

AXIOMS

APOLOGETIC OF MARTIN BUCER

ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST

concerning the mystery and the agreement of the Churches on this matter, in response to the themes of Nicholas Amsdorff, falsely accusing the people of Strasbourg.

Translated by Sollie

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TO THE CHRISTIAN READER: MARTIN BUCER GREETINGS AND PEACE.

For several years now, Christian reader, we have devoted ourselves with great diligence here in Strasbourg, professing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the churches may fully agree concerning the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, and acknowledge mutual agreement. For we were previously persuaded that many differed more in words than in substance. From these considerations, we believed it appropriate to clarify the matter in two books in good faith: one written in our language to the monks concerning the true administration of the Church, before they cast themselves into this matter, as well as the ruin of religion and the commonwealth; and the other in Latin, for the defense of Christian doctrine against the Bishop of Avranches, Gallius. For in both books, we have simply and clearly set forth what our opinion is regarding the most holy Lord's Supper, which we recognize to be the same as that of those from whom we were thought to differ in this matter, and why we judge that both should converge in agreement, and have done so. This has brought us favor among many pious and learned men, but at the same time, there have not been lacking those who accuse us of malicious deceit in this matter, and still seek something further in written form, inquiring about matters I know not what. Satan has fully perceived how greatly this disagreement among the ministers of the Gospel has opposed the progress of the Gospel itself. While we were being disparaged only in private letters, we partly ignored it, and partly repelled the slander through private Epistles. Meanwhile, as the spirits of the saints are coming together beautifully everywhere, and the desired peace of the churches is taking root among many, Amssdorf has published his theses against the Zwinglians and Anabaptists, in which he explicitly attacks us, calling us "Strasburgians." He accuses us of

deceitful fabrication, of the most shameful lies, and of the distortion of the Lord's words. He denies that he recognizes us as brethren, while we publicly retract. He makes accusations in his theses, and falsely defames us with his assertions concerning faith and sincerity, which the Lord has granted us to uphold in the present cause, as our testimony shows.

We commend ourselves and our cause in the Lord to all who judge us, and earnestly pray that, once our innocence has been recognized, they may acquit us of Amssdorf's slander, while continuing to love and cherish Amssdorf himself in the Lord, whom I hear preaches Christ purely and diligently, and who, I believe, has greatly benefited his churches and even contributed to public tranquility. May they love and uphold him in the Lord, as they continue always to pray to Christ. May the mercy of our Lord follow us, so that He may forgive whatever sins we have committed everywhere against Him and His bride, the Holy Church. Having been set free by intercessory and steadfast zeal, and by every effort of ours, may He cause us to strive with all our might and by every means to advance His kingdom, giving no offense anywhere. May He, who is our head and peacemaker, finally remove all stumbling blocks from His Church, making it peaceful, tranquil, and prosperous in every way. Amen.

At Augsburg, on the Calends of April, in the year 1535.

SATIRICAL THESES OF NICOLAS AMSDORF.

But the Strasburgians, among others, more cunning, pretend to agree and teach the same as Luther.-40

But they lie most disgracefully, as shown by the book recently issued by them.-41

Therefore, they are in no way to be trusted, unless they acknowledge their error and publicly retract.-42

They have falsely taught and written against Luther in this matter, teaching "This is my body," that is, "This signifies my body," or "This is the figure of my body."-43

When they retract this and seek forgiveness, as befits Christians, we will recognize them; otherwise, we will not. -44

If adulterers are not to be admitted into the fellowship of the Church without repentance, much less should false preachers be admitted. -45

APOLOGETIC AXIOMS OF MARTIN BUCER.

It befits a theologian to speak the words of God, and true zeal for the purity of God's word is never devoid of love and sincerity. Love rejoices in the truth, and candor interprets everything in the best light.

Let Amsdorf see if it is truly theological and Christian, that which he has published about the Strasburgians in his theses titled Against the Zwinglians and Anabaptists.

For he writes that the Strasburgians, among others, are more cunning, pretending to agree and teach the same as Luther.

But he has not received from us any argument whatsoever in this matter that supports any deceitful scheming or falsehood.

