

Bible Study: *Revelation*.

The Rev. Willis C. Jenson, Supply Pastor

Concordia Lutheran Mission

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Introduction

The book of Revelation was written by the Apostle St. John.¹

Revelation is a book of comfort in a world hostile to Christianity.² Jesus says Christians will be persecuted by the world because of the Gospel. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulations: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”³ Jesus also comforts us by telling us that *He has already overcome the world*. The outcome is *not* uncertain. The Church *has prevailed because Christ has already prevailed for her*. Revelation simply repeats and reinforces Jesus’ teaching.⁴

Christ overcame the world by His suffering, death, and resurrection and also now rules all things, the entire world, in the interest of the Church. St. John writes in Revelation, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it has been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits

¹“The Author of the Book of Revelation is God, and the writer is John (Rev. 1:1). We take this John to be the disciple and the writer of the Fourth Gospel and the three epistles of John.” The Rev. Luther Poellot, *Revelation, Concordia Classic Commentary Series*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, rpr. 1987, p. 1.

²“It was designed to meet an immediate need on the part of those to whom it was addressed, but, like the other books of the New Testament, it serves for consolation to the children of God in the manifold trials and tribulations which are the lot of the believers in Christ until the end of time. ‘The prophecy of the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God over all hostile forces of earth and hell, the promise of the coming of Christ, the pictures of heaven with its glory and joys, have been a source of cheer, comfort, and courage to millions of Christians.’” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, Vol. II*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 590.

³**St. John 16:33.**

⁴All epistles are merely commentaries on the Gospels. The Rev. Dr. G. Waldemar Degner, former professor of New Testament exegesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, c. 1989.

of God⁵ sent forth into all the earth.”⁶ Scripture once again pulls back the veil between earth and glory and reveals that our Savior is seated at the Throne of all power and that His Church, represented by the elders, have direct access to that Throne.

Christ Himself, the Lamb who was slain for us, sits at the center of all power, the Throne of God. Our Savior, then, governs all things for the sake of His Church. While we may not understand all things that happen in this world, it is a great comfort to Christians to know that our Savior lies behind all of them working them to the eternal advantage and benefit of His Church.⁷

The source of the hostility of the world is the hatred of the Gospel, absolution and faith.⁸

⁵The Spiritus septiformis, The Sevenfold Spirit: “To the Spirit, who rest on him [Christ], are given seven names that designate the Spirit’s various gifts and powers. On the basis of this passage the church speaks of a Spiritus septiformis. Accordingly, the prophecy of Zechariah, 4,6.110, and Rev. 1,4; 3,1; 4,5; 5,6 speak of the seven eyes or the seven spirit of God, that is, of the Spirit of God in the diversity of his gifts, powers, and activities.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Isaiah: The First Twelve Chapters*, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 119. Dr. Stoeckhardt is commenting on Isaiah 11:2.

⁶**Revelation 5:6.** “There are twenty-four elders before God (that is, all the bishops and teachers in unity); they are crowned with faith, and praise Christ, the Lamb of God, with harps (that is, they preach); and they worship him with censers (that is, they exercise themselves in prayer). All this is for the comfort of Christians, that they may know that Christendom is to endure in spite of the plagues that are going to come.” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 35, p. 401.

⁷“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” **Romans 8:28.**

⁸“Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which [proclaims peace to me and] is the true voice of the Gospel. {German: The word of absolution speaks peace to me and is the Gospel itself.} Thus we also comprise absolution when we speak of faith, because *faith cometh by hearing*, as Paul says Rom. 10, 17. For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution [*i.e.*, the promise of divine grace] is heard, the conscience is encouraged and receives consolation. And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God [here on earth sins are truly canceled also before God in heaven] according to Luke 10, 16: *He that heareth you heareth Me*. Wherefore the voice of one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven. And absolution [that blessed word of comfort properly can be called a sacrament of repentance, as also the more learned scholastic theologians speak. Meanwhile this faith is nourished in a manifold way in temptations, through the declarations of the Gospel [the hearing of sermons, reading] and the use of the Sacraments. For these are [seals and] signs of [the covenant and grace in] the New Testament, *i.e.*, signs [of propitiation and] the remission of sins. They offer,

Hence, warfare is spiritual not physical⁹ because spiritual means absolution and faith. Jesus

therefore, the remission of sins, as the words of the Lord's Supper clearly testify, Matt. 26, 26. 28: *This is My body, which is given for you. This is the cup of the New Testament*, etc. Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through of the Sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. (V.).*39-43.

⁹Hence, Jesus told Pilate His Kingdom is not of this world. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." **St. John 18:36**. We, therefore, should not look for a physical or military conflict in the book of Revelation, but rather a spiritual struggle, namely the efforts of the world, the flesh, and the devil to vanquish the preaching of the Gospel, i.e. to expunge absolution and faith in the Word and the Sacraments, because the Word and the Sacraments are how Christians overcame Satan: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, *and by the word of their testimony.*" **Revelation 12:11**, emphasis added. The Word of their testimony is the Apostolic Office of the Word and the Sacraments, of absolution and faith.

"The second article is still clearer, that Christ gave to the apostles only spiritual power, *i.e.*, the command to teach the Gospel, to announce the forgiveness of sins, to administer the Sacraments, to excommunicate the godless *without bodily force* [by the Word], and that he did not give the power of the sword, or the right to establish, occupy, or confer kingdoms of the world [to set up or depose kings]. For Christ says, Matt. 28, 19.20: *Go ye, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;* also John 20, 21: *As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.* Now, it is manifest that Christ was not sent to bear the sword or possess a worldly kingdom [rule in a worldly fashion], as He Himself says, John 18, 36: *My kingdom is not of this world.* And Paul says, 2 Cor. 1, 24: *Not for that we have dominion over your fatih;* and 2 Cor. 10, 4: *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal*, etc." *The Smalcald Articles, Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope.*31.

Similarly, St. John Chrysostom, the archbishop of Constantinople in the fifth century, writes of the spiritual warfare revealed by the Gospel: "Herein standeth the trophy of the cross, glorious, and conspicuous, the spoils won by Christ, the first-fruits ... of our nature, the booty of our King; all these, I say, we shall out of the Gospels know perfectly. If thou follow in becoming quietness, we shall be able to lead thee about everywhere, and to show where death is set forth crucified, and where sin is hanged up, and where are the many and wondrous offerings from this war, from this battle." *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff, Volume X, **Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew**, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, rpr: May 1986, p. 9.

Likewise Luther commenting on Zechariah 9:10: "*And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim.* ... It is as if He were saying, ... 'Moreover, this will be a spiritual kingdom. Therefore I shall cut off all external weapons, chariots, horses, and whatever pertains to an external kingdom. None of this weaponry has to do with My kingdom. I use none of it. There is nothing less I carry before Me than some external sign – either weapons or some symbol of an external kingdom. None of this weaponry has to do with My kingdom. I use none of it. There is nothing

says, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them”¹⁰ The world, then, battles to obscure and overthrow the spiritual, that it to say, to obscure and to overthrow absolution and faith. St. Paul, therefore, writes that the warfare is spiritual not physical. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.”¹¹

Spiritual means absolution and faith (**St. John 20:21-23**). Consequently, the warfare consists of the enemy trying to obscure or cut people off from absolution and faith, which absolution and faith comes through the Word and the Sacraments, the Liturgy of the Church.¹²

For example, St. John writes, “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony”¹³ Here we see that Satan and his accusations are overcome *not by force of arms* but rather by the blood of the Lamb, i.e. the Atonement for all sin.

less I carry before Me than some external sign – either weapons or some symbol of an external kingdom. I am a just King and the Savior. So that kingdom of Mine is also going to be poor and humble on the surface. In it nothing regal will be apparent. But I shall clothe with spiritual power those who will be My soldiers in this kingdom of Mine. They will have dominion not over men but over death, sin, hell, and Satan, so hath no creature can prevail against them. They will be My princes of salvation.’ This is what He calls cutting off the chariots of Ephraim. This is what Isaiah (Is. 2:4) also says: ‘They shall beat their swords into plowshares, etc.’ That is the same thing, too, which the prophet adds here: ‘I will cut off the war horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off,’ that is, there will be no further concern for weaponry. Animals will not be equipped for warfare.” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 20, 95.

¹⁰**St. John 20:22, 23.**

¹¹**Ephesians 6:12.**

¹²“But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e. of the Gospel and the Sacraments.* And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Thus the term liturgy [liturgy] agrees aptly with the ministry.”*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV. (XII.)*.80, 81.

