

Thesis I

The church in the proper sense of the term is the congregation [Gemeinde] of saints, that is, the aggregate of all those who, called out of the lost and condemned human race by the Holy Spirit through the Word, truly believe in Christ and by faith are sanctified and incorporated in Christ.

1. Scripture Proof

Thus writes the holy apostle Paul (Eph. 1:22–23): “[God] put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” If, according to these words, Christ is the Head of the congregation or church, and this is His body, then the true church in its proper sense is the sum total of all those who are joined to Christ, just as the members of the body are joined to their head.

The same apostle further writes (Eph. 5:23–27): “The husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

The same apostle writes further (1 Cor. 3:16–17): “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” For this reason the same apostle calls the church “the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Heb. 12:23).

The Lord Himself says of His church (Matt. 16:18): "On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Accordingly, the church in its proper sense, that is, its members, is built on the Rock of Christ and His Word. But on this only he is built who is built on it by a living faith.

Finally, the evangelist St. John writes in John 11:51-52: "Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad." The church, for whose institution and gathering Christ came into the world and died, therefore, is the sum total of God's children.

2. Witnesses of the Church in Its Official Confessions¹

1. *Apostles' Creed*: "I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian church, the communion of saints" (*Triglot*, p. 31). The addition of "communion of saints" does not indicate a new article of faith, as the Romanists teach, but it explains the word "church." The Large Catechism [of Luther] explains it thus:

The word *Kirche* (*church*) means really nothing else than a common assembly, and is not German by idiom, but Greek (as is also the word *ecclesia*); for in their own language they call it *kyria*, as in Latin it is called *curia*. Therefore in genuine German, in our mother-tongue, it ought to be called a Christian congregation or assembly (*eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung*), or, best of all and most clearly, a holy Christendom (*eine heilige Christenheit*).

So also the word *communio*, which is added, ought not to be rendered communion (*Gemeinschaft*), but congregation (*Gemeinde*). And it is nothing else than an interpretation or explanation by which someone meant to explain what the Christian church is. . . . But to speak correct German, it ought to be *eine Gemeinde der Heiligen* (a congregation of saints), that is, a congregation made up purely of saints, or, to speak yet more plainly, *eine heilige Gemeinde*, a holy congregation. . . .

But this is the meaning and substance of the addition: I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost. (Art. III, par. 48-51; *Triglot*, p. 691)

2. *Augsburg Confession*, Art. VIII, "What the Church Is": "Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers," etc. (*Triglot*, p. 47). While the Augsburg Confession in Art. VII desires not so much to describe the church according to its essence, but merely wishes to state that at all times there is and must remain a holy Christian church, where it is and by what marks it can be recognized, Art. VIII tells us what the church is, and indeed, what it is properly. This must be well observed when defining the concept that our church has set forth in its Symbols regarding the church.

3. *Apology*: "But it certainly remains a fact that the true church is the assembly and the people who here and there in the world, from the rising to the setting of the sun, truly believe in Christ. . . .

"Although therefore hypocrites and wicked men associate with the true church in outward rites, titles, and offices, nevertheless, when we would properly define what the church is, we must say that it is the church that is called the body of Christ and has fellowship not merely in outward signs but has the [divine] gifts in the heart, [namely,] the Holy Spirit and faith. . . . For we must well understand by what we become members of Christ and what makes us living members of the church. If we would say that the church is merely an outward polity, as are other governments, in which there are evil and good persons and the like, then no one would know or understand that Christ's kingdom is spiritual, as indeed it is, and that in it Christ inwardly rules, strengthens, and comforts the hearts and imparts the Holy Ghost and various spiritual gifts, but people would think that it is merely the outward observance of certain forms of worship and rites. Again, what difference would there be between the people of [under] the Law and the church if the church would be merely an outward polity? But Paul distinguishes the church from the Jews in that he says the church is a spiritual people, that is to say, one that distinguishes itself from the heathen not merely by its polity and civil affairs but by being the true people of God, enlightened in heart and born again by the Holy Ghost" (Art. VII, VIII, par. 11-14; German expanded text, *Triglot*, pp. 228, 230). "That is properly the Christian church that has the Holy Spirit" (*ibid.*, par. 22; *Triglot*, p. 234).

