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CHRISTIANITY DIVIDED

*Protestant and Roman Catholic
Theological Issues*

edited by

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THE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

KARL BARTH

WE must be quite clear in our minds and not deceive ourselves for a moment: our meeting here today signifies a very daring undertaking. I have shouldered only half of the responsibility by accepting this most kindly proffered invitation; and I admit I am glad of that.

Is it at all possible for Catholics and Protestants to enter into a theological conversation which concerns itself seriously with a *substantial* question, which concerns itself with a concept of Christian *dogmatics* and not merely with an historical or practical subject; which deals, moreover, with that concept which, as everyone with experience knows, tends to make its appearance as the boundary and limit whenever a halfway thorough attempt is made to further mutual understanding; a concept which is the boundary where *Sic et Non* (Yes and No) clash without any mitigation, where all mutual understanding comes to an end and where all understanding which has been apparently accomplished, again becomes questionable—the concept of the *Church*?

I would answer: *if* one should dare to enter into such a conversation (and Münster¹ suggests itself as the place where this venture, for once, might be essayed) and if it is to be meaningful, then it should concern itself with a serious question, i.e., with a question of dogmatics and precisely with this question which, if all signs do not mislead, is the very touchstone of spiritual division. This should be done even though at the very most the result of this conversation can be no other than that we come to agree why and in what respect as matters stand now we cannot come to an agreement. That is why what we undertake today is a daring venture, since even at best its

results can be no more than the one I have described. Yet I, for my part, would certainly count even this result as a gain.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Catholics and Protestants still looked each other in the eye, wrathfully to be sure, but they faced each other; and then they engaged in conversation, harshly and angrily, but they truly engaged in *conversation*. But we today, tired of the long quarrel, possibly also tired of Christian seriousness in these matters, rather look past each other and speak without making contact with one another on almost all points. Thus we oppose each other in an unfruitful manner (more precisely, we stand disengaged side by side) that is not worthy of the high mystery which, in any event, is at stake on both sides. I have accepted the invitation to come here to this meeting because I conceive of our being together as an attempt to take each other seriously.

Among those who are *ultimately* not one, who are not one in *Christ*—and indeed, here we are *not* one—taking each other seriously cannot mean: to meet urbanely, in a friendly fashion, to listen to each other quietly and attentively and to extend recognition to each other's position in various nonessential matters. Nor can it mean to grant each other a certain *bona fides* in the great and decisive main issue while at the same time we hold each other to be in error. Certainly we have the will to do all this. Nevertheless, taking each other seriously means: mutually to bear the whole burden of our opposition, both as a burden and as the burden of our being opposed to each other. (So often we dispense ourselves even from thinking of the fact that this burden is present.) It means to *see* the other over there, who also calls himself a Christian, but really to see him in his whole, horrifyingly different faith, in his uncanny turning away from that which for us is the most central and unshakeable Christian truth; while we at the same time make clear to ourselves that he, on his part, is just as horrified about us. It means: again to listen willingly to the great and painful enigma of the Church's division, the split which exists on a level where no separation should exist, where division is a *contradictio in adjecto*, so that we may leave here as better, more convinced, but probably also more thoughtful Catholics or Protestants yearning more than ever before for the peace in Christ that now is not given to us. Considering that we might in this sense

succeed in taking each other seriously, I can assume the responsibility for speaking here.

