

Charles Krauth

Of the Church: The Lutheran View, Romish, Reformed (by Guericke)



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Of the Church in General: The Lutheran View, Romish, Reformed

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Of the Church in General: The Lutheran View, Romish, Reformed

Translated from the Allgemeine Christliche Symbolik of H. E. F. Guericke. Second Ed. Leipzig, 1846.

By Heinrich Guericke. Translated By
Rev. Charles Porterfield Krauth

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

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Of The Church In General: The Lutheran View, Romish, Reformed.

By Heinrich Guericke and Translated by Charles Porterfield Krauth.

Translator's note.

The translation we offer from Guericke presents a comparative view of the doctrines of the various Christian denominations on that subject, which, more than any other, engages the attention of the theological world at present. We have given a literal version, but have disentangled the sentences, and broken them up into parts of moderate length. We have thrown the illustrations into the text, instead of ranging them below it, as in the original. We have also translated the quotations from the Latin and Greek symbols.

THE COLLECTIVE SYSTEM of the different parts of the Christian communion, sums itself up in the doctrine of the church. The conception of the Evangelical Lutheran church proceeds from the inward spiritual essence of the church, as a communion of faith, love, the Holy Ghost, knit together by means of the word of God and the sacraments, but which also forms itself into a body in an outward manifestation. In this outward manifestation, she is to be recognized by word and sacrament, as the outward conditions of what is within, and by confession, whose purity and unity, as in the case of word and sacrament, suffice for the true unity of the church. Thus there is a visible-invisible, an invisible-visible church, of which the visible is the manifestation, as the condition of the invisible.

The Roman Catholic conception of the church, on the contrary, including also, in essentials, the Greek practice, proceeds from the outward manifestation of the church, and that in a distinct outward form; this outward form she regards as the essence of the church, the inward as only incidental and derivative. Thus, she holds a purely visible church, an embodiment of the essence of the church in materiality. In the opposite extreme we have a purely invisible church, the resolving, the volatilizing of the essence of the church into spirituals, an idea found in the germ in the Reformed church, and more perfectly expanded in the sects. The Reformed church, indeed, proceeds with the Evangelical Lutheran, from the inward spiritual essence of the church. With the exception, however, of the church of England, although in not very clear development, she there stands still, without elevating herself to the idea of a true spiritual bodily church, to which she only proximately inclines. And this she does, in part not without inward contradiction, in her relation to the predestinarian particularism, and in part not without pushing her view to an extreme, in coordinating constitution and discipline with word and sacrament. In the same fundamental idea of a purely invisible church, the Arminians, and close after them the Socinians unite. The Quakers, and in part also the Mennonites, have expressed it with more theoretical consequence, and have carried it out practically, in the case of the Quakers, even to the rejection of the entire ministerial office, and of worship; the Swedenborgians, after their own fashion, have cemented the Romish materialism to the Reformed spiritualism.

The church, since with the first Pentecost she has entered specifically into the world, is, in accordance with the most explicit expressions of scripture, the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:27, 13; Eph. 1:23; 4:12, 16; 5:30; Col. 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15; Rom. 12:5). We may add in other more definite words:¹

“The church is Christians who, through the Holy Spirit, by means of the pure word of God and the sacraments, administered in conformity with it, are bound together, into one body, the body of Christ, the head, in one faith and in one love.”

The church is, consequently, as a body, something which presents itself in manifestation, external, but as the body of Christ, of the risen and glorified Christ, it presents itself as something essentially super-earthly, essentially (if we understand the word aright) spiritual. It is a *Σωμα πνευματικον* (1

Cor. 15:44); hence the church in Luther's confession of faith² is called "the spiritual body of Christ." This spiritual essence, however, or essentiality of the church, the spiritual communion of its members in true faith on the Lord, in the Holy Ghost, must, in order to present to view the complete church, reveal itself in an outward bodily form, in a common confession of faith, verbal and sacramental. This verbal and sacramental confession of faith is certainly more, however, than a creed, inasmuch as it also, as we have already observed, appears as the condition, the verbal in general of the structure of the church, the sacramental as the true reality of the conception of the church as Christ's body.

Unquestionably, then, according to its material idea, the Evangelical church, the Lutheran, embraces the conception of the church, as the "Corpus Christi," body of Christ.³ She proceeds from the inmost spiritual essence of the church, and defines it as the "assemblage of all believers,"⁴ as the "congregation of all believers and saints,"⁵ as the "society (united by) faith and the Holy Spirit in their hearts,"⁶ and constantly in thorough connection with the "communion of saints" in the Apostles' creed, as the "congregation of saints, who are associated together in the same gospel or doctrine, and in the same Holy Spirit, who renews, sanctifies, and rules in, their hearts,"⁷ as the spiritual people, not distinguished from the nations by civil rites, but a true people of God, renewed by the Holy Spirit.⁸ Yet this "communion of saints" in the creed is by no means to be regarded as a mere explanation of the preceding "church." Rather must we regard the word "church" in the creed, as designating the invisible-visible or visible-invisible church upon earth in general, in its totality, and the expression "communion of saints," as referring to the invisible essence of the church, and that naturally of the entire church in heaven and on earth, especially, perhaps, regarding the heavenly as the basis of the earthly. In the same manner it connects with the "communion of saints" the "forgiveness of sins," (the true intermediate member between what precedes and what follows, two points bound in unity in the creed), as a basis again of the communion of saints. With the quotations we have made, compare the smaller catechism on the third article:

“I believe that I cannot, by my own reason or strength, believe on Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Ghost hath called me by the gospel, illumined me with his gifts, sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; even as he calleth, gathers together, illumines, sanctifies, and through Jesus Christ, preserves in the only true faith all Christian people upon earth.”

