

The True Church



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Preface

This Discourse is here presented in a permanent form in the hope it may aid our church members to give an answer to the inquirer, concerning the Church we love; and in promoting, above all else, the glory of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, of whose Church we are members, by whose "Righteousness we are justified, and in whose Holy Sacrament we have blessed fellowship with His own divine life.

Emanuel Greenwald

Lancaster, Pa.,

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The True Church

“I speak concerning Christ and the Church.”– Eph. 5:32.

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.”– 1 John 2:7.

Much stress is laid by the members of the Church of Rome upon the question of the True Church, and very properly, too, for the question is one of great importance. It is not a matter of indifference whether we belong to the True Church, or not. Every one is interested in learning the marks of the True Church, and none should rest satisfied to be in any other than the True Church.

The question of the True Church has had very great prominence given to it, of late, in the minds of Christians, both in Europe and America. The discussion of it is met with in the ponderous volume, in the winged tract, and in the weekly paper. I have met with it in numerous instances, among educated and uneducated persons, when visiting in different, and quite opposite, sections of a very large parish. The question has, in every instance, been urged upon the attention of our members by their neighbors belonging to the Church of Rome. In every instance, they have asserted that theirs alone is the True Church; that ours is not the True Church; that they are safe because they belong to the True Church; and the effort is insidiously and persistently made to cause our members to feel unsafe and dissatisfied because they do not belong to the True Church. So often has this question come to my attention, of late, as to leave the conviction on the mind that it is a part of a general and well-matured plan of operations by which to attack the Church of the Reformation. I feel that the question deserves attention, and ought to be met in a thorough and candid discussion of it, for the information of our members, and to enable them to parry the attacks made upon their faith and their Church. It is particularly an appropriate theme on a centennial occasion such as this,¹ and in view of the anniversary of the Reformation by Luther, which the Church always celebrates on the 31st of October. It is, at such a time, very timely and very appropriate to inquire into the reasons why we believe that we are the True Church of Christ. I shall discuss the

theme with my accustomed earnestness and plainness of speech, but whilst I do so firmly, I shall not forget to do it kindly.

I shall speak, as on such an occasion I have a right to do, of the Lutheran Church. It is the Church of the Reformation. For many years the Augsburg Confession was the only Protestant Confession that was everywhere recognized as such. The Protestant Church was the Lutheran Church. It is much to be regretted, for the credit and for the interests of Protestantism, that the Augsburg Confession was not everywhere retained as the only Protestant Confession, and the Church of the Reformation the only Protestant Church, so as now, and always, to present a united front to the powerful hierarchy of the Church of Rome. But whilst I shall speak of the Church of the Reformation directly, and defend its claims to be the True Church, I feel that I am defending the claims of our common Protestantism that holds true Christian faith, cultivates true Christian life, and practices true Christian duties. I am sorry that I must say, in all candor, that not all that calls itself Protestant, possesses this character. There is some Protestantism that is very unsound in doctrine, and that preaches quite another Gospel than that which Christ, and Paul, and Luther preached. It is a species of semi-infidelity, boasts itself of its rationalism, and makes human reason, and not God's Word, the rule of its faith. It takes away the divinity from Christ, and renounces salvation by the atonement on the cross; is proud, sensational, worldly, unchurchly, unsacramental, schismatical, and human. It professes to be Protestant and free, but it is no credit to either Protestantism or true liberty. It has done, and is doing, more to lead some men to conclude that Protestantism is a failure, and the Reformation a mistake, than all the efforts of either Romanists or Infidels. In, therefore, offering arguments in behalf of the Church of the Reformation as being the True Church, I do not include such a spurious Protestantism as this. On the contrary, whatever I may think of the claims of the Church of Rome to be the True Church, I am sure that this spurious, half-infidel Protestantism, is not the True Church.

In order that we may have a proper comprehension of the whole subject, we must first inquire, What is the Church?

What is the Church?

The answer is: “The Church is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity, and the Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.”

This is the definition given in our Augsburg Confession, and it is the true one. The Greek word is “Ecclesia,” and means an assembly, a congregation, a community, a convocation of people called out from the rest of mankind. Ek, kaleo, means called out, and was used by the Greeks to mean the same as our words convoke, or called together. It is, therefore, rightly called in our Augsburg Confession, “An assembly.” As there are many assemblies, or organizations of different sorts, it next tells us what kind of an assembly it is. It is an “Assembly of believers.”