Perhaps nowhere is the cleavage of Western Christendom more glaringly apparent than in the disagreement about this very concept of the Church. Neither side can seriously deny that it is truly the *same object* on whose proper conception no agreement can be reached. Nor can either side deny that this disagreement entails very grave consequences. This is what makes the breach so serious. Matters do not stand thus that Catholics and Protestants mean totally different realities when they speak of the Church. Of course, in part, we do *also* see different realities. But the dissension engendered by this difference becomes necessary and important only because each side sees first and foremost the *same* reality so *very differently*. Perhaps we should even say that this dissension becomes necessary and important because, in accordance with God's inscrutable council, the same reality *looks at* each side in a wholly different manner. So great is the difference that we cannot come to an understanding of the Church's proper concept, that we are not one in Christ but divided, that we cannot think of the Church without thinking of her disastrous cleavage. Because we look at things so differently (*aliter*) we really see partially different objects (*alia*). To the primary dissension concerning the *quale* (of what nature) is added, therefore, the dissension, secondary in principle, concerning the *quantum* (in what measure): e.g., about the ranking of the functions of the Church, whether she is a sacramental or a preaching Church; about the relationship of those invested with ecclesiastical powers to the remainder of the membership; about the extent of ecclesiastical authority; about the particular predicates belonging to the magisterial and jurisdictional powers which the Bishop of Rome holds in respect to the entire Church; and about other, similar questions. All these are burning and decisive questions. But they are burning and decisive because ultimately we contend about *something quite different*. To make clear to you in what this altogether different reality consists I should like to underscore emphatically that, in speaking of the Church, we see as regards the substance the same reality—though we are not in agreement. If we do not take this into account, then each side makes

the discussion much too easy for itself. Then we tend, by neglecting to listen to the most important things which our opponent *also* knows and *also* says, to picture him as if he worshipped before some strange idol. If we listened more attentively, we would have to say to ourselves that he adores the same God, but in such an incompatible and different manner that adoration in common does not occur. We must take into account that—despite all kindly and enlightened toleration—both sides deny the presence of the true Church on the other side. Hence there remain in force the bitter words: he is of a different faith. Permit me now, through a discussion of the most important determinations of the concept of the Church, to explain this statement (which in no way is ironically intended) that Catholics and Protestants see the same reality when they speak of the Church.

*"I believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic church."*² Thus the words of the common creed and confession. Let us inquire briefly into the meaning of these words.

1. "The word *ecclesia* (church) means 'a calling forth.'"³ The Church is the calling together of God's people; of the people of the faith who have been created on the basis of the covenant through Christ between God and men and who have been awakened by the Holy Ghost. If on the Protestant side it is held that Catholicism understands by *evocatio* only the calling together as such, in other words the Church understood as an institute of salvation which functions through "magic," that is as erroneous as holding on the Catholic side that Protestantism does not understand the Church as a divine foundation but only as a corporation of the pious or of people who intend to be pious. Listen to these two definitions of the Church: a) What do you believe of the holy universal Christian Church? That from the beginning of the world to its end from the whole human race the Son of God collects, protects, and maintains for Him through His spirit and word in the oneness of the true faith a community of the elect for life eternal of which I am and remain forever, a living member; b) The Church is a *gathering together of believers*, "that is, of those who have been called by faith to the light of truth and the knowledge of God, so that putting aside the darkness of ignorance and error, they may worship the true and living God in piety and holiness and serve him with their whole heart."⁴ Who

would not admit that the first formula shows more the foundation character of the Church, while the second shows more the communal character of the Church? There Christ is the subject; here the *fideles* (believers) are the subject. But the first formula is taken from the Heidelberg Catechism, while the second is found in the *Roman Catechism*.⁵ I mention this merely to point out that Protestantism also knows of the objective aspect in its conception of the Church and Catholicism too knows the subjective aspect in its conception. There is, therefore, little meaning in attacking each other on this point.

2. The Church is *one*. This is as certain as that there is only one God. She is the body of Christ on earth which can only be one. It is absurd to speak of several opposing churches. If such a situation actually exists, then one Church is the true Church and the others are false churches, nonchurches. In that case all we can do is recall the divine foundation of the Church and fall back on the fact that the members of the other church are in error *sine fraude* and belong ultimately to the one true Church—in somewhat the same way as Pope Pius IX asserted in dealing with Emperor Wilhelm I.

