

Habeas Corpus: The Key to Interpreting the Great Commission

Habeas corpus ad subjiciendum (Lat., “you should have the body for submitting”) “is a judicial mandate to a prison official ordering that an inmate be brought to the court so it can be determined whether or not that person is imprisoned lawfully and whether or not he should be released from custody.”¹ The right to such a procedure is guaranteed in the United States Constitution (article one, section nine), and has historically served as “the fundamental instrument for safeguarding individual freedom against arbitrary and lawless state action.”² The bringing forth of a very different kind of body, namely that of Christ, is similarly a fundamental instrument for safeguarding the basic principles of Christianity, including especially the release of human beings from their various oppressors. Confusion concerning the meaning of σῶμα Χριστοῦ negatively impacts Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, the preaching of the Gospel, and the practice of the Lord’s Supper. It is thus worrisome that the phrases σῶμα Χριστοῦ and σῶμα κυρίου do not figure prominently in modern discussions of basic Christian doctrine,³ including those within the Lutheran church.⁴

In Jesus’ own speech, σῶμά μου includes his physical person (Mark 14:8; John 2:21) as well as the first element of the Eucharist (Mark 14:22). His physical corpse alone is indicated by the phrase σῶμα Ἰησοῦ (Mark 15:43; Luke 24:3). By contrast, the crucified and resurrected σῶμα Χριστοῦ overthrows the law’s coercions and accusations (Rom. 7:4; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:22; Heb. 10:5, quoting Ps. 40:6 LXX; 1 Pet. 2:24). As a result, the identity of our bodies as μέλη Χριστοῦ is incompatible with the coercion of prostitution (1 Cor. 6:15),⁵ whereas the freewill love of a man for a

¹ “Habeas corpus,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habeas_corpus.

² *Harris v. Nelson* (March 1969, one of Abe Fortas’ last U.S. Supreme Court decisions), <http://www.lectlaw.com/def/h001.htm>.

³ An unhelpful exception is Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p. 139, who from the premises that the church is the body of Christ and that bodies are collection of cells deduced that “every Christian needs to be involved in a small group within their church.”

⁴ The Lutheran Confessions employ σῶμα Χριστοῦ and σῶμα κυρίου frequently in articles concerning the church, e.g. AC Ap VII and VIII, 5 (Tappert, p. 169; *Triglotta*, p. 227) and the Eucharist, e.g. AC Ap X, 1 (Tappert, p. 179; *Triglotta*, p. 247), respectively, but not in those involving the doctrine of justification.

⁵ Prostitution is the sexual equivalent of works righteousness, since both coerce

woman parallels Christ's as savior of his body (Eph. 5:23). Like the Trinity, the church is a unity of distinct persons because it is σῶμα Χριστοῦ (1 Cor. 12:27, following the repeated occurrence of σῶμα in 12:12ff.; Eph. 5:30; Col. 3:15) and ἐν σῶμα ἐν Χριστῷ (Rom. 12:5). Both σῶμα Χριστοῦ (1 Cor. 10:16) and σῶμα κυρίου (1 Cor. 11:27) describe the bread of the Eucharist, thus the latter may be defined as the means whereby its recipients are joined to the defeat of the law, the love of Christ, and the fellowship of the Trinity. The Pauline use of σῶμα Χριστοῦ is regularly associated with discussions of Christ's resurrection and ascension, and his subsequent assignment of officers among the people of God (Eph. 1:23, 4:12; Col. 1:18; see also 1 Cor. 12:28).

Since the so-called Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) is a statement of the resurrected, soon to be ascended Christ describing the tasks which certain officers would fulfill among the people of God, it follows that a correct understanding of and emphasis on the church as σῶμα Χριστοῦ is a necessary background to the interpretation of this text. As will be seen, it is exactly the failure of modern Lutheranism to follow this procedure which is responsible for the many intractable conflicts on church and ministry in its midst.