Apology: "And yet . . . God still preserved His church, i.e., some saints, under the papacy so that the Christian church did not perish

altogether" (Art. XXIV [XII], par. 98; *Triglot*, pp. 416, 418).

4. *Smalcald Articles*: "Thank God, [today] a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd. For the children pray thus: 'I believe in one holy Christian church'" (Art. XII; *Triglot*, p. 499).

3. Witnesses of the Church in the Private Writings of Its Teachers

Thus *Luther* writes: "Christians are a special, called people and are denominated not merely *ecclesia*, church or assembly, but *sancta, catholica, Christiana*, that is, a Christian holy people that believes in Christ, for which reason it is named a Christian people and has the Holy Spirit who sanctifies it daily, not only through the forgiveness of sins (as the Antinomians² foolishly assert), but also through the putting away, purging, and destroying of sins, wherefore it is called a holy people. Hence the 'holy Christian church' means as much as the people that is Christian and holy, or, as it is commonly said, the holy Christendom, or the whole Christendom. In the Old Testament it was called God's people (Is. 1:24; 12:3, etc.). If in the children's confession such words would have been used as 'I believe that there is a Christian holy people,' then all confusion would easily have been avoided that was caused by the dark and obscure word 'church.' The expression 'a Christian holy people' would clearly and convincingly have shown both the meaning and scope of what the church is and what it is not. Whoever would have heard the expression 'a Christian holy people' would at once have argued that the pope is no people, much less a holy Christian people. So also the bishops, priests, and monks are not a holy Christian people, for they do not believe in Christ, nor do they lead a holy life, but they are the devil's wicked and perverse people. Whoever does not truly believe in Christ is neither Christian nor a Christian, and he who does not have the Holy Spirit against sin is not holy. Therefore they [the papists] cannot be a Christian holy people, that is, *sancta et catholica ecclesia*, which means the holy and universal church" ("Concerning Councils and Churches," St. Louis edition, 16:2269-70).

John Gerhard: "We define the church as the communion of saints in order that no one may think that the church is merely a

certain outward polity of good and bad persons, since it is, to speak properly and accurately, the holy assembly of those who are united by the bond of the Holy Spirit in true faith and true love. But we by no means use the expression 'of saints' in the sense of the Anabaptists or Pelagians. Nor do we fictitiously teach that the true members of the church in this sinful life are perfectly or altogether sinless. Nor do we change the church into a Platonic concept and a vain visionary idea that exists only in one's imagination, but we distinguish between sins of weakness with which faith, repentance, and zeal for sanctification may coexist, and sins against conscience by which the regenerate cease to be true and living members of the church" (*Loci theologici*, "De ecclesia," par. 51).

The same: "Of a genuine member of the true church there is required not only the outward confession of faith and the outward use of the sacraments but also the inward renewal by the Holy Spirit, because the church is not only a body but also a soul, that is, a living and animated body. Hence in order that anyone may truly belong to Christ's body, he must be ruled, led, and, as it were, animated by the Holy Spirit" (*ibid.*, par. 53).

The same: "We declare that catechumens, as also all others who are endowed with the true inward faith, are in the church, even if they have not yet actually received Baptism" (*ibid.*, par. 54).

Quenstedt: "Properly and principally the church is the assembly of saints and true believers" (*Theologia didactico-polemica*, part IV, 15.2). "We prove our judgment that the church properly is the assembly of saints by the nature and peculiarity of the church; for in Holy Scripture the church is called 1. Christ's mystical body. . . . 2. The church is the mother not of the [spiritually] dead, but of the living, or the true believers. . . . 3. The church is Christ's fold and the true members of the church are Christ's sheep. . . . 4. The prophets and the apostles often bestow on the church such expressions of praise as cannot be referred to the whole assembly of the called, comprising both the good and the evil. . . . Therefore, we must assume a church, properly and primarily so called, to which principally and immediately these expressions of praise and these ascribed properties belong; for here and there in the Old Testament and in the New it is called 'Christ's spouse or bride' (Song of Sol. 4:8-10; Is. 61:10; Hos. 2:19-20; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:9); 'Christ's fair and spotless love' (Song of Sol. 4:7); 'a chaste virgin of Christ'

no vessels of earth or wood, but all are of silver and of gold; for here is the body of Christ, the chaste virgin that has neither spot nor wrinkle" ("Hom. VI in 2 ep. ad Tim.," *J. Chrysostomi opera*, ed. Bern. de Montaucou [Paris, 1734], 11:692).

