

Readings in the History of Christian Theology

Volume 2
Revised Edition

*From the Reformation
to the Present*

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and
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Editors

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Preface to the Second Edition

It is an honor to be asked to bring up-to-date this anthology of readings in the history of theology first assembled by my friend and mentor William C. Placher nearly thirty years ago. Having done similar updates and additions to Bill's earlier *History of Christian Theology* and the first volume in this two-volume *Readings* project, I am pleased that this updating has put fresh resources in the hands of students. Students were Bill's first love.

Many have asked me what changes have been made to these *Readings* volumes. I have tended to say something like, "A little, but not a lot." Both halves of that answer seem to be good news to folks. The volumes will be recognizable to classroom teachers who have used them as a way to get the original texts of Christian theologians into student hands as soon as possible. The introductions have been kept brief and with an eye to both setting up each text and connecting broad themes. And concision has been a priority; Bill asked himself and I asked myself, "What is the very best page or two written by Theologian X that typifies her or his work?" Of course, finding and honing short selections is more work, rather than less, for the editors. But it also gives the student or beginner to theology the best chance to see the breadth and possibilities of the tradition. New entries to the book have been included if and as the influence of writers seems to portend significant influence in the near future. Not all present trends in Christianity are theological in nature. For instance, the growing secularization of the United States, or the emergence of Pentecostalism as a global force, have roots and consequences elsewhere than primarily in theology.

I am pleased to thank my student research assistant Samuel Vaught for editorial works of supererogation during the assembly of this book. His attentiveness to detail and his concern that the job be done in the best possible way

speak well of his future in church and academy. Bev Cunningham was very helpful at an early stage of this reworking by helping me to get organized and setting a plan in place. I am also glad to thank Wabash College, especially its dean, Scott Feller, for the support I have received along the way. The same goes for my colleagues in the religion department and its chair, Jon Baer. Despite Bill's absence from the college, which is still felt by many, this remains an outstanding place to work on and think about the history of theology, and even the future of theology. The students in my history of Christianity classes have been happy (I think!?) to help me think about which texts worked and which did not. I am as glad to thank them as I am to teach them. And at the end of the process, Rachel Hassler was heroically helpful in organizing an increasingly complex project. My gratitude to her is as hefty as the binder in which she collated the necessary correspondence about copyright permissions.

Bob Ratcliff and especially Michele Blum at Westminster John Knox have been a delight to work with. I appreciate their patience with and confidence in me very much.

As always, Kelly and Madeleine deserve my deepest thanks. *Sine qua, non.*

D.R.N.
June 25, 2016

Preface to the First Edition

In 1983 The Westminster Press published a book I had written called *A History of Christian Theology*. The book's reviewers have been kind, and sales have been good. I have been particularly pleased by the teachers and students who have thanked me for the help it gave them in teaching and learning theology's history.

That earlier book, however, had an obvious limitation: it presented its story primarily in my words, with my interpretations. As soon as possible, students of any kind of history should be reading primary texts for themselves and reaching their own interpretations. But that isn't always easy. One of the themes of my earlier book was that Christian theology has always been a pluralistic affair, but with the escalating price of books, it is difficult to put together an affordable collection of readings that captures that diversity. I hope these two volumes will help.

To cast modesty aside, I think I have succeeded beyond my expectations. I had expected to put together a book of readings that would need to function as a supplement to a narrative history—my own or someone else's. That certainly remains one possible use. But, rather to my surprise, I found it possible to put together excerpts that, with brief introductions, form a roughly coherent narrative and stand on their own as a history of Christian theology. Keeping in mind that they might be used independently, I have repeated some material from my earlier book in introductions and suggestions for further reading.

These volumes share some of the features of my earlier book: an ecumenical perspective, a commitment to representing the tradition's diversity, a focus on the history of ideas rather than institutional history. I have tried to choose selections long enough to give a sense of the writer's style and to make it clear

that theology does not consist simply of unsupported assertions but involves arguments. I have sought to keep my own introductions and notes to a minimum, to make room for as much of the primary texts as possible. Occasionally I have substituted U.S. spellings for British. Teachers are sometimes tempted to leave out things that have become, for them, overly familiar—but even the most familiar texts are often new to a student. Therefore, while I hope that even those expert in the field will find a few unfamiliar passages here, I have tried not to leave out the obvious ones.

No anthology is ever really satisfactory. If I were more learned or more imaginative, I am sure this one would be better. We keep learning more about the past, and we keep asking new questions of it as new issues arise in the present. So history keeps going out of date. In compiling this anthology, I was particularly conscious that new insights in feminist scholarship raise questions about both the selection and the translation of texts. I wish I had been able to take them more into account.

I am grateful to James Heaney, a committed and courageous editor who encouraged and supported my earlier book, and to Cynthia Thompson, my helpful editor for these volumes. The Lilly Library of Wabash College and the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago and their staffs helped me at many points. My emeritus colleague John Charles answered questions over coffee about everything from medieval history to Greek grammar. I am also grateful to James McCord and the Center of Theological Inquiry for providing me with a wonderful “home away from home” for a year during which the final stages of this project were completed. My colleagues, students, and friends at Wabash continue to be a community that nurtures me in many ways. Wabash faculty development funds and money from the Eric Dean Fund helped support my research. I am above all grateful to my two research assistants: for over a year, David Schulz did everything from typing to tracking down publishers, and David Kirtley provided invaluable assistance in the project’s final stages. Without them, I am not sure either I or the book would have made it.

W.C.P.

Luther and the Radical Reformation

The history of Christian theology forms a connected story; it allows for no clean divisions. Recent scholarship concerning the Reformation, for instance, has often emphasized its roots in the late Middle Ages. Still, if one has to divide Christian theology's history in half, the Reformation of the sixteenth century does mark a decisive watershed. The same story continues, but here a dramatically new chapter begins.

That chapter opened modestly enough. In 1517 a German friar named Martin Luther wrote ninety-five theses criticizing abuses in the selling of indulgences. According to late-medieval theology, anyone who had sinned, even once forgiven, owed a penance. But those who repented and contributed money to the church could receive an indulgence that let them off the penance. In the hands of unscrupulous popular preachers, all this could sound like buying permission to sin. As Luther thought about indulgences, however, he realized that his real objection was not just to such popular abuses but to a whole theology that seemed to suppose one could earn or deserve God's grace. Luther read in Paul's Letter to the Romans that the just shall live by faith, and he concluded that those who have faith are justified by God's unmerited grace alone, without regard for their good works.

At first, Luther thought he was only clarifying the true teaching of the church. But in 1519 the Catholic theologian Johannes Eck challenged Luther to a public debate and convinced him that he was in disagreement with official statements of popes and councils. Called in 1521 before the assembled nobility of Germany to recant, Luther insisted, "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves . . . I cannot and will not retract anything."