We must distinguish between the *ecclesia triumphans* (church triumphant) in heaven and the *ecclesia militans* (church militant) on earth, between the Church of the old covenant and the Church of the new covenant, between the visible and the invisible Church. But in none of these distinctions can the unity of the Church become doubtful. Protestantism emphasizes this distinction, as is well known. But it should not be overlooked on the opposing side that also according to Protestant doctrine the visible Church and the invisible Church are one and the same; that they are not two species of one genus, but two predicates of the same subject. The *coetus electorum* (group of the elect), the invisible Church made up of those who are not only called but chosen, is not a *civitas platonica* (Platonic commonwealth) somewhere above the visible Church but identical with the latter in its ambiguous state. Catholic dogmatics which emphasizes the visibility of the Church nevertheless recognizes that there obtains in reference to the Church something akin to the relationship of body and soul, where the latter can be perceived only in the spirit and “only to a degree.”⁶ The *Roman Catechism*⁷ expressly teaches

that in the Church the good and the wicked coexist without external mark of distinction, as the pure and the impure animals coexisted in Noah's Ark. Apparently here too there is provided a visually imperceptible delimitation of the Church within the Church; in which case—as we know—conditions might be such that even a pope may find himself standing on the left side.

Also as regards the unity of the Church, it must be noted that in respect to viewing the Church as a necessary instrument of salvation no substantial controversy seems to exist. Protestant dogmatics too professes belief in the famous words of the Fathers to which Catholic dogmatics habitually refers on this point. Some examples are: "*Where the Church is, there also is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is there is the Church.*"⁸ "*Outside the Church there is no salvation.*"⁹ "*I would not believe the Gospel unless the authority of the Catholic Church impelled me.*"¹⁰ According to Luther, the Church is ". . . the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it he illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it."¹¹ And Calvin holds that *discessio ab ecclesia* (to leave the Church) is no more, no less than *Dei et Christi abnegatio* (denial of God and Christ).¹²

3. The Church is *holy*; she is set apart from every other institution and community as the place and the instrument of divine revelation and atonement. In what respect is she *sancta* (holy)? Listen again to two definitions: a) She is holy "*among so many sinners . . . because she is joined to Christ the Lord as a body to its head,*"¹³ b) "*because all of those whom God chose, he justifies and reforms in holiness and innocence of life so that his glory may shine for them.*"¹⁴ Who would not believe that in this instance the first objectively determining formula is Protestant, probably Calvinist, and that the second formula which emphatically underscores the sanctification of the members is Catholic. But in fact the first formula is found in the *Roman Catechism*,¹⁵ while the second has Calvin as its author.¹⁶ No doubt the Catholic can subscribe joyfully to the second formulation and the Protestant, with equal joy, can subscribe to the first.

In this context belongs the proposition, also held in common, that the Church in its entirety cannot err *in fundamenta fidei* (in basic

matters of faith), that God's people as such cannot miss its goal, whatever might be said about individuals and particulars; in short, the proposition which enunciates the essential infallibility and perennial existence of the Church. There seems, moreover, to be a prevailing agreement that the Holiness of God must be clearly distinguished from the holiness of the Church. Hence not only Calvin¹⁷ but also the *Roman Catechism*¹⁸ emphasizes that in the creed we read *credo ecclesiam* (I believe the Church) and not *in ecclesiam* (in the Church) as we do in regard to the three Divine persons: "*so that also by this different way of speaking, God, the Creator of all things, may be distinguished from created things, and so that we may attribute to the divine Goodness all those wonderful favors which are bestowed on the Church.*"¹⁹

4. It also seems impossible that there should be basic disagreement concerning the predicate *catholicam* (catholic, universal) either when we understand thereby the absolute priority of the ecclesiastical community to the communities of race, of language, of culture, of state, of class; or when it is emphasized that the body united to its head is prior to its members. We also appear agreed that this predicate must be understood to express a spiritual quality and not a mechanical quantity. In other words, the divinely given title of the Church cannot be proven numerically, but only through the objective superiority of the truth.²⁰ Catholicity means virtual universality and not numerical majority. From the Catholic side this fact receives remarkable and valuable illumination from the fact that since the pope is not bound to the majority he can assent to the opinion of the *pars minor et sanior* (smaller and more sensible group)²¹ when issuing the necessary certification of a conciliar decision.