The same: "When you flee to the church, do not flee to a place, but flee to it with your heart; for the essence of the church does not consist in wall and masonry but in faith and virtue. . . . It is called a mountain because of its firmness; a virgin because of its sanctity; a queen because of its glory; a king's daughter because of its relation with God; a mother, having given birth, because of the great number of her children whom it conceived after it had been childless for a long time, not to speak of uncountable other names that Holy Scripture gives to it in addition" ("Second Sermon on the Fall of Eutrope," *J. Chrysostomi opera* [Paris, 1721], 3:386, 391).

The same: "The church of Christ is none other than the soul of all those who believe in Christ" (on Ps. 87).

Augustine: "The body of this Head is the church, not the one which is [merely] in this place, but the one which is here and in which the one from Abel to all who will be born till the end of the world and who believe in Christ, the whole assembly of saints, belonging to one city, which city is the body of Christ, whose Head is Christ" (on Ps. 92).

Isidore of Pelusium: "The fact that the church is the assembly of saints having the true faith and leading a godly life is known to all who have tasted the truth even only a little" (*Isid. Pelusioiae de interpretatione div. script.*, book 5 [Paris: Morell, 1638], folio 236, lib. 2, ep. 246. [The most complete but unfortunately very defective edition of Isidore of Pelusium; cf. Herzog, *Realencyklopädie*, 7:89]).

(2 Cor. 11:2); 'one flesh with Christ' as are husband and wife (Eph. 5:30). None of these epithets applies to the wicked. [Moreover the church is called] 'the house of the living God' (1 Tim. 3:15); 'a spiritual house' (1 Peter 2:5); 'a peculiar people, zealous of good works' (Titus 2:14) etc., to which none belong but those who are 'living stones, built on the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ' (Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:5)" (ibid.).

Quenstedt: "Those who have been excommunicated truly are members of the church if they have faith and love" (ibid.).

J. W. Bajer: "The church militant is used in a twofold sense: first, properly and accurately defined, for the assembly of the true believers and saints who by faith have been implanted into Christ the Head, and with Him as living members constitute one mystical body" (*Compendium theologiae positivae*, part III, 13.2).

This truth the church has taught from the beginning. Thus, among other things, *Ignatius* writes: "In order that He [Christ] by His resurrection might establish forever a sign for His saints and believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, in [the] one body of His church," etc. (*Ep. ad Smyrnaeos* 1).

The same: "Ignatius to the holy church, beloved of God, which is at Tralles in Asia, the elect and worthy of God" (*Ep. ad Trall. nemini*).

Cyprian: "Peter, replying in the name of the church, says: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' (John 6:68–69). He wanted to show and prove that those who have separated themselves from Christ are lost by their own fault, but that the church, which believes in Christ and firmly holds to what it has once learned to know, does not depart from Him, and that [therefore] those are the church who remain in the house of God. But we see that those who have not been planted by the Father do not remain firm as a fruit but are sifted by the wind of the enemy. Of these John says in his letter: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us' [1 John 2:19]" (*Epp.* 1. 1.3).

Chrysostom comments on 2 Tim. 2:20: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver," etc., as follows: "He (the apostle) speaks this (parable) not of the church but of the whole world. Therefore, do not refer it to the church, for there are in it

Thesis II

To the church in the proper sense of the term belongs no wicked person, no hypocrite, no unregenerate, no heretic.

1. Scripture Proof

Thus writes St. Paul (Rom. 8:9): "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." Whoever does not belong to Christ is not a member of the true church, which is His spiritual body.

So also writes John in 1 John 2:19 of the hypocrites who finally also left the fellowship of the church outwardly: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us."

Again our Lord says (John 15:6): "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered."