The Protestant Reformation began with that challenge to traditional authority. The newly invented printing press spread Luther's message of "justification by faith" and "the authority of Scripture alone" through Germany and the rest of Europe. Others, such as Ulrich Zwingli in the Swiss city of Zurich, were arriving independently at conclusions like those of Luther and were beginning reformations of their own. The reformers soon began to disagree among themselves. Luther and Zwingli debated a number of issues, especially the nature of the Lord's Supper, and followers of Zwingli and other Swiss Reformers grew into the family of "Reformed" Protestants, to be distinguished from "Lutherans."

As the Reformation spread, it inevitably divided the Christian community, but both Luther and Zwingli tried to keep all Christians within a given territory together in one church, even at the cost of making some compromises. Others, however, felt that true reform meant creating a purified church of the truly committed, even if that meant founding small separated communities. They often took willingness to be rebaptized as an adult as the necessary sign of membership in such communities and were therefore called Anabaptists (rebaptizers).

Many Anabaptists suffered persecution. Some, like the leaders of the city of Münster in the 1530s, tried to impose their own beliefs by force. A young preacher named Thomas Müntzer did not advocate rebaptizing but is often classified with the Anabaptists as part of the Radical Reformation. A widespread revolt among German peasants in 1525 appealed to Luther for support, but he refused to challenge secular authority as he had that of the church. Müntzer, however, denounced everything he considered a form of oppressive authority and joined the peasants, only to be killed by their opponents as he fled after the defeat of the peasant army.

Associations with violence were giving the Radical Reformation a bad name. In the later 1500s a Dutchman named Menno Simons and others regrouped the surviving Anabaptists into withdrawn, disciplined, pacifist communities, which survive as the Amish and Mennonites. While Menno Simons was uniting divided Anabaptists, Lutheran theologians were dividing over such issues as the role of human freedom in salvation, divisions settled only with the Formula of Concord in 1577. Reforming Christian theology was proving to be a complicated and controversial task.

MARTIN LUTHER (1483–1546)

From *The Freedom of a Christian*

In 1520 Pope Leo X required Luther to retract his views and submit to papal authority. Luther wrote this treatise within weeks of having received the papal demand.

About the time he finished it, the emperor summoned him to the imperial Diet that would meet at Worms the following year. Luther burned the papal demand and at the Diet refused to recant his position. The Reformation had begun, and this treatise, as much as any other, summarized its basic principles—justification by faith, the authority of Scripture, and the priesthood of all believers.

To make the way smoother for the unlearned—for only them do I serve—I shall set down the following two propositions concerning the freedom and the bondage of the spirit:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

These two theses seem to contradict each other. If, however, they should be found to fit together they would serve our purpose beautifully. Both are Paul's own statements, who says in 1 Cor. 9 [:19], "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all," and in Rom. 13 [:8], "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Love by its very nature is ready to serve and be subject to him who is loved. So Christ, although he was Lord of all, was "born of woman, born under the law" [Gal. 4:4] and therefore was at the same time a free man and a servant, "in the form of God" and "of a servant" [Phil. 2:6–7].

Let us start, however, with something more remote from our subject, but more obvious. Man has a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily one. According to the spiritual nature, which men refer to as the soul, he is called a spiritual, inner, or new man. According to the bodily nature, which men refer to as flesh, he is called a carnal, outward, or old man, of whom the Apostle writes in 2 Cor. 4 [:16], "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day." Because of this diversity of nature the Scriptures assert contradictory things concerning the same man, since these two men in the same man contradict each other, "for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh," according to Gal. 5 [:17].

First, let us consider the inner man to see how a righteous, free, and pious Christian, that is, a spiritual, new, and inner man, becomes what he is. It is evident that no external thing has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or freedom, or in producing unrighteousness or servitude. . . .

One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, John 11 [:25], "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live"; and John 8 [:36], "So if

the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”; and Matt. 4 [:4], “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Let us then consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing, since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing. This is why the prophet in the entire Psalm [119] and in many other places yearns and sighs for the Word of God and uses so many names to describe it. . . .

You may ask, “What then is the Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?” I answer: The Apostle explains this in Romans 1. The Word is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching. Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God, according to Rom. 10 [:9]: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Furthermore, “Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified” [Rom. 10:4]. Again, in Rom. 1 [:17], “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever but only by faith. Therefore it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works; for if it could be justified by anything else, it would not need the Word, and consequently it would not need faith.

This faith cannot exist in connection with works—that is to say, if you at the same time claim to be justified by works, whatever their character—for that would be the same as “limping with two different opinions” [1 Kings 18:21], as worshiping Baal and kissing one’s own hand [Job 31:27–28], which, as Job says, is a very great iniquity. Therefore the moment you begin to have faith you learn that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable, as the Apostle says in Rom. 3 [:23], “Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” and, “None is righteous, no, not one; . . . all have turned aside, together they have gone wrong” (Rom. 3:10–12). When you have learned this you will know that you need Christ, who suffered and rose again for you so that, if you believe in him, you may through this faith become a new man in so far as your sins are forgiven and you are justified by the merits of another, namely, of Christ alone.

Since, therefore, this faith can rule only in the inner man, as Rom. 10 [:10] says, “For man believes with his heart and so is justified,” and since faith alone

justifies, it is clear that the inner man cannot be justified, freed, or saved by any outer work or action at all, and that these works, whatever their character, have nothing to do with this inner man. . . .

When, however, God sees that we consider him truthful and by the faith of our heart pay him the great honor which is due him, he does us that great honor of considering us truthful and righteous for the sake of our faith. Faith works truth and righteousness by giving God what belongs to him. Therefore God in turn glorifies our righteousness. It is true and just that God is truthful and just, and to consider and confess him to be so is the same as being truthful and just. Accordingly he says in 1 Sam. 2 [:30], “Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” So Paul says in Rom. 4 [:3] that Abraham’s faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness” because by it he gave glory most perfectly to God, and that for the same reason our faith shall be reckoned to us as righteousness if we believe.

The third incomparable benefit of faith* is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh [Eph. 5:31–32]. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage—indeed the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but poor examples of this one true marriage—it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil. Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own. Let us compare these and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them, and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ’s, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul’s; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride’s and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers?

Here we have a most pleasing vision not only of communion but of a blessed struggle and victory and salvation and redemption. Christ is God and man in one person. He has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent. By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride’s. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own acts as if they were his own and as if he himself

* The first was that faith “makes the law and works unnecessary for any man’s righteousness and salvation”; the second was that “it honors him whom it trusts [God] with the most reverent and high regard.”

had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all. . . .