5. Again both sides appear to have perceived and recognized in principle the mark of the *apostolicity* of the origin of the doctrine and of the succession of the Church. The Catholic must be aware that in addition to God's authority Protestantism knows also very well the authority of the Church, insofar as the latter is grounded and must continually return to its ground in the testimony of the apostles, which is normative both for the understanding and the preaching of divine revelation. The Protestant on the other side who at first glance, and quite understandably, thinks he perceives only a god-

like authority of the Church as such, must make it clear to himself that, according to Catholic doctrine, we are confronted here with the delegated relative power which Christ handed over to the apostles, or, more precisely, to *the* apostle Peter. Objectively considered, this position is identical with that which Protestantism understands as the authority of the written and of the preached word of the Bible. There is, therefore, no need to contend about the existence of an apostolic authority in the Church which, by the way, is documented in Matthew 16. In principle, therefore, no one need become upset by the well-known use of the *Tu es Petrus* (Thou art Peter) in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome.

6. I mention as the last point: both sides appear to be in agreement that close attention must be paid to the word *credo*, with which the section of the creed we are discussing begins. This attention is necessary for comprehending that the Church, although visible in her existence and thus rationally intelligible, must be believed through the mystery on which her existence is based and through which she is maintained. She must be believed with all her characteristics by virtue of which she is not just *any* church but the Church of God. We appear also agreed that the word *credo* is requisite to understanding that, as the Church of God, she is visible and becomes visible only through grace. Once more I read, not in a Protestant work bearing witness to the Reformers' point of view, but in the *Roman Catechism*:²²

Therefore, since this article [of the Creed] surpasses the capacity and power of our intelligence as fully as the other articles, we are altogether justified in acknowledging that it is not by human reason that we know the origin, the functions and the dignity of the Church, but we see all these things by the eyes of faith. . . . For it was not men who were the founders of this Church, but the immortal God himself. . . . And the power she received is not human but granted by God's gift. That is why, just as this cannot be accomplished by natural human powers, so also it is *by faith alone that we understand* that the keys of heaven are in the Church, and that the power of forgiving sin, of excommunicating, and of consecrating the true body of Christ have been committed to her.²³

In view of this rather broad basis of apparent agreement, to which more could easily be added, one may marvel momentarily how it was possible, and is possible, that the Reformers of the sixteenth century, in the emphatic language of that time, unanimously rejected the Roman Church as the church of the anti-Christ; how it was, and is, possible that the Roman Church, regenerated at Trent, offered on her part nought but a monotonous anathema to the Church of the Reformation and that today, all on either side who are serious-minded, though with a heavy heart and in the more muted expressions of our day, must nevertheless ratify this attitude of their respective ancestors with an impartial Amen. But why? Indeed why? Because—and this must be said to all those good and well-meaning persons who might wish to step into the middle and exhort us to recognize this quite respectable common minimum and to get along with each other—because everything that we have mentioned, everything without exception, and much else besides which could be brought up is understood so differently by both sides; because the reality of the Church which undeniably is perceived in common is visible in so different a manner and viewed in so different a manner, that we disagree as to what she is. This entails immediately that we disagree on our attitude toward her and our position in her. Therefore, even with the best of wills on both sides, we cannot recognize ourselves as one flock under one shepherd, but we must leave it in the hand of God, whether and in what respect we might be such.