For we indeed believe and teach that in the Holy Supper, not only the bread and wine, the sacred symbols, are truly offered and received, but at the same time, and indeed primarily, the body and blood of the Lord are offered together with those visible elements of bread and wine.

Now Luther acknowledges that, in the Holy Supper, bread and wine do not change in their nature; however, he believes and teaches that together with these elements, the body and blood of the Lord are truly exhibited and received.

Thus far, therefore, we both believe and teach in agreement with Luther, and it is slanderous for Amsdorf to claim that we pretend otherwise in a deceitful manner.

For whatever Luther means by "essentially, really, or even corporally" to be present, given, and received—the body and blood of the Lord in the Holy Supper (as we understand his mind from his own writings)—this we fully intend to express with true words.

He asserts no natural connection of the body and blood of the Lord with the bread and wine, nor any physical connection at all.

And he has determined that the body and blood of Christ are not locally enclosed in the bread and wine, nor does he make Christ our Lord into food for the stomach. For indeed, based on his great confession, we may judge his view accordingly.

But, excluding these coarser interpretations, there is nothing that could be said to express the true presence and perception of the Lord in the Supper that we would not willingly use in its appropriate context.

Since here the body and blood of the Lord are offered to us with the corporal signs, namely the bread and wine, and these are given and received corporally, into the hands and into the mouth, we do not hesitate to affirm this.

Let us also consider Luther's interpretation, attributing to these visible actions, which pertain to the bread and wine themselves, something that pertains to the body and blood, which are certainly not subject to our senses, due to the sacramental union.

Just as with those synecdoches: John saw with the Holy Spirit; Moses saw and heard the Lord face to face.

Moreover, just as we acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Himself, true God and man, is truly given and received here by us, so too we do not shy away from using terms like "essentially" and "really." For the Lord Himself is truly given.

Furthermore, since Christ the Lord gives Himself to us in this way, so that He lives in us, we become His members, flesh of His flesh, bone of His bones; we thus become partakers of His nature. This pleases those statements of the holy fathers, of Hilary, Cyril, and others, that Christ dwells in us sincerely, naturally, corporally, carnally, that is, according to His nature, body, and flesh. But by this, we imagine nothing of such a mixture, nothing of a union that would fulfill the term "nature" as Aristotle uses it.

For, just as the soul and body are joined in us, the parts of the body are joined to each other, and the other things which are said to constitute human nature.

What Christ gives us in the holy mystery, what He offers, and what He is, surpass the grasp of our nature.

Such things are, indeed, that the Holy Spirit did not find it sufficient to express them by names, breaths, spirits, virtues, operations, and similar terms.

But He judged that He should say here, the Lord's body is offered to us, and His blood, that we eat and drink these, that He lives in us, that we are incorporated into Him, that we are of His flesh and bones, and thus of His body and nature.

The holy fathers, wishing to imitate this, wrote that we are united with Christ according to the flesh, that Christ dwells in us bodily through the communication of His flesh, that He is in us by a natural participation, that we live according to the flesh through Christ, having obtained the nature of His flesh.

However, in these expressions, in this age, there is nothing of nature that can be perceived by our reasoning, nor did they wish to translate these divine mysteries into a natural understanding.

Therefore, just as we are able to understand these mysteries only through the Word of God, so too we are commanded by this alone, together with the holy fathers, to think and speak accordingly.

For who could express these things more precisely or more clearly than the Holy Spirit? Let it suffice to reaffirm that all these things are brought together with a heavenly and divine reasoning, which is not of this world. Even though we are still placed in this world's condition, and these matters are presented through perceptible symbols, nonetheless, the most true and real communion with Christ is provided.

For the bread which we break is a participation in the body of Christ, and the cup for which we give thanks is a participation in the blood of Christ—true, certain, and solid.

Thus, we Strasburgians both believe and teach. Let those Christians, who are familiar with Luther's teaching, judge whether we believe and teach in agreement with him, and why Amsdorf candidly writes that we are pretending, as if we were more cunning than others.