¹³**Revelation 5:10, 11.**

But why does St. John added, “and by the word of their testimony”? St. John adds the Word of their testimony because the benefits of the blood of the Lamb are communicated and given to people through the Gospel, which is the Apostolic Office of the Word and the Sacraments. The Word is their testimony. Jesus says of the Apostles, “And ye are witnesses¹⁴ of these things.”¹⁵ And through their Word or testimony people come to saving faith. Jesus says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”¹⁶

Revelation uses the imagery and expressions from the Old Testament. For example, in the book of Daniel, God the Father is described in this way: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire.”¹⁷ Compare this to St. John’s description of Christ in the book of Revelation: “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. his head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.”¹⁸ Like Father like Son because they are one essence or being.

But doesn’t this mean the Son is the same person as the Father because the both look alike? No. The similarity of features in the imagery of Daniel and Revelation is because of the fact that they are one substance – “being of one substance with the Father”¹⁹, as we confess in the Creed – but not one person. They are two distinct person of the Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son. The identity lies in the one nature, the one essence, being, or substance, not in the Person. The distinction lies in the Persons. Hence, the Son is the same according to the Divine essence, but distinct according to His Person.

So, we see here an example of Old Testament imagery used in the book of Revelation. This use will occur throughout the book of Revelation, New Testament events being spoken of in

¹⁴A witness is one who testifies or gives testimony to what he has seen.

¹⁵**St. Luke 24:48.** “but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” **Acts 1:8.**

¹⁶**St. John 17:20.**

¹⁷**Daniel 7:9.**

¹⁸**Revelation 1:13-15.**

¹⁹**The Nicene Creed**, p. 22, *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

Old Testaments terms.²⁰

Chapter One.

1. *The Revelation²¹ of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.*

A. This book is revelation and not obscurity. The book, therefore, makes matters pertaining to the Gospel and the Church plain not dark.

B. This is the revelation which God gave to Jesus.²²

C. The purpose of this revelation is to show His servants, i.e. Christians, the events that must come to pass shortly.

D. The revelation is sent and signified by his angel to John.

2. *Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and all things that he saw.*

A. St. John bears record of the Word of God because he witnessed it being an Apostle chosen by Christ Himself.

B. St. John also bears record of Christ's own testimony. Jesus Himself also testified to God's mercy in the Gospel. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness? If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **St. John 3:11-13, 16.** Christ can bear witness of God's mercy and attitude toward fallen men because He is the Son of God Himself who rests in the bosom of the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*." (**St. John 1:18**). And, indeed, God sent Him into the world

²⁰“Gerhard aptly says that the Old Testament passages adduced by the chiliasts ‘speak of New Testament matters in Old Testament terms’” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 522.

²¹“‘Apocalypse’ is the first word (in the original) and the title of the book. It means revelation, an unveiling, a revealing. It refers to things which man by himself could never know and which only God could make known to him.” Luther Poellet, *Revelation*, p. 5.

²²“Jesus Christ, true and omniscient God, is also true man. God gave Him this revelation according to His human nature.” Luther Poellet, *Revelation*, p. 5.

in order to save the world from its sins. “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” **St. John 3:17.**

3. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

A. Blessed, i.e. he has been done a good turn.

B. The blessing is that the words herein are the Gospel.

C. The Gospel dispels all confusion and keeps us safely within the Arms of God. “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.” **Psalm 71:1-2.** That righteousness that delivers and saves is the Gospel. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.” **Romans 3:21-22.** “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9.** This righteousness also dispels all confusion because we know that in spite of the confusing circumstances of the world, God is working all things to our eternal good. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” **Romans 8:28.**

D: Prophecy: Prophecy pertains to Divine revelation. “According to the Old Testament a prophet was a man sent by God to be a spokesman for Yahweh. The chief function of a prophet was not primarily to foretell future events, but in a general way to proclaim God’s message to men. From Exodus 4:16 and 7:1 it will be seen that Aaron was said to be Moses’ prophet. The message of the prophets may concern the past, present or the future. What the prophet proclaims may be a revelation, a warning, a reprimand, an encouragement, a promise or a prediction. A prophet is often both a forthteller and a foreteller. The interest of the prophetic messages was always centered in the Kingdom of God, or the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. God granted to His chosen prophets insight into God’s council through dreams, visions, inward suggestions or oral communications. The message of prophets were communicated to the people either through simple declarations or by description of their dreams and visions.”²³

E. Because prophet is God’s Word because it is Divine revelation, Christians are

²³The Rev. Dr. Raymond Surburg, *The Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 414.

obligated to keep it.²⁴

F. St. John is writing about his time, for he writes, “the time is at hand.” We are living in the last days, i.e. the New Testament era. “This attitude is required all the more strongly since ‘the time’ is near, we are living in God’s last hour of the world. As Luther say, this is no time for slothful and sleeping. Prayerful vigilance must characterize the Christians in these last days of sore distress.”²⁵

4. *JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;*

A. Grace is the Gospel, the actual Word of forgiveness recorded in Scripture and preached to us and heard from our brethren. “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, *and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up*, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”²⁶ God’s Word can actually build us up because God’s Word, i.e. the Gospel, confers, gives, or dispenses God’s forgiveness, i.e. His grace. Hence, St. Paul calls it “the gospel of the grace of God” (**Acts 20:24**) because God’s absolution, i.e. grace, actually issues from the Word one reads, hears, and shares. “We will now return to the Gospel, which not merely in one way gives us counsel and aid against sin; for God is superabundantly rich [and liberal²⁷] in His grace [and goodness]. First,

²⁴“Therefore both he that read the words of this message to others and they that listened to, and heeded, its contents are called blessed. For it is not enough to read and hear the prophecy, the Word of the Lord, in a mere mechanical manner, for it is not mere prediction that we are concerned with in these pages, but religious truth and instruction in the way of salvation. It requires a careful and firm keeping, an observing of its injunctions, a relying upon its comforting promises in steadfast faith, Luke 11, 28. This attitude is required all the more strongly since “the time” is near, we are living in God’s last hour of the world. As Luther say, this is no time for slothful and sleeping. Prayerful vigilance must characterize the Christians in these last days of sore distress.” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament, Vol. II*, pp. 590, 591.

²⁵The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament, Vol. II*, pp. 590, 591

²⁶**Acts 20:34**, emphasis added.

²⁷“On the other hand, the Gospel brings consolation and remission, not only in one way, but through the Word and Sacraments, and the like, as we shall hear afterward in order that [thus] there is *with the Lord plenteous redemption*, as Ps. 130, 7 says, against the dreadful captivity of sin.” *The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article III. Of Repentance*. 8, 9, *Triglotta*, p.

through the spoken Word by which the forgiveness of sins is preached [He commands to be preached] in the whole world; which is the peculiar office of the Gospel. Secondly, through Baptism. Thirdly, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourthly, through the power of the keys, and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, Matt. 18, 20: *Where two or three are gathered together, etc.*”²⁸ “The Gospel is not merely a story of our redemption, telling us how forgiveness was procured, but it *proclaims and offers* grace and forgiveness to all that hear it ..., for this reason it is called the ‘Gospel of the grace of God’ (Acts 20, 24).”²⁹

B. Grace and God’s Name: And not surprisingly, this grace is connected with God’s Name. In Exodus we read: “... in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.” **Exodus 20:24.** God publishes His Name in the Gospel. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” **St. Matthew 28:19.** In the Gospel God blesses us with the forgiveness of sins: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” **Acts 2:38.** In the Gospel God saves us: “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” **I Peter 3:21.** In the Gospel God adopts us to be His children: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” **Galatians 3:26, 27.** In the Gospel God gives eternal life: “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” **Titus 3:4-7.** In the Gospel God gives us the resurrection of the body: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection” **Romans 6:3-5.** “The greeting comprises the summary of the Gospel: grace, the free favor and love which the sinner has in the message of redemption, through the mercy of the Father, through the atonement of the Son, through the

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²⁸*The Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article IV. Of the Gospel, Triglotta*, p. 491.

²⁹*The Small Catechism, Annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler*, question 168, p. 182.

sanctification of the Spirit; peace, the effect of grace, which follows the reconciliation of the sinner with God, Rom. 5, 1, the peace of God which passes all understanding.”³⁰

C. God the Father: “him which is, and which was, and which is to come” This expression reflects the Father’s eternity and the source of all things. The prophet Daniel likewise speaks of the Father in this way when he refers to Him as the “Ancient of Days”, i.e. the source of all days.³¹ “First, the revelation comes from God the Father. ... ‘the One Who Is’ in the phrase ... ‘the One Who Is and Who was Who Is Coming’ ... leads on to the LXX³² rendering of the holy name (the tetragrammaton³³ ...) in Exodus 3. In Ex 3:14 the LXX translates ... ‘I Am Who I Am’ ... with ... ‘I Am the One Who Is’ After God identifies himself,

³⁰The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *The Popular Commentary of the New Testament, Vol. II*, p. 591.