2. Witnesses of the Church in Its Official Confessions

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "Those in whom Christ does not work anything through His Spirit are not members of Christ. . . . So also we confess in our holy creed and faith: 'I believe in a holy Christian church.' There we say that the church is holy, but the wicked and ungodly cannot be the holy church. . . . If the church, which is truly the kingdom of Christ and God, is distinguished from the kingdom of the devil, the wicked, who are in the devil's kingdom, cannot be the church. Hence the wicked in this life are not the kingdom of Christ, because it has not yet been revealed. . . . The wolves and wicked teachers, though they rage and do injury in the church, yet are not the church. . . . And since the true church in Scripture is called Christ's body, it is impossible to speak of it in

any other way than we have spoken of it. For it is certain that the hypocrites and wicked are not Christ's body but belong to the kingdom of the devil, who holds them captive and moves them to whatever he desires" (Art. VII, VIII [IV], par. 6, 8, 17, 22, 29; German expanded text, *Triglot*, pp. 228–36).

3. Witnesses of the Church in the Private Writings of Its Teachers

Luther: "Concerning the church they (the papists) will contend that 'church' designates also the wicked multitude that holds office; this they contend because they refer the promise to themselves" ("Considerations of the Protestant Theologians for the Smalcald Convention," 1540, St. Louis edition, 17:322).

The same: "Whoever does not believe rightly nor is holy and justified, does not belong to the holy Christian church. . . . And this is the article that was condemned by the honorable Council of Constance together with this statement and all of Holy Scripture. For John Huss confessed at that time that there is a holy Christian church. [But] if the pope would not be pious and holy, he could not be a member, much less the head, of the holy church, though in it he would occupy the office. For that reason he [Huss] had to be burned and anathematized. They counter and say: Though the pope, bishops, and they all alike would sin very grievously, they nevertheless are not of the devil nor of his synagogue, but they are of Christ and of God, members and heads of holy Christendom. Indeed, they are members of the church just as spittle, snot, pus, sweat, excrements, urine, stench, scab, smallpox, glandular swellings, sexual diseases, and all other sicknesses are members of the body. These also are in and on the body, and the body must bear them with great peril, trouble, and disgust" ("Exposition of Psalm 118," 1530, Halle edition, 5:1792–94).

The same: "The pope says he is the Christian church. This we deny, though there are some under the papacy who belong to the Christian church, just as among the Turks, in England, and in France there are many who belong to the Christian church. They were baptized, believe the Gospel, use the sacraments rightly, and are true Christians. But the fact that they [the papists] condemn us and declare that our doctrine is not the right one, asserting their in-

nocence over against it, and justify themselves with their laws, fables, brotherhoods, and good works and say that whoever keeps these is a true Christian and the true Christian church—this too we deny. We admit and readily concede that they are in the church, but they are not true members of the church, though they have the pulpit, Baptism, the pastoral ministry, and Sacrament. So they are in the church but are not righteous. Just so among our followers there are many who are baptized, partake of the Sacrament, pretend to be Christians, yet under the skin they are rascals and are not righteous. Therefore, we say that among the large numbers of Christians many have the name, appearance, and semblance of Christians, but they are not Christians. . . . Such are in the Christian church as mouse-dung is in the pepper or the cockle in the corn; they merely help to fill the bushel. So also in the human body there are fine, clean, sound, and proper members, which a person may use as he needs them. But there is in the body also perspiration and other filth. . . . So the heretics, false teachers, or wicked, while being in the church, are not real or right members but the filth that the body gives forth” (“Exposition of John 6–8,” St. Louis edition, 8:99–100).

Gerhard: “We believe that the hypocrites, the wicked, and the hidden unbelievers and in general all reprobates, as long as they are and remain such, are not true members of the true church, though outwardly they confess the same faith as the saints and use the same sacraments” (*Loci theologici*, “De ecclesia,” par. 51).

The same: “As Christ says of His disciples, John 17:14, that they are in the world but not of the world, so we say contrariwise that the wicked are in the church, but not of the church” (ibid., par. 64).