The Recipients of the Great Commission

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, like Julius Caesar's ancient Gaul, may be described as currently divided into three parts: first, the conservative group, known to its critics as "bronze agers," dominated by pre-"baby boom" laity who orient around the publication Christian News; second, the confessional group, known to its critics as "hyper-Euro-Lutherans," dominated by post-Seminex era clergy who orient around the publication Logia; and third, the moderate group, known to its critics as "liberals," a broad coalition of former Seminex supporters, charismatics, and advocates of "church growth" mission philosophy and liturgical practice, who orient around the publication Jesus First. Similar groups also exist within most other denominations which are derivative of the defunct Synodical Conference, that branch of American Lutheranism which has historically subscribed to Francis Pieper's Brief Statement.

The latter document contended that "the officers of the Church publicly administer their offices only by virtue of delegated powers, and such administration remains under the supervision of the latter, Col. 4:17."⁶ In the

a prerequisite payment for love rather than simply granting love as a free gift.

⁶ Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia, 1932), sec. 30, in which "the latter" apparently means "those who delegated the powers." But in Colossians 4:17, that the congregation should exhort

preamble to this assertion, the Great Commission is one of the texts cited as evidence that Christ “commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments.” Of course, few Synodical Conference laymen have ever insisted that each believer should have the right to occupy the pulpit on Sunday mornings, and whereas the casuistry of “emergency baptism” is often cited as evidence of the need for the Brief Statement’s doctrine, such baptisms are an extremely rare phenomenon. The real reason why this polity is so vigorously defended is so that lay assemblies may have the right to overturn the exercise of pastoral jurisdiction,⁷ especially as it pertains to liturgics and church discipline. Thus both the LC-MS’ 1943 and 1986 editions of Luther’s Small Catechism concluded that the sentence “the called ministers of Christ . . . exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation,” from the explanation of John 20 under the Office of the Keys and Confession, means simply that the called minister “must carry out the resolution of the congregation.”⁸ This is akin to claiming that, even though the United States Constitution confers on the president the right to veto legislation, he may not actually exercise this right himself, but like a press secretary merely announces a decision which some other body, whose alleged powers are not enumerated in the Constitution, has made.

But if Christ really “commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments,” how does the church avoid violating the Pauline requirement that an administrator of the church’s doctrine and discipline must be “blameless,” “the husband of one wife,” and “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2)? The conservative party in the LC-MS tried hard to insure that its lay administrators were as much like pastors as possible, by requiring every member to attend catechism classes modeled after seminary doctrine courses and by permitting only adult males to join voters’ assemblies and hold congregational offices. The moderate party however simply ignored the material from the Pastoral Epistles, arguing that because justification is universal (Gal. 3:28), so must access to church offices be. Aided by secular egalitarian movements, this group has successfully campaigned for the Brief Statement’s office of “supervision” to be conferred on

Archippus to “watch the ministry (βλέπε τὴν διακονίαν) which you received in the Lord” hardly constitutes any “supervision” of Archippus. Indeed, in Scripture the term “supervision” (ἐπισκοπή) describes what pastors exercise over congregations, not congregations over pastors (Acts 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:1).

⁷ Tractate 60 (Tappert, p. 330; Triglotta, p. 521).

⁸ A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine (St. Louis: Concordia, 1943), p. 187; Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), p. 226.

women as well as men, initially by including them in voters' assemblies, more recently by allowing them to serve as congregational presidents and elders. In other words, while the LC-MS continues to deny to women the outward titles and costumes of the pastoral office, it now confers upon them the full substance of that office's authority.

The moderates agree with the conservatives that the "ye" of Matthew 28:19 means "ye believers," which the conservatives regard as a collective entity ("ye group of believers"),⁹ but the moderates tend to view as a reference to an aggregate of distinct individuals ("each one of ye believers").¹⁰ Over against both groups, the confessional party has observed that the antecedent of "ye" in Matthew 28:19, "the eleven disciples" (οἱ ἑνδεκα μαθηταὶ) of 28:16, is a group not obviously synonymous with "all believers." The latter interpretation is that of the Book of Concord:

Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is, the command to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence. He did not give them the power of the sword or the right to establish, take possession of, or transfer the kingdoms of the world. For Christ said, "Go therefore and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20), and also, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21).¹¹

C. F. W. Walther, widely believed by all three LC-MS parties to be a champion of the

⁹ Richard C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943), p. 1178, insisted that "the Great Commission was given, not to the eleven alone as apostles, but to the entire 500 [of 1 Cor. 15:6] as the church of Jesus."

