

# The Second Martin of the Lutheran Church

by Rev. Gaylin Schmeling

## The Life of Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586)

### *The Early Life of Martin Chemnitz*

The name Martin Chemnitz is one largely buried in antiquity. With the exception of a few Lutherans who remember him in connection with the composition of the *Formula of Concord* (1577), Chemnitz is one of history's forgotten men. Yet, he was the leading light in Lutheranism after Luther, so much so that the seventeenth century had this saying: "If the second Martin (Chemnitz) had not come, the first Martin (Luther) would scarcely have stood" (*Si Martinus non fuisset, Martinus vix stetisset*). This is not to say that he was the only figure of any importance in the generation following Luther. But, of the sixteenth-century Lutheran theologians (Jakob Andreae [1528–1590], Nikolaus Selnecker [1528–1592], David Chytraeus [1531–1600], and others) who transmitted the treasures of the Lutheran Reformation to succeeding generations, Chemnitz was the greatest. He, more than any other, was the bridge and link between Luther and third-generation Lutherans, the dogmaticians of the seventeenth century. Chemnitz was not a creative spirit, but he put the theological inheritance which he received from Luther and Melancthon into a logical and systematic form for future generations. In this Reformation anniversary year, it is important to see the continuum between Luther and Chemnitz.

Martin Chemnitz was born November 9, 1522 in Treuenbrietzen, Germany,<sup>1</sup> a small town located fifteen miles northeast of Wittenberg. His father, Paul, was a wool merchant who died when Martin was eleven years old. The local schoolmaster, Laurentius Barthold, recognized him as a lad with superior gifts and persuaded his mother to send him to Latin school in Wittenberg. Because of financial difficulties, he had to discontinue his education for a time, but later with the help of two prominent citizens of Magdeburg, he continued his studies in the same city from 1539 to 1542. After some additional studies at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder, Chemnitz returned to Wittenburg in 1545. There he studied at the feet of Melancthon (1497–1560) and established a longtime friendship with him. He considered Melancthon to be one of his mentors. He rejected Melancthon's later doctrinal errors, but he always strived to see him in the best possible light. As a bonus Chemnitz heard Luther lecture and preach in Wittenberg, but by his own admission he "did not hear him with due attention then."<sup>2</sup> It was later that he came to treasure the seminal writings of Martin Luther.

### *Chemnitz the Librarian at Königsberg*

When the Smalcald War temporarily disrupted the University of Wittenberg, in 1547 Chemnitz sought the more peaceful atmosphere far to the north at Königsberg in East Prussia. As the rector of the city's Kneiphof school, he received his master's degree in 1548 at the newly established University of Königsberg. Later he attained the position of librarian at the ducal library of Königsberg. Here he had the opportunity to do a considerable amount of study which

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1 J. A. O. Preus, *The Second Martin: The Life and Theology of Martin Chemnitz* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), 88. This is probably the most complete biography of Martin Chemnitz in the English language.

2 August L. Graebner, "An Autobiography of Martin Chemnitz," *Theological Quarterly*, Vol. III, no. 4 (October 1899), 479.

prepared him for his future as one of the greatest theologians of the age. Chemnitz was very much a self-taught doctor of the church.<sup>3</sup>

With the outbreak of the Osiandrian controversy in Königsberg, Chemnitz found himself at odds with Duke Albert of Prussia. Andrew Osiander (1498–1552), the Duke’s favorite, advocated a doctrine of justification which stated that the sinner is justified not by imputed but by essential righteousness of Christ. God does not declare the sinner just, but makes him just; he does not impute Christ’s obedience and righteousness to the sinner, but has Christ Himself dwell in the sinner for his justification. This view was sharply resisted by Chemnitz and his friend Mörlin.<sup>4</sup> The Duke did not dismiss Chemnitz because he needed his expertise as an astrologer. Chemnitz, however, decided himself not to remain in the hostile atmosphere of Prussia, especially since his friend Joachim Mörlin had been banished by the Duke.

### *Chemnitz the Superintendent*

After Mörlin’s flight from East Prussia he was called as superintendent at Braunschweig. At his urging, Chemnitz accepted the duties of preacher and coadjutor in Braunschweig. On November 25, 1554 John Bugenhagen, the original developer of the Reformation in Braunschweig, ordained Chemnitz into the holy ministry.<sup>5</sup> In 1555, he married Anna Jaeger, the daughter of a licensed jurist, and to this union ten children were born.

In 1561, Chemnitz became involved in the Hardenberg case. Hardenberg was a preacher at the cathedral in Bremen, where he held to views concerning the Lord’s Supper that were considered to be Reformed. At a meeting held in Braunschweig, Hardenberg was declared to be a despiser of the *Augsburg Confession* and a Sacramentarian. That same year Chemnitz’ first theological publication appeared, a lengthy treatise on the Lord’s Supper in reaction to Hardenberg.<sup>6</sup> What Chemnitz found particularly disturbing was the dishonesty in the word-games played by the Crypto-Calvinists. Rather than being straightforward as the Zwinglians had been, the Crypto-Calvinists were concealing their error with deceptive words. Chemnitz emphasized the interpretation of the Words of Institution and the importance of distinguishing between questions having to do with the substance and essence of the Supper, and those dealing only with its power and effect. The Calvinists were more interested in the latter, and this he found to be the great weakness in their approach.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Preus, 91–95.

