between Jesus and all other human beings. Jesus had no sin since he had been conceived by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.

The angel Gabriel who was sent by God to Mary said to her: "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus" (Luke 1:31). From the beginning of the world, parents are necessary for babies to be born. No human being has life before the moment of conception. Mary also knew that. But Mary and Joseph had not lived together and would not, until they would hold a wedding according to Jewish custom. Therefore, it was beyond Mary's reason that a virgin could conceive. That is why Mary was amazed and said to the angel: "How will this be since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34).

The angel replied: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). It is important for us to note that the baby who would be born of Mary was the Son of God, sinless from eternity, and at the same time the Son of Man, holy and sinless from the moment of conception by the working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not polluted by man's sin when he took on a human body. Since he remained in complete holiness, Jesus did not sin in thoughts, words, or deeds.

Isaiah says about Jesus' sinlessness: "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:9). Paul says: "God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Peter calls Jesus "a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:19). If Jesus had committed one sin, he would not have been able to pay for all the sins of all people. The author of the letter to the Hebrews compares Jesus, our High Priest, and the high priests in the Old Testament times. Because Jesus was holy, blameless, pure, and set apart from sinners, unlike the other high priests, he did not have to offer sacrifices for his own sins (Hebrews 7:26,27). Finally, let us remember this: Jesus often challenged the Jews to prove him guilty of sin (John 8:46; 18:20-23), but they could not do it.

Jesus did not deserve to die.

We learned that though truly human, Jesus was sinless. That is to say, Jesus did not deserve to die. Let us recall Genesis 2:17. There God said to Adam: "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *for when you eat of it you will surely die.*" If Adam had not broken this law, he could have lived forever. As we know, however, Adam ate the forbidden fruit. He lost his holiness.

Because of the sin of Adam, all people were polluted by sin and they lost their holiness. All people surely die. Paul tells us the truth as follows: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through *one man*, and in this way *death* came to all men, because all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). What causes death is sin as Paul says: "The wages of sin is death" (Roman 6:23). Jesus did not deserve to die, because he remained holy, just, righteous, and sinless.

Jesus' death was voluntary.

Then, what is the reason for Jesus' death? Jesus himself answers this question. "No one takes it from me, but *I lay it down of my own accord.* I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. *This command I receive from my Father*" (John 10:18). From the context, it is obvious that Jesus is talking about his own life in this passage. Jesus voluntarily laid down his life. The Father sent Jesus to this world to die as the ransom to atone for all people. Jesus wished to obey the command of his Father and he willingly offered his life on the cross. Pilate the governor could crucify Jesus only because he allowed him to do so.

Twofold Generation

The fact that two distinct natures, true deity and true humanity, are united in the person of Jesus Christ points to a *twofold generation*, one *from eternity*, pertaining to his divine nature, the other *in time*, pertaining to his human nature. St. John writes: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John the Baptist testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me'" (John 1:30). No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known'" (John 1:14,15,18).

From the context of John 1:1-18, there is no doubt that "The Word" means Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity. Jesus was called "the Word" because he had made God known to people, that is to say, he had revealed God's will, plans or thoughts to people (John 1:18). For that reason, it is right for us to substitute Jesus Christ for "the Word" and the personal pronouns (he or him) that refer to "the Word" in the previous paragraphs. Therefore, we can read John 1:1,2 as follows: "In the beginning was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was with God, and Jesus Christ was God. Jesus Christ was with God in the beginning." Jesus has been in existence from eternity as true God and Jesus came from the Father. This is Jesus' generation from eternity.

Concerning the eternal generation of the Son the Psalmist writes: "I will proclaim the decree of the LORD. He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'" This passage, as quoted in Hebrews 1:5 and Psalm 2:7, is difficult to understand even for Christians. Dr. John F. Brug has a good comment, which helps us avoid misunderstanding this passage:

Because Christ is the eternal second person of the Trinity, his being 'begotten by the Father' is not an event which takes place at a specific point of time, as our conception and birth did. God the Father did not become Christ's father by an act of generation or conception that took place at a point in time. Christ's being 'begotten by the Father' refers to an eternal, unchanging relationship which exists between the first and second persons of the Trinity (Brug, *People's Bible, Psalms*, Vol. 1, p. 48).

When John the Baptist said, "This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because *he was before me*,'" (John 1:30), he did not mean that Jesus was older than he. In fact, as true man Jesus was younger than John the Baptist. John the Baptist wanted to say that Jesus was true God and that Jesus had been in existence from eternity together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

However, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among the Jews. St. John is talking about Jesus' birth and his life of thirty-three years in this world. Jesus' life as true man started at the moment in which he was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. The Old Testament prophesied that the Savior Jesus would be born in Canaan from the Israelites, Abraham's descendants. Later it prophesied that the Savior would be born from the tribe of Judah and as a descendant of King David. Also the Old Testament prophesied that Jesus would be born of a virgin. His conception is Jesus' generation in time.

The impersonality of the human nature of Christ

While every other human nature is a separate person, the human nature of Christ was assumed into the person of the divine Logos and therefore never existed as a separate person. The human nature of Christ differs from all other human natures, negatively, by having no personality of its own, and positively, by subsisting in another, the divine personality (Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*: p. 31). From its beginning it was received into the personality of the Divine Logos.

As passages of the Bible such as John 1:14, Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 2:14, and 1 John 4:2,3 tell us, the Son of God took on a human nature, became a man, but he did not assume a human personality. He assumed only a human nature. "Christ did not consist of two persons, one divine and the other human, but in him the divine nature and the human nature were united into one undivided and indivisible person" (Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*: 261). Therefore, with the words of the Athanasian Creed, we confess: "Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ: One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; one altogether; not by confusion of the substance, but by unity of Person."

Christ had to be both God and man to be our Savior.

It was necessary for our Savior to be true man that He might take our place under the law (Galatians 4:4,5).

All people are sinful by nature and sin every day in their thoughts, words, and actions. Sin results in eternal death in hell. But no one can save himself from eternal death. That's why Jesus came to this world. Jesus took on a human nature in order to be placed under the Law and in order to obey the Law in full as the substitute of all people.

It was necessary for our Savior to be true man that He might be able to suffer and die in our stead (Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 2:14).

Not only did Jesus take our place under the law, but He was also made to be sin. He became a curse for all people. Jesus suffered much for all people. Jesus was forsaken by God the Father for all people. Jesus experienced the agony of hell on the cross for all people. Jesus took on a human nature in order to die for all people, including you and me.

It was necessary for our Savior to be true God so that his fulfilling of the law and his suffering and death would have sufficient value for all people.

After the fall of our first parents, "No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him" (Psalm 49:7). The psalmist continues, "The ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough" (Psalm 49:8). Because all human beings are sinful by nature and nobody can give to God a sufficient ransom for sinners, God the Father sent God the Son to this world. Jesus came to this world "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Jesus came to this world as true God so that his perfect life lived under the law might supply an eternal righteousness for all people. ("Christ is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness..." Romans 10:4; "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Jesus Christ who is true God from all eternity lived a perfect life according to the law, suffered much, and died on the cross for all people. Because he was holy, unlike other high priests, Jesus did not have to offer sacrifices for his own sins but could pay for all the sins of all people fully and completely when he offered himself (Hebrews 7:27). The blood of Christ that redeemed us from eternal death was without blemish and was more precious than silver or gold (1 Peter 1:18,19). Only the eternal holy God could suffer the eternal death for all people during his time of suffering upon the cross. "Jesus cried out with a loud voice...'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46).

The personal union in Christ

In Jeremiah the Lord declares: "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jeremiah 23:24). This passage "refers to God Himself and to His essence" (F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* II: 86). As the Creator of all things (Colossians 1:17), God fills everything in everyway (Ephesians 1:23) and is present in and with

all things. This means that there is a union of God with all creatures. All creatures owe their existence and activity to this union of God with them (Acts 17:28a). This union has been called the **general union** because it includes all creatures.

In a special manner, however, God is united with his church, the believers. Jesus says in John 14:23, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him.*" Because God lives in his believers, their bodies are the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). They are "the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16) and the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23). This union between God and the believers is so intimate that believers are called "partakers in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). This special and most gracious union of God with his believers is called the **mystical union**.

The **personal union**, the union of God and man in Christ, is totally different and much closer than those unions mentioned above. This personal union was effected when in his incarnation the divine Logos so assumed a human nature, which never subsisted alone, into his divine person that in the incarnate Christ, God and man are one undivided and indivisible person (Romans 9:5; Matthew 16:13,16).

This union is not like that of two boards glued together, in which neither gives anything to the other or takes anything from the other. Rather, faithful church fathers illustrated that union by the union of body and soul; iron glowing with fire (FC Ep VIII: 5). "But these unions are only similar, not like, the personal union" (Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*: 264).