¹⁰ Oscar E. Feucht, Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), p. 27, implied that the Great Commission was addressed to every Christian: "After giving the great commission to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to empower ALL believers to be ambassadors for Christ." On p. 24, he urged pastors to ask, "How can we effectively teach this central fact of the great commission to every group of new members. . . . Is this priestly concept of the believers clearly alive in the personal theology of our members?"

¹¹ Tractate 31 (Tappert, p. 325; Triglotta, p. 513). Since lay assemblies in modern Lutheran churches "establish, take possession of, or transfer the kingdoms of the world" when they administer matters of finance and property, it is difficult to see how they may also administer the keys without violating this confessional principle.

conservative and moderate view of the Great Commission, was in fact in full agreement with the Lutheran Confessions. The second thesis on ministry in his widely referenced work, The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry, cited the Great Commission among other texts as proof that “the divine institution of the holy ministry is evident from the call of the holy apostles into the ministry of the Word by the Son of God.”¹² Lest anyone think that “the holy ministry” here refers to something administered by the laity, Walther’s first thesis on ministry stated, “The holy ministry or pastoral office is an office distinct from the priestly office which all believers have.”¹³ Especially stunning, in the face of assertions that laity “supervise” pastors, is the following declaration of pastoral supremacy in Walther’s sixth thesis on ministry:

If ministers who already administer the office belong to the calling congregation, they also of course belong to those calling, and indeed, according to the office which they administer in the church, they above all. Therefore when their cooperation, which is their right on account of their office, is denied, then there is no longer any call of the “multitude,” for then the call is extended not by the [whole] congregation but by individuals in the congregation, which when properly organized consists of both preachers and hearers.¹⁴

That the pastoral office is “above all” appears to conflict with the Lutheran Confessions, whose Latin text states that “the church is above the ministers” (supra ministros).¹⁵ The German text however reads “more than the ministers” (mehr denn die Diener), the correctness of which is demonstrated by the accompanying Scripture citation, 1 Corinthians 3:4-8. The identification of Paul and Apollos as “ministers through whom you [the Corinthian congregation] believed” in no way suggests the superiority of either clergy or laity.

How was it possible that the Synodical Conference could have overthrown the polity of its founding theologian? Because the leadership of its second generation, widely assumed today to have been faithful exponents of Walther’s theology and

¹² Walther on the Church, John Drickamer, trans. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), p. 75. The third thesis, p. 78, similarly invoked Matthew 28:19-20 in holding that “the apostles’ ministry of the Word is by Christ’s command to continue till the end of time.”

¹³ Walther on the Church, p. 73.

¹⁴ Walther on the Church, p. 86.

¹⁵ Tractate 11 (Tappert, p. 321; Triglotta, p. 507).

practice, in fact all but completely ignored Walther's primary writings in developing their systems. Walther's theses on law and Gospel played no role in Francis Pieper's treatment of this crucial subject in his Christian Dogmatics.¹⁶ Pieper frequently quoted Walther's church and ministry theses in the public ministry section of his definitive doctrinal text, but not specifically in his assessment of the addressees of the Great Commission: "In Matt. 28:18-20 not only the Apostles as such, but the Christians to the Last Day are charged with the administration of Word and Baptism."¹⁷ Most subsequent Synodical Conference theologians have followed Pieper's system in asserting that "the words in Matthew [28:19, 20] . . . were not limited to the eleven disciples,"¹⁸ and they "cringe to hear of statements made by some pastors today, which fail to regard rightly the priesthood of the believers they serve. . . . They propose that it is an error to assert that in Matt. 28:19-20, Christ is commissioning all believers to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments."¹⁹

The Transmitters of the Great Commission

A major reason why such offense is taken against the idea that in Matthew 28 Christ is commissioning pastors to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments is that, at first glance, it appears to provide no role for the congregation in the process. The reduction of the laity to a secondary status in the church would then appear to be unavoidable: "The commission of the apostolic office precedes the founding of the church both temporally and logically; the work of Christ through his apostles establishes the church and not vice versa."²⁰ Some in the

¹⁶ Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, vol. III (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), p. 252, merely acknowledged the existence of Walther's work in a concluding footnote.