4 Joachim Mörlin (1514–1571) was born in Wittenberg when Luther was still a monk in the Augustinian cloister and later attended the university there, becoming an avid follower of Luther. He was one of the hardliners in the opposition against the imperial edict of the Augsburg Interim and the Leipzig Interim. He was also among the fiercest critics of Andreas Osiander and his doctrine of justification. Remember Osiander emphasized that the divine nature of Christ dwelling within us is salvific in contradistinction to the work of Christ outside of us. According to Scripture, the righteousness that avails before God for mankind is the righteousness accomplished through the active and passive obedience of the God-Man. We are not saved by the essential righteousness of the divine Christ dwelling in us through the mystical union. Therefore, Mörlin rejected such statements of Osiander: “For 1500 years the blood of Christ has been gone and for us it is good for nothing. It dried up in the garment of Christ (*Das Blut Christi sei seit 1500 Jahren dahin und sei uns nichts nütze, es sei in Christi Rock vertracknet*)” (Jürgen Diestelmann, *Joachim Mörlin* [Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 2003], 133). This controversy caused him to leave Königsberg and become superintendent in Braunschweig in 1553 where Chemnitz later joined him. In 1567, he was installed as bishop of Samland at Königsberg. He was one of the important mentors of Chemnitz.

5 Preus, 99.

6 Diestelmann, 245–276.

7 Theodore Jungkuntz, *Formulators of the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977),

In 1567 and 1568 Chemnitz reaped the fruits of his long years of self-preparation, for in 1567 he was appointed superintendent of Braunschweig when Mörlin became bishop of Königsberg, and the following year he received his doctorate in theology at the University of Rostock. He faithfully served the church in Braunschweig as superintendent. An important vehicle in developing the confessional consciousness of both the laity and the clergy was the publication in 1569 of his *Enchiridion* which was used in the preparation of the clergy for examinations by the superintendent and for the examination of candidates for ordination.<sup>8</sup>

### *Chemnitz the Theologian and Concordist*

A short writing by Chemnitz against the new Jesuit order brought him into conflict first with Johannes Alber of Cologne, and then with a more formidable foe, Jacob Payva de Andrada. In answer to Andrada and his defense of the Council of Trent, Chemnitz analyzed the Council in four books, demonstrating with exhaustive evidence from Scripture and from the ancient teachers of the church where the Council of Trent had departed from the teaching of Scripture. In his *Examen*, Chemnitz, following Luther, helped the church to see the difference between justification itself and the fruits of justification. He distinguished clearly between the righteousness which is ours by imputation unto faith, i.e., forensic righteousness, and the righteousness that is worked in us gradually as a result of faith, that is, that which belongs to sanctification. Werner Elert writes, "As Martin Chemnitz showed in his critique of the Trent dogma, this concept made it impossible to bridge the opposition."<sup>9</sup> There was an irreconcilable difference between the Lutherans and Rome concerning the central article of the faith. The first volume of the *Examen* which appeared in 1565 covered the chief articles of the Christian faith. In the remaining three volumes he treated the Sacraments and the abuses in the Roman Church which the Council of Trent sought to defend.

Chemnitz is known predominantly for the role which he played during the dissension that arose after Luther's death. After Luther's death, Melanchthon was looked upon as the leading theologian in the Lutheran Church, but he was unable to give strong direction. Melanchthon did not have leadership qualities. He tended to vacillate on important doctrinal issues. As a result of this, opposing parties like the Gnesio-Lutherans, who believed they were upholding Luther's doctrine, and the Philippists, who accepted Melanchthon's compromises, arose in the Lutheran Church. It was Chemnitz, more than anyone else, who was the guiding force behind the *Formula of Concord* which settled these doctrinal controversies. He was instrumental in putting together this document which was signed by three electors, twenty dukes and princes, many lesser nobles, thirty-five imperial cities, and about 8,000 pastors and teachers. Chemnitz was irenic, yet firm. He did not engage in name calling but focused on the issues, and as a result brought concord out of dissension.

Chemnitz was a prolific writer. Besides the *Formula*, the *Examen*, and the *Enchiridion*, Chemnitz wrote the *De Duabus Naturis*, a learned study of the two natures in Christ; the *Loci Theologici*, lectures on the *Loci Communes of Melanchthon*; the *De Coena Domini*, his main work on the Lord's Supper; the *Kirchenordnung or Church Order of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel*, together with Jacob

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<sup>8</sup> For an English translation of his *enchiridion* see Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, Vol. I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 73.

Andreae;<sup>10</sup> the *Harmonia Evangelica*, a harmony of the four Gospels,<sup>11</sup> which he produced together with Leyser and Gerhard;<sup>12</sup> the *Postilla*, his sermons; and the *Apologia*, a defense of the *Formula of Concord* which he authored together with Kirchner and Selnecker.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout his life Chemnitz enjoyed excellent health which allowed him to do an amazing amount of scholarly work. But by 1582, though only sixty years old, he suffered from what we would today call “burnout.” In 1584 he resigned from his office as superintendent. On April 6, 1586 he died a faithful confessor of the church.

## Theological Points in the Writings of Martin Chemnitz

### *Chemnitz and Scripture*

The doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture was not in question at Chemnitz’ time, nor during the lifetime of Luther. It was generally assumed by all parties involved in the controversies of the time that the Scripture was errorless and authoritative. In his writings, Chemnitz continues the high view of Scripture that is found in Luther. The Holy Scriptures are the very Word of God and they are a powerful and creative thing. They are the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). The Scripture is the life-giving Word of the Lord:

What we have thus far adduced from the very words of Scripture are the firmest of firm testimonies on which a pious heart can safely rest. For they set before us the judgment of the Holy Spirit Himself concerning the Scripture. For as the ancients say that concerning God nothing should be believed except on the basis of His own revelation and testimony, so also we should believe about the Scripture what the Scripture says about itself, or rather, what its author, the Holy

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10 The *Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* is significant because its authors were Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae, who also helped prepare the *Formula of Concord*. The Church Order, in effect, is the Lutheran doctrinal confession put into practice. It contains a summary of basic Christian doctrine, an agenda for the divine service, directions for Christian schools, and a guide for many points of pastoral theology. Seeing how the authors of the *Formula of Concord* put it into practice is instructive for us today. Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae, *Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel: How Doctrine, Ceremonies, and Other Church-Related Matters Shall (by God’s Grace) Be Conducted Henceforth*, trans. Jacob Corzine, Matthew C. Harrison, et al. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015).