³¹“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garments *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire.” **Daniel 7:9**.

³²The Roman numeral LXX (70) refers to the seventy translators who were supposed to have composed a Greek translation of the Old Testament. “*The Septuagint*. The most celebrated Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures and the oldest complete translation of them. It was called the Septuagint, commonly designated by LXX, after the 70 translators reputed to have been employed on the Pentateuch in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285-246 B.C.” *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 624, s.v. “**Versions**”.

³³“And this is the name by which He will be called: ‘The Lord our Righteousness.’ From this passage we are eager to prove and demonstrate that it is necessary that the Branch of David, or the Messiah, to whom all concede this passage must be understood to refer, is true God. For he says: ‘This is His name, by which men call Him, ‘Lord,’ and the tetragrammaton [HWHY] is used here, which belongs to God alone. Therefore we contend that Christ is true God who justifies us because He has a name which is assigned to God alone.” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 6, p. 248, transliteration added. The tetragrammaton means four letters and refers to the four letters of God’s name: YHWH. There are no vowels given in Scripture for it, so its pronunciation cannot be known and the name, therefore, cannot be pronounced. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes: “The rabbinic scholars call it: ... ‘the name, son of four letters,’ and the Greeks [tetragrammaton] [‘four-lettered] from the number of letters with which it was written. ... ‘the name’ par excellence, because it is to be preferred above all other names. Lyra, on Exodus 8, from Rabbi Moyses: ‘The four-lettered name, however, signifies pure, bare essence as He exists in Himself.’” *Theological Commonplaces: Exegesis II-III: On the Nature of God and On the Trinity*, p. 21.

he then tells Moss to say to the children of Israel that, in the LXX's rendering, ... 'the One Who Is' ... sent him. ... In Rev. 1:4 John follows the LXX rendering of the holy name by his use of ['the One Who Is']; in the context of 1:4-6 ['the One Who Is] then refers to God the Father. But what are the referents of ... 'Who Was' and ... 'Who Is Coming' ..., for these expressions do not appear in the LXX's rendering of Exodus 3? ... John, in his own way, uses ... 'the One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is Coming' ... for the holy name in Exodus 3. He takes ... 'the One Who Was and Who Is Coming' ... from the LXX of Ex 3:14 and then expands it by adding ... 'and Who Was and Who Is Coming' By so doing he states that the ever present One is continually present now, as he was in the past and as he always will be in the future. *The entire three-part phrase, then, is really a rendition of ... 'I Am,' ... in Ex. 3:14, which is God's own explanation for the tetragrammaton, ..., the holy name, Yahweh (Ex. 3:13-16). John may not have been the only one to interpret the holy name in this way, for a rabbinic tradition also interprets ... 'I Am He Who has been, Who is now, and Who will be in the future.'*"³⁴

D. God the Holy Spirit: "... the seven Spirit which are before the throne" This expression refers, of course, to the Holy Spirit, which we have discussed earlier: "To the Spirit, who rest on him [Christ], are given seven names that designate the Spirit's various gifts and powers. On the basis of this passage the church speaks of a Spiritus septiformis. Accordingly, the prophecy of Zechariah, 4,6.110, and Rev. 1,4; 3,1; 4,5; 5,6 speak of the seven eyes or the seven spirit of God, that is, of the Spirit of God in the diversity of his gifts, powers, and activities."³⁵ "The seven Spirits' are 'before His throne' (Rev. 1:4), but not according to the concept of physical space. ... The 'throne' is not a literal chair or seat, and there is no space 'before' it. Space, like time, ... is part of creation, not part of the infinite abode of God. Here God accommodates Himself to human language to picture Himself as a ruler and His Holy Spirit as one who not only is with Him in the intimate fellowship of the Holy Trinity but also is sent out from Him." St. John Chrysostom³⁶ writes: "That city being not only as far from us as Heaven is from the earth, but even much farther, if we be negligent; like as, on the other hand, if we do our best, ... even in one instant we shall come to the gates

³⁴The Rev. Dr. Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation*, pp. 41, 42, amplification added.

³⁵The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Isaiah: The First Twelve Chapters*, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 119. Dr. Stoeckhardt is commenting on Isaiah 11:2.

³⁶St. John Chrysostom was the archbishop of Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) from A. D. 398-403. *Concordia Cyclopedia*, p. 143, s.v. "**Chrysostom, John**". Chrysostom means "golden-mouthed". He was so-called posthumously because of his rhetorical skills. *ibid.*, p. 143, s.v. "**Chrysostom, John**".

thereof. *For not by local space, but by moral disposition, are these distances defined.*³⁷ In other words, God's throne is removed from our access infinitely by sin, an immoral disposition. By the Gospel, however, sin is removed and thereby through faith the law is kept, a moral disposition established, and heaven is here.

5. *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

A. Faithful Witness: Christ is the faithful witness because He is God Himself in the flesh bearing witness to the Truth of the salvation of the Gospel³⁸, for He is in the bosom of the Father, testifying (i.e. witnessing) to His first-hand knowledge the will of the Father to save men from their sins. "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." **St. John 18:37**. The Truth, of course, is the grace of God's salvation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." **St. John 1:14**.

B. The First Begotten of the Dead: Because Christ died and rose again for us, His resurrection from the dead is the First-Fruits of Them that Sleep. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept." **I Corinthians 15:20**. This blessing of following in the train of Christ's resurrection is given to us in the Gospel. St. Paul writes: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." **Romans 6:3-6**.

C. The Prince of the Kings of the Earth: Christ is seated at the Right Hand of God and rules all nations and kingdoms of the earth for the sake of His Church. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." **St. Matthew 28:18**. "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." **Psalms 110:1**. "Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession. Thou shalt

³⁷*A Selection Library of the Nice and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Volume X, Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, p. 7.*

³⁸"The latter he terms the faithful Witness Who confirmed His witness with His death." The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on the Revelation of Saint John*, p. 1.

break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him." **Psalm 2:8-12**. "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne." **Revelation 12:5**. And Christ rules all the princes, nations, and the world and world history for the sake of building His beloved Church. Luther writes: "This is the kind of joy and comfort St. Bernard³⁹ had in his heart, so that he could say, on the basis of this article: "How can I ever become sad and mournful or discouraged? After all, my flesh and blood sits in heaven above. I expect He will not be my enemy."⁴⁰

D. Unto Him that loved us: Christ loved us by laying down His life for our sins in order to save us. "Great love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." **St. John 15:13**.

E. and washed us from our sins in His own blood: Christ's blood washes away sin because it is God's holy blood shed for the purpose of cleansing us from sin. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." **Acts 2:38**. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, Past President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, writes: "Scripture teaches plainly that the very punishment which we should have suffered on account of our sins was meted out to Christ. The very curse which was denounced against sinful man ('Cursed is everyone that continueth not, etc.," Gal. 3:10), fell in its full weight upon Christ: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, *being made a curse for us*' (Gal. 3:13). Yes, the suffering of Christ was of comparatively short duration. But observe God's method of computation. When

³⁹"**Bernard of Clairvaux, St.**, 1091 to 1153. The most influential man of his day; an upright monk (Cistercian), spending himself in ascetic practises. His wise rule as first and lifelong abbot of the newly founded cloister at Clairvaux, France (1115), served to extend the order (now also called Bernardinos) throughout Europe, and the influence of his eloquence and personality gave a new impetus to monasticism.... he was a sincerely pious, a truly humble Christian, and he was that because he loved the Bible and because he believed in justification by faith, deploring on his deathbed, as throughout his life, the sinfulness of his life (*Perdite vixi*), and imploring the mercy of God for the sake of the righteousness gained by Christ ... Luther says: "When Bernard is speaking of Christ, it is a pleasure indeed to listen to him; but when he leaves that subject and discourses on rules and works, it is no longer St. Bernard." *Concordia Cyclopedia*, p. 72, s.v. "**Bernard of Clairvaux**."

⁴⁰*Luther's Works*, Vol. 13, p. 245.