The two natures in Christ, God and man, are united in one person or form one person. Since the two natures are very intimately and permanently united in the person of Christ, he is at the same time true God and true man. Therefore, the Bible clearly and unmistakably says that the righteous Branch is the LORD Our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5,6); the Son of Man is the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-16); the child of Mary is the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:31,32); the descendant of David is the Son of God (Romans 1:3); Christ is God over all (Romans 9:5), etc. Jesus himself illustrates this truth in an interesting dialogue with the Pharisees.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied. He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord?' For he says, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.' If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions (Matthew 22:41-46).

The personal union is completely different from the unions mentioned above. Although God is united with all creatures, we cannot or should not say: "This mountain is God" or "God is a mountain." In a special manner God is united with the believers. Nevertheless, we cannot or should not say: "A Christian is God" or "God is a Christian."

The personal union is a mystery.

As St. Paul says, the union of God and man in Christ is a deep and great mystery (1 Timothy 3:16). The Formula of Concord says: "Next to the article of the Holy Trinity this (the personal union of the two natures in Christ) is the greatest mystery in heaven and on earth" (FC SD VIII: 33).

Christ has two natures, the human and the divine, and yet he is only one person.

By *nature* we mean "that which is common to all the members of the same species." Although there are many differences in many points between people such as the date of birth, nationality, power, position, status, etc., Christ as true man has the same human nature as we have.

Similarly, Christ as true God and the Father and the Holy Spirit have one divine essence. The Athanasian Creed says: "The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal... So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty" (*Triglote*: p. 33).

By *person* we mean "that which is not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself." The Athanasian Creed, in this case too, correctly uses the word "person," saying: "There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost."

Some theologians claim that the concept "person" has changed in the course of centuries and that the term "person" should not be understood in the sense of an individual personality when we apply it to the inter-Trinitarian life of God. However, as a designation of the inter-Trinitarian relation, the concept of person has not changed because the base of that conception, God's Word, has not changed (cf. Pieper, *Op. Cit.* I: 409, 410; See also FC SD VIII: 6).

The concrete and abstract terms

Most Lutheran theologians have avoided using abstract expressions such as: "Divinity has suffered' for the concrete expression: 'The Son of God suffered.' They did this to avoid the charge that they referred the suffering to the Son of God in his divine nature. The use of the abstract expressions, however, should not be condemned as wrong" (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 227). The Formula of Concord says: "If I believe this [permit myself to be persuaded] that only the human nature has suffered for me, then Christ is to me a poor Savior, then he himself indeed needs a Savior.... Because in Christ divinity and humanity are one person, Scripture, on account of this personal union, ascribes also to divinity everything that happens to the humanity, and vice versa" (FC SD VIII: 40-41).

Christ said to the Jews: "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). This teaches us that he was conscious of his eternal existence. Christ was also conscious of his coming to this world in time for a purpose and of his returning to the Father by his suffering, death, and resurrection (John 16:28). Christ knew himself not only as fully human (Luke 2:51; 6:4; John 4:7; 12:33), but he knew himself also as

"the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-17).

Yet the Formula of Concord adds the explanation: "Although the one part, namely, the divinity, does not suffer, yet the person, which is God, suffers in the other part, namely, in His humanity" (FC SD VIII: 42). Pieper writes about the previous explanation as follows: "This explanation shows that Luther and the Formula of Concord use the abstract expression 'divinity' not of the deity *per se*, but of 'the deity in the flesh,' or of the Son of God according to His human nature... The same was true of the Church Fathers who employed interchangeably the statement: 'The Son of God has suffered' and 'The Deity has suffered in the assumed flesh'" (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 152, 227).

The errors of both Eutyches and Nestorius

Eutyches taught that the union of the two natures in Christ was effected by a mingling of the two natures into each other (monophysitism). Nestorius regarded the two natures as separate and denied the personal union and in particular the communion of the natures and the communication of attributes.

Against the errors of both Eutyches and Nestorius the Council of Chalcedon (451) declared: "We confess one and the same Jesus Christ, the Son and Lord only-begotten, in two natures without mixture, without change (against Eutyches), without division, without separation (against Nestorius)." "The error of Nestorius was later championed by Zwingli, who taught: Whenever Scripture says that Christ suffered, you must read: The human nature only has suffered" (Mueller, *Op. Cit.* 265).

The communication of attributes

The Formula of Concord and most Lutheran dogmaticians following its pattern, distinguish three classes (genera) of the communication of attributes: Idiomatic Genus, Majestic Genus, and Apotelesmatic Genus. The exact number of classes has never been a major issue among Lutherans as long as there is agreement in doctrine. Also the order of the classes has varied.

The first class of communication of attributes

The first class, the Idiomatic Genus, consists in this: "Because the divine and human natures of Christ constitute one person, the attributes, belonging essentially to only one nature are always ascribed to the whole person, but the divine attributes according to the divine nature, and the human attributes according to the human nature" (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 143; see also FC SD VIII: 36f.; Chemnitz, *The Two Natures*: 83).

St. Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians: "They crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8). Truly, Jesus was crucified. He suffered the agony of hell and died on the cross. In Acts 3:15, St. Peter says to the people: "You killed the author of life." Such properties as "to be crucified," "to suffer," "to die," or "to be killed" are peculiar to the human nature. Paul and Peter, however, ascribed those properties to "the Lord of glory" or "the author of life." On the other hand, the author of Hebrews says: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus said to the Jews:

"Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). These two passages speak of Jesus' eternity. Eternity is a property that is peculiar to the divine nature, but both these passages do not ascribe it only to the divine nature. In all the passages mentioned above and similar passages, peculiarities of either nature are ascribed to the whole person.

Through the ages, errorists misinterpret the Bible-passages that ascribe human or divine peculiarities to the whole person of Christ. They deny that the human characteristics (*idiomata*) such as "to be born," "to be crucified," "to suffer," "to die," or "to be killed" are rightly predicated of the Son of God. In spite of the passage: "the blood of Jesus, his (God's) Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7), Nestorius and Zwingli denied that the blood of Jesus was the blood of God's Son. In other words, they denied that the suffering and death of Christ were the suffering and death of God. In spite of the clear indication of the Bible by the diacritical particles, as in Romans 1:3; 9:5; 2 Timothy 2:5, Eutyches taught that the two natures of Christ mixed with each other or one nature converted into the other nature. We believe, confess, and teach that, because of the union of the two natures, the attributes belonging essentially to only one nature are always ascribed to the whole person, but the divine attributes according to the divine nature, and the human attributes according to the human nature.

The second class of the communication of attributes

Concerning the second class, the Majestic Genus, Lutherans teach that in the personal union, while nothing is added to or taken away from the divine nature in itself, yet, because of the personal union with the deity, countless supernatural qualities, even qualities which are contrary to the common condition of human nature, are given and communicated to Christ's human nature (Chemnitz, *Op. Cit.* 6, 83; see also Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 220; FC SD VIII: 50-52).

When Scripture states, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9), "it teaches by these words that the Son of God, with all the abundance of His divine essence and of His divine attributes, without any deduction whatsoever ("all the fullness of the Godhead"), is united with His human nature, ... not merely nominally, but really" (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 158).

Reformed and Roman Catholic theologians argue against our teaching about the communication of divine attributes to Christ's human nature as follows. "If the divine attributes belong as communicated attributes also to the human nature, then the Lutherans teach a separation of the divine attributes from the divine essence. This results in two sets of divine properties, one that belongs to the divine nature, and another that belongs to the human nature" (*Concerning the Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 404 and Frank, *Theology of the Formula of Concord III*: 386 as quoted in Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II, p. 224). Let them say all they want to. Never will our teaching of the communication of divine attributes to Christ's human nature be shaken no matter how loud their voice is, because the base of this teaching is Colossians 2:9, the unshakable Word of God.

Whenever divine attributes are given to Christ in time (such as in Matthew 28:18: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth") this is proof of the second class. If this passage really refers to the divine nature, as Reformed theologians assert, Christ would not be fully God at the incarnation. The

divine nature of Christ did not need to be given all power at the incarnation because He had all power from eternity as true God. Reformed theologians should realize their own mistake. As long as they adhere to the previous error, they put themselves in the same place as Arians who deny the true deity of Christ. That means that their doctrine is anti-Scriptural (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 156, 157).

The human nature does not communicate anything to the divine nature. "The divine nature is unchangeable and therefore cannot be perfected or diminished, exalted or humiliated. The promotion therefore belongs to the nature that is assumed, not to that which assumes" (Mueller, *Op. Cit.* 277; See also FC SD VIII: 49). When the LORD says: "I the LORD do not change" (Malachi 3:6; See also James 1:17b), he, of course, includes his essence or attributes. According to his divine nature, Jesus also does not change (Hebrews 13:6). What he has according to his divine nature Jesus had from eternity.