The Church must, of course, be an assembly “of believers.” It is not an assembly of unbelievers of any sort. The kind of believers that constitute the Christian Church must, of course, be Christian believers; believers in Christianity, believers in Christ, believers in the true Gospel, believers in the true doctrines of the Word of God. All such believers in the faith and doctrines of Christ, and that associate together as confessors of that faith, compose the True Christian Church.

The essential characteristics of a True Church, according to this definition, is that “the Gospel must be preached in its purity, and the sacraments administered according to the divine institution.”

1. There Must Be The True Doctrine.

Impure doctrine makes an impure Church, There cannot be a sound Church if the faith is unsound. Soundness of the faith, and soundness of the Church, are absolutely identical and necessary to each other. A Church, like a home, is constituted, not so much by the bricks and timbers of the house, as by the people that inhabit it. If a Church was a sound Church whilst it held sound doctrine, it may, and will, become an unsound Church if it becomes unsound in the faith. A Church is a true Church if it holds true doctrines. If it holds false doctrines, and tolerates unchristian practices, it is a false, and not a true Church. It is the nature of the faith, and of the practice that flows from that faith, that constitutes the nature of the Church. It is true or false, just as its faith and practice are true or false. The Jewish Church, in the time of Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Daniel, was a true Church, but in the time of the Pharisees, when it

crucified the Savior, and persecuted the apostles, it was no longer a true Church. The Churches in Asia Minor were true Churches when Peter wrote to them his first Epistle, and could speak of them as “elect of God” “having faith unto salvation” “being begotten again unto a lively hope,” “having a faith more precious than gold,” “being built up a spiritual house on the chief corner-stone, elect, precious” which is Christ. But those of them were no longer true Churches, when, in his second Epistle, he was compelled to denounce their “false teachers,” their “damnable heresies” their “denying the Lord that bought them,” their “having eyes full of adultery,” “that could not cease from sin;” and to call them, “Cursed children, which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Baalim son of Bosor.” The Church at Rome was a True Church, when Paul was its pastor, and such saints as Priscilla and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, Tryphena and Tryphosa, and Urbane, and Apelles, and Narcissus, and Persis, and Rufus, and a host of others, true believers, and sound Christians, were its members. But it ceased to be a True Church when the Infidel Leo X. was Pope, Tetzal was seller of indulgences, forgiveness of sins was sold for money, justification by works was substituted for justification by faith, the worship of Mary superseded the worship of Christ, penance took the place of repentance, and the grossest corruption prevailed everywhere among popes, priests, monks, nuns, and people. For a Church to be true, its faith, and practice, and religious life must be true. If these are false, and untrue, and corrupt, it ceases to be a true Church. Every one can understand, and must admit, the force of these facts, and the conclusiveness of these reasons.

2. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper Must Be Administered Properly

This definition of the True Church requires the Sacraments to be rightly administered.

There must be the true number, the true doctrine concerning their nature, and they must be rightly administered to the proper persons. They are two and not seven, as to their number. They have each two elements, an earthly and a heavenly, or a visible and invisible, that are not changed into each other, but remain two natures whilst constituting one Sacrament, and, therefore, there can be no transubstantiation. They must be administered to all the communicants alike, in both kinds, to the laity as well as to the priest, so that all that commune

receive the complete Sacrament. We commit an unwarrantable innovation upon Christ's institution if we add five Sacraments to the two which he instituted. We, with unwarrantable presumption, change one of the Sacraments altogether if we take away the bread, or which is the same thing, transubstantiate it into the substance of the body of Christ, so as to leave no bread whatever remaining. And we, with censurable boldness, defraud the congregation of a part of the Sacrament when we take from them the cup and give them the bread only. In all these respects the Sacrament is not rightly administered according to the institution and pattern of Christ, the divine Founder of the Church. The True Church adheres most strictly, in all points, to Christ's institutions, because the Sacraments are vital to the very existence of the Church. That Church ceases to be the True Church that lays its presumptuous hands upon the holy institutions of Christ, and changes their number, their nature, their elements, or their subjects.

This definition of the Church, as laid down in our venerable Augsburg Confession, is so certainly sound and correct, that no opponent, however disposed, can by any possibility refute it. Sound doctrine and the divine sacraments, truly believed, and professed, and held, and practiced, as Christ, the great Head of the Church, has himself taught, and ordained, and commanded, and instituted them, are necessary to constitute the True Church. A great and powerful external organization called a church, does not constitute a true Christian Church, if the true faith, and the true sacraments, and true Christian life, are wanting. Every one who gives the subject the smallest consideration will admit the correctness of this position.