Moreover, if it appears that there is still some difference between Luther's teaching and this statement of ours, as we have just laid it out, no one can reasonably accuse us of falsehood.

For wherever we speak of this concord between Luther and us, we explicitly add that this is how it seems to us. And why should we falsely testify concerning what we know for certain in our hearts?

Furthermore, in every place where we discuss this matter, we are accustomed to carefully set forth our position on this doctrine, and then to compare it openly and cautiously with Luther's position from his published works, and then to submit the judgment of our concord to the Christian reader.

For we know that many do not easily accept our statements in the way we intend.

Therefore, we do not wish to admit anything that could be taken as falsely gaining any person's consent on our behalf.

This is a matter concerning Christ. And here we have abundant support, if He Himself is present as a witness to those who see our hearts. The care of the churches concerns us greatly in this matter.

Amsdorf asserts: "But they lie most disgracefully," as demonstrated by the book recently published by them.

Most disgracefully? To accuse us of lying in this matter, neither Amsdorf, nor any mortal, indeed not even the divine beings, could prove it.

For we neither speak nor write anything against our own intent in this matter, nor have we accepted anything of the sort, from which a good man could justly suspect us of such things.

But our recently published book indicates the opposite. This is what Amsdorf refers to.

The works we recently published on this matter include: our Confession presented to His Imperial Majesty at the Diet of Augsburg, and its Apology; On the Governance of the Church directed to the Monasterians; and the Exposition of the Creed. These are in both German and Latin. There is also the Apology of Christian Doctrine against the Bishop of Avranches.

If Amsdorf is referring to the works of Sebastian Franck, let him understand that the Senate of our Republic expelled him from the city, on account of his insane audacity revealed in his history, after he had suffered the penalty of imprisonment. For he had deceitfully managed to have his Histories printed without approval.

We have also prohibited the printing of other absurdities by this man, since it was deemed gravely impious by our Magistrates: and he has never been permitted to return to us, despite his repeated and earnest pleas.

It is therefore an unworthy injury for a theologian to inflict such a reproach on a Republic, especially one that is united with us in name, by attributing to us such a book published by us, which our Magistrates condemned and punished under his authority.

It follows in the Theses of Amsdorf: "They should in no way be trusted, unless they acknowledge their error and publicly retract."

If no trust should be placed in one who has erred or is still erring, and has not yet acknowledged his error and publicly retracted, what should we make of Amsdorf, who, erring against the Republic of Strasbourg and against us, whether he wishes it or not, falsely accuses his brethren of falsehood and sacrilege?

But let us consider what error he attributes to us. He writes that we have taught and written against Luther, claiming that this is my body means this signifies my body or this is the figure of my body.

We respond: If Amsdorf proves that any one of us has ever taught or written that this is my body means this signifies my body or this is the figure of my body, then we will condemn ourselves for the crime of which he accuses us.

Where is the fear and trembling, by which Paul defended the cause of Christ, not only at Corinth, but among any mortals, and certainly not in a great church, to recklessly and impetuously accuse us of such a great sacrilege, and to do so publicly in both languages?

We do defend those who, while recognizing the true presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, have written that the bread of the Eucharist is a sign and figure of Christ's body, just as not only the holy fathers, but also those who in this present age above

others fought for the presence of the Lord in the Supper, they are in agreement.

But if the bread is a sign of the body of Christ, what harm is there in saying that the bread signifies the body of the Lord, as long as you express adequately the Lord's presence?

However, as we have always acknowledged and continue to acknowledge, the chief gift that Christ gives us in the Holy Supper is His very body. Thus, the pronoun Hoc indicates two things for us: bread for the senses and the Lord's body for the understanding. Thus, we customarily speak when we exhibit what is invisible through a visible sign.

There is a synecdoche in This, as also in Take and Eat. For two things are offered simultaneously: an earthly thing and a heavenly thing, as Irenaeus writes, "the visible and the invisible together," as Chrysostom says; the sign and the thing signified, as Augustine, Bernard, and others affirm—namely, the body of the Lord and the wine and blood of the Lord.