11 In 1573, Chemnitz began to edit his *Harmonia*, but he was so pressed by his many other duties that he never finished the work. He authored the first part of the *Harmonia* (chapters 1–51). It was later published after his death by Polykarp Leyser in 1593. Leyser carried on the work of Chemnitz and published an additional portion of it (chapters 52–140) in the years 1603–1610. The whole project was completed by Johann Gerhard in 1626–1627 (chapters 141–180). This massive harmony of the Gospels was published in completion at Frankfurt and Hamburg in 1652.

12 See also Gaylin R. Schmeling, “Polykarp Leyser (1552–1610): A Theological Bridge Between Chemnitz and Gerhard,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 50, no. 2 & 3 (June–September 2010): 187–207.

13 When Lutheranism returned to the Palatinate in 1576 with the reign of Ludwig VI, Calvinists like Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, left the University of Heidelberg and established an anti-school at Neustadt an der Hardt. Here a critique of the *Book of Concord* was prepared in 1581. This critique, mainly authored by Ursinus, was entitled *Christian Admonition on the Book of Concord (Neostadiensium Admonitio)*. The critique was intended to refute mainly the Lutheran doctrines of Christology, the Lord’s Supper, and election.

The Lutherans gathered at Erfurt to draw up a defense of the *Book of Concord*. Martin Chemnitz was there at the request of the elector of Brandenburg, Nikolaus Selnecker represented Saxony, and Timotheus Kirchner the government of Ludwig of the Palatinate. The Lutherans responded to the Neustadt Admonition with the Apology of the Book of Concord (*Apologia oder Verantwortung des Christlichen ConcordienBuchs*, 1583). It is also referred to as the Erfurt Book. This apology was a detailed defense of the Lutheran doctrine of Christology, the Lord’s Supper, and election.

Spirit Himself, concludes and declares about His work. But we shall also add the consensus of the ancient church concerning the authority, perfection, and sufficiency of the Scripture. For we love and venerate the testimonies of the ancient and purer church, by whose agreement we are both aided and confirmed; but our faith must rest on the word of God, not on human authority. Therefore we do not set the testimonies of the fathers over the Scripture, but subordinate them to it.<sup>14</sup>

At one time God revealed His Word by various ways and means. For sometimes, appearing Himself to the holy fathers, He spoke in their presence, sometimes through prophets inspired and moved by His Spirit; finally He spoke to mankind through His Son and the apostles. Heb 1:1-2; 2:3; 2 Ptr 1:21; 2 Ti 3:16; Lk 1:70. But He gave us neither command nor promise to expect that kind of inspirations or revelations. Yet for the sake of posterity He saw to it that this Word of His, first revealed by preaching and confirmed by subsequent miracles, was later put into writing by faithful witnesses. And to that very same Word, comprehended in the prophetic and apostolic writings, He bound His church, so that whenever we want to know or show that a teaching is God's Word, this should be our axiom: Thus it is written; thus Scripture speaks and testifies.<sup>15</sup>

Chemnitz, following Eusebius of Caesarea,<sup>16</sup> the church historian, and the early church fathers, makes a distinction in the canon between *homologoumena* (commonly confessed) books and *antilegomena* (those spoken against by some) books.<sup>17</sup> Luther makes the same distinction.<sup>18</sup> The *homologoumena* books are those books recognized by all as verbally inspired by God. The *antilegomena* books are those books whose integrity was questioned by some. These books in the New Testament are Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and the Revelation. While some had reservations about these books, believers in general recognized the voice of the Lord in them and they remained a part of the canon. Yet because the *antilegomena* books were questioned in the past, the church does not base any teaching on these writings unless that teaching is also found in the *homologoumena* books. Some would say, "Doesn't the debate over the *antilegomena* books prove that the church has authority over the canon, that the church established the canon?" Actually it proves the very opposite. It shows that it was not church councils or scholars that decided which books were part of the Scripture. Rather, the books showed themselves to be God's very Word and were recognized as such by the church which was created through these instruments of God. For that reason even those who had questions could not change the status of a certain book but had to bow to the workings of God. No church council or scholar can declare *antilegomena* to be *homologoumena* or vice versa.

In the Luther Bible between the Old and New Testaments there is a collection of books called the Apocrypha concerning which Luther says, "These books are not held equal to the Holy

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14 Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, trans. Fred Kramer, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971-1986), 1:150.

15 Chemnitz, *Enchiridion*, 40-41.

16 Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius: The Church History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999), 115 (Eusebius III, para. 25).

17 Chemnitz, *Examination*, 1:180-189.

18 LW 35:394-400.

Scripture but are useful and good to read.”<sup>19</sup> Chemnitz continues this distinction.<sup>20</sup> The term “Apocrypha” means “hidden” in the sense that these books were of an obscure and doubtful character and not considered canonical by Old Testament believers. The Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1545–1563) decreed that these books were equal to the canonical books of the Bible. The Reformed churches went to the opposite extreme and rejected these writings as having no value whatsoever. As a consequence, very few editions of the English Bible contain the Apocrypha. The Lutheran church, following the lead of Luther, has taken the proper middle course. Although we admit that these writings are not inspired and are not of equal authority with the canonical books of the Holy Scripture, we say with Luther that they are good and useful reading. Here we have a witness to the faith of the believers who lived in the Intertestamental Period. Because the Lutheran church has this view of the Apocrypha, passages from the Apocrypha have at times been used as sermon texts and as lections in public worship. For example Walther based one of his wedding sermons on a text from the book of Tobit.<sup>21</sup>

### *Chemnitz and Christology*

In the Reformation there were major conflicts concerning the person of Christ. Contrary to the Nestorian tendencies of the Reformed, Luther maintained the true biblical doctrine of the person of Christ, following in the tradition of Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus. Christ is both true God and true man in one person. The Savior had to be God in the flesh so that He could conquer the power of sin, death, and the devil. He had to be true man to live a perfect life in our place and so that He could suffer and die in our stead. He had to be true God so that His holy life and death would have infinite value for all people.