Mohammedanism is not the True Church. Why not? Not for the want of a large and powerful external organization, that is just about as old as the Pope of Rome. Mohammedanism has its pope, called the Caliph, who is the "acknowledged successor of Mohammed, and is invested with supreme dignity and power in all things relating to religion and civil polity." As the Pope claims to be the vicegerent of Christ, and the visible head of the Christian church on earth, so the Caliph claims to be the successor and representative on earth of Mohammed as the Prophet of God. and the head of the church of all good Mussulmans. The Caliphs claim their dignity, and power, and position, almost in the very words in which the Pope claims his. And their organization is immensely vast and powerful, for there is very little difference between the number of adherents of the Caliph and that of the Pope. But this external organization, and headship, and numbers, and powerful claims, do not constitute

Mohammedanism the True Church. Why not? The answer is plain. It has not the true faith, nor the right sacraments, nor the correct practice.

We may cite a very apposite case much nearer home. Mormonism claims to be the True Church. It has its pope, its organization, its members, its ordinances, and is such a wealthy and powerful institution, that it has been able to defy the laws and government of the United States. But Mormonism is not the True Church. Why not? The answer is plain. It has not the true faith, nor the right sacraments, nor correct practice. These constitute the True Church, and where they are wanting, the True Church is wanting; and no organization of whatever kind, that has not the true Christian faith, nor the true Christian sacraments, nor the true Christian practice that results therefrom, is the True Christian Church.

We must distinguish between the nature of things. Mere names and outward appearances are not enough. We must go into the interior of all institutions, whether civil or religious, and ascertain what are their principles, their nature, their real character, and we must judge them from what they really are.

Let us now go more into detail, in the examination of the claims of the Church of the Reformation, to be the True Church, as over against the Church of Rome. It must be borne in mind, that we are not the aggressors in this contest, nor are we taking the offensive; but we are acting strictly on the defensive, and are asserting claims that are being denied and called in question every day. We are simply maintaining our right to exist, in answer to those who are everywhere – in public and in private – denying that we have any right to live. If our claim to be the True Christian Church cannot be maintained, then we ought not to live. A false or untrue Church has no right to exist.

How Do We Know Our Church Is The True Church?

1. We are the True Church, because we have the True Head of the Church.

There is, and can be, but one Head of the Christian Church. That Head is Christ. It is a divine and not a human Head. No *man* can be the Head of the Christian Church. It is a divine institution, and, therefore, must have a divine

Head. It cannot have two heads, the one divine and the other human. This would be a two-headed monster, and not the True Christian Church. Nowhere has Christ given us the least intimation that He has appointed any human head, any vicegerent, any representative man, any one to act in His stead on earth, as the Head of the Church. He occupies that position, and He alone; and He has nowhere announced that He has vacated that position, or given that honor to another. It is contended that Peter was made the head of the church, and that his successors are the earthly representatives of Christ. But the well-known, and oft-quoted, passage, says nothing of the kind. “Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.” Even if we grant the interpretation which our Romish friends put upon it, the passage says nothing of the kind. It speaks of “Peter,” but it says nothing of his successors. It speaks of a “rock” on which the church will be “built,” but the rocky foundation is a very different thing from the “head” of the Church. The passage says nothing about a “head.” The builder is the head, not the foundation on which he builds. Even if Peter was meant personally, and he was called the rock on which the Church was to be built, it would only say, what is elsewhere said, that the Church is “built on the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone” It would only say that the Church is founded on the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, which we all believe, and which none disputes. Even then, allowing the popish interpretation of this passage, it says nothing whatever of a human head of the Church – of a vicegerent of Christ on earth – of a pope to whom the whole Christian Church in the world must be subject, and without whom there is no True Church. But even this cannot be allowed.

It will be interesting to my hearers to learn what is said on this passage by intelligent and candid Roman writers themselves. It is well known, that the decree of the Infallibility of the Pope, voted by the council that held its sessions in Rome a few years ago, has met with much opposition from intelligent Roman Catholics themselves, such as Dr. Bollinger, Hyacinthe, Reinkens, and others. Several of the most learned of its opponents within the Romish Church have published a work entitled “The Pope and the Council, by Janus.” It is a work of great ability. I know you will give your closest attention, whilst I quote from it the following passage, p. 74.