¹⁷ Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, p. 451. Pieper also ignored the post-Reformation theologians, of whom he was otherwise enamored, on this matter. In Heinrich Schmid, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1899), the administration of word and sacraments is entrusted to "certain men" (Gerhard, p. 606) or "a certain and suitable person" (Hollaz, p. 607), and possession of the keys confers solely "the right and power to appoint ministers" (Baier, p. 608).

¹⁸ L. W. Spitz, "The Universal Priesthood of Believers," in The Abiding Word, Theodore Laetsch, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1946), p. 332.

¹⁹ Raymond Hartwig, "Contemporary Issues Regarding the Universal Priesthood," in Church and Ministry, Jerald C. Joerz and Paul T. McCain, eds., (St. Louis: Office of the LC-MS President, 1998), p. 194.

²⁰ Theological Commission of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church

confessional party go even farther, holding that the clergy are not only the sole recipients of the Great Commission, but also its sole transmitters: “The minister is really nothing more or less than the ecclesiastical embodiment of the Father’s only-begotten Son.”²¹ This lays the foundation for a genuinely hierarchical polity, in which the clergy alone (or worse, a subdivision of clergy such as seminary faculties or regional “bishops”) make new clergy by a graduation or ordination ceremony rather than a congregational call. Yet the same historic Lutheranism which held that Christ commissioned ministers, not all believers, to baptize and teach was equally adamant that the congregation, and no subdivision of same, had the office of calling ministers.²² What is the basis for the latter principle in the Great Commission?

As previously noted, most of the attention in Great Commission debates has focused on the various interpretations of the “ye” to whom the commission was addressed. Few have considered whether it is rather the identity of the “I” who spoke the commission which is being misunderstood. The issue is more sharply revealed when one recalls Walther’s definition of the Great Commission: “the call of the holy apostles into the ministry of the Word by the Son of God.”²³ The phrase “Son of God,” especially as capitalized, suggests the meaning, “Jesus alone,” and the mistranslation of that uniquely Johannine designation of Jesus as τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ, “only-begotten Son” (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), as “only Son” in English translations of the Apostolic Creed,²⁴ serves to minimize the full fellowship which Scripture portrays as already existing between Christ and believers. An incredible number of modern teachers across denominational lines seem to have forgotten that “sons of God” (υἱοὶ θεοῦ) is the proper designation of all Christians by virtue of their baptism (Gal. 3:26; cf. 1 John 3:1). As a result, the same rights and privileges

(SELK), “The Office of the Church: An Orientation,” in Logia, vol. X, no. 3, p. 19.

²¹ Douglas D. Fusselman, “ ‘It’s Jesus!’: The Minister as the Embodiment of Christ,” in Logia, vol. VI, no. 1, p. 28.

²² Tractate 69 (Tappert, p. 331; Triglotta, pp. 523-525), the only reference to the royal priesthood in the Book of Concord, precludes a call by the clergy alone; the sixth thesis on ministry (Walther on the Church, p. 86) precludes a call by the laity alone.

²³ Walther on the Church, p. 75.