So also the large catechism on the same article,⁹ (where in truth the idea and expression are not yet thoroughly clear):

“The holy Christian church is called in the creed a”communion of saints” (*communio sanctorum*) for it is both embraced in one, ...that is a congregation wherein are saints only, or yet more clearly, a holy congregation (or best of all, and clearest of all, a holy Christian people (Christenheit),”

As in the same passage, a little before he had called the church as such). This, however, is the meaning and sum: I believe that there is upon earth one holy little band and congregation, of believers only, under one head, Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost, in one faith, mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet in unison in love, without sects and division. Of that same am I also a part and member, sharer and partner in all blessings it possesses, brought and incorporated therein by the Holy Ghost, in that I have heard, and do yet hear God’s word, which is the beginning of the entrance therein, etc. It naturally follows, that with this definition, the Lutheran church limits the church to no particular country.¹⁰

“I believe in one Catholic universal Christian church, such that no man may think that the church, like another government of an external kind, is confined to this or that land, ...as the Pope asserts it is to Rome, but this remains undoubtedly true, that the genuine church is that body and those men, who here and there in the world — *sparsi per totum orbem* — from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, truly believe in Christ,” etc.

This is not to be understood as though there were no unbelievers and godless persons in the church, the very opposite of which Donatistic error is expressed already in the Augsburg Confession (art. 8):—¹¹

“Though the Christian church is properly nothing else than the congregation of all believers and saints, yet, since in this life, there are many false Christians and hypocrites, and open offenders remain among the godly, the sacraments, notwithstanding, are valid... Consequently the Donatists, and all others, who hold a contrary view, are condemned.”

We are to understand the passages from our confessions in this sense, that only believers and saints in Christ compose the true essence of the church, whilst unbelievers and the unholy are its dead members. “Bad men are dead members of the church;”¹² “evil persons are only in name in the church, but the good in both deed and name;”¹³ “when the church is defined, it is necessary to define her as the living body of Christ, since that is in name and in very deed the church.”¹⁴ Not however to exalt this idea, as though the church were something merely internal, spiritual, invisible; our confession, at the same time, distinctly defines the church to be “the congregation of all believers, among whom the gospel is purely preached, and the holy sacraments administered according to the gospel;”¹⁵ “*congregatio sanctorum, in qua evangelium recte docetur et recte administrantur sacramenta;*”¹⁶ a society (united by) faith and the Holy Spirit in their hearts, which has, however, external marks, so that it maybe known, to wit, the pure doctrine of the gospel, and an administration of the sacraments consonant with the gospel of Christ.”¹⁷

In reference to this point, the Apology also speaks of “an external society of the church,” or of “an external society having the signs of the church, to wit, profession of the word and the sacraments.” Preaching of the pure gospel, and scriptural administration of the sacraments, are thus the condition of the bodily character of the church, and this indeed not as something outwardly and incidentally connected with it, nay, they are most intimately united with the sacred inward essence, as a holy body with a holy soul (the soul as the true vivifier of the body, the body as the bearer and organ of the soul), they are the conditions of the true spiritual bodily church in its outward visibility. The Apology 7 gives the deep biblical foundation of this truth: “Paul defines (Eph. 5) the church in entirely the same manner as that which is purified, that it may be holy; and adds the external marks, the word and sacraments. For thus he speaks: Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it with the bath of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church,” etc.

Where these two parts, the manifestations of the inward faith, are found, as conditions, there is the true church in its manifestation, though on the one side (as the wheat-field does the tares) it may embrace in it unworthy and dead members, and on the other, may not everywhere be characterized by the same external constitution and usages. In the first of these points the Apology¹⁸ says:

“...hypocrites and wicked persons are partakers in this true church, as concerns its outward rites,”

and in the Form of Concord,¹⁹ the idea, “that a church in which sinners are found, is no true and Christian church,” is rejected as an error of the Anabaptists. As regards the second point, it is only on unity in word and sacrament the true church in outward conformation depends. This sentiment Luther expresses in innumerable passages. For example, in the sermon on the epistle for the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity²⁰ he says:

“In this St. Paul points out and touches what is the true church of Christ, and how we are to recognize her, to wit, that there is but one only church or people of God on earth, which has one faith, one confession of God the Father, and of Christ, etc., and which holds and abides by them, in harmony one with another... Therefore this unity of the church is not denominated, and is not an outward government of one sort, a having and holding a law or prescription and church usage, as the Pope with his troop asserts, ...but where this harmony of the one only faith and baptism, etc., exists. Hence it is called the one only, holy, "Catholic," or Christian church, since therein is the only pure, clear doctrine of the gospel and outward confession of it, in all parts of the world, and through all time, irrespective of the want of similarity, or of the distinction in outward corporeal life, or of outward ordinances, customs and ceremonies. Furthermore, those who do not hold this unity of doctrine and faith in Christ, and moreover, cause divisions and offenses, as St. Paul (Rom. 16:17) says, by these doctrines of men, and self-willed works, for which they contend and maintain them to be necessary to all Christians, these are not the true church of Christ, nor members of it, but its opposers and destroyers."

Elsewhere²¹ he says:

“In brief, where the word remains, there assuredly the church remains also, ...for there must unquestionably be some who have lightly and purely the word and sacrament. Again, those who have not this treasure, namely the word... cannot be the Christian church.”

Furthermore, Luther employs this language:²²

“The church upon earth, when we speak of the external community, is a congregation of those who hear, believe and confess the true doctrine of the gospel of Christ, and have with them the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies them and works in them by the word and sacraments; among whom, nevertheless, there are some false Christians and hypocrites, who yet hold this same doctrine with one accord, and are partakers in the sacraments, and other outward offices of the church.”

And thus in other places. It is clear how wisely and powerfully Luther, in expressions of this kind, removed from this very church all conflict about what might be possible, and has thus adapted her for, and firmly established her in all outward relations, which are in the limits of possibility. Advancing like views with Luther, the Augsburg confession, Art. 7, says:

“This is enough for true unity of the Christian church, that with one mind, and in accordance with a pure understanding, the gospel be preached, and the sacraments set forth conformably with the divine word; and it is not necessary to true unity of the Christian church, that in all places uniform ceremonies, of human institution, should be observed (Eph. 4:4, 5);”

In the Latin copy it is said:²³

“And to true unity of the church it is enough to consent in regard to the doctrine of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary that there should everywhere be similar human traditions, or rites or ceremonies, instituted by men” “if only” (as the Form of Concord) also says, “in doctrine and all its articles, and in the true use of the sacraments, there be concord among the churches.”

“We believe, teach and confess, that one church ought not to condemn another, because it observes this or that more or less of external ceremonies, which the Lord has not instituted... For this is an old and true saying: Dissonance about fasting does not disturb consonance in faith.”

To the same purport the Apology²⁴ says:

“The article in the creed calls the church Catholic, lest we should imagine that the church is an external polity of certain nations; and that we might understand that it consists of men scattered through the whole world, who consent regarding the gospel, and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether the human traditions they hold are like or unlike.”

In the requirement as regards doctrine, is certainly demanded fellowship in all articles of faith, in the whole word of God; “for,” says Luther²⁵

“...where the Devil can bring it to pass, that concession is made to him in a single article, he has won, and has virtually got all, ...for they are all twined together and closely united, like a golden chain, so that if one link is loosed, the whole chain is loosed, and one part falls from the other.”

“Therefore, doubt not that if thou deniest God in one article, thou surely deniest him in all. For he will not let himself be parcelled out in many articles, but he is entire in each, and in all together one God.”

In this view the outward is, however, by no means destitute of value; nor may we by any means consider outward things merely as such, contributing in no way to ecclesiastical fellowship; on the contrary, the Apology expressly attributes to them also a value, though a subordinate one; “the church is not only (*tantum*) a society of external things and rites, as other polities, but principally (thus only principally) it is a society having faith and the Holy Ghost in their hearts.” In times of persecution, however, the Form Concord expressly places these external things far beyond the limits of things indifferent. On this point it says:²⁶

We believe, teach and confess that the church of God anywhere in the world, and at any time soever ...may change ceremonies, in accordance with that judgment, which decides what is most useful and edifying to the church of God. Yet we think that in this matter all lightness should be shunned, and all occasions of offense avoided."

It continues:

“We believe, teach and confess, that in times of persecution, when a clear and steadfast confession is demanded of us, that we may not yield to the enemies of the gospel in things indifferent (Gal. 5:1; 2 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 2:5). For in such a posture of affairs it is no longer with things indifferent we have to do, but with the soundness and preservation of gospel truth and Christian liberty, and with the avoidance of the danger of encouraging men in manifest idolatry, and of offending the weak in the faith. In cases of this kind, we have certainly no right to concede anything to our adversaries, but duty requires that we should make a pious and candid confession, and endure patiently whatever God is pleased to impose upon us, or to permit the enemies of his word to do unto us.”