Where do our ways part? This is what we must discuss now. Our differences could be developed in detail, starting with any of the points mentioned earlier. The last-quoted sentences from the *Roman Catechism* offer the best means of transition. It is said there that in respect to the divine reality of the Church “it is *by Faith alone that we understand*” (*Fide solum intelligimus*). We can safely maintain that if we interpreted these words in the same sense, then there would be no division in the Church; then we would not need to prefix “Catholic” or “Protestant”²⁴ to the name of “Christian.” Were we agreed on this point, we could then discuss all other things—and I do mean *all* other things—papacy and sacrament, dogma and ritual. If a Protestant conceives these three words in a Catholic sense, which in this case would be according to the sense of the

text, then he is at bottom a Catholic, even though he happens to be a professor of Protestant theology. And if a Catholic understands these three words in a Protestant sense, then he has turned Protestant in his heart no matter what the outward appearances. A genuine Catholic and a genuine Protestant, however, cannot come to agree on the meaning of these words. This is the final reason why they cannot discuss other disputed points. They can only discuss why it is impossible to discuss them.

I shall now try to develop briefly how we Protestants understand those three words *fide solum intelligimus*, or rather how we would understand the Church in the light of these three words if we knew not where and by whom they were written.

We Protestants understand by *faith* man's acceptance and grasp of God's grace, which itself is the effect of grace. Here grace is grace and God's ineffable *favor* precisely to the extent that it is, and *remains*, God's grace both in respect to that which has been accepted and also in respect to the acts of acceptance and comprehension; where the reality of the Logos and the Spirit of God acquire power over man so that he perceives grace sensibly (through Word and sacrament), knows it rationally and experiences it within his heart. But in all this, and this is the decisive point, man never acquires the least power of disposition over grace, as he has power of disposition over other realities which he perceives, knows, and experiences. Man does not receive this power of disposing over grace, because in grace man has to do with the holy *God* who, even when he is graciously inclined toward us, dwells in a light where none can come; because man is a *sinner* whose community with God is not possible for a single moment or in any way except through God's action. Man's community with God is without reciprocity and man is never in a position to lay his hand upon God as God lays His hand upon *him*. In other words, man's condition is such that at every moment, in every respect, he is held by God and by God alone, and in no way at all by himself. Although his faith is a perceiving, a recognizing and an experiencing, man cannot keep himself in community with God either by means of his perception, or by means of his cognition, or by means of his experience. For God is God, but man is a creature and a sinful creature at that. How should he be able to maintain himself in com-

munity with God through his acts of perception, cognition, and experience? For man to be supported by his own self would be the equivalent of sin without grace, of death without hope. That *God* keeps him, that therein consists his redemption and salvation, that he is maintained by God Himself, by God alone, this is what faith believes.

But this precisely is also the meaning of *credo ecclesiam* (I believe the Church). The Church is the place and the means of God's grace. It is there, in and through the Church, that the act of faith takes place. For there speaks, and there is heard, the reality of the Logos become flesh and of the holy Spirit of God. The Church, however, shares, as place and means of grace, the characteristic that she has power over us, while the reverse is not the case. We do not have the Church as we have other things, but we have her as we have God—that is, if, and insofar as, He has us. There is, of course, this decisive difference that we deal here with a visible historical quantity which becomes tangible in men and human thoughts, in human institutions and enterprises, and which as such, as the earthly body of the heavenly Lord, is the place and means of grace. How else could she be the *place* and the *means*, the *accessible* place and the *usable* means of grace? But this does not alter the fact that we have her only as we have God; thus, that in her and through her the consoling message God has consigned to us, comes to us in a manner which on our part does not give rise to a claim on God and on those matters reserved to Him and to Him alone. When anyone else addresses us, a corresponding claim on our part may arise, a claim now to assert effectively as our own what has been addressed to us. But when God addresses us, *no* such claim arises. To have the Church, the *evocatio*, the assignment of divine grace cannot mean that we are furnished a claim; that in that visible historical and human place and means of grace, there is given to us the instrument by which we could have the power of disposing over grace and even could *secure* ourselves in respect to grace. If there were in the Church some other security than that founded in God Himself, how could grace still be grace? Therefore, however dear grace be to us, we should not wish to have the Church in any other way than as we have God, i.e., as beggars who live from hand to mouth and not as rich, secure, and powerful peo-