Scripture measures the value of Christ's Passion, it does so by the exalted dignity of the Sufferer. It was the suffering of the Son of God, I John 1:7: 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' Acts. 20:28: 'His [God's] own blood.' The teaching of the 'orthodox theologians' that the brief suffering of Christ, as that of the Son of God, is equivalent to the eternal suffering of mankind is not a 'dogmatic construction,' but it is the doctrine of Scripture. ... [Dorscheus ... : 'The eternity of human suffering is compensated by the majesty and excellence of the Person (Christ).'] ... Christ 'fully balanced our account,' the settlement is 'mathematically' correct as God views the matter."⁴¹

6. *And hath made us kings and priest unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

A. **Priest:** A priest makes intercession for men with God by bringing to God the satisfaction for their sins. "For such an high priest becometh us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." **Hebrews 7:26, 27.** Christians make intercession for others and bring satisfaction for sin through the Gospel, i.e. through absolution of all sin for Christ's sake.⁴² St. Peter writes: "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood⁴³, an holy

⁴¹*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 354.

⁴²Luther: "... you are not called a priest because you are tonsured or wear a long coat but because you may approach God." *Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, p. 63.

⁴³Priesthood means "order of priests." "the order composed of priests" *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*, p. 1428, **s.v. "priesthood"**. The people under Moses were also called a nation of priests because they too possessed the Gospel. Luther: "Here the apostle [St. Peter] gives the Christians a proper title. He took this statement from Moses, who tells the Jews in Deut. 7:6: 'You are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth.' And in Ex. 19:5-6 we read: 'You shall be My own possession among all people ... and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priest and a holy nation.' Here you see what Peter is speaking about. I repeat what I said earlier, namely, that one must become accustomed to the way Scripture is wont to speak about priests. ... Let no one be concerned about those whom people call priests. Let everyone call them what they choose. You must remain with the pure Word of God. What it calls priests, you, too, must call priests. We will permit those whom the bishops and the pope consecrate to call themselves priests. They may call themselves what they choose, provided that they do not call themselves 'priests of God'; for they cannot adduce a single word from Scripture in defense of this. ... Some can be selected from the congregation who are officeholders and servants and are appointed to preach in the congregation and to administer the sacraments. But

nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" **I Peter 2:9**. "shewing forth the praises of him who hath called out of darkness into his marvellous light" is the preaching of the Gospel.⁴⁴ For God's praise is that He forgives sinners freely for Christ's and this message calls men out of the darkness of the kingdom of the prince of this world into Christ's light ("In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness" **St. John 1:4, 5**) "As priests the Christians possess all the treasures won for mankind by the suffering of Christ. They have God, Christ, pardon, the means of grace, the keys of heaven. 1 Cor. 3, 21. They have the privilege of free access to God without human mediators."(*Concordia Cyclopaedia*, p. 616, s.v., "**Priesthood, Universal**"). "The doctrine of justification by faith alone abolished human mediation between man and God. Luther fully recognized the New Testament idea of the priesthood of all believers and proclaimed it with all the force of his eloquence. His language on this subject is very explicit: 'Every Christian man is a priest and every Christian woman a priestess, whether they be young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid-servant, scholar or illiterate. All Christians are, properly speaking, members of the ecclesiastical order, and there is no difference between them, except that they hold different offices.' By the inculcation of this fundamental principle the laity recovered its position in the Church of Christ, and lay representation again

we are all priests before God if we are Christians. For since we have been laid on the Stone who is the Chief Priest before God, we also have everything He has. ... It would please me very much if this word 'priest' were used as commonly as the term 'Christians' is applied to us. For priests, the baptized, and Christians are all one and the same. For just as I should not put up with it when those who have been anointed and tonsured want to have exclusive right to the terms 'Christians' and 'baptized,' so I should also not put up with it when they alone want to be called priests. ... For it must be our aim to restore the little word 'priests' to the common use which the little word 'Christians' enjoys. For to be a priest does not belong in the category of an external office; it is exclusively the kind of office that has dealings before God." *Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 62, 63.

⁴⁴Luther: "A priest must be God's messenger and must have a command from God to proclaim His Word. You must, says Peter, exercise the chief function of a priest, that is, to proclaim the wonderful deed God has performed for you to bring you out of darkness into the light. And your preaching should be done in such a way that one brother proclaims the mighty deed of God to the other, how you have been delivered through Him from sin, hell, death, and all misfortune, and have been called to eternal life. Thus you should also teach other people how they, too, come into such light. ... Thus we see that the first and foremost duty we Christians should perform is to reclaim the wonderful deeds of God. Now what are the wonderful deeds and the noble works God has done? They are the deeds and works we have often mentioned, namely, that by the power of God Christ has swallowed up death, devoured hell, drunk sin to the dregs, and placed us into eternal life. These are such great deeds that man cannot understand them, let alone perform them." *Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 64, 65.

became possible. ‘The restoration,’ says Litton, ‘in theory at least, of the laity to their proper place in the Church was in immediate consequence of the Reformation. By reasserting the two great Scriptural doctrines of the universal priesthood of Christians and of the indwelling of the Spirit, not in a priestly caste, but in the whole body of the faithful, Luther and his contemporaries shook the whole fabric of sacerdotal usurpation to its base and recovered for the Christian laity the rights of which they had been deprived. The lay members of the body of Christ emerged from the spiritual imbecility which they had been taught to regard as their natural state and became free, not from the yoke of Christ, but from that of the priest.’” *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, p. 412, s.v. “**Laity**”.

B. Kings: Christians are rulers because they are again the crown of God’s creation restored through the Second Adam Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ “The ‘kingdom’ is Christ’s kingdom of grace and glory. It is a spiritual kingdom, not of this world. ... Its members have royal power and dignity. By faith they possess all that Christ, their one great King, has. They rule with Him. They concur in all that He does. They own the universe, the world, and all things in the world (1 Cor. 3:21, 22). ‘What the Second Psalm says only of Christ, Christ Himself in Rev. 2:26, 27 ascribes to all that are His: ‘He that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of My Father.’ It is true, of course, that the reign of the believers of the world will become manifest only on Judgment Day. But even now, before Judgment Day, this reigning of believers is in fact, though to all appearances they are the oppressed, the dying, the slain.’ ‘In short, the Christians are the wealthiest and mightiest group in the world. Heaven’s sluices of grace and blessing have

⁴⁵Hence, God governs and rules through the prayers of Christians as through His instruments. “Since God preserves this world only for the sake of the Christians, in order that they may execute their Christian calling in the world (Matt. 24:14), and since the will of Christians as expressed in their prayers coincides with the all-sustaining and governing will of God (I John 5:14), ... it follows that the Christians’ prayer sustains and governs [instrumentally] the whole world. The prayer of Christians has its effect on all occurrences in the Church and the world. Scripture here goes into detail. It is owing to their prayer that the Word of God spreads over the earth in spite of the bitter opposition of the world (2 Thess. 3:1), that, e.g., the Apostle Paul finds an open door and preaches the Word boldly (Col. 4:2-4; Eph. 6:19-20) and is delivered from danger (Rom. 15:30-32). It is owing to their prayer that the State is preserved and prospers (Jer. 29:7), that peace is preserved and restored (I Tim. 2:1-3; Ps. 76:6), that bloody and deceitful men are destroyed (Ps. 5:6, 10; 55:23). Let us always bear in mind that according to the teaching of Scripture the Christians are doing exactly what Christ does, that whatever Christ does as [the cause] He does through the Christians as [instruments].” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 80, amplification added.

opened for them through their faith in Christ. The believers have everything, the unbelievers nothing.' ... Christians alone are the children and heirs of the kingdom."⁴⁶

7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.*

A. **Christ coming in the clouds, i.e. the Gospel:** Other commentators take this to mean Christ's coming glory.⁴⁷ I, however, take it to refer to Zechariah 12:10 and St. Matthew 19:37 where Christ is working through the Gospel to save men and gather His Church. As Luther notes, when Christ works in the Kingdom of Grace He works through Means and not directly, the clouds indicating Christ working through means. Christ's Second Coming would be a direct meeting of Christ and not one through means. Luther on God working through means: "God also does not manifest Himself except through His works and the Word, because the meaning of these is understood in some measure. Whatever else belongs essentially to the Divinity cannot be grasped and understood, such as being outside time, before the world, etc. Perhaps God appeared to Adam without a covering, but after the fall into sin He appeared in a gentle breeze as though envelope din a covering. Similarly he was enveloped later on in the tabernacle by the mercy seat and in the desert by a cloud and fire. Moses, therefore, also calls these objects 'faces of God,' through which God manifested Himself. Cain, too, calls the place at which he had previously sacrificed 'the face of God' (Gen 4:14). This nature of our has become so misshapen through sin, so depraved and utterly corrupted, that it cannot recognize God or comprehend His nature without a covering. It is for this reason that those coverings are necessary. ... It is folly to argue much about God outside and before time, because this is an effort to understand the God head without a covering, or the uncovered divine essence. Because this is impossible, God envelops Himself in His works in certain forms, as today He wraps Himself up in Baptism, in absolution, etc. If you should depart from these, you will get into an area where there is no measure, no space, no time, and into the merest nothing, concerning which, according tot the philosopher, there can be no knowledge."⁴⁸

⁴⁶The Rev. Luther Poellet, *Revelation*, pp. 11, 12.