Abraham Calov: “Though the hypocrites are in the assembly in which the church is, they are not properly the assembly that is the church. . . . We do not make a twofold church: one of the saints and another that is mixed. But we say that we make this distinction only insofar as the word ‘church’ is taken homonymically (that is, that two altogether different things have one and the same name) now for the assembly of believers and then again for the assembly in which hypocrites are mingled with the believers” (*Systema locorum theologorum*, loc. 8, pp. 253ff.).

Quenstedt: “The evil fluids are not members of the body, and the wicked are like the evil fluids. They are not members of the body, namely, that of Christ, but they are attached to the church like

boils to the body from which they may be separated without any injury to the body, indeed, to its great advantage” (*Theologia didactico-polemica*, part IV, 15.2, folio 1634).

The same: “The wicked and hypocrites may be called parts of the true church but not members in the proper sense of the term” (ibid., folio 1637).

This truth the church has taught at all times.

Thus writes *Augustine*: “The church is uncorrupt, chaste, and pure, and therefore the avaricious, robbers, usurers do not belong to it, not only those who are without but also those who are within it” (*De baptismo* 4.2).

The same: “We must not think that the heretics are in the body of Christ because they are in the church, personally partake of His sacraments, and so forth. They are not in the union of Christ that in the members of Christ grows to the growth of God by its connection and contact; for the church rests on a rock, as the Lord says: ‘On this rock I will build My church’ [Matt. 16:18]. But they are built on sand as the Lord also says: ‘Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand’ [Matt 7:26]” (*Contra lit. Petilianii* 2, 118).

Jerome: “Whoever is a sinner and is besmirched with any blemish cannot be named from the church of Christ, nor can it be said of him that he is subject to Christ” (on Ephesians 5).

Thesis III

The church in the proper sense of the word is invisible.

1. Scripture Proof

Thus says the Lord (Luke 17:20–21): “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” (The *Glossa ordinaria* comments on the words, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation”: “It cannot be observed, because My kingdom is not temporal but spiritual and now begins by faith.”)

Again, St. Peter writes (1 Peter 2:5): “You also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” According to these words the true church is a spiritual building and therefore not visible.

The apostle St. Paul moreover writes (2 Tim. 2:19): “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let every one who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” According to these words only the Lord knows those who are His. But only those who are the Lord’s are the true church. Hence no man can see the church.

Compare also the Scripture proof under Thesis I.

2. Witnesses of the Church in Its Official Confessions

In the first place we read in the oldest Confession of the church, the *Apostles’ Creed*: “I believe . . . a holy Christian church, the communion of saints.” If, according to these words, the church is something that must be believed, it cannot be visible, for “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”

(Heb. 11:1). For this reason Augustine writes: “This is faith, to believe what you do not see” (Tract. 10 on John); and in another place: “You fool, what you see is not faith.”

The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*: “If we would say that the church is merely an outward polity as are other governments, in which there are wicked and good [persons], etc., no one would know or understand from this that Christ’s kingdom is spiritual, as indeed it is, in which Christ inwardly rules, strengthens, and comforts the hearts and imparts the Holy Spirit and various spiritual gifts, but people would think that it is merely the outward observance of certain forms of worship and rites. Likewise, what difference would there be between the people of [under] the Law and the church, if the church were merely an outward polity? But Paul distinguishes the church from the Jews thus that the church is a spiritual people, that is, a people that is distinguished from the heathen not merely by polity and civil affairs, but that it is the true people of God, regenerated in heart and born again by the Holy Ghost. Again, among the Jewish people all those who were by nature Jews, stemming from the seed of Abraham, had besides the promise of the spiritual gifts in Christ also many promises concerning temporal blessings, such as those of government and the like, and because of the divine promise also the wicked among them were called God’s people. For God had separated the bodily seed of Abraham and all who were born Jews from other heathen by these very temporal promises. Yet despite these [promises] the ungodly and wicked were not the true people of God, nor did they please God.

“But the Gospel that is preached in the church brings not merely the shadow of the eternal gifts, but every true Christian partakes [even] here on earth of the eternal gifts themselves. . . . Therefore, according to the Gospel, only those are God’s people who receive the spiritual gifts [and] the Holy Ghost, and this church is the kingdom of Christ, distinguished from the kingdom of the devil.