“Of all the fathers [of the first 600 years after Christ, p. 76] who interpret these passages in the Gospels, Matthew 16:18 – John 21:17– the words of Christ to Peter, *not a single one applies them to the Roman bishops as Peter’s successors*. How many fathers have busied themselves with these texts, yet not one of them, whose commentary we possess – Origen, A.D. 230; Chrysostom, A.D. 370; Hilary, A.D. 360; Augustine, A.D. 390; Cyril, A.D. 350; Theodoret, A.D. 400 – and those

whose interpretations are collected in catenas, has dropped the faintest hint, that the primacy of Rome is the consequence of the commission and promise to Peter! Not one of them has explained the rock, or foundation on which Christ would build His Church, of the office given to Peter to be transmitted to his successors; but they understood by it either Christ himself, or Peter's confession of faith in Christ, or both together. Or, else they thought Peter was the foundation equally with all the apostles – the twelve being together the foundation stones of the church. (Rev. 21:14, – ‘And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.’) The fathers could the less recognize in the power of the keys, and the power of binding and loosing, any special prerogative or lordship of the Roman bishop, inasmuch as – what is obvious to any one at first sight – they did not regard a power first given to Peter, and afterwards conferred in precisely the same words on all the apostles (Matthew 16:19; 18:18) as anything peculiar to him, or hereditary in the line of Roman bishops.”

So far the book from which I quote. It is not often that we meet with such candid statements as these; and it proves that the truth of history will force itself to be heard from the lips of candid and intelligent men, who love truth more than party. It establishes the position with which I set out, that whilst we refuse to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome, we are, nevertheless, the True Church, because we have Christ, the true Head of the Church, and are built upon the true foundation of the apostles and prophets, Peter among the rest.

2. We Are The True Old Church, Because We Have The True Church Succession.

Luther was not a schismatic, nor is the Lutheran Church a sect. The Church of the Reformation is the true and proper development of the true Christian Church life, and in the way of the True Church succession. The true old Church arose, at the Reformation, out of the errors and corruptions that had loaded it down for ages, and shaking them off, appeared the same old True Church, cleansed and purified. The Reformation was not a revolution so much as it was a development. Luther did not create the times, but the times created Luther. Washington did not make the American Revolution, but the Revolution made Washington. The country called for Washington, and he came. So it was not Luther that made the Reformation so much as the Church oppressed, and groaning, and struggling to rise, wanted a suitable leader to help it up, and God raised the true man of the times, that the times called for. It was the Church itself that did its own reforming. If the Church had not been struggling up from beneath its grievous oppressions, Luther could have done nothing, and his feeble voice would never have been heard, or would soon have been drowned and

forgotten. In all great movements in Church or State, there is, first, the condition of things that is ripe for the movement, and then the right man in the right place, is always found to lead the movement and give it direction and success. Such was the glorious Reformation of the 16th Century, known as the Lutheran Reformation.

It was not the rising up of one man, or a few men, or of one or a few Churches, in one place or a few places. But it was the spontaneous rising up of hundreds and thousands of men, of whole nations of Churches; and when the rule, and the errors, and the corruptions in doctrine and practice of Rome and its pope were cast off, the regular routine of Church life moved on almost as uninterruptedly as if nothing had occurred to disturb the even progress of affairs.

There was no breaking of the succession in the ministry, in the Church organizations, in the ordination of pastors, in the preaching of the Word, in the participation of the Sacraments, in the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, or in any of the regular public and private acts of Christian Church life. In most of the parishes of Germany, the same pastors that had ministered to the congregations under papal rule, renouncing the pope and the errors of popery, remained still the pastors of the same people who had become Protestant. Their successors were educated, ordained, and appointed as they had been, and the succession thus continued has remained to this day.

This is particularly true as regards the countries of Sweden, of Denmark, and of Norway. Here the whole nation, as by one act, cast off the jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome, and the Churches and pastors, almost as one man, embraced the Reformation. No break in the succession occurred anywhere. The succession was as regular as when one wave succeeds another; as when one joint of the wheat stem follows another; or as when the child is born to his father, and inherits the father's name, and the father's homestead. It was the spectacle of three entire nations of Churches rising and casting off the foul yoke that, not God, but man had imposed on them, and then moving on in its purified Church life, as if nothing wonderful had occurred. It was the same old Church, the same line of descent, the True Church afterward as before, much more the True Church afterward than before, because it had cast off what had been false and untrue, and its faith and practice were now the pure truth of God.