Thus, then, the Lutheran church has construed a visible bodily church, since, and inasmuch as she has an invisible spiritual church, and at the same time a visible one, whose essence is not at all the visible form, but a deep internal life of faith. Not inappropriately in this connection, the church has recently been designated as a the redemption actualizing."²⁷

With justice, the Lutheran church holds fast, not merely that invisible, spiritual church, but also this invisible-visible, this spiritual bodily church, as the true and perfect church. This same view is avowed by Melanchthon:²⁸

“Neither do we dream of some Platonic city, as certain cavilers assert we do, but we say that this church exists, to wit, the true believers and righteous persons, scattered through the whole world,”

And of this church (only after inserting: “and we will add its marks, a pure gospel and the sacraments”) he says: “This church is properly the pillar of the truth,” “this church alone is called the body of Christ.”²⁹ And in his *Loci*^{30 31} he says: “as often as we think of the church, we contemplate the assemblage of those who have been called, which is the visible church, nor do we dream that any of the elect are elsewhere than in this visible church; for God will not be invoked nor acknowledged otherwise than as he reveals himself, nor does he reveal himself except in the visible church, in which alone the voice of the gospel sounds, nor do we feign another church invisible and silent.”

Thus the Lutheran church expresses herself in the abstract on the true church. In the concrete, she understands herself to be that church, since the Reformation. Look first at the language of the symbols. The *Form of Concord*³² draws a distinction between the church, of which it is the confession, that is the Lutheran and “the papacy and other sects.” In another place it speaks of “our churches, that have undergone the reformation,” immediately after designates them as “the church of God,” and then “the pure churches,” and again distinguishes them from “Romanists, and other heresies and sects, whom we reject and condemn.” In another passage³³ “church of God” stands also in antithesis preeminently to the Reformed church. Luther, in his confession of faith³⁴ designates the faith he there expresses as the faith of “all genuine Christians,” whose communion must consequently be regarded as the only proper Christian people. Compare with this his words: “Even as the whole Christian people upon earth ... maintains in the only true faith,”³⁵ and of like force, “the whole Christian people upon earth, maintains (the truth) in but one sense.”³⁶

With such expressions the language of the orthodox Lutheran divines agrees: as for example the very title of the work of Calovius,³⁷

“Controversies which the church of Christ has had with heretics and modern schismatics, Socinians, Anabaptists, Weigelians, Remonstrants, Papists, Calvinists, Calixtines and others;”

And J. Gerhard, in the very application of the idea of “one true religion” to the Lutheran church.³⁸ Naturally, however, the Lutheran church has applied to herself this objective expression, neither with a harshness foreign to the gospel, nor with a Donatizing sectarianism. The entire contents of the Lutheran symbols distinctly exclude the latter; and long ago the mild words of the Apology³⁹ were at war with any unevangelical harshness:

(“The church, the pillar of truth) retains the pure gospel, and, as St. Paul says, the foundation, that is, the true knowledge of Christ and faith in him, although there are in it many of the weak, who build upon this foundation perishable hay and stubble, that is, certain useless opinions, which, however, as they do not subvert the foundation, may be forgiven them, or may be amended.”

She might, in this reference also, consider herself merely as the visible church, as the church which clearly, and in all its fulness, confesses the one divine truth as an outward visible banner, whilst the others, the church communions perverted in the two directions, are to be esteemed rather as certain dependencies of the invisible, than of the visible church, as far as that one truth, which they also certainly recognize on its basis, though it be more or less hidden, endures as an outward common bond, though it be entirely invisible, or visible only in a fragmentary way. That there is, then, in the tenor of this observation, with all its apparent exclusively Lutheran mode of apprehension, a certain inward apology for the collective Christian church, is unmistakable; as alone in the position of things, as we have given it, lies in Let the condition of unity, and that a unity necessary throughout, to the universal Christian church, as she, despite of all the rupture which preents itself in her history and creeds, appears to a more thorough view, in order according to God’s will, in whatever form it may be, more and more as a church to illumine the world. The position we alluded to is, that there is between the Lutheran and the other church communions, a relation analogous to that of the visible and invisible church, which has been enlarged upon.

The Roman and Greek View

In an entirely different way does the Roman Catholic church view this matter, with which also, in the main, the practice of the Greek church agrees. In the Greek confession no distinct definition of the church is set forth.

Metroph. Kritopolus⁴⁰ leaves it undetermined whether ecclesia designates the communion of all whatsoever, who through the preaching of the gospel have become believers, both the true and the false (“a body of all those, wheresoever, who yield to the preaching of the gospel, both orthodox and heretics) or exclusively the former, (“a body of those only who are orthodox, and in all respects sound in their Christianity”) independently of the want of correspondence in the parts of the two definitions, and only in opposition to the Calvinistic position of Cyrillus Lucaris,⁴¹ that the elect alone compose the church, has the Synodal Decree⁴² of Parthenius expressed itself. The Roman Catholic church, in place of the spiritual bodily, invisible-visible church of the Lutheran Christendom, has a church which is in essence merely bodily, a purely visible ecclesiastical establishment. That is to say, the Catholic church⁴³ proceeds not from the inward spiritual essence of the church, with a definition of its idea, but from its outward appearance, and this too, only in the form in which it is displayed in the Romish church itself.