Omnipotence

Jesus met a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and asked her to give him some water (John 4:6). The night before his crucifixion, because Jesus was struck with terror, an angel was sent to him and strengthened him (Luke 22:43). On the same night, "the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus" (John 18:12). These passages tell us that Christ, in his humiliation, did not, in these cases make full use of the power his human nature had received from the divine nature so that he could accomplish his redeeming work. As Paul writes in Philippians 2:6-8 and as our Catechism teaches, Christ did not always use his divine power according to his human nature.

However, we should not forget that Jesus truly received divine, infinite power according to his human nature. In his vision Daniel saw the promised Messiah and he was given absolutely unlimited dominion (Daniel 7:13,14). Before his ascension, Jesus said to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). The author of Hebrews says that God put everything under Christ's feet and that in putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him (Hebrews 2:8). Even in his state of humiliation, Christ sometimes showed his infinite power to prove that he was the Son of God (Mark 4:39; 5:35-42). In spite of the strong opposition of the Reformed theologians that "the human nature of Christ is no more omniscient or almighty than the worker of a miracle is omnipotent" (Hodge, *Systematic Theol.*, II: 417; quoted in Mueller, *Op. Cit.*: 279), yet it is clear from the Bible that Christ according to his human nature was given almighty power.

Omniscience

As the result of the union of the two natures, Christ had a twofold knowledge. One is finite knowledge and this knowledge is capable of growth like ours. Luke speaks of the finite knowledge of Christ in Luke 2:52, which says: "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature." Jesus learned his mother tongue and customs in his community especially from his parents, and he matured like any other boy.

The other is infinite knowledge. When Jesus said to a paralytic: "'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven,' some teachers of the law said to themselves, 'This fellow is blaspheming.' Jesus perceived their thoughts and said to them: 'Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, Your sins are forgiven or to say, Get up and walk?'" (Matthew 9:2-4). Jesus knew that Nathanael

was under a fig tree before he met him (John 1:48). Jesus met a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and he knew all that she had done (John 4:17,18,29). Jesus knew that Thomas doubted his resurrection (John 20:24-29). Peter said to Jesus: "Lord, you know all things" (John 21:17). These passages show us the infinite divine knowledge that the divine nature communicated to the human nature in the personal union.

Omnipresence

As Holy Scripture ascribes to Christ's human nature omniscience and omnipotence, so it ascribes to it also omnipresence (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:20-23; 4:10). The omnipresence of Christ's human nature, however, is taught also in John 1:14 and Colossians 2:9; for these passages declare that wherever, after the incarnation, the Logos is present, he is present in both natures.

Comfort is found in the communicated omnipresence. Luther said that he desired to know no God except God in the flesh (WA 28:136). To meet God outside the flesh will utterly destroy us. There is no comfort in Christ's presence with us if he is only present in the burning consuming deity before whom we do not dare to stand. Yet there is great comfort in knowing that he is with us as our human brother. He knows our sorrow and conflict; he endured them. He already gave his life for us on the cross. Therefore, we are certain that he, our human brother who knows our needs, will be with us in all the problems of life, working all for our good, even turning evil into good in our life.

The different modes of Christ's presence

The first mode is the local mode. This is the comprehensible, corporal mode as when our Lord walked bodily on earth (FC SD VII: 99; LW 37: 215; Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 176). In this mode, the body of Christ "occupied space, could be seen with human eyes, and be touched and handled with human hands" (*Ibid.*).

For instance, the body of Christ was in the womb of Mary for months (Luke 1:42,56; 2:6). His body was wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger (Luke 2:7). The aged Simeon took the Christ Child in his arms (Luke 2:28). Christ's body was in a synagogue when he read and taught the Bible on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). Christ's body was in the upper room of a house when he ate the last Passover with his disciples and gave them the first communion (Mark 14:12ff). Christ was arrested by his enemies and taken into the house of the high priest (Luke 22:54). Pilate had Christ whipped (John 19:1). The Roman soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on Christ's head, and they clothed him in a purple robe to make fun of him (John 19:2). Christ was crucified and died on the cross (John 19:18,30). Christ's body was wrapped in strips of linen and was laid in a new tomb (John 19:40-42).

The second mode is the definitive or illocal mode. Definitive means a presence, which is not bound to a certain space. This is an incomprehensible or illocal, spiritual presence as when Christ passed through the closed doors on Easter night (John 20:19). Luther and the Formula of Concord also use this mode for the real presence in the Sacrament (FC SD VII: 100; LW 37:215, 216; Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 177ff.). Luke 24:31 also tells us of this mode of presence.

Nevertheless, the Reformed teach that the human nature of Christ has only a local mode. With regard to John 19:20, Calvin writes: "And to enter while the doors were shut does not mean that He penetrated through the solid matter, but that He made for Himself an opening by His divine power, so that, in a miraculous manner, He instantaneously stood in the midst of His disciples, though the doors were shut" (Commentary on John 20:19, quoted in Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 177). Calvin places Christ's entering into the room in John 19:20 and Peter's coming out of the jail in Act 12:10 in the same category. In Peter's case, however, the iron gate that led to the city opened for them by itself and that the angel and Peter went through it. God made it open so that Peter could go out. In Jesus' case, the Bible clearly says: "the doors were shut." Christ did not make it open by his almighty power so that he could enter the room. Rather, the text and context show that he penetrated the door.

Concerning Luke 24:31, Calvin says: "Christ did not become invisible, but so influenced the eyes of the disciples that they could not see Him" (*Inst.* IV, 17, 29, quoted in Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 179). The Bible says: "He disappeared from their sight." The condition of their eyes after Christ's disappearance was the same as that of their eyes before Christ's disappearance. Nothing was wrong with their eyes but they saw that "Christ disappeared from their sight." Christ could suddenly disappear as well as suddenly appear (Luke 24:36).

The third mode is the repletive or supernatural mode of the subsistence of Christ's human nature. This is the mode by which Christ, who is one person with God, is present in all things and places and yet is not contained in any space (FC SD VII: 101; LW 37:216; Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 180,181). This is the mode spoken of in Ephesians 1:20-23 and 4:10 where it says that Christ fills all things. There is no doubt that this is a completely different and much superior mode of presence to the local or illogical mode of presence. This mode "cannot be ascribed to any other human beings" (*Ibid.* II: 180). Only according to this supernatural, divine mode of presence "does the human nature of Christ share divine omnipresence" (*Ibid.* II: 181).

This mode is beyond our reason and a mystery just as the incarnation of the Son of God. However, the Bible teaches this fact in the passages mentioned above. Therefore, we should not try to understand this mode with our reason as the Reformed theologians do. They believe the personal union of the two natures of Christ but they don't believe the omnipresence of Christ's human nature. We, together with Luther, maintain the Scriptural doctrine of the supernatural mode of presence of Christ's human nature. Luther says:

You must place this being of Christ, who is one person with God, very far, far outside of the creatures, as far as God is outside of them; and again as deep and near within all creatures as God is within them. For He is one inseparable person with God; where God is, there must He also be, or our faith is false. But who will say or think how this occurs? We know indeed that it is so, that He is in God outside of all creatures, and one person with God, but how it occurs we do not know; it [this mystery] is above nature and reason, even above the reason of all the angels in heaven; it is understood and known only by God (FC SD VII: 101,102).

The fourth mode of subsistence is the presence of Christ's body, namely, the sacramental presence or the sacramental union in the Lord's Supper. We believe the real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper. Luther and our church fathers confessed and taught this truth with the Confessions and many other faithful writings derived from the Bible. The Formula of Concord says:

When Dr. Luther or we employ this word *spiritual* in regard to this matter, we understand by it the spiritual, supernatural, heavenly mode, according to which Christ is present in the Holy Supper, working not only consolation and life in the believing, but also condemnation in the unbelieving.... Thus our faith in this article concerning the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper is based upon the *truth and omnipotence* of the true, almighty God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These foundations are strong and firm enough to strengthen and establish our faith in all temptations concerning this article, and, on the contrary, to overthrow and refute all the counter-arguments and objections of the Sacramentarians, however agreeable and plausible they may be to our reason; and upon them a Christian heart also can securely and firmly rest and rely (FC SD VII: 105,106).

On the other hand, both the Roman Catholics and the Reformed teach that the doctrine of the communicated omnipresence conflicts with the second article of the Apostles' Creed, which says: "Who (Jesus) was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead." Their teaching is based on their rational understanding that Christ's human nature has only the local and visible mode of presence.