So too, we may cite the case of the Church of England. The 39 Articles and the Liturgy of the Church of England are almost transcripts of the Augsburg Confession and the Lutheran Liturgies. Archbishop Cranmer was in constant correspondence with Melancthon, and earnestly invited him to England, and

Melanchthon would have gone to England if the Elector of Saxony would have permitted him. Both the Articles and the Liturgy of the Church of England are mainly Lutheran. Here, too, there was no break in the succession. By one act the entire nation cast off the popish rule, and then moved on as it had done before. Bishops, presbyters, deacons, and Church members were the same persons the day after, that they had been the day before. The stream, it is true, rippled a little at the spot, and from a crooked channel it turned into a straight one, but it was, nevertheless, the same stream. It was the old stream that had run on from the time that God started it, and there was no break in the succession of its waters. It was the True Old Church, truer because of the Reformation than it had been before. It lost by the Reformation, not one element of the True Church, but gained a much stronger element of truth than it had possessed before.

We are, therefore, the True Church, because we have the true succession. The succession has not been interrupted. There has been no break in it. It is the same living tree, with its roots grounded away back in the good soil of Jesus and the apostles. It is the same living stream that started in the pool under the temple in Jerusalem. It is the same life which God breathed into its nostrils; it never ceased to breathe, and it breathes with more vigorous and healthy life since the Reformation than it did for centuries before.

3. We Are The True Church Because We Have The True Faith.

We have the same old Apostles' Creed, says Luther, in his admirable and well-known dissertation on the True Church, the old faith of the old Church that has been held, believed, repeated, and confessed from the beginning. Nothing has been taken from it, and nothing added to it; but we repeat it now as it was repeated from the time of the death of the last of the apostles. Our children are baptized in it now, as they were then. Our Catechumens ratify it at their Confirmation now, as they did then. And in our stated Sunday services we repeat it, at morning and at evening worship, now, as it was then. We hold to every article of it, and suffer no innovation therein. All our subsequent confessions, and catechisms, and symbols are only the full and complete development of this old Apostles' Creed of the Church catholic. We are, therefore, the True Church, because we hold the true old faith of the Apostles' Creed, which the True Church has held from the beginning.

With the old True Church we also have the Nicene Creed; and in it, with this holy church through the centuries, we profess our faith in “One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God – begotten of His Father before all worlds – God of God– Light of Light – very God of very God – begotten, not made – consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

In these noble words we utter our faith and hope when partaking of the Holy Supper, in which He, who is the Life of the world, gives Himself to us for the nourishment of His own divine life in our souls. As the True Catholic Church in all ages has confessed this faith, we who belong to the same have not ceased to confess it. We are, therefore, parts of the body of true orthodox confessors, and members of the True Church, the conservator of our holy faith, by which we must be saved.

We also hold, with the true old church of the fathers, the Athanasian Creed, as the third chief symbol, in which we confess concerning the Godhead, the true doctrine of the Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and concerning the Son of God, “who although He be God and man, is yet not two, but one, Christ – one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the humanity into God – one altogether – not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.”

We have and hold this true faith as it has been held and professed by the True Holy Catholic Church in all the years of its purity; and, therefore, having the True old Faith, we belong to the True old Church of Christ.

And we have the Augsburg Confession, which is the true and consistent development of the true old faith of the true old church. In it, we have not brought forth another faith, or changed any part of the old true faith, but have only, thereby, corrected the errors, and rectified the abuses, by which pope and priests had for so long a time corrupted the True, Holy Church of the Fathers. In no one point of doctrine have we, in this noble Augustana, departed from the faith of the Holy Catholic Church of the first centuries, but the greatest and most successful care has been taken, in the words themselves of this Magna Carta of Protestantism, “in order that it might be the more clearly perceived, that by us nothing is received, either in doctrine or ceremonies, which might be contrary to the Holy Scriptures, or opposed to the universal Christian Church. For it is clear, indeed, and evident, that with the greatest vigilance, by the help of God, we have been careful that no new or ungodly doctrine insinuate itself, spread, and prevail in our churches.”

We hold, therefore, and cherish the one old true faith, of the true old church, which was proclaimed in the beginning, and have neither added anything to it, nor taken anything away from it; and, consequently, having the true old Faith, we have the True old Church of God.