From this you once more see that much is ascribed to faith, namely, that it alone can fulfill the law and justify without works. You see that the First Commandment, which says, "You shall worship one God," is fulfilled by faith alone. Though you were nothing but good works from the soles of your feet to the crown of your head, you would still not be righteous or worship God or fulfill the First Commandment, since God cannot be worshiped unless you ascribe to him the glory of truthfulness and all goodness which is due him. This cannot be done by works but only by the faith of the heart. Not by the doing of works but by believing do we glorify God and acknowledge that he is truthful. Therefore faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian and the fulfilling of all commandments, for he who fulfills the First Commandment has no difficulty in fulfilling all the rest.

But works, being inanimate things, cannot glorify God, although they can, if faith is present, be done to the glory of God. . . .

That we may examine more profoundly that grace which our inner man has in Christ, we must realize that in the Old Testament God consecrated to himself all first-born males. The birthright was highly prized for it involved a twofold honor, that of priesthood and that of kingship. The first-born brother was priest and lord over all the others and a type of Christ. . . .

Injustice is done those words "priest," "cleric," "spiritual," "ecclesiastic," when they are transferred from all Christians to those few who are now by a mischievous usage called "ecclesiastics." Holy Scripture makes no distinction between them, although it gives the name "ministers," "servants," "stewards" to those who are now proudly called popes, bishops, and lords and who should according to the ministry of the Word serve others and teach them the faith of Christ and the freedom of believers. Although we are all equally priests, we cannot all publicly minister and teach. We ought not do so even if we could. Paul writes accordingly in 1 Cor. 4 [1]: "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

That stewardship, however, has now been developed into so great a display of power and so terrible a tyranny that no heathen empire or other earthly power can be compared with it, just as if laymen were not also Christians. Through this perversion the knowledge of Christian grace, faith, liberty, and of Christ himself has altogether perished, and its place has been taken by an unbearable bondage of human works and laws until we have become, as the Lamentations of Jeremiah [1] say, servants of the vilest men on earth who abuse our misfortune to serve only their base and shameless will. . . .

Rather ought Christ to be preached to the end that faith in him may be established that he may not only be Christ, but be Christ for you and me,

and that what is said of him and is denoted in his name may be effectual in us. Such faith is produced and preserved in us by preaching why Christ came, what he brought and bestowed, what benefit it is to us to accept him. This is done when that Christian liberty which he bestows is rightly taught and we are told in what way we Christians are all kings and priests and therefore lords of all and may firmly believe that whatever we have done is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God, as I have already said. . . .

Now let us turn to the second part, the outer man. . . .

Although, as I have said, a man is abundantly and sufficiently justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he needs, except insofar as this faith and these riches must grow from day to day even to the future life; yet he remains in this mortal life on earth. In this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check. The inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained.

While he is doing this, behold, he meets a contrary will in his own flesh which strives to serve the world and seeks its own advantage. This the spirit of faith cannot tolerate, but with joyful zeal it attempts to put the body under control and hold it in check. . . .

In doing these works, however, we must not think that a man is justified before God by them, for faith, which alone is righteousness before God, cannot endure that erroneous opinion. . . .

We should think of the works of a Christian who is justified and saved by faith because of the pure and free mercy of God, just as we would think of the works which Adam and Eve did in Paradise, and all their children would have done if they had not sinned. We read in Gen. 2 [:15] that "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." Now Adam was created righteous and upright and without sin by God so that he had no need of being justified and made upright through his tilling and keeping the garden; but, that he might not be idle, the Lord gave him a task to do, to cultivate and protect the garden. This task would truly have been the freest of works, done only to please God and not to obtain righteousness, which Adam already had in full measure and which would have been the birthright of us all.

The works of a believer are like this. Through his faith he has been restored to Paradise and created anew, has no need of works that he may become or be

righteous; but that he may not be idle and may provide for and keep his body, he must do such works freely only to please God. Since, however, we are not wholly recreated, and our faith and love are not yet perfect, these are to be increased, not by external works, however, but of themselves. . . .

We do not, therefore, reject good works; on the contrary, we cherish and teach them as much as possible. We do not condemn them for their own sake but on account of this godless addition to them and the perverse idea that righteousness is to be sought through them; for that makes them appear good outwardly, when in truth they are not good. They deceive men and lead them to deceive one another like ravening wolves in sheep's clothing [Matt. 7:15]. . . .

Let this suffice concerning works in general and at the same time concerning the works which a Christian does for himself. Lastly, we shall also speak of the things which he does toward his neighbor. A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself. To this end he brings his body into subjection that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others. . . .

Behold, from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligations. He does not distinguish between friends and enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or whether he gains a reward. As his Father does, distributing all things to all men richly and freely, making "his sun rise on the evil and on the good" [Matt. 5:45], so also the son does all things and suffers all things with that freely bestowing joy which is his delight when through Christ he sees it in God, the dispenser of such great benefits. . . .

We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. Yet he always remains in God and in his love, as Christ says in John 1 [:51], "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Translated by W. A. Lambert. From "The Freedom of a Christian," in Martin Luther, *Three Treatises*, 2nd rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), pages 277–81, 285–88, 291–96, 300–301, 304, 309.

ULRICH ZWINGLI (1484–1531)

From *An Account of the Faith of Zwingli*

Zwingli began his career as a priest, a humanist scholar, and a Swiss patriot. He came to reformation, he always insisted, quite independently of Luther, and, beginning in 1519, led the reformation of the Swiss city of Zurich. The authority of Scripture and the need to purify Christian worship played particularly important roles in his version of the Reformation. In some ways Zwingli very much inherited the attitudes of Renaissance humanism—in his emphasis on careful study of the biblical text and, as this selection mentions, his reluctance to treat the inheritance of original sin as really a sin. He fought a series of debates with Luther that centered on interpretations of the Lord's Supper and with the early Anabaptists over the question of infant baptism. Zwingli wrote this summary of his faith for presentation to Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530.

First of all, I both believe and know that God is one and He alone is God, and that He is by nature good, true, powerful, just, wise, the Creator and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are indeed three persons, but that their essence is one and single. And I think altogether in accordance with the Creed, the Nicene and also the Athanasian, in all their details concerning the Godhead himself, the names or the three persons. . . .

Secondly—I know that this supreme Deity, which is my God, freely determines all things, so that His counsel does not depend upon the contingency of any creature. For it is peculiar to defective human wisdom to reach a decision because of preceding discussion or example. God, however, who from eternity to eternity surveys the universe with a single, simple look, has no need of any reasoning process or waiting for events; but being equally wise, prudent, good, etc., He freely determines and disposes of all things, for whatever is, is His. Hence it is that, although having knowledge and wisdom, He in the beginning formed man who should fall, but at the same time determined to clothe in human nature His Son, who should restore him when fallen. For by this means His goodness was in every way manifested. . . .