Chemnitz confessed this same Cyrillian Christology. He maintained a true personal union or hypostatic union. In the personal union, the incarnate, divine Logos assumed a perfect human nature, which never subsisted in itself, into His divine person so that the natures are so intimately united as to form one undivided, indivisible person in Christ. Thus we confess that God pushed forth from the Virgin’s womb and that she is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*). We confess that one of the Trinity died on the cross, as we sing in the hymn “*O grosse Not! Gott selbst ist tot.*”<sup>22</sup>

Already in John of Damascus there are allusions to the three genera of the communication of attributes.<sup>23</sup> Chemnitz follows this logic in explaining the personal union. Concerning the first genus, the *genus idiomaticum*, he teaches that because the divine and human natures of Christ constitute one Person, the attributes, belonging essentially to only one nature are always ascribed to the whole Person, but the divine attributes according to the divine nature, and the human attributes according to the human nature.<sup>24</sup>

The second genus, the *genus maiestaticum*, which is the third genus for Chemnitz, is explained in this way: concerning the second genus Lutherans teach in the hypostatic union, while nothing is

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19 LW 35:337n. *Apokrypha, das sind Bucher, welche der heiligen Schrift nicht gleich gehalten, aber doch nutzlich und gut zu lesen sind* (WA DB 2, 547).

20 Chemnitz, *Examination*, 1:180-189.

21 C.F.W. Walther, *Predigtenwürfe* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903), 383.

22 O sorrow dread! Our God is dead (ELH 332:2).

23 Gaylin R. Schmeling, “Book Review: St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (March 2009): 84–93.

24 Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House 1971), 6, 83; Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), II, 143; FC SD VIII, 36f, *Triglotta* 1027.

added to or taken away from the divine nature in itself, yet, because of the hypostatic union with the deity, countless supernatural qualities and qualities which are even contrary to the common condition of human nature, are given and communicated to Christ's human nature.<sup>25</sup>

The third genus, the *genus apotelesmaticum*, which is the second genus for Chemnitz, consists in this, that all official acts which Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King has performed and still performs for the salvation of men, He performs according to both natures, by each doing what is proper to it, not by itself and apart from the other nature, but in constant communion with the other, in one undivided theanthropic action.<sup>26</sup>

The doctrine of the personal union in Christ is not the bone-dry speculation of theologians with no value for the Christian in the here and now. The personal union gives great comfort each day of our lives. From this scriptural doctrine we know that God is our Savior, not a mere man in whom the deity dwelt in a greater degree than others. Only a divine Savior could conquer sin, hell, and the devil. Only a divine Savior could enter death, tearing it apart and ripping it to pieces, so that now death for the Christian is not the terrible end of everything but rather a new and great beginning in joy.

This divine Savior is with believers in every need. According to the *genus maiestaticum*, He is not only present in the fiery deity before whom none dare to stand but also as our human brother. He is everywhere at all times. Luther states that he desires to know no god except God in the flesh. To meet God outside of the flesh will utterly destroy us. There is no comfort in Christ's presence for us if He is present only in the burning, consuming deity. Luther writes, "Therefore, a Christian should know that he is to seek and find God nowhere else but on the Virgin's lap and on the cross, or however and wherever Christ reveals Himself in the Word."<sup>27</sup> Yet there is great comfort in knowing that He is God, our human brother. He knows our conflicts and sorrows for He endured them. He already gave His life for us on the cross. Therefore, we have the certainty that He, our human brother who knows our needs, will be with us in all the problems of life, working all for our good, even turning evil into good in our lives.<sup>28</sup>

### *Chemnitz and Baptism*

Chemnitz summarizes the essential parts of Baptism thus:

- I. The element of water (Jn 3:5; Eph 5:25-26; Acts 10:47).
- II. The Word of God (Eph 5:26; Cleansing with the washing of water by the Word—namely the command of Christ regarding the conferring of Baptism, Mt 28:19, and the very promise of grace, Mk 16:16). For that word of the command and promise of God is a true consecration or sanctification by which Baptism becomes a clean water (Eze 36:25), in fact a water of life (Eze 47:9; Zch 14:8) and a washing of regeneration (Tts 3:5).<sup>29</sup>

In the Brauschweig-Wolfenbüttel Church Order of 1569, Chemnitz points out that the entire Trinity is active in Baptism:

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25 Chemnitz, *Two Natures*, 6, 83, 244; Pieper, *Dogmatics*, II, 220; FC SD VIII, 50-52, *Triglotta* 1031.

26 Chemnitz, *Two Natures*, 83; Pieper, *Dogmatics*, II, 247; FC SD VII, 46, 47, *Triglotta* 1031.

27 LW 69:67 (WA 28:136). See also LW 16:55 (WA 25:107), LW 26:29.

28 Chemnitz, *Two Natures*, 147ff.

29 Chemnitz, *Enchiridion*, 112.

But if Baptism is administered on the basis of and according to this command and promise along with the words, then it enjoys the presence of God the Father, who saves us through the washing of rebirth (Titus 3 [:5]); of God the Son, who purifies His Church through the washing of water in the Word (Ephesians 5 [:26]); and of the Holy Spirit, who gives us rebirth and renewal through this washing of water in the Word (John 3 [:5]; Titus 3 [:5]). And from this, Baptism derives its identity as a blessed washing which cleanses us from sin.<sup>30</sup>