ple. The Church is placed between Jesus Christ and the pardoned sinner. Jesus Christ and the pardoned sinner have in common that in both takes place God's entrance into time, into the twilight, into the relativity and ambiguity of history and of human life, into that hiddenness where he can be recognized only through the presence of his will and of the act of his love, and where there cannot be any direct and self-evident recognition of him.

This is the manner in which the Church too is divinely founded; *thus* is she the community of saints. It is an essential characteristic of grace to be objectively real in the Logos become flesh. Christ took His Cross upon Himself and was obedient unto death (and for this, for this God has raised Him up) and therewith the Church too is shown her position and character. It is an essential characteristic of grace to be subjectively real in pardoned sinners. The pardoned sinner cannot live anywhere else but under the judgment and the promise of God before whom he is dust, and Who alone can set matters right with him; and therewith the Church is told where she belongs and how she should stand before God. The Church who is placed between Jesus Christ and the pardoned sinner cannot stand under any other law than these two. The Church is the place and the means of grace in the *hiddenness* of God, in the lowliness of things human, or she is in no way the place and means of grace. Because of the fact of this hiddenness we must have her as we have God and in no other way. We do perceive her, we recognize her, we experience her. Yet we do not have her through our perception, through our recognition, through our experience. No, we have her because God has *us* in our perception, recognition, and experience of the Church, because he deals with us as the Lord, has elected *us* in this manner which is suited to us, and not because we have, and even in the most subtle way, elected Him. If we wanted to invert the relationship, what else would we retain of the Church than the lowliness of everything human which, at best, might be idealized and decked out but would not thereby vanish; the poor servant maid who, even most beautifully draped, would no longer be the handmaid of Christ, but just an ordinary maid like any other? Now for us to have in her the one handmaid and bride of Christ depends on our not making her into a grand lady and thus—for we ourselves are the Church—making ourselves into

lords. And note well, this means making ourselves lords in our relation to God. It is not permissible to invert this relation because we want to have a Church without lowliness, with her lowliness covered by a royal robe. Her glory can consist only in that she hears, in her honestly admitted poverty, the word of the eternally rich God and that she makes it heard. Her glory does not consist in acquiring control over His word as one acquires control over the things of this earth. Nor does it consist in possessing His word as material or intellectual goods are customarily possessed. Nor can she count on it, as if she owned anything which had not been given to her. Her glory cannot, and may not, shine forth anywhere else than where the glory of the Lord and where the glory of the pardoned sinner shines forth. But the place where that occurs on earth is the *Cross*. Whatever shines forth in some other place is some other glory, namely, the glory of this world which passes away; the Church should not put herself on this level.

This is the way in which the Church is the *one* Church. Yes, the one Church beside whom there is no other. Her oneness, however, is not at her disposal, but she herself is at the disposal of the one God, and that in two ways. She is the one Church insofar as God has set her apart and keeps her separate from every false church, but not so as she herself is able to set herself apart in an inevitable, but also very relative, manner from other structures which also call themselves churches. She is the one Church insofar as it pleases God to make visible in her and through her what He as the Lord of the Church can make visible, but not insofar as she herself renders her invisible reality visible. She is the one Church, not to the extent that she might be able to prove through words and deeds that she is necessary for salvation, but to the extent that in her and through her God Himself gives the proof of spirit and power which honors not her but Him.