“Our judgment,” says Bellarmine,⁴⁴ is that there is only one church, not two, and that this only and true church is a congregation of men, bound together in the profession of the same Christian faith, and in the communion of the same sacraments, under the government of legitimate pastors, and especially of the Only vicar of Christ on earth, the Bishop of Rome... The parts of this definition are three. Profession of the true faith, communion of sacraments, and subjection to a legitimate pastor, the Bishop of Rome. The first part excludes all unbelievers, not only those who were never in the church, as Jews, Turks, Pagans, but those who were in it and have left it, as heretics and apostates. By the second part, catechumens and excommunicated persons are excluded... The third excludes schismatics, who... do not subject themselves to the legitimate pastor. All others are included, though they be reprobate, wicked and impious.⁴⁵ And this is the difference between our opinion and all others, that all others require internal virtues to constitute a man a member in the church, and moreover regard the true church as invisible; we however, although we believe that in the church all virtues are found... do not think that any internal virtue is required in order to a man’s being called, in some measure, apart of the true church, but only in external profession of faith and communion of sacraments, which is perceived by the sense. For the church is a body of men as visible and palpable as the

body of the Roman people, the kingdom of France, and the republic of Venice."

This outward form, in fact, "as the outward assumption of humanity, was the essence of the Redeemer,"⁴⁶ constitutes, according to the Roman Catholic doctrine, the essence of the church; the inward attribute of a pure, living communion of faith on the basis of the outward means of grace, is rather incidental and derivative, and by no means an essential and universally binding condition of her existence; thus in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the church as purely visible, there appears an extreme, which materializes the spiritual essence of the church, as though it were only a bodily manifestation.

Zwingli and Calvin

In contrast with this, we find the opposite extreme, the spiritualistic and spiritualizing, in its germ in the Reformed church, and in its expanded form in the sects, whilst the Lutheran view pure and safe, as the development of the church in history demands, occupies the medium between the two extremes. The church of England forms a distinct exception in this matter, and especially on this very point, to the general character of the Reformed church, inasmuch as she insists on "a visible church," and confesses:⁴⁷

"The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

The Reformed church, it is true, proceeds in common with the Lutheran, from the inner spiritual essence of the church; she continues, however, (with the exception of the Anglican part) substantially — for a certain obscurity in her development of the doctrine, renders it difficult clearly to understand her — resting at this idea of an invisible spiritual church, and is unable distinctly to rise to that of a truly visible, a spiritual bodily church. The conception of a true and truly visible church, apprehended in an entirely objective manner,⁴⁸ is not held by the Reformed church, nor any sect soever, nor by the Roman Catholic as anything else, than as an essential appurtenance to the invisible, and a fragmentary right to be claimed for the visible

church; the point in question, therefore, is not so much how these churches not Lutheran are to be regarded in a purely objective aspect, but rather, as they themselves prefer to be looked at, how they are to be regarded subjectively. In Zwingli's "Expositio Fidei Christianae," the "ecclesia invisibilis" is alone the true one; she is that which "came down from heaven," which through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, "acknowledges and embraces God to her belong all believers in the whole world, and she is called invisible, because to human eyes it is not manifest who are these believers. Beyond this he had no higher and deeper conception of the "ecclesia visibilis," as that which embraces all in the entire world, who outwardly profess Christianity. Less disjointedly, more connectedly, than Zwingli, the profound Calvin held the conception of the invisible and visible in the church, although his view, that the church consists only of the elect, — (and consequently is a purely invisible church,⁴⁹ which yet should present itself as a strongly disciplined organism) — appears to introduce into his system an inward contradiction, which the brief statement in the various Reformed symbols has been able in very slight measure to relieve. For these also appear properly to recognize only an invisible spiritual (actual) church. The Helvetic confession ⁵⁰ declares: "There has always been, is, and shall be a church, that is, a congregation of faithful men, called forth or collected from the world, a communion, we mean, of all saints, of those, to wit, who truly know and rightly worship the true God, under the guidance of the word and Holy Spirit, in Christ the Savior, and finally partake, by faith, of all the blessings freely offered through Christ;" and the confession of the French churches "We affirm from the word of God, that the church is a congregation of faithful men, who consent in following God's word, and in practicing pure religion, in which also they make daily progress," etc. In a yet more spiritual manner, the (first) confession of Basil, Art. 5, declares:[^cq]

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"We believe in a holy Christian church, that is, a communion of saints, the congregation of believers in spirit, which is holy and Christ's bride, in which all those are citizens who truly confess that Jesus is Christ the Lamb of God... and who also prove this faith by works of love;"

and the Belgic confession, Art. 27:

“We believe and confess that only Catholic or universal church, which is a holy congregation or assembly of all truly faithful Christians, who expect all their salvation from Jesus Christ alone, inasmuch as they are washed in his blood, and sanctified and sealed by his Spirit. . . This holy church is assuredly not situated in one particular spot, or limited by it, or bound to certain persons, but is scattered and diffused throughout the whole world.”

