

Study of the Augsburg Confession

Part 5: The Church (Articles 5, 7, 8, 14)

Article V (5) About the Office of Preaching

How do we get faith? God created the office (job) of pastor to give the Gospel and Sacraments. The Holy Spirit comes to us (John 20:22) through the Word and Sacraments. The Holy Spirit gives faith to whoever God wants (John 3:8), to people who hear the Gospel. The Gospel teaches that Jesus takes away our sins. This does not happen because of what we do. It happens because of what Jesus did for us.

Our churches disagree with the people called Anabaptists and other people who think that we can do things to get the Holy Spirit without the Word of God.

Article VII (7) About the Church

Our churches teach that one holy Church will remain forever. What is the Church? The Church is the believers meeting together, where the pastors preach the true Gospel and the Sacraments are given in the right way. The Church has unity when the church preaches the true Gospel and uses the Sacraments in the way that agrees with God's Word. The unity of the Church does not depend on traditions that people make up. Traditions don't need to be the same in every place. Paul said in Ephesians 4:4-5, "There is one body and one Spirit, the same-as God called you to one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Article VIII (8) What Is the Church?

The Church is the group of all believers in Jesus. But many people pretend to be Christians: false Christians, hypocrites, and people not sorry for their sin (Matthew 13:24-30). Even if the pastors are wicked men, the Sacraments still do God's work. Jesus said, "The scribes and Pharisees have authority to teach the Law."

Our churches disagree with the people called Donatists and others who believe that evil pastors cannot give God's good gifts.

Article XIV (14) About Church Order

Our churches teach that no one should preach or give the Sacraments unless he has an official call to be a pastor.

Vocabulary

Administer – Administer the Sacraments means to baptize and give the Lord's Supper to people.

Ceremonies, or Traditions – Traditions of worship and church life that are not commanded in the Bible. For example, the details of a worship service are ceremonies (traditions). How many Bible readings – one, two or three? That is a ceremony. Whether you say the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, or no creed – that is a ceremony. How many hymns you sing, etc. If the pastor wears an alb (robe) or not – that is also a ceremony. They are important parts of our worship

or Christian life. But the Bible doesn't command us to do them or not do them, or the Bible tells us to do them, but doesn't always tell us how to do them.

Church – The group of all believers in Christ.

Donatists – In the early church, people and governments persecuted Christians and told them to give up the faith. Sometimes a pastor said he gave up the faith. Then later he was sorry and came back to the church. Was he a true Christian? When he preached and gave Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were those gifts good or no good? The Donatists were a group of Christians who said the pastor's preaching and Sacraments were no good because he was not a true Christian. If that pastor baptized you, then you must get baptized again. The whole church said the Donatists were wrong. The pastor baptizes and gives the Lord's Supper, but God does the work. If the pastor is a true Christian or a false Christian, that doesn't change how baptism and the Lord's Supper work. God still does His work.

External Word – Preaching and teaching from the Bible. It is called the "external" word because the word is outside us. God's word doesn't come from us, and it doesn't depend on our feelings inside. The word comes from God to us.

Gospel – Good news that Jesus is our Savior.

Means – A way or path that God gives us grace. God gives us grace through His word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Those are the ways God promises to give us grace, the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, and all His gifts. Also named the Means of Grace.

Merits – If you do a good work, you get a reward. The Roman Catholic church teaches that you need to get enough merit (rewards) to get into heaven.

Office of Preaching, or Office of the Ministry – The pastor's job or responsibility of preaching, baptizing, and giving the Lord's Supper. "Office" doesn't mean an office room. "Office" means a job or responsibility, a position of authority.

Proper call, or Regular call – A congregation calls (asks) a man to serve them as their pastor.

Sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper. God gives forgiveness, life and salvation through the Sacraments. Confession and forgiveness is sometimes also called a sacrament.

Unity of the Church – When the church teaches and believes what the Bible says, and the church agrees on this teaching. (There are other ways of defining the unity of the church, but this is what it means in Article 7.)

Explanation

Jesus died and rose alive again to save you. But where do you get that salvation? These articles begin to answer that question.