4. We are the True Church, because we have the True, Old, Apostolic, Christian Baptism.

By Baptism we are incorporated into Christ, made members of His Church, translated from the Kingdom of nature into the Kingdom of grace, made subjects of Christ's Kingdom, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. An unbaptized person is not a member of the Christian Church. By Baptism, as the divinely appointed initiatory Sacrament, a person is initiated, or brought into the Church. This has always been so, and it is so now. In all missionary operations, as well as in the regular parochial routine of home Church life, it is Baptism that initiates old and young, upon whom it is administered, into the Church. It was so with the first candidate that was baptized by Peter and the other apostles, on the day of Pentecost, and it is so with the child, or the adult that has been baptized to-day. Being baptized with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it is made a member of Christ, and of the Christian Church. Not man's rite nor an ordinance appointed by Pope or Council, but God's own holy Sacrament makes us members of His Church.

We are all so baptized. All our forefathers were so baptized before us. In regular, unbroken succession, with no defective link, our baptism goes up from the present members of the Church, to the first members that were baptized on the day of Pentecost. It is not a new Baptism, invented by us, or by Luther, or invented in our day, or at the time of the Reformation, but it is the "selfsame old Baptism instituted by Christ, and in which the Apostles, the primitive Church, and all Christians after them, have ever been baptized to this day." – Luther.

Were they thereby made members of the True Church? So are we. It is the Baptism of the old primitive Church, it has the same efficacy now as then; it is administered in the same way, in the same name, and initiates now as then, into the same old, primitive, apostolic, true, Christian Church.

5. We Are The True Church Because We Have The

True Lord's Supper.

We have the same two elements, the one earthly, and the other heavenly – the earthly being bread and wine, and the heavenly being the body and blood of Christ – as Christ himself constituted it. We take bread and wine as Christ did, and we say, “Take, eat, this is my body” and “Take, drink ye all of it, this is my Blood,” as Christ said.

We believe too, as his disciples believed, as he himself taught us, and as they also teach, that " the cup with which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ." We take Christ's words as he uttered them, and we believe that which they express. We do not attempt to explain them otherwise than according to their plain and obvious meaning, nor do we fritter away their force, by giving them an interpretation which makes them a mere figure of speech. It is, what Christ himself has made it, and as Luther in his Small Catechism declares it to be, “The true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ himself.”

We retain, too, the whole sacrament, for whilst we receive the body of Christ, we do not destroy the bread, as the false doctrine of transubstantiation necessarily does. Neither do we give to the lay members of the Church, only a part of a Sacrament, as they do who withhold the cup from the people. Of these false doctrines, and of these impious innovations, the old primitive Church knew nothing, but held and administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as we now hold concerning it, and as we now administer it. We say, therefore, with Luther, “We have the Holy Sacrament of the Altar even as it was instituted by Christ himself, and as it was used by the Apostles, and by all Christendom after them, until the Church of Rome corrupted it.”

We have introduced nothing new therein, but have the same old, pure, true body and blood, under the true bread and wine, as the apostles, and the true, old Church of Christ, always had.

6. We Are The True Church Because We Have The True Ministry.

We have the old, twofold call to the ministry. First, of God – “For no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron” Secondly, of the Church, for when the first congregation numbered only one hundred and twenty members at Jerusalem, and there was a vacancy in the apostleship occasioned by the death of Judas, they all “gave forth their lots, and the vote fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” Christ, who has instituted the office of the ministry, and who, with the other “gifts” which He “gave unto men when He ascended up on high,” included “pastors and teachers for the edifying of His body,” the Church, still calls men into this holy office, and has so called them from the beginning. And the Church, too, which is the congregation of believers, having the keys of the kingdom given to it, and its members being “a royal priesthood,” has the power, and has ever exercised it, to call and ordain ministers to preach the Gospel, and to administer the holy Sacraments. This twofold call, which the old True Church had, we still have, and have always had. We have, therefore, the true ministry of the True Church. But we accept no lordly pope as vicegerent of Christ on earth, for Christ appointed none, and the True old Church knew of none. Nor do we submit to a despotic hierarchy, that puts all ecclesiastical power into the hands of corrupt and tyrannical bishops and priests, by which men’s consciences are oppressed, their liberties destroyed, and both the Church and the State are made captive to the outrageous pretensions of vain and proud men who arrogate to themselves the power and infallibility that belong to God only. Such an oppressive hierarchy Christ did not institute, and the True old Church knew nothing of. As to ministerial succession, we have the true, regular succession, for from the ordinations of the apostles, down through all the centuries to our own immediate times, there has been no break or interruption of the succession in the ranks of the ministry. If the ministry in Germany, and Sweden, and Denmark, and Norway, and England, was a regular ministry up to the time of the Reformation, their successors through the three centuries since must be also regular, for the succession passed from one to the other in the same regular way, and with the same twofold call. We have, therefore, the true, old ministry, and the True old Church of the apostles and prophets, among whom the line of succession began.