⁴⁷For example, the Rev. Dr. Louis Brighton, professor emeritus of our Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., writes: "The prologue concludes with a reference to the returning of the Lord: 'Behold, he is coming with the clouds' (1:7). *Concordia Commentary: Revelation*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, no date, p. 43.

⁴⁸*Luther's Works*, Vol. 1, p. 11.

B. Luther on Zechariah 12:10: “*And they will look on Me whom they have pierced* [Zechariah 12:10]. The evangelist John has quoted this passage in chapter 19:37. Here we have a wonderful natural succession. What now follows to the end of the chapter is about mourning and the sort of mourning which occurs over Christ. This, too, we read in the Gospel: ‘All the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.’ (Matt. 24:30). However, we shall not apply this to the day of judgment, for we are involved here in a description of the church. Consequently, I take the meaning to be as follows: A Christian leads a double life — the life of the Spirit, and the mortification of the flesh. You see, when we have been justified and taken into the kingdom of God’s grace, we must still also mourn over our flesh; we must not merely mourn and lament our suffering Christ but also imitate Him; we must die along with Him and crucify your own flesh. Here, then, He is speaking about that mortification of the flesh and not about the grief of the Final Judgment, when every eye will see Christ judging the guilty and punishing the ungodly for crucifying Him. After all, the hands of the Jews which crucified Christ are the hands of all the wicked. But while Christians are alive on this earth, they mourn as mortify their own flesh. This they do because of Christ.”⁴⁹

8. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

A. Here Christ Himself as the beginning and ending of all things⁵⁰ because He Himself Lord of all things because He is the True God and also by virtue of the fact that He is the Messiah who is Lord of all things because of His Redemptive Work: “Ask of me, and I shall give unto *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.” **Psalm 2:8**

B. which is, and which was, and which is to come: Christ is the same

⁴⁹*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 20, p. 140.

⁵⁰Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. “In religious symbolism, the letter A, or alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, is combined with another letter not as well known, Σ, or omega, the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Together these letters symbolize the beginning and the end.” *Revelation*, Luther Poellet, p. 14.

“We understand the name ‘Alpha and Omega’ in the light of Is. 44:6: ‘I am the First, and I am the Last, and *beside Me there is no God.*’ It is ‘the Lord God,’ ... the *only true God.* He will not give His glory to another, neither His praise to grave images (Is. 42:8). All other explanations of the name ‘Alpha and Omega’ must flow out of this. For example: Only the true God could be ‘the *Author and Finisher* of our faith’ (Heb. 12:2)” *ibid.*, p. 15.

“yesterday, today, and forever” because He is the True God.⁵¹ “Before Abraham was, I am.” **St. John 8:58.** Also, His mercy is the same from age to age because He was, is, and is to come, the one and the same Savior.

C. In a hostile world, it is a great comfort for Christians to know that He who is the Alpha and Omega, i.e. the beginning and end of all things, who circumscribes all history and events, is also our Savior. He, therefore, is fully able to care for our eternal souls in a world filled with trials and temptations.⁵²

⁵¹“I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord.” *The Small Catechism, The Second Chief Part: The Apostles’ Creed*, p. 10.

Hebrews **13:8.** “It is true indeed that there have always been others who practiced different methods of purifying; but the doctrine has never varied since the beginning of the world. To be sure, it was worded differently. From the beginning of the world until the days of John the Baptist the people were told” ‘Believe in the Seed that is to come!’ From then on it is: ‘The Messiah has come.’ Thus there has always been but one Christ – the Christ of the past, the present, and the future. The Apocalypse refers to Him as the One ‘who is and who was and who is to come’ (Rev. 1:8). ... I am saying this that we may understand the doctrine of purifying and of Baptism correctly. John relates it all to Christ. He says: ‘I was sent to be his forerunner.’ And if anyone should interpose: ‘But were people who died before the advent of Christ also saved?’ then we reply: ‘Of course, they believed that John purified by his Baptism; for by means of it he jointed you to Christ.’ Thus one is saved according to the way in which Christ instructed Nicodemus (John 3:5). And when Christ Himself appeared and was present, St. John’s Baptism had to cease, just as circumcision also had to come to an end.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 22, p. 429.

“Let us be guided by this. God help us as he helped our forefathers, and as he will help our heirs, to the honor and glory of his divine name forever. For after all, we are not the ones who can preserve the church, nor were our forefathers able to do so. Nor will our successors have this power. No, it was, is, and will be he who says, ‘I am with you always, to the close of the age.’ As it says in Hebrews 13 [:8], ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever,’ and in Revelation 1[:8], ‘He who is and who was and who is to come.’ This is his name and no on else’s; nor may anyone else be called by that name.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 47, p. 118.

⁵²“Let us be guided by this. God help us as he helped our forefathers, and as he will help our heirs, to the honor and glory of his divine name forever. For after all, we are not the ones who can preserve the church, nor were our forefathers able to do so. Nor will our successors have this power. No, it was, is, and will be he who says, ‘I am with you always, to the close of the age.’ As it says in Hebrews 13 [:8], ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever,’ and in Revelation 1[:8], ‘He who is and who was and who is to come.’ This is his name and no on else’s; nor may anyone else be called by that name.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 47, p. 118.

D. Almighty⁵³: Christ is the Almighty God, able to effect our salvation on the Cross and able to deliver the salvation to us through the Gospel. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful⁵⁴, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper: “Christ could not dispense with His deity in the state of exinanition. He had to attach the full weight of His deity to His obedience, suffering, and death, as Scripture tells us Gal. 4:4-5 and Rom. 5:10. Facing death, He had to be the mighty God that He might be able by His death to overcome death, to raise up again the temple of His body (John 2:19, 21), to take up His life again (John 10:18).”⁵⁵ Jesus: “All power⁵⁶ is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”⁵⁷ St. Paul: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”⁵⁸

9. *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for*

⁵³The Greek word is *pantokrator* (panto [all] krator [power]), which means all powerful. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Walt Bauer, tr. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Second Edition, rev. and augmented, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, p. 609, s.v. “**pantokrator**”.

⁵⁴“And the angel of the LORD said unto him [Manoah], Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* [Wonderful]?” **Judges 13:18**, amplification added. *The King James* has “secret” but I have translated it “Wonderful” because of the Hebrew word, *pele*, which means “wonderful”. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard: “First of all, Isaiah calls this little Child which is born to us: **Wonderful**. This Name is taken from the book of Judges 13:18. There the angel fo the Lord Himself appears to the wife of Manoah and announces to her the birth of Samson. This same angel was the Son of God, the Angel of the great counsel – as the seventy translators [of the Septuagint] have in this case tendered this reference of Isaiah, where He Himself is called God. When Manoah asks for the name of this angel, he answers: **Why do you ask for my name, which, of course, is Wondrous?**” *Seven Christmas Sermons*, pp. 72, 73.

⁵⁵*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 289.

⁵⁶“*exousia*”. Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, p. 278, s.v. “**exousia**”.

⁵⁷**St. Matthew 28:18-20.**

⁵⁸**Romans 1:16.**

the testimony of Jesus Christ.

A. **Companion in tribulation.** St. John the Apostle is living in the tribulation. The tribulation is another name of the New Testament era, for the Church suffers much trouble (tribulation) at the hands of the world because of the Gospel. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” **St. John 16:33.**

B. **Kingdom of Patience and Jesus Christ:** Christ’s Kingdom is a Kingdom of Grace, i.e. a Kingdom of Absolution⁵⁹, Forgiveness. Hence, Christ’s Kingdom is a Kingdom of Patience. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” **II Peter 3:9.** “for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” **Joel 2:13.** “THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” **Romans 5:1-5.**

C. **Patmos:** An island located between Greece and Asia (modern day Turkey) in the Aegean Sea.⁶⁰

D. **for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ:** St. John was on Patmos because of the Gospel.⁶¹ The apostles were witnesses of Christ and His saving work. “Thus is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins

⁵⁹**St. John 20:21-23.**

⁶⁰“Patmos, an island about forty miles west-southwest of Miletus” *Concordia Commentary: Revelation*, Louis Brighton, p. 48.