It is Zwingli who sowed the seed of this radical error in the Reformed. Luther, a reformer of Germany, and Zwingli, a reformer of Switzerland, met at Marburg in 1529 in order to establish unity in doctrine. They agreed on fourteen theses, but one point remained a problem. Zwingli did not accept the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. According to Zwingli and his followers, it is impossible that Christ's body and blood subsists in the Lord's Supper because "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty." However, even after his ascension, Jesus is present with his Church according to his invisible mode (Matthew 28:20). When the apostle Paul says, "When he (the Father) raised him (Christ) from the dead and seated him (Christ) at the right hand in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:20), the apostle does not mean that Christ is in a certain place. Rather, as the context shows, Paul tells us about the almighty and omnipresent dominion over everything that was communicated to Christ's human nature.

In addition, we have the words of institution. At the table of the first Lord's Supper, giving a piece of bread to each disciple, the Lord said: "Take and eat; this is my body," and, offering wine in a cup to them, he said: "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:27,28). Mark and Luke also record the words of institution. None of these evangelists tell us that the disciples doubted the words of their Lord and the real presence of the body and blood of their Lord in the Lord's Supper. Rather, as the broad context shows, the disciples practiced the Lord's Supper as their Lord instituted it.

As we know, St. Paul was the leader of persecutors but was led to repentance for his sin by the risen Lord. By the grace of the Lord, Paul was called to be an apostle. Paul was not there when the Lord instituted the Holy Supper and gave bread and wine to his disciples. As his letter to the Corinthians shows, however, Paul correctly understood the words of institution and powerfully said: "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). Paul is not asking readers two questions. He emphasizes the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Then, he warns all those who don't believe the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper but receive the sacrament, saying: "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:27,29).

Lutherans are not dogmatic about the number of modes. Because Luther and the Confessions allow at least three modes of subsistence and more (FC SD VII; 103), theologians such as Pieper speak of a fourth mode, the sacramental mode (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 182). As mentioned above, however, the difference about the number of modes among the Lutheran theologians is not a major issue as long as there is agreement in doctrine.

Divine honor

"As Holy Scripture ascribes to Christ according to His human nature divine majesty and glory, Colossians 2:9, so it ascribes to Him also divine adoration, John 5:20-23; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 5:9,10" (Mueller, *Op. Cit.*: 281). The Reformed and Roman Catholic refused to ascribe divine honor to the human nature of Christ. Their denial is based on Isaiah 42:8 and Jeremiah 17:5. However, these two passages do not deny ascribing divine honor to the human nature of Christ. In Isaiah 42:8, the Lord tells us that he will not give his glory or praise to idols. The Lord emphasized that he was the only true God and he warned the Israelites against worshiping idols. In Jeremiah 17:5, the Lord forbade the Israelite to trust in man or depend on man's strength more than on him. This passage is the Lord's declaration of a curse upon those who do not believe in him. The Lord, in these two passages, does not deny ascribing divine honor to the human nature of Christ, who is, because of the indivisible unity with the divine nature, the Lord and the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

The Reformed concede a communion of the human nature with the Person of the Son of God, but they declare the communion of the human nature with the divine nature impossible on the grounds that the finite human nature is incapable of a real communion with the infinite divine nature (*finitum non est capax infiniti*). Truly, the communion of the finite human nature with the infinite divine nature is impossible as far as they try to understand it according to their reason. However, it is beyond our reason. It is a deep and great mystery (1 Timothy 3:16) and a true Bible doctrine. Jesus teaches us to honor him just as we honor the Father (John 5:23). Innumerable saints and angels give the Lamb, Jesus Christ, praise and glory that are due to God (Revelation 5:9-12). We also give divine honor to Christ.

We, however, should note that "Scripture, though it ascribes to the human nature the 'fulness of the Godhead,' (Colossians 2:9), never predicates directly of Christ's human nature the quiescent attributes (eternity, immensity, infinity) but only the operative attributes (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, etc.). The reason for this our dogmaticians give as follows: "In spite of the personal union the divine properties remain the essential attributes of the divine nature and never become the essential attributes of the human nature by transfusion. But they are predicated of the human nature in so far as they became active in the human nature as in the body of Christ" (Mueller, *Op. Cit.* 282, 283).

The third class of the Communication of Attributes

The third class, the apotelesmatic genus, consists in this: "All official acts which Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King has performed and still performs for the salvation of men, He performs according to both natures, by each doing what is proper to it, not by itself and apart from the other nature, but in constant communion with the other, in one undivided theanthropic (divine-human) action" (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 247, see also FC SD VII: 46, 47; Chemnitz, *Op. Cit.* 83).

Passages such as 1 John 3:8: "'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested [4:2: come in the flesh], that He might destroy the works of the devil,' refer to all divine works by which the Son of God became, and still is, the Savior of all men. But all these divine works are executed through the assumed flesh or human nature. The human nature of Christ therefore is the divinely chosen organ, or instrument, for the divine work of redemption in all its parts" (Pieper, *Op. Cit.* II: 249, see Mueller, *Op. Cit.* 285).

The Reformed teach that the two natures of Christ "in the work of redemption acted their parts alone, each without participation of the other" (*Ibid:* 284). "Similarly they claim that the human nature of Christ contributed to the miracles only as a mere or passive instrument" (*Ibid:* 284). "Calvin called the merit of Christ directly the merit of a man and thus excluded the divine nature from the active acquisition of salvation for men" (*Ibid:* 284). We believe, confess, and teach that "Christ indeed suffered and died according to His human nature, yet by virtue of the personal union the divine nature participated in the suffering and death of the human; for the human nature was always united with the divine nature, and the human nature was always united with the divine nature, and from this union the holy, vicarious Passion of our Savior received its redemptive value" (*Ibid:* 286). "The third genus must be maintained in its Scriptural purity; for upon it rests the entire comfort which the Gospel of reconciliation proclaims to lost and fallen man" (*Ibid:* 286).

We reject the following errors:

Ancient errors which rejected the deity of Christ:

Dynamic Monarchianism, Arianism.

Ancient errors which rejected the humanity of Christ:

Gnosticism, Docetism, Apollonarianism, Monothelitism.

Ancient errors which reject the personal union

Eutychianism (Monophysitism), Nestorianism, Zwingliism.

Modern errors which deny Christ's deity.

1. That the deity of Christ was constructed by the early church to give the impression that Jesus was a "super-man."
2. That the deity of Christ taught by Scripture is merely an adaptation of Greek legends concerning the Greek gods.

Errors which deny the Gospel records concerning Christ

1. That the Gospel accounts of Jesus are merely the development of oral traditions reported by the early church concerning Jesus.
2. That the four Gospels are the result of an evolutionary development from oral traditions to written sources, edited at a later stage, and affected at all stages by influences from Hellenistic and Jewish sources.
3. That it is impossible to arrive at "the Jesus of history."

Errors which deny the saving work of Christ

1. That Jesus was a mere martyr.
2. That Jesus was a social reformer.
3. That Jesus was a misguided zealot.
4. That Jesus was a mere example.

II: THE TWO STATES OF CHRIST

Whoever reads the Bible carefully runs into questions that are related to the two natures of our Lord Christ. As Scripture clearly testifies (cf. Section I), he is true man and true God at the same time. But how can he as true God die on the cross? How can he say that he does not know the moment of the world's end, which is determined by God (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7)? How does this fit with his true, divine nature?

Such questions have preoccupied Bible readers of all times. Many have come up with their own ideas. In doing so, some have fallen into error. Above all, in the 17th and 19th centuries there were the so-called kenotic controversies (kenosis = emptying). Several scholars claimed that Christ had completely emptied himself of his divine attributes during his life on earth and had actually withdrawn temporarily from the Trinity. We want to see what Holy Scripture teaches.

When Christ humbled himself he did not make full use of his divine attributes according to the human nature. He did this in order to be our Savior.

The apostle Paul writes about our Lord: “Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8 NKJV).

Jesus Christ remained true God, even when he became a man. Concerning him Paul confesses in Colossians: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,” (2:9) and, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3).

However, he condescended to us humans and came to our earth. Conceived in a miraculous way by the Holy Spirit, he was given birth by the virgin Mary in great poverty (Luke 2:7). Already shortly after the birth, Mary and Joseph had to flee with him into a foreign land (Matthew 2:13ff). Through much humiliation (Matthew 8:20) he went his predetermined way to the cross. In agonizing pain his life on earth ended as that of a criminal—on the cross (Isaiah 53:12; Mark 15:28).

He took this all upon himself, in order to bring us eternal salvation. And he was not forced to do this, rather he did it voluntarily (John 10:17ff; Matthew 26:53). Paul writes to the Corinthians: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet **for your sakes** he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). This is the reason why he at times kept his glory hidden.

He could only make his vicarious sacrifice because he as the sinless Son of God took our sins and guilt upon himself (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22-24). No human would have been able to pay for the guilt of all mankind.

This is the most important thing in his humiliation and his passion. When we consider Jesus’ suffering, we should not at first consider his physical pains (as, for example, happens with the ‘Way of the Cross’ meditations in the Roman Catholic church). Rather we should consider that he has suffered everything in order to cancel our guilt and sins. Our Lord does not desire our sympathy, above all, rather, our repentance and faith.