Fourthly—I know that our primeval ancestor and first parent, through self-love, at the pernicious advice suggested to him by the malice of Satan, was induced to desire equality with God. When he had determined upon this crime, he took of the forbidden and fatal fruit, whereby he incurred the guilt of the sentence of death, having become an enemy and a foe of his God. Although He could therefore have destroyed him, as justice demanded, nevertheless, being better disposed, God so changed the penalty as to make a

slave of him whom He could have punished with death. This condition neither Adam himself nor anyone born of him could remove, for a slave can beget nothing but a slave. Thus through his fatal tasting of the fruit he cast all of his posterity into slavery.

Hence I think of original sin as follows: An act is called sin when it is committed against the law; for where there is no law there is no transgression, and where there is no transgression there is no sin in the proper sense, since sin is plainly an offense, a crime, a misdeed or guilt. I confess, therefore, that our father [Adam] committed what was truly a sin, namely an atrocious deed, a crime, an impiety. But his descendants have not sinned in this manner, for who among us crushed with his teeth the forbidden apple in Paradise? Hence, willing or unwilling, we are forced to admit that original sin, as it is in the children of Adam, is not properly sin, as has been explained; for it is not a misdeed contrary to law. It is, therefore, properly a disease and condition—a disease, because just as he fell through self-love, so do we also; a condition, because just as he became a slave and liable to death, so also are we born slaves and children of wrath [Eph. 2:3] and liable to death. However, I have no objection to this disease and condition being called, after the habit of Paul, a sin; indeed it is a sin inasmuch as those born therein are God's enemies and opponents, for they are drawn into it by the condition of birth, not by the perpetration of a definite crime, except as far as their first parent has committed one. . . .

I believe that there is one Church of those who have the same Spirit, through whom they are made certain that they are the true children of the family of God; and this is the first fruits of the Church. I believe that this Church does not err in regard to truth, namely in those fundamental matters of faith upon which everything depends. I believe also that the universal, visible Church is one, while it maintains that true confession, of which we have already spoken. I believe also that all belong to this Church who give their adherence to it according to the rule and promise of God's Word. I believe that to this Church belong Isaac, Jacob, Judah and all who were of the seed of Abraham, and also those infants whose parents in the first beginnings of the Christian Church, through the preaching of the apostles, were won to the cause of Christ. For if Isaac and the rest of the ancients had not belonged to the Church, they would not have received the Church's token, circumcision. Since these, then, were members of the Church, infants and children belonged to the primitive Church. Therefore I believe and know that they were sealed by the sacrament of baptism. For children also make a confession, when they are offered by their parents to the Church, especially since the promise offers them to God, which is made to our infants no less, but even far more amply and abundantly, than formerly to the children of the Hebrews.

These are the grounds for baptizing and commending infants to the Church, against which all the weapons and war engines of the Anabaptists avail nothing. For not only are they to be baptized who believe, but they who confess, and they who, according to the promise of God's Word, belong to the Church. For otherwise even the apostles would not have baptized anyone, since no apostle had absolute evidence regarding the faith of one confessing and calling himself a Christian. . . .

Eightbly—I believe that in the holy Eucharist, *i.e.*, the supper of thanksgiving, the true body of Christ is present by the contemplation of faith. . . . But that the body of Christ in essence and really, *i.e.*, the natural body itself, is either present in the supper or masticated with our mouth and teeth, as the Papists or some [the Lutherans] who look back to the fleshpots of Egypt assert, we not only deny, but constantly maintain to be an error, contrary to the Word of God. . . .

Christ Himself, the mouth and wisdom of God, saith: "The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always" [John 12:8]. Here the presence of the body alone is denied, for according to His divinity He is always present, because He is always everywhere, according to His other Word: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" [Matt. 28:20], *viz.*, according to divinity, power and goodness. Augustine agrees with us. Neither is there any foundation for the assertion of the opponents that the humanity of Christ is wherever the divinity is, otherwise the person is divided; for this would destroy Christ's true humanity. Only the deity can be everywhere. . . .

When in departing He commended His disciples to His Father, He said: "I am no more in the world" [John 17:11]. Here we have a substantive verb ("I *am* no more in the world"), no less than in the words: "This *is* my body"; so that the opponents cannot say that there is a trope here, since they deny that substantives admit of the trope.* . . .

In view of these passages we are compelled to confess that the words: "This is my body," should not be understood naturally, but figuratively, just as the words: "This is Jehovah's passover" [Ex. 12:11]. For the lamb that was eaten every year with the celebration of the festival was not the passing over of the Lord, but it signified that such a passing over had formerly taken place. . . .

As the body cannot be nourished by a spiritual substance, so the soul cannot be nourished by a corporeal substance. But if the natural body of Christ is eaten, I ask whether it feeds the body or the soul? Not the body, hence the

* In other words, someone like Luther cannot dismiss Christ's statement, "I am no more in the world," as a metaphor, since he has so firmly insisted that "This is my body" cannot be a metaphor.

soul. If the soul, then the soul eats flesh, and it would not be true that spirit is only born of Spirit. . . .

The above [twelve points] I firmly believe, teach and maintain, not by my own utterances, but by those of the Word of God; and, God willing, I promise to do this as long as the mind controls these members, unless someone from the declarations of Holy Scripture, properly understood, explain and establish the reverse as clearly and plainly as we have established the above. For it is no less agreeable and delightful than fair and just for us to submit our judgment to the Holy Scriptures, and the Church, deciding in harmony with these by virtue of the Spirit.

From Ulrich Zwingli, *On Providence and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. William John Hinke (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1983), pages 36, 38, 40–41, 45, 49–50, 52–53, 58. Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. www.wipfandstock.com.

MARTIN LUTHER

From *That These Words of Christ, “This Is My Body,” etc., Still Stand Firm against the Fanatics*

By 1527, when Luther published this treatise, Zwingli and Johannes Oecolampadius, the leader of the reformation at Basel, had challenged his understanding of the Eucharist, insisting that Christ’s words, “This is my body,” must be understood only in a figurative sense. Luther rejected the Roman Catholic theory of transubstantiation, but he thought Zwingli and Oecolampadius went too far. He set out his own position in this treatise. The meeting of Luther and Zwingli at Marburg in 1529 only confirmed their differences, and the union of Lutheran and Reformed Protestants proved impossible.

Our adversary says that mere bread and wine are present, not the body and blood of the Lord. If they believe and teach wrongly here, then they blaspheme God and are giving the lie to the Holy Spirit, betray Christ, and seduce the world. . . .

