

THE ADORATION OF THE SACRAMENT (1523) by Martin Luther

...Therefore, **where there is no faith and spiritual worship**, it is better to stay far away. And one should not celebrate mass where there are no real and genuine Christians. Until such Christians are present **one should abandon the monstrances and the Corpus Christi processions, because there is no need for them; they serve no useful purpose and they only dishonor the sacrament with gross hypocrisy and mockery....**

Now to come back to the sacrament: **he who does not believe that Christ's body and blood are present does well not to worship either with his spirit or with his body. But he who does believe, as sufficient demonstration has shown it ought to be believed, can surely not withhold his adoration of the body and blood of Christ without sinning.** For I must always confess that Christ is present when his body and blood are present. His words do not lie to me, and he is not separated from his body and blood. And when he lay dead in the grave, he was still Christ and worthy of his honor, even when there was no longer any blood in him. Moreover, we must honor and adore one another, as Paul teaches in Rom. 12[:10], for the sake of Christ, who dwells in us spiritually through our faith.

It is, of course, true that there is a distinction between Christ sitting on high in heaven, and being in the sacrament and in the hearts of believers. For certainly he ascended to heaven so that men should and must worship him there and confess him to be the Lord, mighty over all things (Phil. 2[:10–11]). **But he is present in the sacrament and in the hearts of believers not really because he wants to be worshiped there, but because he wants there to work with us and help us;** just as he also came to earth in the flesh not that men should worship him, but to serve us, as he himself said: "I have not come to be served but to serve and to give my life for many" [Matt. 20:28].

But from this it does not follow that one should not worship him. For many people worshiped him when he was upon earth and he accepted it too, such as the three kings at the manger [Matt. 2:11], the blind man [John 9:38], and many others. Nevertheless, his state at that time was not yet the state of his honor and glory, for which nothing but worship and adoration is fitting. There had to be freedom to worship or not to worship, because no definite command had been given to worship him before he was glorified. That is why he allowed himself to be worshiped at times, and at other times not to be worshiped. **Likewise, here in the sacrament and in all believing hearts it should be left a matter of freedom, in order that we may be assured that he gave no command about worshiping him in the sacrament or in believing hearts. Moreover, that is not the reason for his presence there. Nevertheless, one should not withhold from him such worship and adoration either; but freely give it, if the proper time and occasion presents itself, or omit it.**

For that reason we say now that one should not condemn people or accuse them of heresy if they do not adore the sacrament, for there is no command to that effect and it is not for that purpose that Christ is present. Just as we read that the apostles did not adore the sacrament since they were sitting and eating at table [Matt. 26:20, 26]. On the other hand, one should not condemn and accuse of heresy people who do adore the sacrament. For although Christ has not commanded it, neither has he forbidden it, but often accepted it. **Free, free it must be, according as one is disposed in his heart and has opportunity. Therefore both parties are to be blamed when they take a stand on either of these two sides and quarrel over this matter and condemn one another, and both of them miss the middle way.** The first group would like to compel people not to adore the sacrament, as if Christ were not there at all; and the other group would like to compel people to adore it, as if Christ's state of glory were in the sacrament as it is in heaven.

--Luther's Works, Volume 36, p.269-306.