This is the way in which she is the *holy* Church. Her holiness is not at her own disposal, but she herself is at the disposal of the holy God. Her holiness does not consist in her constituting herself as a second Christian world in opposition to the world. Indeed, she must constitute herself in the world, but in doing *that* she is not yet anything more than the world. She is more than the world because she *has been* constituted, and *continuously* is constituted in the world, not by Canon

Law but by God's law. The act of her institution is never something past and gone, precisely because she is instituted by God. She is holy to the degree that she obeys, not to the degree that she commands. Her freedom from error does not arise because infallibility and perfection are attributes of the precepts she necessarily gives and which necessarily are conditioned by the human factor; but she is free of error to the degree that she bears witness and confirms through her precepts that she has heard the infallible word of God, to the degree that she, as Calvin has it, "*puts aside her own wisdom and allows herself to be taught by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.*"²⁵ Insofar as she does not do this she is not a church at all. But to the extent that she does this she will always seek infallibility in what has been *said to her*. That which she can say herself and ought to say herself does not come from heaven, in contrast to what has been said to her, but is spoken on earth; it is not *the* dogma but *a* dogma; it has not divine authority but the specific ecclesiastical authority, which *by its own nature* is weighty and demands respect. This ecclesiastical authority is truly genuine authority because it is ready at every moment to submit to the higher authority which is really set over her. The Church is under obligation to will her *purity*; first and foremost the purity of her teaching. She must fight for this and, if it become necessary, suffer for it. But she cannot will to be holy. She can only *believe*, under the judgment and promise of God, that she is holy.

This is the way in which she is the *catholic* Church. Again it must be said: her catholicity is not at her disposal, but she herself is at the disposal of the eternal, omnipresent God. She will, therefore, not boast about her centuries and millennia—the idolatrous church of ancient Egypt for instance could have done so with much greater justification. Nor will she insist on the territorial extent she might perhaps have in common with the Roman or the British Empire. What would that have to do with her real catholicity, which is a spiritual and qualitative thing? Where two or three among you are gathered together in *my* name, there I am in their midst. I! This establishes, maintains, and preserves the catholicity of the Church. Without this she *is* not a church at all. But this also is the content of a promise which can only *become* true, for which one can only pray, which no one on earth can *make* true, whatever the means and guar-

antees used. Once more faith is demanded. The great truth of the catholicity of the Church also requires faith.

This is the way in which the Church is also *apostolic*. She has that quality by *serving* the Logos and the Spirit of God in accordance with the testimony and the model of the apostles. For this were the apostles chosen; for this Peter was chosen among the apostles; and for this were all his genuine successors chosen. How else could the Church prove and enact the apostolicity of the origin of her doctrine and of her succession, if not through the *ministerium verbi divini* (ministry of the Word of God) in which these men are our models and predecessors? Assuredly, she exercises by this *ministerium* a power, the *potestas ecclesiastica* (churchly power), the power to bind and to loose, beside which all other powers are stunted and meager. But if she, as apostolic Church, exercises such power, then it is a power which she, by virtue of the apostolicity of her origin, of her doctrine and of her succession, knows is not in *her* hand. On the contrary, while she binds and looses on earth she knows that this power is wholly in the hand of Him who alone can forgive sin and who alone can make man accountable for sin.

This is the meaning of *credo unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam*. I believe the Church as the place where God is honored and where, therefore, divine honors are rejected. For these reasons and in this manner I believe the Church as a means of grace. I believe the Church as the divine foundation by virtue of which there shall not be a palace but rather a hovel of God among men until the end of the world. I believe the Church as the community of saints; that is, of sinners set apart and called by God, who, even as a *community* of saints, even as preachers and hearers of the divine word, even as God's people—and particularly as that—wish to live by God's mercy (and do not consider this too little!) until the beginning of the realm of glory. There everything that passes away, even the transitory character of this community, the earthly body of the heavenly Lord, will put on permanence, where, also in this respect, what has been sown in weakness shall rise up in strength.