Neither does it help them to assert that at all other points they have a high and noble regard for God’s words and the entire gospel, except in this matter. My friend, God’s Word is God’s Word; this point does not require much haggling! When one blasphemously gives the lie to God in a single word, or says it is a minor matter if God is blasphemed or called a liar, one blasphemes the entire God and makes light of all blasphemy. . . .

The sum and substance of all this is that we have on our side the clear, distinct Scripture which reads, “Take, eat; this is my body,” and we are not under obligation nor will we be pressed to cite Scripture beyond this text—though

we could do so abundantly. On the contrary, they should produce Scripture which reads, "This represents my body," or, "This is a sign of my body." . . .

Suppose they say: The Scriptures contradict themselves, and no one reconciles them unless he believes that mere bread and wine are present in the Supper. Answer: What Scripture? Suppose they say: Oh, where the article of faith is established that Christ ascended to heaven and sits on the right hand of God in his glory. Again, eating flesh is of no avail, John 6 [:63], "The flesh is of no avail." So, if flesh and blood are in the Supper, Christ could not be sitting at the right hand of God in his glory, and he would be giving us something to eat which is of no use for salvation. Therefore name any Scripture you will, it must make of Christ's body a "sign of the body," and this must be the text of the Supper!

Who would have expected such lofty wisdom from the fanatics? Here you see the best single argument that they have. . . .

Now anyone who asks too many questions becomes unwelcome, but I must ask some more, that I may become still more clever. How do we become certain, good gentlemen, that a body may not through the power of God be at the same time in heaven and in the Supper, since the power of God has neither measure nor number, and does things which no mind can comprehend but must simply be believed? When he says, "This is my body," how shall I calm my heart and convince it that God has no means or power to do what his Word says? . . .

Here perhaps they may say: We can prove it very well. Once we climbed up to heaven secretly, just at midnight, when God was most soundly asleep. We had a lantern and a master key with us, broke into his most secret chamber, and unlocked all his chests and strongboxes in which his power lay. We took gold scales so that we could weigh our loot accurately and be sure to hit it just right. But we found no power that can enable a body to be at the same time in heaven and in the Supper. Therefore it is certain that "body" must mean "sign of the body." May God repay you, Satan, you damnable wretch, for the shameful and coxsure way you ridicule us! But my ridicule in turn will tickle you, too, what do you bet? . . .

The Scriptures teach us, however, that the right hand of God is not a specific place in which a body must or may be, such as on a golden throne, but is the almighty power of God, which at one and the same time can be nowhere and yet must be everywhere. It cannot be at any one place, I say. For if it were at some specific place, it would have to be there in a circumscribed and determinate manner, as everything which is at one place must be at that place determinately and measurably, so that it cannot meanwhile be at any other place. But the power of God cannot be so determined and measured, for it is uncircumscribed and immeasurable, beyond and above all that is or may be.

On the other hand, it must be essentially present at all places, even in the tiniest tree leaf. The reason is this: It is God who creates, effects, and preserves all things through his almighty power and right hand, as our Creed confesses. For he dispatches no officials or angels when he creates or preserves something, but all this is the work of his divine power itself. If he is to create or preserve it, however, he must be present and must make and preserve his creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects. . . .

Listen now, you pig, dog, or fanatic, whatever kind of unreasonable ass you are: Even if Christ's body is everywhere, you do not therefore immediately eat or drink or touch him; nor do I talk with you about such things in this manner, either; go back to your pigpen and your filth. I said above that the right hand of God is everywhere, but at the same time nowhere and uncircumscribed, above and apart from all creatures. There is a difference between his being present and your touching. He is free and unbound wherever he is, and he does not have to stand there like a rogue set in a pillory, or his neck in irons.

See, the bright rays of the sun are so near you that they pierce into your eyes or your skin so that you feel it, yet you are unable to grasp them and put them into a box, even if you should try forever. Prevent them from shining in through the window—this you can do, but catch and grasp them you cannot. So too with Christ: although he is everywhere, he does not permit himself to be so caught and grasped; he can easily shell himself, so that you get the shell but not the kernel. Why? Because it is one thing if God is present, and another if he is present for you. He is there for you when he adds his Word and binds himself, saying, "Here you are to find me." Now when you have the Word, you can grasp and have him with certainty and say, "Here I have thee, according to thy Word." Just as I say of the right hand of God: although this is everywhere, as we may not deny, still because it is also nowhere, as has been said, you can actually grasp it nowhere, unless for your benefit it binds itself to you and summons you to a definite place. This God's right hand does, however, when it enters into the humanity of Christ and dwells there. There you surely find it, otherwise you will run back and forth throughout all creation, groping here and groping there yet never finding, even though it is actually there; for it is not there for you.

So too, since Christ's humanity is at the right hand of God, and also is in all and above all things according to the nature of the divine right hand, you will not eat or drink him like the cabbage and soup on your table, unless he wills it. He also now exceeds any grasp, and you will not catch him by groping about, even though he is in your bread, unless he binds himself to you and summons you to a particular table by his Word, and he himself gives meaning to the bread for you, by his Word, bidding you to eat him. This he does in the Supper, saying, "This is my body," as if to say, "At home you may eat bread

also, where I am indeed sufficiently near at hand too; but this is the true *touto*,* the ‘This is my body’: when you eat this, you eat my body, and nowhere else. Why? Because I wish to attach myself here with my Word, in order that you may not have to buzz about, trying to seek me in all the places where I am; this would be too much for you, and you would also be too puny to apprehend me in these places without the help of my Word.”

From “That These Words of Christ, ‘This Is My Body,’ etc., Still Stand Firm against the Fanatics (1527),” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 37, ed. and trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), pages 26, 33, 46–48, 57–58, 68–69.

GEORGE BLAUROCK (D. 1529)

From *The Hutterite Chronicle*

Zwingli had tried to lead a gradual reformation in Zurich, one that would keep the support of a consensus of the citizens. He did not move fast enough or far enough for some. The crucial issue proved to be infant baptism: some of his young associates held that a reformation based on Scripture and individual faith ought to require that adults confess their faith and then be rebaptized. After all, they argued, the New Testament never mentions baptizing infants. In this excerpt, George Blaurock recalls those beginnings of Anabaptism in Zurich.

It came to pass that Ulrich Zwingli and Conrad Grebel, one of the aristocracy, and Felix Mantz—all three much experienced and men learned in the German, Latin, Greek, and also the Hebrew, languages—came together and began to talk through matters of belief among themselves and recognized that infant baptism is unnecessary and recognized further that it is in fact no baptism. Two, however, Conrad and Felix, recognized in the Lord and believed [further] that one must and should be correctly baptized according to the Christian ordinance and institution of the Lord, since Christ himself says that whoever *believes* and is baptized will be saved. Ulrich Zwingli, who shuddered before Christ’s cross, shame, and persecution, did not wish this and asserted that an uprising would break out. The other two, however, Conrad and Felix, declared that God’s clear commandment and institution could not for that reason be allowed to lapse. . . .