7. We Are The True Church Because We Have The Real Old Keys.

Christ gave the keys of the kingdom, or Church, not to Peter only, but .to all the apostles; and not to one only, but to all of their successors, with authority to use them to open or to shut the Church to men. By this is meant the power to admit into the Church worthy persons, and to exclude unworthy persons from it. The notion that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to one man, and that man the Pope of Rome, for him to open and to shut the kingdom of heaven to whom he will, was never held until the year A.D. 845, when it was foisted upon the Church by a wicked forgery, known in Church History as the “*Isidorean Decretals*” It is directly opposed to the Word of God, which tells us that Jesus gave the power to bind and to loose, to all the apostles: Matt. 18:18. It is an outrageous imposition, and has been made the pretext for the worst tyranny, the most high-handed oppression, and the crudest injustice, on the part of the Pope of Rome, that the world ever witnessed.

“We have the real old keys, and use them,” says Luther, to open the kingdom to believing and penitent sinners, and to shut against unbelievers and hardened offenders, “as Christ instituted and designed them, and as the apostles and all Christendom have used them unto this day. As, therefore, we have the keys and their use, with the old Church, we are the selfsame old Church,” “We make no new keys,” nor impose a new yoke, such as neither the Church nor the apostles imposed, nor our fathers were able to bear: neither do we use these keys, which were intended only for spiritual uses, to dethrone kings, and burn and slay with fagot and stake, with torture and gibbet, as in the days of popish power. But we use them as the old Church did, to admit worthy men into, or to exclude unworthy men from, Christ’s Church or spiritual kingdom, as the old Church did; by the command of the Lord. We have, therefore, the old, true apostolic Church, because like the old, true, and apostolic Church, we have the real old keys, and use them as the old, true, and apostolic Church used them.

8. We Are The True Church Because We Have, And Hold, The True Word Of God.

God’s Word is the only rule of faith and practice for men. It is the only infallible guide and teacher. Man may err, but God can never err. We are directed to go “to the law and to the testimony, and if we speak not according to this Word, there is no life in us.” Neither is it man’s Bible, but God’s Bible. The force of a plain passage of God’s Word is sought to be evaded by the flippant

reply, “Yes, so it reads in your Bible” as if we had made the Bible. No, it is God’s Word, and not man’s word, and we have it in our hands, just as Christ spoke it, and the apostles wrote it, and the old primitive Church read it, and all Christendom, from that time to this, believed and practiced it. Like them, we ground our faith on God’s Word, we believe nothing that it condemns, and we reject nothing that it reveals. We have it pure and true as it came from the mouth of God himself, in the very words in which He inspired it, and clothed with infallible divine authority.

“We,” says Luther, "teach it diligently among us, without any addition of new or human doctrines, even as Christ himself commanded and taught it. and as the Apostles and the primitive Church always did.

We invent nothing new, but continue steadfastly to hold to the old Word of God, as the old Church had it. We are, therefore, the real old Church, and as the one and the same old and true Church, we believe and teach the same old and true Word of God.

9. We Are The True Church, Because We Have The True Cross, And The Way Of Salvation By It.

We have not the wooden cross, and Christ on a crucifix, but the real and true cross, and a living Christ who was crucified, but who is risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. We adore not so much the cross, as we adore Him who was crucified on it, and bore our sins, and cleanseth us from all sin by His blood. We do not take Christ off the cross and put our own merits, and works, and penances, and righteousness instead of His. IN either do we displace Christ from his office of intercessor for us with the Father, and put Mary and the saints in His place. But counting, with St. Paul, as dung all our own merits, and works, and righteousness, we make mention of Christ’s righteousness, and His only; and casting down at the foot of the cross all our vanity, and pride, and self-exaltation, all hope of salvation by any and all human means and methods, all saintly intercession, all purgatorial purification, all works of supererogation, all merit secured by bodily penances and mortifications, we look up to Christ crucified for us, as our wisdom and righteousness, our sanctification and redemption, our all in all, everything we need for our justification before God, and our inheritance of the bliss of heaven.