This is the way in which we understand the *fide solum intelligimus* as it refers to the Church. I do not wish to develop that all this is, and in what way it is, a sharp antithesis to Roman Catholic doctrine. You

will have perceived, without effort, the boundary and limit of which I spoke in the beginning and you will have heard the protest of Protestantism. The authors of the *Roman Catechism* presumably understood these three words somewhat differently. How? It may be left to our discussion to bring that into the light of day.

Translated by U. Allers

NOTES

A translation of "Der Begriff der Kirche," which appeared in *Zwischen den Zeiten*, Vol. 5 (1927), pp. 365-378. A lecture given to the University Group of the [Catholic] Center Party in Münster i. W., July 11, 1927. It is reprinted and translated here with the gracious permission of Professor Barth and of the Christian Kaiser Verlag, Munich.

1. The treaties of Münster and Osnabrück in 1648, commonly known as the Peace of Westphalia, marked the end of the religious wars in Germany and Holland. [Ed. note.]
2. "Credo unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam."
3. *Catechismus Romanus*, Part I, Chapter 10, Number 2. ["Significat ecclesia evocationem."]
4. "Congregatio fidelium qui scilicet ad lucem veritatis et Dei notitiam per fidem vocat sunt, ut, rejectis ignorantiae et errorum tenebris, Deum verum et vivum pie et sancte colant illique ex toto corde inserviant."
5. *Ibid.* [*Catechismus Romanus*.]
6. Bernhard Bartmann, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, Vol. II, pp. 189 f.
7. *Catechismus Romanus*, Part I, Chapter 10, Nos. 6 and 7.
8. "Ubi ecclesia ibi et spiritus Dei et ubi spiritus Dei illic ecclesia."
9. "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus."
10. "Ego evangelio non crederem nisi ecclesiae catholicae commoveret auctoritas."
11. *The Large Catechism* (1529), Part II, Article 3. English translation cited from *The Book of Concord*, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 416.
12. *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (1599), Book IV, Chapter 1, Number 10. [English trans., *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1936), Vol. II, pp. 282-283.]
13. "Inter tot peccatores . . . quod, veluti corpus cum capite, Christo Domino conjungitur."

14. "Quia quoscumque elegit Deus eos justificat reformatque in sanctitatem ac vitae innocentiam quo in illis reluceat sua gloria."
15. *Catechismus Romanus*, Part I, Chapter 10, Number 12.
16. *Catechismus Genevensis*, ed. by K. Müller, p. 125.
17. *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, Book IV, Chapter 1, Number 2. [English trans., *Institutes*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 270 ff.]
18. *Catechismus Romanus*, Part I, Chapter 10, Number 19.
19. "Ut hac etiam diversa loquendi ratione, Deus omnium effector a creatis rebus distinguatur, praeclaraque illa omnia, quae in ecclesiam collata sunt, beneficia divinae bonitati accepta referamus."
20. Bernhard Bartmann, *Lehrbuch der Dogmatik*, Vol. II, p. 199.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
22. *Catechismus Romanus*, Part I, Chapter 10, Nos. 17 and 18.
23. "Cum igitur hic articulus, non minus quam ceteri, intelligentiae nostrae facultatem et vires superet, jure optimo confitemur, nos ecclesiae ortum, munera et dignitatem non humana ratione cognoscere sed fidei oculis intueri. . . . Neque enim homines huius ecclesiae auctores fuerunt sed Deus ipse immortalis, . . . Nec potestas quam accepit, humana est, sed divino munere tributa. Quare, quemadmodum naturae viribus comparari non potest, ita etiam fide solum intelligimus in ecclesia claves caelorum esse eique potestatem peccata remittendi, excommunicandi, verumque Christi corpus consecrandi traditam." *Ibid.*
24. The word Barth uses is "Evangelical," which is used in Germany much as the word "Protestant" is used in this country. [Ed. note.]
25. *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, Part IV, Chapter 8, Number 13. "Abdicato omni sua sapientia a spiritu sancto doceri se per verbum Dei patitur." [English trans., *Institutes*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 429 ff.]

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