They came to one mind in these things, and in the pure fear of God they recognized that a person must learn from the divine Word and preaching a true faith which manifests itself in love, and receive the true Christian

* “This” in Greek.

baptism on the basis of the recognized and confessed faith, in the union with God of a good conscience, [prepared] henceforth to serve God in a holy Christian life with all godliness, also to be steadfast to the end in tribulation. And it came to pass that they were together until fear began to come over them, yea, they were pressed in their hearts. Thereupon, they began to bow their knees to the Most High God in heaven and called upon him as the Knower of hearts, implored him to enable them to do his divine will and to manifest his mercy toward them. For flesh and blood and human forwardness did not drive them, since they well knew what they would have to bear and suffer on account of it. After the prayer, George Cajacob arose and asked Conrad to baptize him, for the sake of God, with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and knowledge. And when he knelt down with that request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained deacon [*diener*, servant] to perform such work. After that was done the others similarly desired George to baptize them, which he also did upon their request. Thus they together gave themselves to the name of the Lord in the high fear of God. Each confirmed the other in the service of the gospel, and they began to teach and keep the faith. Therewith began the separation from the world and its evil works.

From *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. George Huntston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), pages 42–44.

THOMAS MÜNTZER (CA. 1489–1525)

From Sermon Before the Princes

Müntzer had converted to the cause of the Reformation by the early 1520s. As preacher in the town of Zwickau, he soon pushed reform in more radical directions: he claimed that the Holy Spirit, speaking directly to the common people, had more authority than the Scriptures as interpreted by learned scholars, and he proclaimed that God would soon bring the present age of the world to an end, punishing those who oppressed the people. Müntzer preached this sermon to Duke John of Saxony and his son and court officials in 1524, urging them to become God's instruments in the revolution. Not surprisingly, they declined, and in the next year Müntzer joined the peasant revolt and was killed.

It is known that poor, ailing, disintegrating Christendom can be neither counseled nor aided unless the diligent, untroubled servants of God daily work through the Scriptures, singing, reading, and preaching. But therewith the head of many a pampered priest will continuously have to suffer great

blows or [he will] miss out in his handiwork. But how ought one otherwise to deal with him at a time when Christendom is being so wretchedly devastated by ravenous wolves, as it is written in Isaiah [5:1–23] and in Ps. 80 [9–14] concerning the vineyard of God? . . .

Christ the Son of God and his apostles and indeed, before him, his holy prophets began a real pure Christianity, having sown pure wheat in the field, that is, [they] planted the precious Word of God in the hearts of the elect as Matthew [12:24–30], Mark [4:26–29], and Luke [8:5–15] have written, and Ezekiel [36:29]. But the lazy, neglectful ministers of this same church have not wished to accomplish this and maintain it by dint of diligent watchfulness; but rather they have sought their own [ends], not what was Jesus Christ's [Phil. 2:4, 21]. For this reason they have allowed the harmfulness of the godless vigorously to take over, that is, the weeds [Ps. 80:9–14]. . . .

Thus, ye amiable princes, it is necessary that we apply utmost diligence in these parlous days [1 Tim. 4], as all the dear fathers have delineated in the Bible from the beginning of the world, in order to cope with this insidious evil. For the age is dangerous and the days are wicked [2 Tim. 3:1; Eph. 5:15–16]. Why? Simply because the noble power of God is so wretchedly disgraced and dishonored that the poor common people are misled by the ungodly divines all with such rigmarole, as the prophet Micah [3:5–7] says of it: This is now the character of almost all divines with mighty few exceptions. They teach and say that God no longer reveals his divine mysteries to his beloved friends by means of valid visions or his audible Word, etc. Thus they stick with their inexperienced way [cf. Ecclesiasticus 34:9] and make into the butt of sarcasm those persons who go around in possession of revelation, as the godless did to Jeremiah [20:7–8]. . . .

The beloved apostles had to be diligently attentive to [the meaning of] visions, as it is clearly written in their Acts. Indeed, it is a [mark of the] truly apostolic, patriarchal, and prophetic spirit to attend upon visions and to attain unto the same in painful tribulation. Therefore it is no wonder that Brother Fattened Swine and Brother Soft Life* rejects them [Job 28:12–13]. . . .

Now if you want to be true governors, you must begin government at the roots, and, as Christ commanded, drive his enemies from the elect. For you are the means to this end. Beloved, don't give us any old jokes about how the power of God should do it without your application of the sword. Otherwise may it rust away for you in its scabbard! May God grant it, whatever any divine may say to you! Christ says it sufficiently [Matt. 7:19; John 15:2, 6]: Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is rooted out and cast into the fire. If you do away with the mask of the world, you will soon recognize it with

* Martin Luther.

a righteous judgment [John 7:24]. Perform a righteous judgment at God's command! You have help enough for the purpose [Wisdom of Solomon, ch. 6], for Christ is your Master [Matt. 23:8]. Therefore let not the evildoers live longer who make us turn away from God [Deut. 13:5]. For the godless person has no right to live when he is in the way of the pious. In Ex. 22:18 God says: Thou shalt not suffer evildoers to live. Saint Paul also means this where he says of the sword of rulers that it is bestowed upon them for the retribution of the wicked as protection for the pious [Rom. 13:4]. God is your protection and will teach you to fight against his foes [Ps. 18:34]. He will make your hands skilled in fighting and will also sustain you. But you will have to suffer for that reason a great cross and temptation in order that the fear of God may be declared unto you. That cannot happen without suffering, but it costs you no more than the danger of having risked all for God's sake and the useless prattle of your adversaries. For though even pious David was drawn from his castle by Absalom, he finally came again into ascendancy when Absalom got hung up and was stabbed. Therefore, you cherished fathers of Saxony, you must hazard all for the sake of the gospel. But God will chasten you out of love as his most beloved sons [cf. Deut. 1:31] when he in his momentary anger is enraged. Blessed at that time are all who trust in God. Free in the Spirit of Christ, say only [Ps. 3:6]: I will not be afraid of a hundred thousand though they have set themselves against me round about. I suppose at this point our learned divines will bring out the goodness of Christ, which they in their hypocrisy apply by force. But over against this [goodness] they ought also to take note of the sternness of Christ [John 2:15–17; Ps. 69:9], when he turned over the roots of idolatry. As Paul says in Col. 3:5–7, because of these the wrath of God cannot be done away with in the congregation. . . . That this might now take place, however, in an orderly and proper fashion, our cherished fathers, the princes, should do it, who with us confess Christ. If however, they do not do it, the sword will be taken from them [Dan. 7:26–27].

From *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, edited by George Huntston Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), pages 49–50, 54, 61, 66–68.