⁶¹“Tribulation had brought John in exile to ‘the isle that is called Patmos.’ He was banished ‘for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ (Rev. 1:9). In his preaching and teaching he had been faithful to his God and Savior. Now he had to suffer for it. But was strengthened, encouraged, and upheld by the knowledge that he was an heir of the Kingdom. Perhaps he remembered the words of Jesus: ‘Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ (Matt. 5:10)” *Revelation*, Luther Poellet, p. 6.

should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” **St. Luke 24:45, 47-48.** And the Word of the Apostles is God’s Word, the Gospel: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” **St. John 17:20.** “And are build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*.” **Ephesians 2:20.**

10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

A. in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit was instructing him what to say and write. “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” **St. John 16:13.**

B. The Lord’s Day: The Lord’s Day is Sunday. “But since from of old *Sunday [the Lord’s Day]*... .” **The Large Catechism: Part First: The Third Commandment.**⁸⁵ The German is “Sonntag”, namely Sunday, and the Latin is “dies Dominica”, namely the day of the Lord.

C. a great voice, as of a trumpet: St. John hears Christ in His exalted state⁶² and not as he was accustomed in Christ’s state of humiliation.⁶³ On rare occasion Christ exhibited some of the Divine majesty and glory communicated to His human nature, e.g. the Mount of Transfiguration⁶⁴, but here St. John sees Christ according to His exalted human nature.

11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyartira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

⁶²“**148. Wherein does Christ’s State of Exalation consist?** ... Christ’s State of Exalation consists in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ *always and fully* uses the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature.” *The Small Catechism*, question 148, p. 116.

⁶³“**134. Wherein did Christ’s State of Humiliation consist?** ... Christ’s State of Humiliation consisted in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ did *not fully* use the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature.” *The Small Catechism*, question 134, p. 109.

⁶⁴“And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” **St. Matthew 17:2.**

A. **I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:** Jesus is the First and the Last A. because He is the Almighty God⁶⁵, and B. because He is the Savior outside of whom there is no salvation. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” **Acts 4:12.**

B. **What thou seest write in a book:** St. John is writing under Divine inspiration, writing not his own thoughts and feelings, but rather what the Lord Himself reveals to him, nothing more and nothing less. “**10. What does ‘by inspiration of God’ mean?** ... ‘By inspiration of God’ means that God the Holy Ghost *moved* the holy men *to write*, and *put into their minds*, the *very thoughts* which they expressed and the *very words* which they wrote. (Verbal Inspiration.)”⁶⁶

Habbakuk: Write the vision, not write what you feel the vision means to you. So, also, it is with St. John: St. John writes what he sees, not what he feels the vision means.

12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.

A. **The Voice:** It is the voice of the Lord (vv. 8, 11, the Alpha and the Omega).

B. **The Seven Candlesticks:** The seven churches of Asia. The Holy Spirit enlightens men through the Gospel⁶⁷ and, thereby, creates His Church⁶⁸. “The

⁶⁵“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” **Isaiah 9:6.**

⁶⁶*The Small Catechism*, question 10, p. 41.

⁶⁷“That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, was instituted*. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake.” *The Augsburg Confession*, **Article V.1-3**, *Triglotta*, p. 45.

⁶⁸“... *the Church* properly is the congregation of saints and true believers” *The Augsburg Confession*, **Article VIII.1**, *Triglotta*, p. 47.

churches of the Lord are lampstands as bearers of His light⁶⁹ which is to benefit their entire surrounding and ultimately the whole world. They are not themselves the light, just as little as a lampstand by itself is able to shine, but their light is that of Christ's Spirit, who works by means of Word and Sacrament and not only illumines them but also makes them instruments for illuminating others."⁷⁰

13. *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

A. In the midst of the seven candlesticks: Christ remains in the midst of His Church because Christ is everywhere present according to His human nature and especially and blessedly present in His Word and Sacraments: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."⁷¹ "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."⁷² Likewise in 2 John 7: "... who confesses not that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh", namely, that Jesus is continuously coming in the flesh and, therefore, remains in the flesh."⁷³ *Here is an important point in our study of Revelation:* The mark of an antichrist, St. John writes, is "... every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ come in the flesh to stay⁷⁴⁷⁵ is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have

⁶⁹"*Foreasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." **II Corinthians 3:3**. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bush, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." **St. Matthew 5:14-15**.

⁷⁰*Revelation*, Luther Poellet, pp. 18, 19.

⁷¹**St. Matthew 28:19-20**.

⁷²**I John 4:1-3**.

⁷³The Greek present participle is here used. To make entrance *continuously* is another way of saying to come to stay.

⁷⁴Hence, Jesus says in **St. Matthew 28:20**: "... and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world."

heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world.” The spirit of an antichrist says Christ is not present with His Church in His Word & Sacraments to forgive sins and save. Luther writes: “2. *By this we know the spirits of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.* Whatever they teach, compare it with these words from 1 Tim. 1:15: ‘Jesus came into this world to save sinners.’ You must understand that whatever agrees with this is of God. But you must believe that whatever does not agree with this is from the father of lies (John 8:44). First the Jews deny constantly that Christ came in the flesh, and Cerinthus kept denying that Christ existed before Mary. If He came into the flesh, it follows that He existed before the flesh. He who denies that He came into the flesh denies that He is God and man. Accordingly, he is not of God but is of the devil. Nor is the spirit of the pope of a better sort. *For the pope confesses the statement that Christ came in the flesh, but he denies its fruits. But this is the same as saying that Christ did not come in the flesh.* For Christ’s coming in the flesh did not take place in order that He might be made man for His own sake; it took place in order that He might save us. He who teaches that Christ came in this way for His own sake destroys the fruit and the efficacy of His coming. For Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (3:8), to redeem sinners from sins. But the pope denies this. To be sure, he keeps the same words; but he denies the efficacy of His coming, that is, that our hearts should trust in Christ’s righteousness alone and be justified. In his bulls the pope condemns the article that we are justified solely by the righteousness of Christ. *Yet this is the effect of His incarnation.* But Paul contradicts the pope clearly when he says in Rom. 3:28: ‘We hold that man is justified apart from the works of the Law.’ And our John says in 1 John 1:7: ‘His blood cleanses us from all sin.’ Therefore Peter, in 2 Peter 2:1, condemns those who “deny the Master who bought them.’ *To be sure, they confess the Master; but they deny that He bought them. Therefore we conclude from this text that the spirit of the pope is of the devil; for he denies that*

⁷⁵The translation is mine. St. John the Apostle uses here the Greek perfect tense. The perfect indicates an action that occurs with continuing results. “The Greek perfect tense denotes the present state resultant upon a past action. Examples: (1) Suppose someone asks an official, ‘What is your relation to that prisoner?’, and he replies, ‘I have released him,’ the verb in this answer of the official would be [leluka – I have released]. The perfect would express the present state of the official (with reference to the prisoner) resultant upon his past action of releasing. ... The perfect passive is often much easier to translate into English than the perfect active. Thus [gegraptai] means *it is written* (in the Scriptures). Here the English *it is written* is not present tense at all, but reproduces the Greek perfect very well; the meaning is *it stands written*. Both English and Greek here refer to a present state resultant upon an act of writing which took place long ago.” (The Rev. Dr. J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners*, pp. 187, 188) Hence, when St. John the Apostle writes, “Jesus Christ is come [perfect tense] in the flesh,” he is saying, “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh and remains” or we might say, “Jesus Christ come in the flesh to stay.”

