

Thesis II

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

1. Scriptural 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.

Romans 8:9-11 (English Standard Version)

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

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."

1 John 2:18-25 (English Standard Version)

Warning Concerning Antichrists

¹⁸Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They 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 it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²²Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵And this is the promise that he made to us— eternal life.

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

John 15:1-11 (English Standard Version)

I Am the True Vine

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

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 U8," 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 innocence 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 mousedung 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, Johann: Lutheran dogmatician; b. at Quedlinburg (34 m n.w. of Magdeburg), of distinguished family, Oct. 17 1582; d at Jena Aug 17, 1637.... In 1599 he went to the University of Wittenberg and devoted himself to the study of philosophy and theology. Complying with the wish of a relative and contrary to his vow, he took up the study of medicine, but after the death of the relative resumed theology. He removed to Jena, but profited less from the lectures of the professors there than from private study of the Bible and the Church Fathers. In 1603 he became master of arts.

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 theologicorum*, 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. Petiliani* 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).