Here is the gift: the body and blood of the Lord. Bread and wine are used as symbols in such a way that this offering may become fuller for us, even to our physical senses, and may more effectively arouse our faith.

This is why the Lord, offering bread and wine with His hand, testifies with words that He is offering His body and blood.

Those who say that nothing is exhibited here except a sign and figure—let them be anathema.

Therefore, what Amsdorf thinks should be retracted by us, let him clearly indicate.

For he adds: When they retract and seek forgiveness, as befits Christians, we will acknowledge them; otherwise, we will not. Let him therefore show what we have taught that needs retracting, and we will retract it sincerely and humbly ask forgiveness from him and from the entire Church.

Until he does this, let him consider why he so firmly refuses to acknowledge us (does he perhaps consider us?) as brothers.

And while he, along with a few others who presume too much, is unwilling to recognize us as brothers, Christ, along with many thousands of the saints, has acknowledged us as His brothers and members.

Even the foremost among those with whom Amsdorf wishes to appear aligned have testified that, if we sincerely profess the position we have previously stated, we cannot be condemned.

Furthermore, we openly admit, and have confessed in our published books, that while many denied there being any trope in the words of the Lord, This is my body, and denied that This referred to the bread, and that It was to be understood substantially.

And hence, it would follow that the bread is precisely the same as the Lord's body, essentially, corporally, carnally.

Or that the body of the Lord is in the bread, essentially, really, substantially, corporally, carnally.

We thought those who affirmed such views meant either that the Lord's body is naturally united with the bread or that it is locally contained within the bread.

And so, we have established the rationale of the Lord's presence in the Supper solely in accordance with St. Augustine and other holy fathers, as one that aligns more accurately with the reality of human nature in Christ.

Wherever they began to admit a trope, a synecdoche, or a natural communion between the body of the Lord and the bread to deny it, while affirming a sacramental presence, and to reject local inclusion, we began to declare our agreement with them, testifying that what we opposed was primarily in their words and interpretations.

Would that they would acknowledge and candidly admit this, as well as those who have thoughtlessly accused us of false charges—certainly most grave ones.

For they have not only slandered us by denying the presence of Christ in the Holy Supper.

On both sides, we truly need to pray that Christ may teach us to seek only His glory and to pursue it with courage.

Amsdorf adds: "If adulterers are not to be admitted into the fellowship of the Church without repentance, much less should false preachers be."

False preachers? Let Amsdorf show what falsehood we have preached, whether in this or any other matter, and we will testify our repentance in whatever manner he wishes.

I would also like to know the number of those who, having once been fornicators, greedy, revilers, or drunkards, began to live free from these vices, and whom Amsdorf has excluded from the Church's fellowship until they gave public testimony of their repentance.

Finally, he concludes: "Some people might think that it is the Lutherans who have fallen into their error, rather than they coming to our truth."

But which people? Could they understand what both sides confess concerning this mystery, or not at all? If they can, they will easily see into what position we have conspired. If not, what hinders them as Christians?

Rather, it should concern us how Christ and the saints view us, while we so falsely slander our brothers and often cause such miserable conflict that deeply disturbs the churches.

The leaders of the Christian community, at the end of the Augsburg Diet, saw the Confession presented to the Emperor by our Republic and judged that in the main it agreed with their own beliefs. From this, they established a fellowship with us, declaring that it stood opposed to what was contrary, so that, in this matter, we were in agreement. They granted this name also to the Magdeburgers, where Amsdorf acts as pastor.

Meanwhile, we have always been held to be in concord, and this concord was further affirmed in Schweinfurt, where they testified that they accepted both our confession and that of the Princes.

Let Christians now judge whether it would have been disgraceful for Amsdorf as a pastor of a sister city if he had not warned our

Republic, their ally, beforehand about so great a matter—one that he accuses us of—as sacrilege, bringing the charge against both sides. To accuse our Republic and us so gravely and falsely.

May the Lord strip us of ourselves and clothe us in Himself, to sanctify His name and to expand His kingdom, Amen. At Augsburg, on the Calends of April, in the year 1535.

Published at Augsburg by Philippus Vlhardus

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