For Chemnitz, infant Baptism is biblical and it is essential for children. Christ declared that children are part of the kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14). No one can be part of the kingdom of heaven unless he is reborn, having faith worked in his heart. This washing of rebirth occurs through Baptism (John 3:5; Titus 3:5). Therefore infants should be baptized. Second, Christ wants infants to be saved for it is not the will of the Father that any of these little ones should perish (Matthew 18:14). The way that they are saved from destruction is through Baptism. Third, infants are born dead in trespasses and sins and are by nature children of wrath (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:3). Baptism is the divine means which brings them the forgiveness of Christ and washes away sin (Acts 2:38, 22:16). Fourth, Christ commanded and desires little children to be brought to Him that He might bless them (Mark 10:14, 16). How can they be brought to Him? They are brought to Him in Baptism. The Scriptures declare that those who are baptized put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). They are baptized into His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3; 1 Peter 3:21). Christ cleanses and sanctifies the church through the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). Fifth, Baptism in the New Testament is compared to circumcision in the Old Testament (Colossians 2:11–12). Therefore as circumcision in the Old Testament was not only for adults but also for children, the same is true concerning Baptism in the New Testament. Sixth, in the Old Testament it is prophesied that in the New Testament not only adults but also children would become part of the church (Isaiah 49:22). In the New Testament Peter tells us that the promise of Baptism is for both adults and children (Acts 2:39).<sup>31</sup> Thus, infants should be baptized.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism gives great and magnificent blessings. Baptism works rebirth so that one is born again through faith in Jesus as the Savior (John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 John 5:1). Here new and wonderful life begins that will culminate in the resurrection on the last day. Baptism washes away sin and gives full forgiveness (Acts 2:38, 22:16). In Baptism one puts on Christ (Galatians 3:27) and is intimately united with Him. The Holy Spirit comes upon him in all his fullness (Acts 2:38) and the entire Trinity dwells within him (John 14:23). The one baptized receives adoption and becomes a son of God (Galatians 4:5), partaking in the divine (2 Peter 1:4), [something missing] heir of heaven. In Baptism, he is united with Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6; 1 Peter 3:21). The old sinful flesh is buried with Christ in the tomb, and as Christ rose triumphant Easter morning, so the new man comes forth and arises. This dying and rising again continues daily in the Christian's life through true repentance and faith in the Savior, climaxing in the resurrection on the last day.<sup>32</sup>

The question often arises: what happens to infants that die before birth or to newborn babies whose parents do not have the opportunity to baptize them? Chemnitz reminds Christians that the Lord has bound them to means, therefore they will take every opportunity to baptize their children. However, God has not bound Himself to such means.

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30 Chemnitz and Andreae, *Church Order*, 54.

31 Chemnitz, *Enchiridion*, 116–117.

32 *Ibid.*, 113, 115.

[W]hen today infants die before they are born—in such cases the grace of God is not bound to the Sacraments, but those infants are to be brought and commended to Christ in prayers. And one should not doubt that those prayers are heard, for they are made in the name of Christ. Jn 16:23; Gn 17:7; Mt 19:14. Since, then, we cannot bring infants as yet unborn to Christ through Baptism, therefore, we should do it through pious prayers. Parents are to be put in mind of this, and if perhaps such a case occur, they are to be encouraged with this comfort.<sup>33</sup>

### *Chemnitz and the Lord's Supper*

Chemnitz' doctrine of the Lord's Supper has its foundation in the Words of Institution. Just as all dogmas of the church have their foundation in definite passages of Scripture where they are clearly treated and explained (*sedes doctrinae*), so the proper foundation for the doctrine of the Supper is to be found in the *Verba* as they are recorded in Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. Chemnitz chides all those who want to find a basis for the Sacrament outside the Words of Institution or who refuse to make the *Verba* normative in the study of the Supper. He agrees with Cyprian who says concerning the Sacrament, "We ought not to give heed to what someone before us thought should be done, but to what He, who is before all, did first."<sup>34</sup>

### *The Essence of the Sacrament*

Following the Ancient Church beginning with Irenaeus,<sup>35</sup> Chemnitz speaks of the Sacrament as consisting of both the earthly and heavenly elements. The earthly elements are bread from grain and wine from grapes. The heavenly elements are body and blood of Christ born of Mary, crucified and raised again.<sup>36</sup>

We grant, with Irenaeus, that after the blessing in the Eucharist the bread is no longer common bread but the Eucharist of the body of Christ, which now consists of two things—the earthly, that is, bread and wine, and the heavenly, that is, the body and blood of Christ. This is certainly a great, miraculous, and truly divine change, since before it was simply only ordinary bread and common wine. What now, after the blessing, is truly and substantially present, offered, and received is truly and substantially the body and blood of Christ. Therefore we grant that a certain change takes place, so that it can truly be said of the bread that it is the body of Christ. But we deny that it follows from this that we must therefore assert the kind of transubstantiation which the papalists teach.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Efficient Cause of the Sacrament*

The Holy Sacrament bestows upon us all the blessings of salvation. Because it is such a treasure, Christians will want to be certain that they have the Supper in their midst. How does one know that he has the true Supper? What causes Christ's body and blood to be present in the Sacrament

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33 Ibid., 119-120. See also Chemnitz and Andreae, *Church Order*, 58; *Comfort for Women Who Have Had a Miscarriage*, LW 43:245-250 (WA 53:205-208).

34 Martin Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:312.

35 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* IV, 18, 5.

36 Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 46.

37 Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:257-258.

or what effects the presence? It is not any power or work of man, but alone the Word and institution of Christ, as Chemnitz declares.<sup>38</sup> It is that all-powerful Word which God spoke at the creation and it was done (Psalm 33:9). Because the presence is not effected by any human words or actions, Chemnitz does not make the eucharistic prayer or the canon of the Mass a prerequisite for the Supper. In this regard Chemnitz asserts:

[H]e acts wickedly who takes away the consecration of the Eucharist from the words of divine institution and transfers it to the prayers of the canon, which have been patched together by men out of unsound and sound, or rather, mostly out of unsound materials.<sup>39</sup>

Chemnitz teaches that the Words of Institution spoken by the minister are the effectual cause of the presence. At the same time, he binds the consecration into an intimate relationship with Christ's original institution and command as is done in the *Formula of Concord*:

For where His institution is observed and His words are spoken over the bread and cup (wine), and the consecrated bread and cup (wine) are distributed, Christ Himself, through the spoken words, is still efficacious by virtue of the first institution, through His word, which He wishes to be there repeated.<sup>40</sup>

Thus the Words of Institution are efficacious by virtue of the original institution. The Words of Institution repeated by the minister in a proper celebration of the Sacrament (consecration, distribution, reception), by virtue of Christ's original command and institution, effect the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Supper.