This is the only and the old way of salvation for the world. It was the way of Paul and of Peter, and of all the apostles, and of the primitive church, and of all Christendom in its purest and best state. With the old church we confess, “that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus,” alone.

With the old church we declare, “God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

With the old church we testify, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

So believing, and so trusting, and so confessing, we are of the True old Church of Christ, in which we have salvation and eternal life, by the abundant grace and mercy that flow to the humble believer from the cross of Christ.

10. We Are The True Church, Because In It We Have The True Happy Deathbeds Of The Saints.

This is the great final test. In the True Church we have peaceful deathbeds. The grace which we therein receive takes the sting from death, and the terror from the grave. We therein learn how to die, as well as how to live. With the True old Church we can say, in the language of her sainted martyrs, “I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the righteous Judge shall give me at that day.” With the old True Church we can exclaim, with her dying saints, u O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this good old church the purest devotion has always been cultivated, and has flourished from the first; the holiest, and most self-denying, and most eminently useful lives have been everywhere exhibited; and the sweetest, happiest, and most blessed, deathbeds are constantly witnessed. If we are not safe in this church, we are not safe anywhere. If this is not the True Church, there is no true church. If in this church the soul cannot find rest and peace, there is no rest nor peace for it anywhere on the earth. If in this church the soul cannot be fitted for heaven, it is in vain to hope for such fitness in any other. Particular^, with this pure faith, and these blessed sacraments, and this sure way of

justification, and this ancient order, and this right practice, in this True Church, at the head of which sits in glorious majesty our divine Lord Jesus Christ, I would not entertain the thought, even for a single moment, of exchanging my chances of salvation for a place in the church at the head of which sits the Pope of Rome.

I have Christ's church. I am sure of it. Christ's church is the True Church. With Christ at the head of it, I know I am safe. I would not feel safe in a church with a man at the head of it. Even though he claim to be infallible, I have no proof of it; but many proofs to the contrary. I am satisfied, therefore, to remain where I am; and I would not exchange my faith and hope for any that the Church of Rome can offer me in their stead. With the great and good Luther, at the Diet of Worms, I must now and always say, and with the same positiveness and feeling of certainty with which he said it, – "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me:" Amen.

Preached in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Centreville, Pa., Rev. B. F. Apple, Pastor, October 31, 1874.

1. The occasion on which this discourse was preached was the Centennial Festival of the Lutheran Church, at Centreville, held during the week including the 31st of October.↵

About the Author

"Emanuel Greenwald was born near Frederick, Maryland, Jan. 13, 1811, and was, like the prophet Samuel of old, dedicated by his pious parents to the holy office from his earliest infancy. His theological studies were pursued under the private supervision of Rev. David F. Schaeffer, who similarly prepared no less than fourteen other young men, in his own parsonage, for the work of the ministry.

"Dr. Greenwald's first parish was New Philadelphia, Ohio, and all the adjoining country within a radius of fifteen miles in every direction. At one time he supplied fourteen preaching points on Sundays and week-days. In 1842 he was elected as the first editor of the *Lutheran Standard*, and from 1848 to 1850 he was the president of the English District Synod of Ohio.

"The years 1851 to 1854 were spent in the city of Columbus, during which time he held many responsible positions on important boards, committees, etc. In September, 1854, he accepted a call to the pastorate of Christ Church, Easton, Penn., which he faithfully served for twelve years. His fourth and last parish was Holy Trinity Church of Lancaster, Penn., in which he labored from May, 1867, up to his death in December, 1885. He began preaching every Thursday evening at a mission point in the northern part of the city, which soon developed into Grace Church, and afterwards started another mission in the western section which was the nucleus of Christ Church. An assistant being necessary for the increasing field, Rev. Charles S. Albert served in this capacity, then Rev. David H. Geissinger, then Rev. John Rumble, then Rev. C. Elvin Haupt, then Rev. Ezra K. Reed, then Rev. Charles L. Fry. Long after his own generation will his memory continue to be revered as an ideal pastor and a man of pre-eminent saintliness. C. L. F.¹

1. Jacobs, Henry Eyster, ed. (1899) *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons↵

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Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. –Jude 1:24-25

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