In a similar style, the Heidelberg Catechism (Qu. 54) demands as the condition of the church only a congregation “in unity of the true faith (and that”from the foundation of the world“),⁵² consequently, something purely invisible, and with this is connected the conception of the words in the third article of the Apostles’ creed, which the Heidelberg Catechism understands of a faith”in one holy universal Christian church.” To these may be added passages in the Reformed symbols, where the church is frankly defined in the particularistic language of Calvinism, “as the society of the faithful, whom God has predestined to eternal life,”⁵³ a limitation of the church exclusively to the elect, in the Calvinistic sense, whence properly only an “invisible church” could remain in the Reformed system. Unworthy members are not regarded as belonging to the church itself. “We by no means speak here of the assembly of the hypocrites, who though they be mixed with the good in the church, are nevertheless not of the church.”⁵⁴ With this the words of the French confession, Art.. 27, if we examine them closely, stand naturally in no sort of opposition:⁵⁵

“We by no means deny, that many hypocrites and reprobates are mingled with the faithful, but their wickedness cannot blot out the name of the church.”

Consistently with this, the church is often in the Reformed confessions expressly designated as merely “invisible.”⁵⁶ At the same time, on the other side, we must not overlook the fact, that the Reformed church does not present this theory of hers in regard to a purely invisible church, in all its nakedness. This is true, partly of her theory, and partly in her practice. Partly of her theory, as is indicated already in the words “rightly worship,” in the second Helvetic confession, “confess,” in the Basil confession, in fact in the very expression “assemblage” or “congregation,” which occurs very where, and like phrases. There occurs also here and there an allusion to preaching, or to both preaching and sacrament, as an outward mark. “We teach that the true church is that in which the tokens or marks of a true church are found, especially a legitimate or pure preaching of God’s

word.”⁵⁷ “The marks, by which the true church is known are these: if she have a sound preaching of the gospel, if she administer the sacraments purely, according to Christ’s ordinance, if she possess an ecclesiastical discipline that vices may be corrected.”⁵⁸ The reference, however, to word and sacrament is, in this respect, not analogous to the Lutheran, that in the Reformed church they have a more inward significance, in consequence of the subordination of their outward part to their inward, as it very clearly presents itself in reference to sacrament, and unmistakably, in principle at least, as regards the word; they cannot, therefore, with equal force condition an outward visible existence of the church. It is further true, that in part also in practice, the Reformed view is modified and improved. This, however, is done in a manner which, on Calvinistic principles, which are expressly stated, indeed in the Belgic confession,⁵⁹ completely coordinates with the preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments, as an essentially necessary third element, a certain ecclesiastical discipline⁶⁰ (and especially church government⁶¹), that thereby another new extreme is presented, which, instead of withdrawing the church, as the Lutheran church does, as far as possible from all conflict with the outer world, entangles itself directly with it, and rigidly construed, aims at a goal which, with its ideal union of church and state, fundamentally only in the different parts of the Reformed church, has, although without proper symbolical authority, been maintained always, and especially of late (and by no means merely in the sects), as zealously as if it could find its complete realization only in those principles of a Chiliasm more or less gross, which have been distinctly rejected by the Lutheran church in the Augsburg Confession.

The Lutheran church (whose goal is super-earthly, and not at all of this world, and whose eschatology, based upon the scriptures, can have no place for a gross Chiliasm which has no scriptural basis, and is beside confuted by history) expresses her view in the Augsburg Confession, Art. 17: ⁶²

“We likewise here reject certain Jewish doctrines, which also present themselves at this time, that before the resurrection of the dead, the pure saints, the pious shall have the kingdom of the world, and all the godless shall be destroyed.”

That in these words, sure enough, only the coarse manifestations, even of a gross Chiliasm, which lie before the eye, are condemned, but by no means the matter, which serves as the very root of them, is very palpable no doubt.

The Arminian and Socinian Views

To the Reformed church, in as far as it maintains this theory of a church, in principle merely invisible, approach the Arminians, and next to them the Socinians, the former (apart from the doctrine of predestination) without any modification whatever,⁶³ the latter in a modified form. The Socinians, inasmuch as they place everything in a knowledge of God and obedience to his will, such as is possible without a church, regard in general, the conception of the church as a thing of minor importance; in this direction they understand the church to be the communion of those who adhere to the true Christian saving doctrine, and they call it “invisible,” so far as it embraces “those who trust in Christ and obey him, and exist, moreover, as his body,” and visible as “the assembly of those men who hold and profess the saving doctrine.”⁶⁴