#### *The Last Will and Testament of Christ*

The Sacrament is the last will and testament of Christ for Jesus says that this "is the New Testament in my blood." It is a gift or inheritance for God's people and not a human work or something we offer to God. According to Luther the sacrament contains all the elements of a last will and testament.

Since God in the Scriptures again and again calls his promise a testament he means to announce thereby that he will die; and again, in calling it a promise he means to announce that he will live. And thus, by that one word he wanted to make us understand that he would become man, die; and yet live eternally. . . . A testament is nothing but the last will of one who is dying, telling how his heirs are to live with and dispose of his properties after his death. . . . Four things are necessary in a complete and proper testament: the testator, the oral or written promise, the inheritance, and the heirs; and all of these are clearly visible to us in this testament. The **testator** is Christ, who is about to die. The **promise** is contained in the words with which the bread and wine are consecrated. The **inheritance** which Christ has bequeathed to us in his testament is the forgiveness of sins. The **heirs** are all the believers in Christ, namely, the holy elect children of God – wherefore Paul in Titus 1 [:1] calls the Christian faith the faith of the elect.<sup>41</sup>

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38 Chemnitz, *Lord's Supper*, 139.

39 Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:226.

40 FC SD VII, 75, *Triglotta* 999.

41 LW 36:179-180.

Before a man dies he often prepares his will in which he bequeaths his property to whomever he desires. Those remembered in his will may be totally unworthy, but he has the right to do as he pleases with what is his. Then, through his death, the will is made effective. Likewise, Jesus is the testator who prepared for his death and established his will, his gift. The Holy Supper is Christ's last will and testament which is to be distributed to believers for all time. This testament he ratified and made effective through his death on the cross. We, his heirs, do nothing to obtain the inheritance nor are we worthy to receive it. The Holy Supper is totally and completely a testament or a gift from God. It is the greatest inheritance that we can ever imagine. It is more valuable than all the wealth of this world. Here is bequeathed to us the greatest treasure of all times, all the blessings of the cross.

The fact that the *Verba* are Christ's last will and testament is of extreme importance to Chemnitz because this indicates that these words must be interpreted literally.

[W]hen the last will and testament of a man has been executed, we are required under the law to observe the words with special care so that nothing be done which is either beside or contrary to the final will of the testator. ...Now, because the Son of God in His last will and testament has not permitted His heirs the liberty of believing or doing whatever seems good to them, but has willed that we believe what He has spoken in His words of institution and do what He has commanded, therefore we should give very careful thought that we do not thrust anything upon these words of the last will and testament of the Son of God, lest we deprive ourselves of the benefit of eternal happiness conveyed to us by His will or our inheritance itself be taken from us as being unworthy because we have departed from the will of the Testator as it has been given to us in the words of His last testament.<sup>42</sup>

If the words of a human will cannot be changed or modified but must be taken literally, how much more shouldn't the last will and testament of God's Son be followed carefully and understood literally?

The fact that Christ's last will and testament is to be taken literally is used by Chemnitz as he contends with his adversaries on both sides of the issue of the Lord's Supper. He opposes the Sacramentarians who refuse to take the *Verba* literally saying that the bread only represents the Lord's body. He takes the same position over against the Roman Church when it argues that Christ's body and blood are present apart from the divinely instituted use or action. Also, because the Sacrament is the last will and testament of Christ, it is a gift or inheritance for God's people and not a sacrifice of Christ's body and blood offered to the Father in the Supper.

#### *The Supper and Sacrifice*

The atonement sacrifice for all sin was finished and completed at the cross when the Savior cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30; see also 1 Peter 3:18, Hebrews 7:26-27, 9:12). Since the sacrifice of Christ is complete, the Roman Catholic Church perverts the priestly office of Christ when it speaks of each repetition of the Lord's Supper as an unbloody sacrifice—the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross, only in an unbloody manner: "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.... 'In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated

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<sup>42</sup> Chemnitz, *Lord's Supper*, 27.

in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner."<sup>43</sup>

To say that the Supper is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross, namely, that in the sacrament Christ's body and blood are again offered up to appease God's just anger over sin, impairs the oneness of the once and for all sacrifice on the cross (Hebrews 7:26- 27, 9:12). The sacrifice of the cross cannot be all-sufficient, offered once, and still need to be continually offered in the Mass. The only way that the sacrament may be spoken of as a sacrifice is that the very body and blood which were once offered for the redemption of all, are now present in the Supper conveying the blessings of that redemption to the individual. Chemnitz writes in his *Examen*:

The fathers call the body and blood of the Lord which are present in the Supper a saving sacrifice, a pure host, our ransom, the purchase price of our redemption, the ransom for the sins of the world, a propitiatory sacrifice and a propitiation, **not because the body and blood of Christ are offered in the Mass by the action of the priest in order that they may become the ransom and propitiation for the sins of the whole world, but because that sacrifice which was once offered on the cross for our redemption and for the sins of the whole world—the body and blood of the Lord—is present, is dispensed, offered, and taken in the Lord's Supper, so that the power and efficacy of this offering, once made on the cross, is applied and sealed individually to all who receive it in faith.** Thus Cyprian says of the Lord's Supper: "This life-giving bread and the cup of blessing, hallowed by the solemn benediction, benefits the life of the total man, being at the same time a medicine and an offering, to heal our infirmities and to purge our iniquities."<sup>44</sup>

The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions are extremely emphatic in their rejection of any form of propitiatory sacrifice in the Supper which militates against the once and for all sacrifice of the cross or makes the Sacrament a human work or sacrifice.