“If (then) the church, which surely is the kingdom of Christ and God, is distinguished from the devil’s kingdom, the wicked, who are in the devil’s kingdom, cannot be the church, although in this life, since the kingdom of Christ is not yet made manifest, they are among the true Christians and in the church, in which they also have the ministry of teaching and other offices. Yet the wicked in this life are not a part of Christ’s kingdom for the reason that it has

not yet been made manifest. For the true kingdom of Christ, true assembly of Christ, is and remains forever only those whom the Spirit of God enlightens, strengthens, and rules, though it is not yet revealed to the world, but is hidden under the cross. . . .

"And with this clearly agree the parables of Christ, who says (Matt. 13:38) that the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the devil, and that the acre is the world, not the church. . . . And when Christ says (Matt. 13:47): 'The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet,' and likewise, like ten virgins, He does not want the wicked to be the church but shows how the church appears in this world. Therefore, He says that it is 'like,' and so forth; that is to say, as in a catch of fish the good and bad lie all mixed up, so the church here is hidden in the crowd and multitude of the wicked, and He does not want the pious to be offended [by this fact]. . . . And since the true church is called in Scripture the body of Christ, it is not at all possible to speak of it in any other way than we have spoken of it. For it is certain that the hypocrites and wicked cannot be the body of Christ" (VII, VIII [IV], par. 13–29; German expanded text, *Triglot*, pp. 230–236).

Again the *Apology* declares: "Because of that [the large number of the wicked] the true doctrine and church often are so utterly suppressed and crushed, as this happened under the papacy, [that it seems] as though there were no longer any church, and it often appears that the church has completely perished. Against this, in order that we may be sure and not doubt but believe firmly and fully that there will be and remain on earth properly a Christian church till the end of the world, . . . which is the bride of Christ, though the crowd of the wicked is more and larger, also that the Lord Christ here on earth daily works in the assembly, which is called 'church,' . . . , therefore, this comforting article has been placed in the Creed: 'I believe a catholic, universal Christian church,' so that no one might think that the church, like any other outward polity, is bound to this or that land, kingdom, or state, as the pope at Rome would have it" (*ibid.*, par. 9–11; *Triglot*, p. 228).

3. Witnesses of the Church in the Private Writings of Its Teachers

Luther: "Since a person consists of two natures, body and soul, he is not classified as a member of Christendom according to the body

but according to the soul, indeed, according to his faith. . . . Hence it is manifest that Christendom is a spiritual communion that cannot be classified among the secular communities, as little as souls may be [classified] among bodies, or faith among secular gifts. . . . If Christendom were a bodily [visible] assembly, everyone could judge from the body whether anyone is a Christian, a Turk, or a Jew, just as I can judge from the body whether anyone is a man, a woman, or a child [or whether he is] black or white. Likewise, in a secular community I can judge whether anyone is gathered with others at Wittenberg or Leipzig, here or there, but not at all whether he believes or not. Therefore, let him who does not want to err hold fast that Christendom is a spiritual assembly of souls [united] in one faith" ("Concerning the Papacy at Rome, Against the Illustrious Romanists at Leipzig," 1520, St. Louis edition, 18:1016–17).

The same: "Therefore we rightly confess in the Creed and say: 'I believe a holy Christian church.' For it is invisible and lives in the Spirit at a place to which no one can come. Hence, it is impossible to see its holiness. For God often covers and veils it so much with weakness, sin, and error and with many tribulations and offenses that we can find it nowhere with our senses" (Comment on Galatians 5:19, Halle edition, 8:2745).

The same: "This part, 'I believe a holy Christian church,' is as much an article of faith as are the others. Therefore, reason cannot perceive it, though it would put on all glasses [spectacles]. The devil can so cover it with offenses and factions that it might offend you. So also God can hide it with weaknesses and all kinds of failings that you make a fool out of yourself as you judge it wrongly. The church does not want to be seen but to be believed. However, you believe what you do not see (Heb. 11:1)" ("Preface to the Revelation of St. John," Halle edition, 14:161).

The same: "The church is a high and deeply hidden thing so that no one can recognize or know it, but you must apprehend and believe it solely by [its] Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the [divine] Word" (Luther's writing "Against Johnny Sausage [Hans Wurst]," Halle edition, 17:1678).