Mennonites and Quakers

This same fundamental theory is maintained by the Mennonites and Quakers; they are distinct, however, from the Reformed, in this essential feature, that they, especially the Quakers, have in part developed it with more consequentness, and in part carried it out more strictly in practice. Both these sects manifest the subjective separatistic character of their doctrine and practice in regard to the church, by their (symbolic) prohibition of the reception of offices of civil trust, of judicial oaths, of military service, to a true Christian;⁶⁵ principles whose falsity the Lutheran church, with a deeper knowledge of the essence of Christianity, and at the same time, a deeper estimation of government, has in part positively, in part antithetically, distinctly declared.⁶⁶ The church of the Mennonites, partly in the abstract,⁶⁷ partly also especially in concrete application, and carrying out, consists alone and exclusively of righteous and regenerated persons. That of the Quakers uniquely and alone, of those, as well before as after Christ. Even among Turks, Jews, etc., who (whether — church in its wider sense — scattered over the whole earth, “although outwardly removed and stranger to those, who profess Christ and enjoy. Christianity,” or — taking church in its narrower sense — as “a congregation”) illumined by the inward light, animated by the inward Christ, “obey the divine light and witness of God in

their hearts, so that by it they are sanctified and washed from evil.”⁶⁸ In addition, in one point more at least, the Quakers go further than the Mennonites. The Mennonites admit that Christ has ordained an office of teachers,⁶⁹ for though every believer is a member of Christ, he is not, therefore, either teacher or bishop; the body of Christ, the church, consists of various members. The Quakers, on the contrary, reject every distinct ecclesiastical ministry, since those who administer them, obtain from men authorization of their functions, though that authority can only proceed from the Spirit of God. “Those who have authority of him, can, and should announce the gospel, though destitute of human commands so to do, and ignorant of human literature,” and this too without reference to sex; “since male and female are the same in Jesus Christ, and to the one no less than to the other, he gives his Holy Spirit, therefore, when God, by his spirit, moves in woman, we judge that it is in no respect unlawful for them to preach in the assemblies of God’s people.”⁷⁰ On the other hand, however, those who are devoid of the authority conferred by this divine gift, although they may be in the highest degree endowed with learning and knowledge, and acting under the commands of churches, and the authority of men, are yet to be regarded as imposters and deceivers, not as true ministers or preachers of the gospel.”⁷¹

On the same principle, the Quakers reject all liturgical prayers and other forms, since every prayer, and all religious worship, should gush immediately from the heart, aroused and directed by God.⁷²

“All worship, which is true and pleasing to God, is offered under the internal movement and immediate guidance of his spirit... All other worship, therefore, hymns, prayers or preaching, which men engage in of their own will and at their own season, ...whether they be prescribed forms, as liturgies, etc., or etc... are all, without exception, superstitious worship, and abominable idolatry in the sight of God,” etc.

The Swedenborgian View

Finally, the Swedenborgians combine, in a manner peculiar to themselves, the materialistic Catholic extreme of a purely visible, and the spiritualistic Reformed extreme of a purely invisible church, without striking the genuine organic medium between both. Their new church, according to their catechism, Qu. 40, consists “of all those who worship the Lord Jesus Christ as

the only God, and flee what is evil as sin against him.” This might be understood as completely spiritualistic; the Swedenborgian practice, however, demands that it shall be taken in a very Catholic fashion; for among these worshippers of Christ as the only God, they reckon only themselves, “who have been enlightened by Imm. Swedenborg, the servant of the Lord,”⁷³ “through whom a new institution of the divine goodness and truth has appeared, whereby the pure doctrine of the holy word is to be made known;” and which must now be considered as the only true church.

As to the new United church as such, she also, when she speaks at all, utters, throughout, the Reformed idea of a purely invisible church (in the Reformed mode also of apprehending the third article of the Apostles’ creed), which, however, in practice, she renounces in her effort to attain an outward autocracy.

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1. According to Evers. Abh. über die Kirche (Dissertat. on the church) in the Zeitschrift für die Ges. Luther. Theol. u. K. 1844, 1. P. 80.↩
 2. See Guericke’s Symbol. Anhang.↩
 3. Apol. A. C. Art. 4, p. 145, 146.↩
 4. “Congregatio sanctorum.” Augs. Conf., Art. 7.↩
 5. “Congregatio sanctorum et vere credentium.”↩
 6. Apol. A. C. Art. 4, p. 144.↩
 7. Do. p. 145, close after the former extract↩
 8. Do. p. 146.↩
 9. Apol. A. C. Art. 4, p. 498, 59.↩
 10. Deutsche Apol. d. A. C. Art. 4. (Rech. p. 146.) A. v. Weiss, p. 132. Compare also what follows, p. 615.↩
 11. Compare what follows in this article in the last quotation from Luther, p. 615.↩
 12. Apol. C. A. p. 145.↩
 13. Do. 146.↩
 14. ib.↩
 15. Aug. Conf. Art. 7., Germ.↩
 16. Apol. C. A. Art. 4, p. 144sq.↩
 17. Apol. C. A. Art. 4, 145.↩
 18. Apol. C. A. Art. 4, p. 146.↩