The time of Christ’s humiliation extends from his miraculous conception, which took place through the Holy Spirit, to his burial. At the same time one must consider that the humiliation is not simply to be equated with the incarnation. Otherwise Christ would have had to cast off his body when he was exalted through his resurrection. According to the words of Holy Scripture, however, this did not happen. Even his glorified body still bears the wounds of the crucifixion (John 20:20, 27). From this it becomes clear: his humiliation does not consist in his human form, rather in his temporary setting aside of the use of his divine omnipotence (cf. Matthew 26:53), omniscience (cf. Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:6), and omnipresence according to his human nature (cf. Matthew 14:13).

Christ’s exaltation consists in this, that he, since his victorious resurrection, makes full use of all his divine attributes according to his human nature.

After his resurrection Christ remained visible on the earth only until his ascension. The New Testament tells us about many people who had seen him during this time and could witness to his resurrection. First to be named are Mary Magdalene (John 20:17), the other women (Matthew 28:10), then Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5), then the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35); then the circle of his disciples on Easter evening (John 20:19-30) and many others—at one time actually more than 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Now Christ sits at the right hand of his Father. The right side of a man is the place of honor. In antiquity, the head of government (premier, chancellor) sat on this side of the ruler. The heavenly Father sets his Risen One at this place. He confirms thereby before all the world that the vicarious sacrifice of his Son was sufficient and was accepted by him. He hands over to him the ruling activity over the world. Satan can no longer harm us (Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 12:10).

Before Christ appeared as the Risen One to his disciples and friends, he had demonstrated his entire, divine might already at the descent into hell. The apostle Peter speaks about it, when he writes, “He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom he also went and preached to the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:18ff). In triumphal procession the Risen One passed through hell and preached his victory over Satan there (Colossians 2:15).

He did not descend into hell in order to suffer for our sins, because he had already suffered for them on the cross. Nor did he descend into hell to give the damned a second chance for repentance—as many interpreters of this passage think. This would contradict the clear testimony of the Bible. In Hebrews 9:27, it reads, “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” The very language used in 1 Peter makes it clear what the descent is about. In our passage (3:18), in the Greek text stands *kerussein*, i.e. to proclaim, to call out, to preach. When Peter in this letter describes the preaching of the gospel, he always uses other terms (e.g. *euangelizein*, cf. 1 Peter 1:12, 4:6). Therefore no preaching of salvation or renewed possibility of conversion can be meant here.

Holy Scripture speaks very little about the occurrence of the descent into hell, nevertheless it explicitly teaches it. Much about it remains a mystery for us. We should not speculate uselessly about it. The Formula of Concord references Luther and writes in addition:

“I believe in the Lord Christ, God’s Son, who died, was buried, and descended into hell.” Herein the burial and the descent into hell are differentiated as distinct articles, and we simply believe that after the burial the entire person, God and man, descended into hell, conquered the devil, destroyed hell’s power, and took from the devil all his might.

We are not to concern ourselves with the exalted and acute speculations about how this occurred. With our reason and five senses this article cannot be comprehended any more than the preceding one, how Christ has been made to sit at the right hand of the almighty power and majesty of God. We must only believe and cling to the Word. Then we shall retain the heart of this article and derive from it the comfort that neither hell nor the devil can take us or any believer in Christ captive or harm us (FC SD IX:3).

Our Lutheran confession emphasizes correctly at the end of this article (FC SD IX) the comfort that is given to us through Christ's exaltation. Our risen Lord sits at the right hand of his Father and rules over this world. He does not leave alone those who are his own (Matthew 28:20). In spite of all the distress that his Church must endure in the world, the gates of hell will never overcome her (Matthew 16:18). In addition, Christ intercedes for us before his Father (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25). Better than any good lawyer, he defends us against all charges. He has paid for all our sins, even though we still sin much. He lets us preach the good news of his redemption in this world so that we do not become sleepy in faith and miss the eternal goal.

At the end of this world, the risen Christ will return in the same way as he was taken away at the ascension before his disciples' eyes (Acts 1:11). Then all men will have to recognize him as the Lord, even those who on earth did not want to give him the honor which belongs to him.

The apostle Paul writes, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

We reject the following errors:

1. The error of kenoticism, which says that Christ had given up his deity during his humiliation.
2. The error of Zwingli, who denied that the attributes of Christ's divine nature were also shared with his human nature.
3. The error of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who claim that Jesus' statements during his humiliation indicate that he cannot be equal to the Father.
4. The claim that the resurrection of Jesus is not an historical event (Barth, Bultmann, and other modern theologians).
5. The opinion that after Jesus' ascension, his human nature is no longer present on earth (Zwingli).
6. The claim that Christ is coming again to set up a millennial kingdom on earth (Chiliasm).
7. The opinion that it is unimportant, whether or not Jesus was born of a virgin.
8. The opinion that Jesus descended into hell to suffer for our sins.

III. THE THREE-FOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST

Jesus is called the Messiah in Hebrew and the Christ in Greek. Both words mean "the anointed one." Anointing was a rite used by God in the Old Testament to designate those whom he had set apart for the work of being either a prophet, priest, or king. When the Lord set someone apart for one of these tasks, he also would equip the person with the gifts that were necessary to carry out the work that God had called the person to undertake.

The Lord called Aaron and his sons to serve as priests in Israel. He directed Moses to anoint Aaron, indicating that he and his sons were the ones chosen by God for the priestly office (Leviticus

8:12). The Lord confirmed the status of Aaron's priesthood by causing fire to come out from the Tabernacle and consume the sacrifice Aaron had brought (Leviticus 9:24). The Lord sent Samuel the prophet to anoint David as the king over Israel. The Lord also sent the Holy Spirit to give David the gifts that were necessary to carry out the office the Lord had given him (1 Samuel 16:13). The Lord sent Elijah to anoint Elisha as Elijah's successor (1 Kings 19:16, 19). The Lord confirmed for Elisha that he had given him the gifts necessary to carry out the prophetic office by causing the mantle of Elijah to rest upon him (2 Kings 2:13).

Jesus was the fulfillment of the pictures presented by the Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings. He was the one God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power to be our prophet, priest, and king. Isaiah foretold the Messiah would be given the "seven-fold" gift of the Spirit, and John tells us that Jesus was given the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Isaiah declared that the Messiah would come "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives,...to comfort all who mourn" (Isaiah 61:1,3). Jesus declared in the synagogue of Nazareth, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

All that Christ has done and is still doing for people's salvation can be grouped conveniently under three headings. Scripture tells us that Jesus, the Christ, was sent to preach the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18; John 1:18; Hebrews 1:1; Luke 13:33). He was sent to reconcile the world with God (2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:10; 1 John 2:2). He was sent to govern the church as its king and to rule the universe with his almighty power in order that all things will work out for the good of his church (Luke 1:33; Ephesians 1:22; John 18:33-37).

It has been customary from the earliest times to divide the work of Christ, into the prophetic, the high-priestly, and the kingly offices. The Old Testament presented Christ in his three-fold office: as prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15), as priest (Psalm 110), and as king (Psalm 2:12). It is to this three-fold division which we now turn in our study.

A. THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST

The prophetic office of Christ was already revealed in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 18:15ff, Moses tells us of someone whom God himself would raise from among his people, Israel. Moses speaks of him as one who would be a prophet greater than he and encourages people to listen to him. Isaiah also speaks of a prophet that God would raise. He says that God would put his words in his mouth and he would speak whatever God commands him (Isaiah 42:1-3). By word and deed, Jesus Christ revealed God's plan of salvation. Christ continues to be a prophet today through the preaching of the Word. In Matthew 28:20 he commands his church to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching. The Apostle Paul tells his hearers that Christ was speaking through him by the Word (2 Corinthians 13:3). The Lord Jesus himself says that the only way anyone can remain his disciple is by continuing in his word (John 8:31, 32).

The role of the prophet in the Old Testament: a forthteller

In the Old Testament times God spoke through his prophets at different times. He did not reveal the salvation to come all at once. At one time he revealed the fact concerning the coming Messiah, at another time he revealed the fact that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. At yet another time he revealed the fact that he would be the seed of Abraham. He also revealed the fact that the Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah and that he would be the son of David. Some of these revelations were through the institution of a rite or sacrifice, parable, dream or vision. But in all this, it was God who spoke to the Jews of old through forthtellers, the prophets (Hebrews 1:1).

Moses foretells of the coming of a great prophet. This prophet would arise by the direction of the Lord. He was to come to Israel but all of God's people would receive the benefits of his salvation. He would not be a stranger nor would he come from elsewhere in space. He would come from among the people of Israel. He would be their brother according to the flesh, a true human being.