Christ came in the flesh, inasmuch as he denies the power and the efficacy of Christ's coming. I, too, have seen some spirits who indeed confessed Christ by name but actually denied Him. For they said that they believed in God yet not in a mediator. ... But I have nothing before God and cannot think of God without knowing that Christ is His Son and the Mediator of the whole world. Thus one must begin with the coming of Christ, and when stating the causes of salvation one must flee for refuge to Him who comes in order that we may hear His voice when He says in Ps. 40:7: 'Lo, I come.' Therefore let no one think of God without the Mediator. Consider how Philip errs when he says: 'Show us the Father' (John 14:8). Christ said to him: 'Philip, he who sees Me has seen the Father' (cf. John 14:9). Therefore let us abide in such a way that we receive Him as the One who comes in the flesh. He seeks the lost sheep. Let us, who are the lost sheep, follow the Shepherd. The spirit of the Sacramentarians denies grossly that Christ came in the flesh when they say that Christ's 'flesh profits nothing' (John 6:63), ... likewise that the spirit must do everything, that Baptism amounts to nothing. Therefore he is not of God. If you consider the papacy, you will not see why Christ came into the flesh. Indeed, you will regard this as superfluous. When Erasmus discusses in one of his epistles why Christ came into the flesh, he makes Him a lawgiver. ... All the monks do the same thing. But Christ came to rescue us from Satan, death, and sin, from which we could not be rescued by our own strength. Yes, He came to remove all laws, to abrogate all righteousnesses, and to establish only His own righteousness. Satan, of course, cannot bear the content of the words but tries to divest them of their power. The pope removes the kernel of Christ and leaves the words; he leaves Him the shell and takes out the kernel. For he confesses the righteousness of Christ, yet in such a way that our righteousness is not removed. And this is no confession at all. We know that there is no approach to God unless, as Paul says in Rom. 5:1, 'we are justified by faith.' Christ has flesh, but in it there is the full Divinity. God has offered Himself to us in Christ. *Christ came into the flesh to be with us in Baptism and at the Holy Supper. Every spirit who is at pains to teach that Christ does everything through the sacraments is of God, is glad to hear about Christ, and gives thanks. For he understands that Christ is his and that He came in the flesh. Therefore this has been stated emphatically: Behold, this is the test of a spirit, whether he is of God or of the devil.*⁷⁶ Again, Luther writes: "See how different Christ is from his successors, although they all would wish to be his vicars. I fear that most of them have been too literally his vicars. A man is a vicar only when his superior is absent. If the pope rules, while Christ is absent and does not dwell in his heart, what else is he but a vicar of Christ? What is the church under such a vicar but a mass of people without Christ? Indeed, what is such a vicar but an antichrist and an idol? How much more properly did the apostles call themselves servants of the

⁷⁶Luther's Works, Vol. 30, pp. 285, 286, emphasis added.

present Christ⁷⁷ and not vicars of an absent Christ?⁷⁸

B. One like the Son of Man: St. John the Apostle here alludes to Christ's Ascension to the Right Hand of God recorded in the prophet Daniel: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed." **Daniel 7:13-14.** Compare this passage to Jesus' Words: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." **St. Matthew 28:18.** **One like the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days:** Here we see the distinction in persons between the Father, i.e. the Ancient of Days, and the Son. The expression "one like" in "one like the Son of Man" is used to remind us to distinguish between Christ in His state of exaltation and His state of humiliation (Catechism questions 134 and 148). Daniel is careful to distinguish the two so the people would not get the idea that the Savior when He came to redeem the world is someone who is not approachable and from whom they should flee in consternation and dread (compare Revelation 1:17⁷⁹,

⁷⁷The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes: "Chemnitz admirably states what the passage says of Christ's sovereignty in the universe, by contrasting Christ's sovereignty with earthly kings; for earthly kings, he argues, govern their domain *in absentia*, while Christ, according to His exalted human nature, is everywhere present in His realm. Chemnitz says: 'Christ's humanity rules in the [logos, i.e. the Word] and with Him over all things, not from a distance or separated by an immeasurable space, as is the manner of kings when their rule extends over many far distant countries: but as it [Christ's human nature] exists in the [logos], so, because of its personal union with the [logos], it has all things present before it.'" *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 171, transliteration added.

The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes: "And Christ is here seen dwelling in the very midst of His churches, and so of the Church itself. So Christians are to think of Christ, not as a Lord in heaven only, but as One Who is ever with them, having set up His abode in their very midst." *Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, p. 3.

⁷⁸The Freedom of A Christian, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 31, p. 342.

⁷⁹"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last" **Revelation 1:17.** "Fear not" is the blessed word of comfort of absolution for the sinner. "absolution ... that blessed word of comfort" *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. (V.)*.41, *Triglotta*, p. 261. See footnote 80 for further explanation of "Fear not" and God's Word of absolution strengthening fallen man.

Daniel 10:5-12⁸⁰). The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, past President of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod, writes: "So all men will behold the same form of the glorified *theanthropos* [God-man] when on the Last Day He will appear "in His glory" (Matt. 25:31). Had Christ, however, appeared in this form, which would have been His normal form, He could not have been made under the Law and suffered and died. His parents and relatives, the Jews, the high priests and their servants, Pilate and his mercenaries, would have fled in consternation before Him. In the interest of His office He, therefore, limited the use of His divine majesty. He did not appear as Lord, but as servant, not as the God-man, but as a man like unto other men, submitting even to the death on the Cross."⁸¹

C. clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle: Compare this description to Daniel's description of Christ⁸²: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz"⁸³ The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes: "The exalted Christ is more closely described as to His apparel and visage. He is clothed with a long robe which falls to His feet. So He is attired like the prophets of old. He is a prophet, the eternal Prophet, Who teaches His people and intercedes for His own before God. And the golden girdle

⁸⁰"Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." **Daniel 10:8**. Here we get a glimpse of the fate of unholy man in the presence of the Holy God: man is simply unhinged, right down to the very core of his being. Absolution, the word of comfort, however, restores fallen man. "And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be* unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak: for thou hast strengthened me." (cf. this to the angels on Christmas when they comforted the shepherds with the Word "Fear not" **St. Luke 2:10**) **Daniel 10:19**. Here we see that the Lord's Word indeed does strengthen fallen men. St. Paul states: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, *which* [word of His grace] *is able to build you up ...* ." **Acts 20:32**, emphasis and amplification added. Again, notice that God's Word is able to build up men fallen in sin. That's the power of God's Word of absolution. The Lutheran Church confesses: "Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through of the Sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, **Article XII**. (V.)42, underscore added, *Triglotta*, p. 261.

⁸¹*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 286.

⁸²"Rev. 1:13-16 is the counterpart of Dan. 10:5, 6." The Rev. Dr. Luther Poellet, *Revelation*, p. 12.

⁸³**Daniel 10:5**.

that He wears indicates His royal dignity. As a king He rules. All things are in His hands. He rules the world and directs His Church.”⁸⁴

14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as flame of fire;

A. Hair white like wool and snow: This passage compares to the passage in Daniel 7: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool”⁸⁵ There would appear to be a resemblance between the Ancient of Days, God the Father, and Jesus, the Son. Indeed, there is more than a resemblance; *there is identity of essence.*⁸⁶ Like Father like Son. Just as God the Father is essentially God so also the Son who is eternally begotten of the Father⁸⁷. While they are essentially identical, God the Father and God the Son are wholly distinct in their Persons. The Father is the Father and not the Son and the Son is the Son and not the Father. Jesus is pure and holy just like His Father. “The immaculate whiteness of His head and hair indicates that He is the Spotless, the Pure, the Holy One in Israel. No one but He who is holy can stand before Him.”⁸⁸

B. His eyes were as a flame of fire: Christ’s eyes penetrate to heart and soul of a man because Christ is the omniscient God: “And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears”⁸⁹ “His eyes are sharp and penetrate into the deepest secrets. He tests the hearts and reins. Anyone

⁸⁴*Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, p. 3.

⁸⁵**Daniel 7:9.**

⁸⁶“His head and hair were white as wool, white as snow, and His eyes were like a flame of fire, and His feet were like burnished bronze glowing in a furnace, and His voice was like the voice of many waters. Cp. Dan. 7, 9. Just as in the Old Testament prophecy the Ancient of Days, the Father, is pictured with white hair, so Christ here, by the same token, is shown to be the everlasting God, Is. 9, 6.” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, Volume II*, p. 593.

⁸⁷**Psalm 2:7:** “Thou *art* My Son; this day have I begotten Thee.”

⁸⁸*Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, p. 3.

⁸⁹**Isaiah 11:3.** “and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the haring of His ears, rendering judgment not according to external appearances, rather according to His understanding of the heart and soul” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, Old Testament, Volume II*, p. 308.

whose heart is filled with falsehood and deceit cannot endure His presence.”⁹⁰

15. *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

A. **Compare, again, this to Daniel 10:** “Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of the multitude.”⁹¹

B. **Fine brass:** Brass indicating beauty, value, and endurance of Christ Himself and, therefore, His Kingdom.

C. **Burned in a furnace:** Pure, holy, and, therefore, of the most resilient integrity.

D. **Voice as the sound of many waters:** This manifests the Divine power and majesty communicated to Christ’s human nature. It has the breadth and depth as the sound of many waters and beyond that.