19. Form. Conc. Art. 12. Sol. decl, p. 827.↩
20. Kirchen Postille Epistelpred. Dom. 17, p. Tr. Lpz. Ed. XIV, 332.↩
21. In same Epistelpred. on IS. S. aft. Tr. p. 337. d. ↩
22. Evangelienpred. 20. S. aft. Tr. p. 357. b.↩
23. Form Conc. Art. 10. Epit. p. 616.↩
24. Apol. C. A. Art. 4, p. 146.↩
25. In a sermon of 1532 on Eph. 6:10 sq. Lpz. A. XI. 525.↩
26. Form. Conc. Art. 10. Of ecclesiastical ceremonies, which are usually denominated adiaphora, or things neutral (*mediae*) and indifferent. Epit. p. 615.↩
27. “Die real werdende Erlösung.”↩
28. In the Apol. C. A. Art. 4, p. 148.↩
29. Ib. p. 145.↩
30. Loc. Theol. (De Ecclesiae) Ed. Detzer I. p. 283.↩
31. Epit. init. p. 571.↩
32. Solid. Decl. init. p. 663.↩
33. Epit. Art. 11. p. 621.↩
34. See Guerikes Symb. Anhang.↩
35. In his Exposit. of the 3d Art. in the Sm. Catech.↩
36. In his hymn “Wir glauben all an einen Gott.”↩
37. Alluded to in § 2, p. 7, Guerike’s Syrn.↩
38. See Guerike’s Syrn. p. 605. antn. 1. Cf. of recent date W. Lohe Drei JBucher von der Kirche. Stuttg. 1845.↩
39. Apol. C. A. Art. 4, p. 148.↩
40. C. 7, p. 79.↩
41. C. 11, “We believe that the members of the Catholic church are the saints elected to eternal life, from whose portion and communion the hypocrites are cut off, although we both detect and see in the various churches the wheat mingled with the chaff.”↩
42. p. 123, (Cf. also Dosithei Conf, c. 11.) See however also Guerike Symbol. § 70, 71.↩
43. Whose doctrine of the churches fully treated §70 Sc 71. Guerike’s Symb.↩
44. Eccles. Milit. c. 2.↩
45. Cf. Catech. Rom. I, 10, 7, which on this point opens in the same vein:

- “In the church militant are two kinds of men, the good and the wicked.”↵
46. According to Mohlers sophistical paralell. Symbolik § 37.↵
47. Art. xix, “Ecclesia Christ! visibilis est coetus fidelium, in quo verbutn Oei purum praedicatur, et sacramenta, quoad ea quae necessarie exiguntur, iuxta Chiisti institutum recte adcuinistrantur.”↵
48. Cf. p. 615. Closing remarks on the Lutheran Church.↵
49. Calvin (Institut. Chr. Rel. IV, 1, 4.) finds the reason of the necessity for a visible church, only in the infirmity of men.↵
50. Conf. Helv. II, Cap. 17.↵
51. Conf. Gall. Art. 27.↵
52. “Ecclesiam. i.e. Communionem sanctorum, Congregationem fidelium in spiritu; quae sancta et sponsa Christi est; in qua omnes illi cives sunt, qui confitentur I. esse Christum, agnurn Dei tollentem peccata mundi, . . . atque eandem fidem per opera caritatis demonstrant.”↵
53. Without any reference therefore to true Unity in the Sacrament.
See Qu. 23 8c 54, and Guerike’s Synb. § 12, p. 74.↵
54. Catech. Genev. p. ISO; Conf. Scot. Art. 16; Comp. Cyrill Lucar. Conf. c. 11, and previous part of this Art. p. 610.↵
55. Conf. Belg. Art. 29.↵
56. Conf. Scot. p!. quoted. Cat. Genev. p. 451. Conf. Helv. II, c. 17.↵
57. Ib.↵
58. Conf. Belg. Art. 29. In regard to the Church of England see previous part of this article, p. 620.↵
59. See previous part of this article, p. 623.↵
60. The Lutheran principles in regard to this matter, and the subject in general are treated at large in Guerike’s Symb. § 71.↵
61. This is the case also, and preeminently, in the practice of the English Church, which otherwise in this matter, in general, to express it in brief, Lutheranizes.↵
62. “Damnant et alios, qui nunc spargunt judaicas opiniones, quod ante resurrect. mortuorum pii regnum mundi occupaturi sint, ubique oppressis impiis.”↵
63. Cf. Limborch theol. chr. vii, 1,6, and Curcellaei tr.de ecclesia., p. 659. sqq.; as also Apol. Conf. Rem. p. 241.↵
64. Catech. Racov. qu. 522, 488. Cf. Ostorodt Unterr. C. 42. p. 407.↵

65. Ris. Conf. Art. 37 & 38; Barclai. Apol. 15, 10, 13. p. 352 sqq. & 362 sqq.↵
66. Augsb. Conf. Art. 16; Form. Cone. Art. 12, p. 624, S27.↵
67. Cf. Ris. Confess, art. 24: “Faithful and regenerated men scattered throughout the whole world are the true people of God, or church of Jesus Christ on earth.”↵
68. See Barclai. Apol. 10, 2 sq.↵
69. Cf. Ris. Conf. Art. 25, 26.↵
70. Barclai. Comment. 27.↵
71. Barclai. Theol. Christ. Apol. thes. 10.↵
72. Ib. 11.↵
73. Qu. 41.↵

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