Suppose you want to buy a new car. Where will you go? Wal-Mart? Sears? Many years ago, Sears sold cars, but not anymore. The grocery store? Of course not. If you want to buy a new car, you go to a car dealership.

Where do you go to get salvation? The church. No other place can give you salvation. The world tells us there are many places we can go to help our soul. But Jesus created His church as the place that gives His gifts.

Article 5 tells us where we find faith. The pastor's job ("office") is to preach God's word, baptize, and give the Lord's Supper. God works through those ways to create and support faith. God's word, baptism and the Lord's Supper are called the Means of Grace, because those are the ways God promises to give us His grace and good gifts.

The pastor uses these gifts to help him take care of people's souls.

- When a person joins the church, the pastor baptizes them and God adopts them as His child.
- We sin every day. The pastor gives the Lord's Supper to forgive sins and strengthen faith.
- The pastor preaches and teaches God's word. Then people know how God corrects them, forgives them, and leads them in a true Christian life. God's word tells people how to love each other. The pastor uses God's word and applies it to each person as they need it.

Some people think they can have a relationship with God on their own. They think they don't need God's word or the Sacraments. The world says we don't need the church; Jesus and me is good enough. But God doesn't work that way. God tells us He works in church through His word, baptism, the Lord's Supper. That is where He tells us to meet Him.

Article 7 talks about church unity. Today we see many different denominations – Lutheran , Roman Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal, etc. Some people say they are all the same, some say they are all different. Article 7 tells us how to know we are the same. When the church preaches the true Gospel and uses the Sacraments in the way that agrees with God's word, then that church has unity. If a church doesn't teach the true Gospel, they are not the true church. If a church baptizes, but doesn't believe everything the Bible says about baptism, they are not the true church. That church may be full of Christians who trust in Jesus and will be in heaven. But we don't call them the true church because they are not teaching and doing everything Christ said. Also, we don't have unity with them because their teaching doesn't completely follow the Bible.

What if we have different traditions? What if one pastor wears an alb (robe) and another pastor doesn't? What if one church has the Lord's Supper every week, but another church twice a month? Those are traditions. Traditions should not separate us. If the teachings are true, we are still united together.

Article 8 says the church is all believers in Jesus. There might be people in your church building who don't believe in Jesus. Someone might join your church, get baptized, get confirmed, and say they believe in Jesus. But it is just a show. In their heart, they really don't believe. In that case, that person is not a Christian, they are not part of the true church.

Suppose that is your pastor. Of course, we want all pastors to be faithful and strong Christians! But suppose a pastor is not a true Christian. Does that mean all his preaching, baptism and the Lord's Supper are no good? No. God makes His word and Sacraments work. It doesn't depend on the pastor's faith. It depends on God. God says pastors should be strong Christians, but if it happens that a pastor has no faith, God still works through His word and Sacraments.

Article 14 talks about how a church gets a pastor. Men don't decide themselves to be a pastor and choose a church. God calls men to become pastors. He calls through the congregation. The church chooses men who are trained and know the Bible, who are able to teach, who have a life following God. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 explains what kind of man can become a pastor. The church asks these men to be pastors.

For more, see these pages online.

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article5.html>

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article7.html>

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article8.html>

<http://atlanta.clclutheran.org/bibleclass/bookofconcord/article14.html>

Questions

1. Who created the office (job/responsibility) of pastor?
2. What is a pastor's main responsibility? What work should he be doing (Article 5)?
3. What is the church?
4. The church is "united." What does that mean?
5. Suppose a person joins your congregation. They say they believe that Jesus is their Savior. But inside, they secretly don't believe. Are they a member of the true church? Why or why not?
6. A man decides he wants to become a pastor. He goes to a church and applies to be their pastor. The church board decides to hire him. What does Article 14 say about that?
7. A member visits another church. In that church, the members greet each other and share God's peace at the beginning of the service. Your member likes that and says all Lutheran churches should do that. What does Article 7 (about traditions) say about that?
8. A member of your church stops attending church. You visit them and encourage them to be faithful in coming to church. They tell you they are fine because they pray at home every day. They don't need church. What do you tell them?