This prophet would be greater than Moses. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit without measure, and he would be the chosen one of God. Moses commands full and absolute obedience to him (Deuteronomy 18:15). As such a great prophet Jesus would know even the innermost secrets of the heart. He would reveal every form of hypocrisy (Matthew 7:5).

King David speaks of the king who has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. The apostle Peter says that David is referring to Jesus in Psalm 110:1. Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:34,35). Jesus also says that he, the Messiah, was both the Son of David and the Lord of David (Matthew 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). The writer to the Hebrews says that Psalm 110:4 is a prophetic statement about Jesus Christ (Hebrew 5:6; 7:11-22).

The Bible is clear about the function of the Messiah. It tells us that God appointed him and describes his function, the nature of his work and his authority (Isaiah 42:1-3). He is the Servant of the Lord whose coming Isaiah foretells in great detail. He speaks of him as being equipped to reveal and proclaim the gospel with authority (Isaiah 61:1, 2). Everything we believe about Jesus Christ the Messiah is from God's Word, and God's Word is reliable and true. This Word has come to us in the person of Jesus the Word of life. Those who listen to him receive eternal life (Isaiah 55:4, 5). He is the one who builds God's church. Zechariah calls him the Branch which has grown out of its place as a root out of dry ground. He builds the temple of God, the real sanctuary, the New Testament church (Zechariah 6:12).

The execution of the prophetic office in the state of humiliation

In his state of humiliation Christ did not teach as did the prophets of Israel, but as a unique prophet sent by God. He is the only prophet of his kind; a prophet such as there never was before and never will be again. He is the Savior who even saves the other prophets before and after him because in him God himself came in the flesh. In Christ God himself came to teach on earth (Hebrews 1:11).

Scripture shows in detail that Christ brought God's Word directly. He was not like the other prophets who spoke only what was revealed to them by inspiration. The Old Testament description of the function of the promised Messiah clearly fits the person of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is definitely declared to be the promised prophet, and is shown as exercising all prerogatives of his office.

People recognized Jesus as a great prophet. In the New Testament we have very emphatic and complete testimony to the fact that Jesus performed the function of a prophet in a way which was unparalleled either before or after the period of his public life. He was declared to be the promised prophet (Luke 7:16; John 4:19; 6:14).

Jesus was greater than the Old Testament prophets. In John 1:18 we see him as the only prophet of his kind, a prophet such as there never was before and never again will be. He is superior to all other prophets in that in him God himself came into the flesh. In Christ, God himself taught on earth (Hebrews 1:1).

While the main function of Christ's work was to proclaim the gospel, he, nevertheless, did not invalidate the demands of the law as taught by Moses. He did not substitute it with a new law. Instead, he emphasized its proper understanding (Matthew 4:17).

Fulfilling his office as prophet even today, Christ Jesus has charged his church with the mission to proclaim his gospel, and he has promised to be with the church to the end of time. Wherever the gospel is proclaimed in truth and purity, Jesus is there and promises to give eternal life to all who believe (John 6:40, 3:14,15; Matthew 20:28).

Jesus came to do for us everything that the law of Moses required. By his perfect obedience he has removed the curse of the law and has brought grace and a true understanding of God's love for us (John 1:17). Jesus has taught us what it means to love one another (John 13:34) and this is an application of the law that God gave the Israelites (Leviticus 19:18).

The execution of the prophetic office in the state of exaltation

Jesus sent out his apostles to proclaim the gospel. He sent them to preach the Word in the whole world and to make believers by teaching and baptizing. He promised that he himself would be with them all the time (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Today he desires all believers to do the same things that he commanded his apostles. He has also instituted the office of the public ministry to ensure that the gospel will be preached in truth and purity (Ephesians 4:11,12).

We reject the following errors:

1. That Jesus came to be a new lawgiver (Rome).
2. That Jesus came to proclaim a kingdom of God on earth.

B. THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST

Christ and the High Priest of the Old Testament

The priestly office of Christ was foretold in Old Testament prophecy and foreshadowed or pictured in the entire priestly system of Israel. On the great feast of Atonement the high priest would bathe and then dress himself in priestly garments. Two goats were brought before the high priest. The first goat was slaughtered and its blood was carried by the high priest through the holy place into the holy of holies, which was entered only on this day of the year. The high priest sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat of God on top of the ark of the covenant to atone for or cover the sins of the people. When the high priest had finished making atonement he came out and put the other goat, the scapegoat, before the people. He laid his hands on the goat's head and confessed over it all the sins of the people. The goat was then driven out into the wilderness carrying away the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:15-22).

There were special qualifications for those serving as high priests and for the priesthood in general. The priests were to be descendants of Aaron. They were to be holy to the Lord their God (Leviticus 21:6), they were to refrain from wine and strong drink (Leviticus 10:8) and from all defilement (Leviticus 21:1-15), and they were to be without physical defect (Leviticus 21:16-23). In these qualifications they were an imperfect type of him who was holy, blameless, pure, and set apart from sinners (Hebrews 7:26).

The Old Testament priesthood had definite limitations. Because the priests were sinful men (Hebrews 7:28), they needed to sacrifice first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:11; Hebrews 7:27). There was a need for many high priests in the course of history since death prevented them from continuing in the office (Hebrews 7:28). These limitations had no effect on the one true high priest, for he was the eternal, holy Son of the Father.

The Hebrew people were not so naïve as to think that they could be saved through the blood of goats and calves, but all these things pointed to the promised Messiah. The whole sacrificial system was fulfilled in our true high priest, Jesus Christ. At Calvary he was the victim, high priest, and mercy seat all in one. He sacrificed himself on the altar of the cross as the one and only atoning sacrifice and poured out his holy precious blood, sprinkling the mercy seat of God even as the blood of goats and calves had been sprinkled before his coming in the flesh. Through the pouring out of his blood the sins of all men were blotted out, so that they were not seen or counted. "...Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11,12).

The priestly office of Christ was pictured in the priestly system of Israel and was foretold in Old Testament prophecy. "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek," the Father says concerning the one who sits at his right hand, namely, Jesus Christ (Psalm 110:4). Zechariah speaks of him as a priest on his throne (Zechariah 6:12). Jesus Christ is our one true high priest.

The Work of Christ Our High Priest

Vicarious Satisfaction

As our high priest, Christ lived a holy life for all people, offered himself up for the sins of the world, and now intercedes for believers in heaven. The law demanded that man perfectly obey God's law and that if he failed he deserved to be punished. All people have sinned and come short of the glory of God, deserving everlasting death in hell (Romans 3:23). Therefore to be our Savior, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law in our place, which the Father counts as the perfect life of all people (Matthew 5:17; Romans 5:19; Galatians 4:4,5). Christ's holy life in our place is called his *active obedience*. Then because we deserved to be punished for our transgression of the law, Jesus suffered the punishment for the sins of all people on the cross (Galatians 3:13; Romans 5:25; John 1:7; 1 Peter 2:21-24). All that Christ suffered for our sins is called his *passive obedience*.

To be our substitute, the one who takes our place, Christ had to be both true God and true man (Roman 9:5). It was necessary for him to be true man so that he could take our place under the law as a man and suffer and die in our stead (Galatians 4:4,5; Hebrews 2:14). It was necessary for him to be true God so that his fulfilling the law and his suffering and death would have infinite value for all people (Psalm 49:7; Matthew 20:28). When speaking of this work of Christ, we often use the term *vicarious or substitutionary satisfaction*. This means that as our substitute Christ rendered to God, who was angry over our sin, a satisfaction or a payment that changed his wrath and anger into grace towards us. Through Christ's work God no longer sees us as sinners, but as his perfect children and therefore is gracious to us.

The *Formula of Concord* emphasizes this comforting doctrine: "Since it is the obedience... of the entire person, it is a complete satisfaction and expiation for the human race, by which the eternal, immutable righteousness of God, revealed in the Law, has been satisfied and is thus our righteousness, which avails before God and is revealed in the Gospel and upon which faith relies before God, which God imputes to faith, as it is written, Romans 5:19; 1 John 1:7; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17" (FC SD III:57).

Universal Redemption in Christ

To redeem means to buy back. Christ has redeemed or ransomed us as Luther explains so beautifully in the *Small Catechism*: "I believe that Jesus Christ... has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death." Christ was the full ransom or payment for all sin of all people. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2:5,6; 1 John 2:2). This redemptive work was complete for all people for all time when the Savior cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). No one is excluded from the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Contrary to the Scriptures, the Reformed teach that Christ died only for the elect to salvation (*Canons of the Synod of*

Dort, Part 2, Article 7). However, the Bible teaches he gave his life a ransom for all. Christ paid for the sins of those who are now in hell, but they rejected that treasure and threw it away.