From *The Schleitheim Confession of Faith*

Just as the early Anabaptists posed a radical challenge to Luther and Müntzer, so radicals within their own ranks soon challenged the moderate Anabaptists. The Swiss Anabaptists gathered in 1527 and produced this statement of faith, largely directed against extremists in their own camp. It sets out characteristic themes of Swiss and South German Anabaptism: pacifism, withdrawal from the larger world into small communities, and the use of the “ban”—the refusal to speak or interact with the

offender—as a way of dealing with errant members of the community. Michael Sattler, its chief author, was killed for his faith within the year.

A very great offense has been introduced by certain false brethren among us, so that some have turned aside from the faith, in the way they intend to practice and observe the freedom of the Spirit and of Christ. But such have missed the truth and to their condemnation are given over to the lasciviousness and self-indulgence of the flesh. They think faith and love may do and permit everything, and nothing will harm them nor condemn them, since they are believers. . . .

But you are not that way. For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. You understand me well and [know] the brethren whom we mean. Separate yourselves from them for they are perverted. Petition the Lord that they may have the knowledge which leads to repentance, and [pray] for us that we may have constancy to persevere in the way which we have espoused, for the honor of God and of Christ, His Son, Amen.

The articles which we discussed and on which we were of one mind are these. . . .

First. Observe concerning baptism: Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope. In this you have the foundation and the testimony of the apostles: Matt. 28; Mark 16; Acts 2, 8, 16, 19. This we wish to hold simply, yet firmly and with assurance.

Second. We are agreed as follows on the ban: The ban shall be employed with all those who have given themselves to the Lord, to walk in His commandments, and with all those who are baptized into the one body of Christ and who are called brethren or sisters, and yet who slip sometimes and fall into error and sin, being inadvertently overtaken. The same shall be admonished twice in secret and the third time openly disciplined or banned according to the command of Christ: Matt. 18. But this shall be done according to the regulation of the Spirit (Matt. 5) before the breaking of bread, so that we may break and eat one bread, with one mind and in one love, and may drink of one cup. . . .

Fourth. We are agreed [as follows] on separation: A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world; in this manner, simply that we shall not have fellowship with them [the wicked] and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations. This

is the way it is: Since all who do not walk in the obedience of faith, and have not united themselves with God so that they wish to do His will, are a great abomination before God, it is not possible for anything to grow or issue from them except abominable things. For truly all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who [have come] out of the world, God's temple and idols, Christ and Belial; and none can have part with the other.

To us then the command of the Lord is clear when He calls upon us to be separate from the evil and thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters.

He further admonishes us to withdraw from Babylon and the earthly Egypt that we may not be partakers of the pain and suffering which the Lord will bring upon them. . . .

Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force—such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use [either] for friends or against one's enemies—by virtue of the word of Christ, Resist not [him that is] evil. . . .

In the perfection of Christ, however, only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned, without putting the flesh to death—simply the warning and the command to sin no more. . . .

Keep watch on all who do not walk according to the simplicity of the divine truth which is stated in this letter from [the decisions of] our meeting, so that everyone among us will be governed by the rule of the ban and henceforth the entry of false brethren and sisters among us may be prevented.

From "The Schleithem Confession of Faith," trans. John C. Wenger, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 19, no. 4 (October 1947): 247–50, 252.

MENNO SIMONS (1496–1561)

From *Menno Simons' Life and Writings*

Menno Simons was ordained a Catholic priest but joined the Anabaptist cause in 1536 and soon became the most prominent leader of the Dutch and North German Anabaptists. Menno's tireless efforts in behalf of a moderate pacifist tradition helped Anabaptists recover after their association with violence in the city of Münster. The Mennonites, descendants of the communities he helped restore, still bear his name. He begins this selection by insisting that baptism does not bring about a transformation of a Christian so much as it serves as a sign of a transformation that has already occurred. Therefore, only adults who have committed their lives to Christ should be baptized.

We are not regenerated because we have been baptized, . . . but we are baptized because we have been regenerated by faith and the Word of God [1 Peter 1:23]. Regeneration is not the result of baptism, but baptism is the result of regeneration. This can indeed not be controverted by any man, or disproved by the Scriptures.

The Scriptures know of only one remedy, which is Christ with His merits, death and blood. Hence, he who seeks the remission of his sins through baptism, rejects the blood of the Lord and makes water his idol. Therefore let every one have a care, lest he ascribe the honor and glory due to Christ to the outward ceremonies and visible elements. . . .

This [baptism] is the very least of all the commandments which He has given. It is a much greater commandment to love your enemies, to do good to those who do evil to you, to pray in spirit and in truth for those who persecute you, to subjugate the flesh under God's word, to tread under your feet all pride, covetousness, impurity, hate, envy and intemperance, to serve your neighbor with gold, silver, with house and possessions, with your hard labor, with counsel and deed, with life and death, nay to be free from all evil desire, unbecoming words and evil works, to love God and His righteousness, His will and commandments with all your heart, and to bear the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ with a joyous heart. . . .

Since, then, we do not find in all Scripture a single word by which Christ has ordained the baptism of infants, or that His apostles taught and practiced it, we say and confess rightly that infant baptism is but a human invention, an opinion of men, a perversion of the ordinance of Christ.

To baptize before that which is required for baptism, namely faith, is found in as if one would place the cart before the horse, to sow before plowing, to build before the lumber is at hand, or to seal the letter before it is written. . . .

The regenerated do not go to war nor fight. They are the children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and know of no war. They give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. Their sword is the word of the Spirit which they wield with a good conscience through the Holy Ghost.

Since we are to be conformed to the image of Christ [Rom. 8:29], how can we, then, fight our enemies with the sword? Does not the apostle Peter say: "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did not sin neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" [1 Peter 2:21–23; Matt. 16–24]. . . .

I am well aware that the tyrants who boast themselves Christians attempt to justify their horrible wars and shedding of blood, and would make a good

work of it, by referring us to Moses, Joshua, etc. But they do not reflect that Moses and his successors, with their iron sword, have served out their time, and that Jesus Christ has now given us a new commandment and has girded our loins with another sword. They do not consider that they use the sword of war, which they wield, contrary to all evangelical Scripture, against their own brethren, namely those of like faith with them who have received the same baptism and have broken the same bread with them and are thus members of the same body.

Again, our fortress is Christ, our defense is patience, our sword is the Word of God, and our victory is the sincere, firm, unfeigned faith in Jesus Christ. Spears and swords of iron we leave to those who, alas, consider human blood and swine's blood of well nigh equal value. He that is wise, let him judge what I mean. . . .