### *The Supper and John 6*

Another section of Scripture often referred to in the study of the Lord's Supper is John 6. The Sacramentarians of Chemnitz' day held that the Words of Institution must be interpreted in the light of John 6. Since the eating of John 6 refers to spiritual eating by faith and John 6:63 indicates that "the flesh profits nothing," the Sacramentarians maintained that the only eating of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper was a spiritual eating and not a sacramental eating with the mouth.

In response to this argument, Chemnitz agrees that John 6 refers to spiritual eating, but as a result of this he holds that it does not specifically speak to the Lord's Supper. The eating and drinking in John 6 refer to the eating and drinking which a believer does by faith through the means of grace, receiving all the blessings of Christ's body and blood offered up for salvation.<sup>45</sup> John 6 does not specifically apply to the Lord's Supper because here the eating and drinking are figurative, while in the Words of Institution the eating and drinking are literal. If John 6 is to

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<sup>43</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 344, para. 1367.

<sup>44</sup> Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:491.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:326.

interpret the *Verba* implying that the eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood is figurative, then the eating and drinking of the bread and wine can also be figurative and the whole Dominical directive is abrogated.<sup>46</sup> The second reason that Chemnitz rejects this argument of the Sacramentarians is that the sermon recorded in John 6 occurred a year before the institution of the Supper. Therefore, the sermon in John 6 cannot apply to the dogma of the Sacrament.<sup>47</sup> The third and most important reason Chemnitz rejects this argument is because the eating in John 6 always results in salvation (John 6:51), while in the Lord's Supper many eat judgment to themselves.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, Chemnitz maintains that there is a definite connection between the Words of Institution and John 6. John 6 speaks of the spiritual eating that is necessary for worthy participation in the Holy Supper. All communicants, both the worthy and unworthy, eat sacramentally with the mouth the very body and blood of Christ born of the Virgin, but only those who eat spiritually through true repentance and faith receive all the wonderful blessings offered through that body and blood. Thus, John 6 applies to worthy participation in the Sacrament, and in this sense speaks to the Supper.<sup>49</sup> In summary, Chemnitz confesses with the other writers of the *Formula* concerning these two kinds of eating and the connection between John 6 and the Words of Institution:

There is therefore a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ. The one is spiritual, of which Christ speaks chiefly in John 6:48-58. This occurs, in no other way than with the spirit and faith, in the preaching and contemplation of the Gospel as well as in the Lord's Supper. It is intrinsically useful, salutary, and necessary to salvation for all Christians at all times. Without this spiritual participation, even the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is not only not salutary but actually pernicious and damning.<sup>50</sup>

### *The Blessings of the Sacrament*

The Words of Institution summarize the blessing of the Supper in the words, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Forgiveness of sins is the chief blessing of the Sacrament from which flows all the other benefits of the Supper. The Holy Sacrament assures each individual personally of the Gospel declaration of forgiveness. It is a real means of grace which gives us everything which Christ won on the cross in our stead. Christ accomplished salvation on the cross, but He has not distributed or given it on the cross. He distributes it to us through the Lord's Supper and the other means of grace. In the *Examen* Chemnitz discusses the wonderful comfort derived from the various means of grace.

Moreover, in temptations the mind is troubled chiefly about this question, whether, in view of the fact that the promise is spoken in general, I also, who believe, have forgiveness of sins; whether I have it truly, surely, and firmly. Also, a pious mind is concerned lest it be snatched away or wrested from it. For this use therefore God, who is rich in mercy, which He pours out abundantly on the believers, instituted beside the Word also the use of the Sacraments. However, we leave and ascribe both to the Word and to each Sacrament what belongs to

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46 Ibid., 2:410; *Lord's Supper*, 238.

47 Chemnitz, *Lord's Supper*, 236.

48 Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:326-327; *Lord's Supper*, 238.

49 Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:326-327; 2:410; *Lord's Supper*, 239.

50 FC SD VII, 61, *Triglotta*, 580-581.

each in particular. Through Baptism we are reborn in Christ; having been reborn, we are nourished with the Word and the Eucharist; if we have fallen, we return through repentance and faith to the promise of grace, and by faith in the promise we are again reconciled to God through the Mediator. Nevertheless the Eucharist, which contains the basis for the remission of sins, namely the body and blood of Christ, is not excluded from also this use. For the Son of God testifies in the Eucharist by a most extraordinary and sure pledge, namely by exhibiting His body and blood, that He surely communicates, applies, and seals to each and everyone who uses this Sacrament in faith, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and all the other benefits which He obtained for the church by the offering up of His body and the shedding of His blood that they might be offered in the Word and Sacraments and be accepted by faith. And so faith has in the use of the Eucharist a firm anchor of consolation, trust, and certainty concerning the forgiveness of sins. It also has an effectual remedy for raising up and supporting a feeble faith in the midst of sorrow and trials, against want of confidence, doubt, faintheartedness, and despair.<sup>51</sup>

The forgiveness of sin is offered in the Supper because this Sacrament is the ransom money for sin. In our weaknesses and failures we can often begin to wonder whether we are really forgiven. How can God forgive a wretch like me? Are my sins just too great to be pardoned? In this Supper the Lord Jesus removes our every doubt. As we come to the Lord's Table we are in spirit at Golgotha kneeling before the cross embracing His dying body and drinking from His five bloody wounds. As a kidnapped child is bought back by its parents with money, so Jesus bought us back not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. His body and blood are the ransom for sin. In the Supper we receive the very thing which paid for sins, the very thing which freed us from hell's destruction. Then no matter how great and terrible our sins may be, no matter how heavily they burden our conscience, receiving this Sacrament we need never wonder whether our sins are forgiven, for within us we have the very ransom money which paid for our sins, namely, His true body and blood.<sup>52</sup>

The Holy Supper confers life. This is not temporal life which we received through natural birth, but it is that new spiritual life which has been regenerated in us through the new birth in Holy Baptism. Since this life is still weak and imperfect, and constant growth is necessary, the Lord Jesus has instituted this Sacrament as a true spiritual nourishment. It is the strengthening and food for our faith-life as Chemnitz writes, "It becomes a heavenly and spiritual nourishment for both body and soul of believers unto eternal life."<sup>53</sup>

Chemnitz cites the fathers of the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) as saying:

The flesh of Christ on account of the union with the divine nature, which is life itself, is made life-giving or a life-giver and it thus has the authority or power to give life, and this authority it exercises in the action of the Lord's Supper in the believers.<sup>54</sup>

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51 Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:239.