²⁴ According to F. Bente, “Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church” (Triglotta, pp. 12-13), Jesus is termed τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ in the Apostolic Creed and τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ in the Nicene, but in Latin versions, the former is rendered filium unicum, “unique son,” while the latter is rendered filium unigenitum, “only-begotten Son.”

which the divine nature of Christ extends to the human nature are further extended to those in fellowship with same:

Whatever Scripture says that the Son has received, it understands as having been received with respect to His body, and that that body is the first-fruits of the Church. Accordingly, God raised up and exalted His own body first, but afterwards the members of His body.²⁵

Scripture does not present Christians as so sinful that they must either perform some action of themselves in this life, or await some action from God in an afterlife, before the attributes of Christ are fully communicated to his body.²⁶

If all Christians are sons of God and all Christians currently constitute the body of Christ, it is therefore all Christians, those who in any given location may constitute a Christian church or congregation, who collectively confer upon pastors today what Jesus conferred upon the first pastors.²⁷ Even such a small and temporally limited entity as Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch on the Gaza road (Acts 8:26-39) fulfills Walther's seventh thesis on the church, which linked the concepts of

²⁵ Catalog of Testimonies II, 45 (Triglotta, p. 1117). This is ascribed to a work of Athanasius entitled "On the Assumed Humanity," which is apparently not the same as "On the Incarnation," since no such quote appears in the latter.

²⁶ The notion that all Christians are simul justus et peccator is widely asserted to be a basic principle of Martin Luther's theology, but an actual source in Luther's writings is rarely given. James M. Kittelson, Luther the Reformer (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), p. 98, cited a commentary on Romans in 1515 in which Luther declared of a Christian, "At the same time he is both a sinner and righteous." By contrast, a section from Luther's sermon of April 21, 1530, although entitled "Saints and Sinners at the Same Time" in What Luther Says: An Anthology, Ewald M. Plass, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), vol. III, p. 1247, asserts the very opposite: "To be sure, according to my first birth, I belong to the devil; but according to the new birth, I, sanctified by God's Word and work, am a sinner no more." No reference to simul justus et peccator or its synonyms exists in the Book of Concord, Heinrich Schmid's compendium of post-Reformation theology, Walther's theses on law and Gospel, or Pieper's Christian Dogmatics. In the latter (vol. III, p. 16), the flesh of Christians is neither co-equal with the new man, nor is it eliminated or in process of elimination, but rather crucified.

²⁷ This most obviously occurs at an installation ceremony, whose significance is minimized by most modern Lutherans in favor of either a clergy dominated ordination ritual or a lay dominated voters' assembly election.

children of God and body of Christ to that of the visible congregation:

If there were in any particular congregation even only two or three true believers, true children of God, true members of the spiritual body of Christ, then because of them that congregation would be a congregation of God and the rightful possessor of all rights and powers which Christ has procured for and given to His church.²⁸

The confessional party's principal error was to assume that, because pastors alone receive the ministerial office of Christ, they alone receive the status of body of Christ. The other two parties' principal error was not that they attempted to find the laity in the Great Commission, but that they found them in the wrong place. This left laity fighting with clergy over who has the right to the title, "minister," while the far grander identity of both as the body of Christ was allowed to recede into the background.

Not everyone however regards it as a blessing to be an addressee of the Great Commission, as evidenced by the number of pastors who support the conservative and moderate interpretations of this text. This is doubtless a result of the widespread misreading of the Great Commission as a demand of the law, whereby it is held either to coerce visible church growth ("making disciples" defined statistically rather than theologically), or even to establish an impossible standard which can only accuse. It is perfectly understandable that clergy should want the laity to share responsibility for "ministry," however defined, provided that they also share the blame for the results. But the Great Commission, like all other imperatives in Scripture directed at believers, is a statement of the Gospel, not the law, specifically an admonition of the Gospel,²⁹ one of the many aspects of "the beginning of eternal life."³⁰ Just as "do this in remembrance of me" does not compel

²⁸ Walther on the Church, p. 40 (seventh thesis on the church).

²⁹ C. F. W. Walther, The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel, W. H. T. Dau, trans. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1928), p. 381 (twenty-third thesis). The law cannot possibly be "that which has man as its subject," as is widely claimed in modern Lutheranism, otherwise Walther was gravely mistaken in holding that "the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Gospel is preached first and then the Law" (seventh thesis, Proper Distinction, p. 89), since Paul clearly preached "that which has man as its subject" to believers at the end of his epistles (Gal. 6:10; 1 Thess. 5:12-22).