However lamentably we may here be persecuted, oppressed, smitten, robbed, burned at the stake, drowned in the water by the hellish Pharaoh and his cruel, unmerciful servants, yet soon shall come the day of our refreshing and all the tears shall be wiped from our eyes and we shall be arrayed in the white silken robes of righteousness, follow the Lamb, and with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sit down in the kingdom of God and possess the precious, pleasant land of eternal, imperishable joy. Praise God and lift up your heads, ye who suffer for Jesus' sake; the time is near when ye shall hear, "Come ye blessed" and ye shall rejoice with Him for evermore.

From *Menno Simons' Life and Writings*, by John Horsch and Harold S. Bender. © 1936 Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa. Pp. 78–81, 89, 91, 108–9.

From The Formula of Concord

In 1530 Luther gave his blessing to the Augsburg Confession as the basic statement of Lutheran faith, but in the years after Luther's death in 1546, Lutherans faced a series of theological controversies. Luther's young associate Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) held that human beings can cooperate with God's grace and therefore contribute toward their salvation. Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575), another Lutheran theologian, insisted that this betrayed Luther's emphasis on grace; in sin we have no capacity for free choice. Indeed, we have ceased to be human beings; sin has become our very substance. Around 1560, Victorinus Strigel (1524–1569) responded that even a sinful human being remains a human being and a creature of God. In 1577 a group of Lutheran theologians, Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) the most famous among them, reached a resolution on a number of issues connected to this debate. Their work, the Formula of Concord, represented the clearest statement of Lutheran orthodoxy.

First, a dispute took place among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession regarding original sin and its true meaning. One party contended that because “through Adam’s fall the whole human nature and essence is corrupted,” after the fall the corrupted creature’s nature, substance, essence, even the noblest, most important part of its essence—the rational soul at its highest level and with its most foremost powers—is original sin itself, and has been called nature-sin or person-sin, because it is not a thought, word, or deed but the nature itself, out of which, as the root, all other sins arise. Moreover, there is therefore after the fall, because nature has been corrupted by sin, absolutely no difference at all between human nature or the human essence and original sin.

On the contrary, the other party taught that original sin is not actually the nature, substance, or essence of the human being, that is of the human body or soul, which even now, after the fall, are and remain God’s creation and creature in us. Rather, they taught that original sin is something situated in the nature, body, soul, and all the powers of the human being, namely, a horrible, deep-seated, indescribable corruption of this nature. They acknowledged, therefore, that human beings lack the righteousness with which they were originally created, that in spiritual matters they have died to the good, and that they have perversely turned toward all evil. They taught that on account of this corruption and inborn sin, which is embedded in human nature, all actual sins flow from the heart. Thus, they insisted on preserving the distinction between the corrupted human nature and its essence—or between the body and soul (which are still God’s work and creation in us even after the fall) on the one hand, and, on the other, original sin (which is an activity of the devil, through which human nature has been corrupted). . . .

First of all, it is true that not only should Christians regard and recognize as sin the actual violation of God’s commandments in their deeds, but they should also perceive and recognize that the horrible, dreadful, inherited disease corrupting their entire nature is above all actual sin and indeed is the “chief sin.” It is the root and fountainhead of all actual sins. Luther calls this a “nature-sin” or “person-sin,” in order to indicate that even if a human being thinks, says, or does nothing evil (which is, of course, after the fall of our first parents, impossible for human nature in this life), nevertheless, our entire nature and person is sinful, that is, totally and thoroughly corrupted in God’s sight and contaminated by original sin as with a spiritual leprosy. Because of this corruption and on account of the fall of the first human beings, God’s law accuses and condemns human nature and the human person. Therefore, Luther concludes, we are “by nature children of wrath” [Eph. 2:3], of death, and of damnation, if we are not redeemed from them through Christ’s merit.

Second, it is also clear and true, as the nineteenth article of the Augsburg Confession teaches, that God is not a creator, author, or cause of sin. . . .

To be sure, original sin has contaminated and corrupted all of human nature like a spiritual poison and leprosy, as Luther says, so that in our corrupted nature no one can show or prove what is unmistakably human nature and what is sin. Nevertheless our corrupted nature or the essence of corrupted man, our body and soul or man himself created by God (within which original sin, by which the nature, essence, or total man is corrupted, dwells) are not one and the same thing. Just as in a case of external leprosy the body which is leprous and the leprosy on or in the body are not one and the same thing, so, if one wishes to speak strictly, one must maintain a distinction between (a) our nature as it is created and preserved by God and in which sin dwells and (b) original sin itself which dwells in the nature. According to the Holy Scriptures we must and can consider, discuss, and believe these two as distinct from each other.

The chief articles of our Christian faith constrain and compel us to maintain such a distinction. In the first place, in the article of creation Scripture testifies not only that God created human nature before the Fall, but also that after the Fall human nature is God's creature and handiwork [Deut. 32:6; Isa. 45:11; 54:9; 64:8; Acts 17:25, 26; Rev. 4:11]. . . .

Secondly, in the article of our redemption we have the mighty testimony of Scripture that God's Son assumed our nature, though without sin, so that in every respect he was made like us, his brethren, sin alone excepted [Heb. 2:17]. Hence all the ancient orthodox teachers held that according to his assumed human nature Christ is of one and the same essence with us, his brethren, because the human nature which he assumed is in its essence and all its essential attributes—sin alone excepted—identical with ours; they also rejected the contrary doctrine as patent heresy. Now, if there were no difference between the nature or essence of corrupted man and original sin, it would have to follow that Christ either did not assume our nature inasmuch as he did not assume sin, or that Christ assumed sin inasmuch as he assumed our nature. Both statements are contrary to the Scriptures. . . .

Thirdly, in the article of sanctification we have the testimony of Scripture that God cleanses man from sin, purifies him, and sanctifies him and that Christ has saved his people from their sins. Sin thus cannot be identified with man himself, since God receives man for Christ's sake into his grace but remains the enemy of sin throughout eternity! . . .

Fourthly, concerning the doctrine of the resurrection Scripture testifies that precisely the substance of this our flesh, but without sin, shall arise, and that in eternal life we shall have and keep precisely this soul, although without sin. If there were no difference whatever between our corrupted body and

soul on the one hand and original sin on the other, then it would follow, contrary to this article of our Christian faith, either that our flesh would not rise on Judgment Day and that in eternal life, instead of this essence of our body and soul, we should have another substance or another soul since we there shall be without sin, or else that sin would be raised and would be and remain in the elect in eternal life.

From this it is evident that we must reject this doctrine with all its implications and conclusions, as when it is said that original sin is the very nature of corrupted man, its substance, its essence, its body or soul, so that there is allegedly no distinction whatever between our corrupted nature or substance or being and original sin.

From the Formula of Concord, in *The Book of Concord*, ed. Timothy Wengert and Robert Kolb (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 531–33, 537–39.