The same: "It no longer concerns us that we run to Jerusalem or to any other special place, . . . but [for] now He has built another temple or church, whose wall encircles the whole world, as St. Paul

says in Col. 1:23, and as we read in Ps. 19:5" (Comment on Ps. 65:4, Halle edition, 5:937-38).

The same: "When I called the Christian church a spiritual assembly, you made fun of me, as though I wanted to build a church as Plato built a city, [namely, one] that exists nowhere. And you are greatly pleased with your whim as though you had hit the nail on the head. You say: 'That indeed would be a fine city that would have spiritual walls, spiritual towers, spiritual guns, spiritual cavalry, and everything in it would be spiritual.' And it is your final judgment that the Christian church could not exist without a tangible city, space, and goods. My dear Murnar, let me tell you: Should I, because of reason, deny Scripture and place you above God? Why do you not answer the passages I have quoted as, for example: 'There is no partiality with Him' (Eph. 6:9) or 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:20)? . . .

"Therefore, I conclude that the Christian church is not bound to any place, person, or time, and although the ignorant crowd—the pope with his cardinals, bishops, priests, and monks—do not understand this, yet there sides with me Mr. Omnes (that is, Mr. All, namely, the common Christian people), even the children in the street, and the whole assembly of Christians throughout the world. They all take my side against the obscure, fictitious church of the pope and his papists.

"Now, if you ask me how that could be, I answer briefly: All Christians throughout the world confess: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian church, the communion of saints.' If that article is true, it follows that no one can see or feel the holy Christian church, nor can you say, 'Behold, here it is or there.' For whatever anyone believes, he does not see or feel, as St. Paul teaches (Heb. 11:1).

"Again, what anyone sees or feels, he does not believe. Is not that sufficiently clear, my dear Murnar and Emser? Let me hear what you will reply to that. Are not at this point the children and peasants more learned than the pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, and monks? Who are you, my dear sirs, who assume to expound Scripture and explain the Creed? Do you mean to cry out that the common man does not understand anything in it? The very reverse is true, for the pope and his bishops, with their whole following, do not understand

as much [of it] as do the unlearned peasants and children. So they place in opposition to the holy church of Christ the absurd church of the pope. The holy church of Christ says: 'I believe a holy Christian church.' The former says: 'The church is neither here nor there'; the latter: 'The church is here and there' " ("Reply to the Book of Emser at Leipzig with an Appendix to Murnar," Halle edition, 18:1652-55).

Chemnitz: "Eck indeed ridicules this meaning of the term [invisible church] and says that this is a mathematical church and a Platonic idea. But let him laugh as much as he cares to. What to us is an 'idea' and cannot be seen is for that reason not hidden to God (Col. 3:3): 'Your life is hidden with Christ in God.' But on that account our [Christian] life is not a Platonic idea, that is, an enthusiastic illusion; for we know that when Christ, our Life, will appear, then we also shall appear with him in glory (v. 4). Luther, however, never approved the absurdities of the Anabaptists, who, because the church is invisible, under this pretense kept in hiding and crept into the houses in order to establish a hidden church. Against them Luther in 1532 directed an earnest warning under the title 'Against the Sneak Prophets' [*Wider die Winkelprediger*]. The true and holy church of the elect nevertheless remains invisible, especially when it is described not as an assembly of one people, as the Jewish or Israelite [church] was in the Old Testament, but as the universal communion that is gathered together at all places, in every nation, tongue, and time, accepts the Gospel of Christ with a firm faith, administers the sacraments, and under the cross constantly fights for Christ to life everlasting" (*Loci theologici*, part 3, p. 117).

John Gerbard: "When we say: 'I believe one holy Christian church,' the word 'believe' shows clearly that we speak of the invisible church, which is proved also by the added adjective 'holy' " (*Loci theologici*, "De ecclesia," par. 151).

The same: "We do not say that the church is invisible for the reason that we mean to show that the church has been preserved under the papacy; we say that the true, holy, and universal church is always invisible, even now when the newly kindled light of the Gospel shines most brightly in many kingdoms and provinces" (*ibid.*, par. 69).

The same: " 'But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth' (John 4:23).