³⁰ AC Ap XVI, 6 (Tappert, p. 223; Triglotta, p. 331). This "second half of the Gospel" is termed "subsequent renewal" in FC SD III, 19 (Tappert, p. 542; Triglotta, p.

believers to take the sacrament in an ever more sincere manner, much less does it accuse them of not having done so in the past, but invites and permits their participation in this most blessed of feasts, so the Lord's words at the conclusion of Matthew's Gospel invite and permit credentialed men to share in the ministerial office of Christ, which all are otherwise unworthy to hold.

Practical Implications

When the goal of theology in general, and of church and ministry discussions in particular, is to "have the body," that is, to be affirmative of the status and authority of the believing community as the body of Christ, many errors in modern church life stand to be corrected. Surely when pastors stop preaching condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:1), as so many now do under various forms of legalism, the laity will have far less motive to retaliate by means of voters' assemblies and denominational conventions. It may even be remembered that it is not the non-profit corporation meeting which enjoys any standing in the kingdom of God, but rather the gathering of believers, where the word of God, not Robert's Rules of Order, is the rule and norm of faith and life, and the pastor, not a lay congregational chairman, is the presiding officer. Imagine a church which only assembled to study the word, receive the Eucharist, pray, sing, and practice the mutual consolation and conversation of brethren, where no one attempted to coerce a fellow Christian by voting or to usurp anyone's office by a denominational show of right. In the first century, every congregation was defined in this way. In the twenty-first century, every congregation will be again, if only its true identity is faithfully maintained.

Addendum: The Real Purpose of Romans 7

Four texts of Scripture are commonly quoted by modern Lutherans, in contradiction of Psalm 1:5 and Romans 8:1, as evidence that Christians are still sinners: 1) Isaiah's acknowledgment that "all our righteousness is like a filthy rag" (Is. 64:6), where the antecedent of "our" is falsely asserted to be believers; 2) Paul's statement that he was a former sinner (πρότερον, 1 Tim. 1:13; πρῶτος, 1 Tim. 1:15), the latter mistranslated "chief" (KJV) or "worst" (NIV), even though Paul was not obviously "chief" of a group that includes Cain, Jezebel, and the Herods; 3) 1 John's declaration that believers "have sin" (1:8), misread as "are sinners," and "have

921). The notion that forgiveness of sins alone is the Gospel, as advocated in Hermann Sasse, Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith (Adelaide, Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979), p. 119, is based on an improper insertion of a sola into AC Ap IV, 43 (Tappert, p. 113; Triglotta, p. 133).

sinned” (1:10), misread as “are sinning”; 4) Romans 7:18, where “flesh,” something Jesus shares with all humans (John 1:14), is mistranslated “sinful nature” (NIV), something he does not obviously possess. Incredibly, the sons of the Reformation apparently believe that the answer to Paul's subsequent question, “Who will bring an accusation against the chosen of God?” (8:33) is “Lutheran pastors,” and have forgotten that “accusing our brothers day and night” (Rev. 12:10) is the work of the devil, not Christian ministers.

The misreading of Romans 7 is a consequence of the failure to remember the nature of the church as the body of Christ. No true Lutheran has ever suggested that the church is simul justus et peccator; on the contrary, the church in the proper sense is nothing but a communion of saints. The presence of heretics and hypocrites in congregations does not overthrow this; rather, the wicked merely adhere to the true church in an outward manner, as a leech to a man's body or a barnacle to a ship's hull. When they become manifest, they are rightly removed from the church (the second use of the law) in a procedure analogous to criminals being excluded from the body politic (the first use of the law).

The body of an individual believer works just like the body of Christ. Romans 7:17 and 7:20 clearly state that the sinful acts of the flesh described in this chapter are not committed by a Christian in the proper sense, but by “another law in my members campaigning against the law of my mind” (7:23), which the new or inner man renounces, indeed excommunicates from that which rules and norms his life (the third use of the law, 1 Cor. 9:27; FC SD VI, 9). The latter is the true and highest vocation of every believer, clergy and laity alike.

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