The Holy Scriptures express this redemptive work of Christ with a number of pictures or themes, the most important of which are the *Christus vicar*, *victim*, and *victor* themes. Christ is our substitute, one who took our place, suffering all the punishment that we deserve for sin. He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5). This is the *Christus vicar* theme. Christ is the great sacrifice that was offered to God the Father as a sweet smelling offering (Ephesians 5:2). Through that sacrifice God's just anger over sin was appeased and changed into grace toward all people. This is the *Christus victim* theme. Through his suffering and death Christ is the victor divine who has overcome the power of sin, death, and the devil. He is the divine conqueror, the stronger one, who bound the strong man and set free those enslaved in sin (Luke 11:22). Luther writes in the *Large Catechism*:

There was no counsel, help or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God in His unfathomable goodness had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness, and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers, then, are all expelled now, and in their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation, and has delivered us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, has won us, made us free, and brought us again into the favor and grace of the Father, and has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection, that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness (LC II:29,30).

This is the *Christus victor* theme.

Martin Luther often employed another image to explain the redemptive work of Christ. He spoke of the *joyous exchange* of Christ's righteousness for the sinner's guilt and sin. "Is not this a beautiful, glorious exchange, by which Christ who is wholly innocent and holy, not only takes upon himself another's sin, that is, my sin and guilt, but also clothes and adorns me, who am nothing but sin, with his own innocence and purity?" (LW 51:316; see also LW 31:351,352; LW 17:225). Christ became poor and lowly, assuming our flesh to raise us to his divine glory and eternal life in heaven. He took upon himself our sin, our suffering, and death so that we might be as he is, sharing in his righteousness, divine life, and salvation.

The Sacrifice of Christ and the Sacrifices of the Old Testament

The Old Testament sacrifices were types that pointed to the once and for all sacrifice accomplished by Christ on the cross. "The blood of the sacrificed animals did not atone, not intrinsically; it did atone as a type, as a prefiguring of the sin offering brought by Christ. It was the divinely ordained means of grace by which the atonement to be accomplished by Christ was presented to the Israelites" (F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, II:378,379). These sacrifices had no power to forgive in themselves but they offered that forgiveness achieved by Christ's sacrifice. They functioned as means of grace.

Universal Reconciliation Leads to Forensic Justification

On the basis of Christ's sacrifice God's wrath is appeased and he sees us in a different light. No longer does he see the world as his enemies, whom he must hate, but through the blood of Christ he now sees them as his dear children, whom he loves. "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Here the redemption that Christ accomplished on the cross was offered to the Father and thus he sees the world differently, that is, innocent on the basis of Christ's work. God has declared the whole world not guilty in Christ. This is a change in the status of man in God's court, not in God, for he is immutable (forensic justification).

Universal or Objective and Subjective Justification

On the basis of Christ's sacrifice and his perfect keeping of the law in our place (Romans 5:18,19; Colossians 1:14) God, who is appeased and sees the world differently, does not impute (count or reckon) sin but declares the whole world righteous or innocent. The whole world is declared righteous or justified in him. This truth was demonstrated most vividly on Easter morning. The open tomb is the public declaration of absolution or the verdict of "not guilty" for the world. "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 4:5; Romans 5:18; Romans 3:23,24). Justification occurs totally outside of man (objective justification) but for all men (universal justification).

This verdict of not guilty is brought to us personally by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, Word and sacraments, and is received by faith alone in the Savior. This faith is not a work on our part but merely an empty hand which receives the blessings of the cross and makes them our own. Saving faith in the Savior is worked, strengthened, and preserved by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:3). We speak of this as subjective justification.

The Intercession of Christ

The second function of Christ's high priestly office is the work of intercession, or pleading for us before the Father. This intercession was seen already in the work of the Old Testament high priest and pictured in the offering of incense (Exodus 30:7,8; Leviticus 16:12,13). Isaiah speaks not only of Christ's redemptive work but also of his intercession, when he says, "For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). He stands before the Father's throne and says concerning us, "This my brother or sister by faith must be forgiven and heard, for I paid for his sins with my own blood."

Already in the state of humiliation Christ functioned as our great intercessor, as is seen in his high priestly prayer in John 17. His intercession may be divided into two parts. He interceded for all people, including unbelievers (Luke 23:34). The purpose of his supplication for the unbelievers is that they may be brought to faith and receive the forgiveness of sins already obtained for them. The other portion of his intercession is especially for believers, members of his body the church, of which he is the head. He interceded for Peter (Luke 22:32), as well as for all believers in his high priestly prayer (John 17), and

also at other times (John 14:16; Matthew 11:25). The purpose of his supplication for believers is that they may be strengthened and preserved in saving faith by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace.

The Priestly Office of Christ in the State of Exaltation

The Sacrifice of Christ is now Complete

The priestly office of Christ did not cease with his exaltation (Hebrews 7:24,25). Certainly he does not continue to offer sacrifices for our sin. All sacrifice for sin was finished and complete when the Savior said from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). No further atonement sacrifice is required since his sacrifice was once and for all, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

Since the sacrifice of Christ is complete, the Roman Catholic Church perverts the priestly office of Christ when it speaks of the Lord’s Supper as an unbloody sacrifice—the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross, only in an unbloody manner: “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*... ‘In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1367).

To say that the Supper is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross, namely, that in the sacrament Christ’s body and blood are offered up to appease God’s just anger over sin, destroys the oneness of the once and for all sacrifice on the cross (Hebrews 7:26,27; 9:12). The sacrifice of the cross cannot be all-sufficient, offered once, and still need to be continually offered in the Mass. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions are extremely emphatic in their rejection of any form of propitiatory sacrifice in the Supper which militates against the once and for all sacrifice of the cross or makes the sacrament a human work or sacrifice.

Christ’s Intercession in the State of Exaltation

While Christ’s work of atonement has come to an end, his work of intercession continues in the state of exaltation. “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25). He intercedes for all people and especially for his brothers and sisters in the faith. “Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). Regardless of how often we fall into sin or how great our sin, Christ on the basis of his blood and merit pleads our cause before the throne of God (1 John 2:1,2).

Christians have the blessed privilege of prayer because of Christ’s work of intercession. We can talk to our dear Father in heaven as his dear children by faith in Christ. Regardless of our conflict or struggle we can carry our burden to God in prayer. Jesus, our intercessor, is standing before the Father pleading for us. On the basis of his redemptive sacrifice he is saying that these his brothers and sisters must be heard and answered with the very best thing for them (Romans 8:28). What a comfort it is for

us to know that in spite of our sins and weaknesses Jesus is pleading for us, shielding us with the merits of his redemption! He takes a very personal interest in each and every one of us.

Christ Is the One Redeemer and Mediator Between God and Man

Jesus Christ is our one mediator. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men” (1 Timothy 2:5). Only the God-man Jesus Christ through his fulfilling the law and suffering and dying in our place could offer the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, only he can intercede for us before the throne of the Father on the basis of that sacrifice. There can be no other mediators between God and man such as Mary or the saints. They have no sacrifice of their own with which to appease the Father’s anger over sin.

The virgin Mary is not the mediator with Christ (co-mediatrix) as the Roman Catholic Church teaches: “Therefore the blessed virgin is invoked in the church under the titles of advocate, helper, benefactress, and mediatrix” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 969). The Holy Scriptures clearly state that there is only one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). There is no other mediator, nor do we need one.

The virgin Mary is not the redeemer together with Christ (co-redemptrix). As Jesus hung on the cross suffering for our sins, Mary’s heart may well have experienced the piercing of her soul as prophesied by Simeon (Luke 2:35), but there is no scriptural support for the claim that in some way her suffering plays a role in the work of salvation. “There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, joining herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, born of her” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 964). Christ’s sacrifice was total and complete in and of itself (Hebrews 7:26,27; 9:12). Neither Mary nor any other of God’s saints can add anything to the redemptive work of Christ.

We reject the following errors:

1. That Christ suffered only as a martyr and not to atone for the sins of the world.
2. Any theory of atonement which negates Christ’s vicarious satisfaction.
3. The Reformed concept of limited atonement, that is, that Christ died only for the elect to salvation.
4. An improper use of the *Christus victor* theme which teaches that Christ accomplished salvation alone through his divine power, thus militating against the need for his sacrificial life and death on the cross.
5. The Roman Catholic sacrifice of the Mass.
6. The Roman Catholic teaching that Mary is co-mediatrix and co-redemptrix.

C: THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST

The Lord was the King of his chosen people long before Israel asked for a line of earthly kings (Exodus 15:18). When Israel came to Samuel and demanded a king, they were rebelling against the

order God had established (1 Samuel 12:12). The Lord had provided Israel with the regulations for a future kingship (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Yet, Israel sinned by wanting to be like all the other nations and by having the desire for a king they could see, one who could lead them into battle (2 Samuel 8:20).