52 Chemnitz, *Lord's Supper*, 189.

53 *Ibid.*, 61.

54 Chemnitz, *Two Natures*, 474.

The body and blood of our Lord in the Supper are life-giving. They are never unfruitful, impotent, and useless. Here we receive the body and blood of the living God into this body made of dust. What can be more beneficial? What can be more powerful? This is the greatest treasure in the life of a Christian. It is the greatest benefit for body and soul.

This life-giving bread and cup of blessing, hallowed by the solemn benediction, benefits the life of the total man, being at the same time a medicine and an offering, to heal our infirmities and to purge our iniquities.<sup>55</sup>

As the Christian travels in this life, he faces problems and troubles all the way. There is bitterness in the home, conflict with friends, sickness, and even the death of those most near and dear. Yet, in every difficulty and problem of life the Lord Jesus says, "Come to My Table all you that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest." Through the Sacrament of His body and blood He gives Christians the strength to face all the problems and troubles of life and the power to do all things through Him, the power to overcome and obtain the victory. Here the Lord offers His life-giving nourishment to resist all the attacks of the devil, the world and our flesh, and the ability to lead a more Christ-like life.

When we consider the greatness of the mystery and our own unworthiness, we pray that we may not by unworthy eating become guilty of profaning the body and blood of Christ but that, ingrafted by this eating into the body and blood of Christ, we may draw life from it as branches from the vine and that this eating may benefit us for strengthening of faith, increase in love, mortification of the flesh, etc.<sup>56</sup>

The Supper is indeed "a heavenly and spiritual nourishment for both the body and soul of the believers unto eternal life."<sup>57</sup>

The Holy Supper confers salvation. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is also eternal salvation. In the Supper the believer receives the very ransom money that paid for his sins and freed him from destruction. This is what has thrown open the doors of heaven and broken every barrier down. As we receive His body and blood in the Supper we know that heaven is ours.<sup>58</sup>

As Christ walked among men, people were healed and raised from the dead by His very touch. His flesh and blood are life-giving. Then as we receive His glorified and risen body and blood into this dying body, we are assured that, even though it returns to the dust from which it was formed, on the last day it will break forth from the grave glorified like Christ's glorified body and so we will ever be with the Lord. Because of this the Early Church fathers have often spoken of the Supper as the *viaticum*, "the medicine of immortality," which is a food preparing us for eternal life. This is a concept closely related to the *theosis* theme. Chemnitz, likewise,

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<sup>55</sup> Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:491.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:283; see also *Lord's Supper*, 191. In illustrating this communion and union with Christ in the Sacrament, many of the Lutheran fathers used the example of the vine and the branches in John 15. By receiving His body and blood we are ingrafted into Him, drawing life from Him as branches from the vine. We are so united with Him that we can say, "It is not I that live, but Christ lives in me." When we remain in Him and He in us through a regular use of Word and Sacrament we will bear abundant fruit, for without Him we can do nothing.

<sup>57</sup> Chemnitz, *Lord's Supper*, 61.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

espouses this position that the Sacrament is the medicine of immortality, that we should not die but live in God.

Because in the Eucharist we receive that body of Christ which has been given for us, and blood of the New Testament which has been shed for the remission of sins, who will deny that believers there receive the whole treasury of the benefits of Christ? For they receive that through which sins are remitted, by which death is abolished, by which life is communicated to us, by which Christ unites us to Himself as members, so that He is in us and we are in Him. Hilary says beautifully: "When these things have been taken and drunk, they bring about both that Christ is in us and that we are in Him." Cyril says: "When in the mystical benediction we eat the flesh of Christ in faith, we have from it life in ourselves, being joined to that flesh which has been made life, so that not only does the soul ascend through the Holy Spirit into a blessed life, but also this earthly body is restored by this food to immortality, to be resurrected on the last day." Therefore we receive in the Eucharist the most certain and most excellent pledge of our reconciliation with God, of the forgiveness of sins, of immortality and future glorification. ... Beautiful is that statement of Ignatius, which is found in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he calls the Eucharist *pharmakon athanasias, antidoton tou mee apothanein, alla zeen en theo dia leesou Christou, katharterion alexikakon*, that is, "a medicine of immortality, an antidote, that we may not die but live in God through Jesus Christ, a cleansing remedy through warding off and driving out evils."<sup>59</sup>

St. Paul says, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Not only does the Supper point us back to the sacrifice of the cross, but at the same time it points forward to the final consummation of our redemption on the last day. Each time we celebrate the Sacrament we do it eagerly awaiting the second coming as the whole Ancient Church cried *Maranatha*, "Lord, come quickly." The Father then gives us His Son under the form of bread and wine as a foretaste of the great wedding feast of the Lamb which will be ours at His second coming. In the Supper we for a moment step out of our mundane workaday existence where we carry one after another to the grave, and we have a foretaste of heaven, where the Lamb once slain Himself descends and angels prostrate fall. Here is heaven on earth as the fathers prayed, "Your Supper be my heaven on earth, till I enter heaven" (*Dass dein Abendmahl mein Himmel auf Erden werde*). Then as we eat at His Table here, we have the certainty that we will be at His Table there where we will eat of the heavenly manna and drink of the river of His pleasure forevermore.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Chemnitz, *Examination*, 2:233-234.

<sup>60</sup> Chemnitz, *Lord's Supper*, 157.

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