Yet, God did have an earthly king in mind for his people from eternity. This king was foretold already by Jacob in his farewell address to his twelve sons. Jacob foretold that God's king, the Savior-King, would come from the line of his son, Judah (Genesis 49:10,11). When the monarchy began in Israel, the kings anointed by God were a picture of the coming of the Savior-King.

God's ideal for a king in the Old Testament was that he was to be a shepherd for his people (2 Samuel 5:2; 7:7). Jesus referred to himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). It was part of his kingly office to take care of his people as a shepherd cared for his flock. The prophet Nathan foretold that David's descendant would be *the king* whom God would send into this world. Nathan told David, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16). The angel Gabriel indicated that this prophecy would be fulfilled in the child born to Mary (Luke 1:33). Jesus himself indicated he was a King. He said to Pilate, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth" (John 18:37).

Jesus' work as King was different from what the people of his day anticipated. They were looking for a king who could give them free food and health care. That is why they wanted to make Jesus a king after he fed the 5000 (John 6:15). Many sought Jesus because they saw his miracles of healing (Matthew 8:17,18). Others were looking for someone to free them from Rome and make them a powerful nation like they had been under David and Solomon (Luke 17:20). Even Jesus' own disciples did not fully understand the nature of his kingdom (Mark 10:37; Acts 1:6). Jesus' kingdom, however, was not an earthly kingdom. He said it was spiritual in nature (John 18:36). Jesus' kingdom does not consist in the group of people he rules. Rather, his kingdom consists in his rule in the hearts of those who believe in him (Luke 17:21).

The Bible speaks of the kingdom of God (Matthew 12:28) and of the kingdom of Christ (Matthew 16:28). The two are identical. The kingdom of God was given to Christ by his Father. As God, Jesus always possessed this kingdom. Because the Son of God became man, this kingdom was given to his human nature. In his state of exaltation, Jesus fully and constantly exercises the authority and power given to his human nature by his divine nature.

Jesus conquered sin and Satan for us. He broke the power the devil had over us, which was to accuse us of our sins. Christ has sent the Holy Spirit to bring us to faith. Jesus reigns in our hearts so that we gladly serve him as our Lord and King. His reign as our King today is really one kingdom, but Scripture mentions three distinct spheres of that reign. Jesus' kingdom is one of power, of grace, and of glory. The kingdom of power is his governance over the universe. The kingdom of grace is his reign in the hearts of those who believe in him. The kingdom of glory is Christ's reign in heaven where he shepherds his believers forever. Reformed theology restricts the kingdom of Christ to God's elect alone and leaves all else to the Father, since they deny the communication of the properties of the divine nature to the human nature.

Jesus kingdom of power is his rule of this world in the interest his church

Jesus, as the Son of God, ruled the world from eternity together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As the Son of Man, this authority was given to his human nature by the divine nature. Jesus, also according to his human nature, rules with his almighty power over the world. It is futile for unbelievers to rebel against him. As the Psalmist declared, “You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery” (Psalm 2:9). Jesus governs this world so that all things work out for the good of his church. As Paul wrote, God “raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be the head over everything in the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills every thing in every way” (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Christ’s kingdom of power extends over the entire universe. It is a kingdom in which Christ rules with his almighty power. In the beginning, God created a perfect world. It was created for the benefit of man and it also gave glory to God. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were driven from paradise. If God had left them to their own sinful devices, this world would have been in total chaos. God, however, still wanted the world he created to serve for the benefit of humans and to serve in the interest of his promise of the Savior. In order to allow the gospel to be proclaimed in the world, God still preserves and sustains the world through the ordinances he established at creation and after the flood. These ordinances are for the harmonious working of his creation. Marriage and the family (Genesis 2), government (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13; Daniel 2:21), and labor and property (2 Thessalonians 3:10, seventh commandment) are ordinances God has established for the preservation of order in this world. As he carries out his kingdom of power, Jesus makes use of these ordinances to preserve the world. He governs all of history in the interest of the salvation of souls (Acts 17:26,27).

Since Jesus rules this world, we know that things do not happen by chance. The Lord has not promised he will spare us from trials in this world. Rather, he has told us to expect suffering for his sake (Acts 14:22; 1 Peter 4:12). Yet, we know that the same Lord who died for us and rose again, lives to make all things turn out for our good (Romans 8:28). Jesus is King. He is gracious, longsuffering, not wanting any to perish (1 Peter 3:9). He also has given us his promise that hell itself will never be able to overcome his church (Matthew 17:18).

Jesus’ kingdom of grace is his rule in the hearts of those who believe in him

All people by nature are under the governance of Christ’s kingdom of power. They are born into it. It is by God’s action alone, through the gospel and baptism, that we become members of Christ’s kingdom of grace. Through the gospel (Romans 1:16) and baptism (Titus 3:5) God creates faith in our hearts. Through these same means of grace, as well as through the Lord’s Supper, Christ preserves his reign in our hearts. The Reformed, following the lead of Ulrich Zwingli (died 1531), deny that God carries out his reign of grace only through the means of grace. They believe the Holy Spirit does not use vehicles to enter into and work in the heart of a person. Scripture, however, teaches otherwise.

Jesus had said that his rule is inside of us. It is invisible. It is his rule in the hearts of those who believe in him (Luke 17:21). When God works faith in our hearts, he establishes his reign there. He rescues us from the power of the devil and makes us alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:5). He gives us a new will which delights in carrying out God's will (Romans 7:22). Christ does not carry out his rule by compulsion. Through the gospel and the sacraments, Christ works in us a deep appreciation of his grace, so that we, according to our new man, desire to serve him.

Since Christ's kingdom of grace is not of this world (John 18:36), it does not interfere with earthly kingdoms. It doesn't undermine or overthrow any worldly government. It isn't revolutionary. Those who advocate the social gospel or liberation theology look for a kingdom of God on earth. Christ's kingdom, however, does not advocate the overthrow of existing governments (Romans 13:1-7). Christ's kingdom is not extended by force or by the sword. It is established by the proclamation of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20).

Christ is also the head of the church. He is the king of his kingdom of grace. There is no visible head of the church on earth. No pope or any other official can claim to be the head of the church. Rome is in error when it claims that Christ's kingdom of grace is a visible organization. It is invisible, for faith and the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be seen.

Thank God that, by his grace, we stand in his kingdom of grace! As Paul wrote, "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand" (1 Corinthians 15:1). Christ carries out his rule in our hearts through his means of grace. We will therefore treasure those means through which he preserves us in the faith here on earth and brings us to everlasting life in his heavenly kingdom.

Jesus' kingdom of glory is his reign in heaven where he is accompanied by his saints

The question is raised, "How can Jesus reign in heaven when the Bible tells us that, at the end of time, he will deliver all things into the hands of his Father?" (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24,28). Here again we must remember the dual nature of Christ. As God, he reigns in heaven with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As man, this kingdom is given to him, so that according to his human nature Christ shares in the reign of the divine nature over all of Creation. Christ, according to his human nature, still remains "less" than the Father, even though the human nature has received properties from the divine nature. As his Father has given him a kingdom, so Christ will share that kingdom with us. Jesus said to his apostles, "I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29,30).

Jesus' kingdom of glory will not be in this world, corrupted by sin. The idea of a millennial reign of Christ on earth is contrary to Scripture. When believers die, their bodies decay but their souls enter into the presence of God (Philippians 1:23). On the last day, all the bodies of the dead will be raised. Together with those who are still alive, all will be caught up into the air to stand before the judgment seat of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). This world will be destroyed by fire at the end of time (2 Peter 3:10). Believers will live in the new heaven and the new earth, forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Peter 3:13).

The Bible describes Christ's kingdom of glory in terms of believer's experiencing pure joy. The psalmist wrote, "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11). But what is perfect joy? We have never experienced it in this world of sin. Thus, the Bible often describes heaven by telling us about the troubles which will not be there rather than by describing the joys which will be there. The Bible says of those in heaven: "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:15-17).

As long as we live in this world, we belong to the church on earth which must still fight the good fight of faith (*the church militant*). We are beset by the problems sin causes sinners living in a sin-corrupted world. When we are in heaven, we will be members of the church which reigns victoriously with Christ in heaven (*the church triumphant*).

Though we are sinners, we have been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. We are clothed in his righteousness (Revelation 7:9). Jesus has promised us that he will say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Then, as Paul says, "And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

In joyful anticipation, then, we say with the hymn-writer:

Oh sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect!
Oh sweet and blessed country
That eager hearts expect!
Jesus, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest;
You are with God the Father
And Spirit ever blest! (CW 214:4).

We reject the following errors:

1. That Christ will come to establish a millennial reign on earth.
2. That Christ wants us to establish his kingdom on earth (social gospel, liberation theology).