16. *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

A. **Right hand seven stars:** The seven stars are the seven angels (pastors) of the seven churches (**verse 20**). Pastors are in the right hand and under the control of and answerable to Christ. “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” **Hebrews 10:31** “Obey them that have the ruler over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” **Hebrews 13:17.** Luther: “From these chapters we learn in addition that the word ‘angel’ is to be understood later on, in other images or visions. to mean bishops and teachers in Christendom – some good, such as the holy fathers and bishops, some bad, such as the heretics and false bishops.”⁹² *Finally, it is a comfort to congregations and pastors to know that they are in the Hand of Christ, their Savior.* Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater

⁹⁰*Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, p. 3.

⁹¹**Daniel 10:5-6.**

⁹²*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 35, p. 401.

than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one." **St. John 10:27-30**. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes: "This holy and Almighty God holds the destiny of the Church and all its congregations in His hands. Therefore they enjoy the fullest security against any enemy attack."⁹³

B. Out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: This Sword is His Word. St. Paul writes: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." **Ephesians 6:17**.⁹⁴ Through the Word Christ slays the enemies of the Gospel. The Gospel is absolution and faith: "And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained." **St. John 20:22-23**. *The Apology of the Augsburg Confessions* states: "Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which [proclaims peace to me and] is the true voice of the Gospel. {German: The word of absolution speaks peace to me and is the Gospel itself.} Thus we also comprise absolution when we speak of faith, because *faith cometh by hearing*, as Paul says Rom. 10, 17."⁹⁵ The prophet

⁹³*Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, pp. 3, 4.

⁹⁴**Hebrews 4:12**: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

⁹⁵ "Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which [proclaims peace to me and] is the true voice of the Gospel. {German: The word of absolution speaks peace to me and is the Gospel itself.} Thus we also comprise absolution when we speak of faith, because *faith cometh by hearing*, as Paul says Rom. 10, 17. For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution [*i.e.*, the promise of divine grace] is heard, the conscience is encouraged and receives consolation. And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God [here on earth sins are truly canceled also before God in heaven] according to Luke 10, 16: *He that heareth you heareth Me*. Wherefore the voice of one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven. And absolution [that blessed word of comfort properly can be called a sacrament of repentance, as also the more learned scholastic theologians speak. Meanwhile this faith is nourished in a manifold way in temptations, through the declarations of the Gospel [the hearing of sermons, reading] and the use of the Sacraments. For these are [seals and] signs of [the covenant and grace in] the New Testament, *i.e.*, signs [of propitiation and] the remission of sins. They offer, therefore, the remission of sins, as the words of the Lord's Supper clearly testify, Matt. 26, 26. 28: *This is My body, which is given for you. This is the cup of the New Testament*, etc. Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel, through of the Sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin

Isaiah writes that Christ would slay the AntiChrist with the breath of His Mouth: “But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” **Isaiah 11:4**. St. Paul cites these passage when he writes of the AntiChrist: “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” **II Thessalonians 2:8**. The primary error of the papacy was the usurpation of the Keys, which is the spiritual power of the Church and the Breath of Christ’s Mouth: “Moreover, it is manifest, in the first place, that the Pope rules in the Church, and by the pretext of ecclesiastical authority and of the ministry has established for himself this kingdom. For he assigns as a pretext these words: *I will give to thee the keys.*”⁹⁶ Through the Keys comes the Holy Spirt and the power to bind and to loose sins: “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.” **St. John 20:21-23**. “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”⁹⁷ By properly teaching once again that the Gospel is absolution and faith, the Lutheran Reformation broke the power of the papacy by showing that the Keys belong not to the papacy, but to the Church, i.e. to each and every Christian, because the Keys are nothing else than the Gospel.⁹⁸ The Rev. Dr.

and death.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. (V.)*.39-43, *Triglotta*, pp. 261, 263.

⁹⁶*The Smalcald Articles, Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope*.40, *Triglotta*, p. 515.

⁹⁷**St. Matthew 18:18**.

⁹⁸Not surprisingly, C. F. W. Walther was greatly aided in his faith by the proper understanding of the Keys. Dr. Walther writes: “Let me present one more citation from Luther’s incomparable treatise *On the Keys*. For myself I have to confess that it was from this treatise that I first learned what the Gospel is, at a time when I thought I knew it, but did not. I shall praise and thank God for this forever. When I became a Christian, you know, I got among the Pietists. The reading of Luther’s writings brought me around to the pure doctrine. ... *Luther says* (St. L. Ed. XIX, 943 ff.): ‘Consider, furthermore, that the keys, or the forgiveness of sins, are not based on our contrition or worthiness, as our adversaries teach perversely. Their teaching is utterly Palagian, Turkish, heathenish, Jewish, Anabaptistic, fanatical and antichristian. On the contrary, our contrition, our works, our believing heart, and all that we are, must be built upon the keys, and with entire boldness we must confidently trust in them as in God’s Word, never doubting in the least, as dearly as we love our body and soul, that what the key state and confer is as certain as if it were stated and conferred by God Himself. For it is certainly He that is speaking in this

George Stoeckhardt writes: “We are involved here with that one in whom enmity against the Lord and his Anointed culminates in all its malevolence. Meant is that lone enemy of God and Christ, that foremost enemy to whom Old Testament prophecy otherwise points, also e.g. in Ps. 68,21,; 110, 6; Hab. 3,13, the ‘anomos’, that man of sin, of whom Paul prophesies in 2 Thess. 2,3ff. Him will Christ smite, judge, slay. But it is not Final Judgment that is prophesied here, when the Lord of Hosts will appear in his glorious majesty and by means of his terrifying power cast down and eradicate his and his people’s enemy. Before this happens, and still before the end of the world, Christ will with the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips smite and slay Antichrist and his hostile world. He will spiritually judge and annihilate him by his Word and Spirit. Thus also St. Paul in 2 Thess. 2,8, distinguishes the slaying of Antichrist by the Word of Christ from the final complete destruction of the same at the Lord’s appearing. ... This prophecy is now fulfilled. Christ, the Lord of the church, has by the Gospel which Luther proclaimed to the nations of earth spiritually judged and condemned Antichrist, revealed him before all the world as the arch-deceiver and arch-scoundrel and has thereby created release and help for his lowly, poor flock on earth. Yes, Christ already now, in this time, in various ways shows that he is the Lord who is governing his church. Righteousness and faithfulness, as the prophet adds, are the girdle of his loins. As the girdle holds clothing around the body, so Christ’s kingly rule is ordered and normed by righteousness and faithfulness. He applies his righteousness and faithfulness by restraining and warding off the enemies of his church and by mightily protecting and upholding strengthens his poor church.”⁹⁹ Luther: “For since the doctrine has been brought into such shape and form that the articles of faith are preached in their purity, and since the tongues are now loosed and the ears are opened, we should also apply ourselves that this doctrine may show itself in our daily lives. But I fear it will not be done before lightning and thunder strike down upon us, as St. Paul says. *God has already made a beginning with the Pope, striking the Antichrist with the lightning of the Gospel, which is the Spirit of his mouth, which is now opened and speaks, and is still striking among the wicked;* but I fear the teaching will not be followed by right living, until he will come and strike everything to the ground completely, making an end of ungodliness by the manifestation of his glorious coming, 2

matter, since it is His command and Word, not the word or command of man. If you doubt this, you make God a liar, pervert His ordinance, and found His keys on your contrition and worthiness. True, you must be contrite, but to think that the forgiveness of sins is to be made sure and the work of the keys confirmed by your contrition means to forsake the faith and deny Christ. He does not propose to forgive and remit sins for your sake, but for His own sake, from pure grace, by means of the keys.” *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, pp. 188, 189.

⁹⁹*Isaiah: The First Twelve Chapters*, p. 121.

Thess. 2:8.”¹⁰⁰

C. and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength: Here we see Christ in the State of Exaltation. In the State of Exaltation Christ always exercises the Divine Majesty and Glory communicated to the human nature through the human nature. Catechism: “Christ’s State of Exaltation consists in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ *always and fully uses* the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature. **373** God also *hath highly exalted Him* and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. *Phil. 2:9-11.*”¹⁰¹ During His earthly Ministry, Christ existed in the State of Humiliation. Catechism: “Christ’s State of Humiliation consisted in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ did *not always and not fully use* the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature. **334** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being *in the form of God*, thought it not robbery to be *equal with God*; but made Himself of *no reputation* and took upon Him the *form of a servant* and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in *fashion as a man*, He *humbled Himself* and became *obedient unto death*, even death *of the cross*. *Phil. 2:5-8.*”¹⁰² Some examples of Christ allowing some of His Divine Majesty and Power to show through are His appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration and His cleansing of the Temple. St. Matthew writes: “And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”¹⁰³ On the cleansing of the Temple, Dr. Stoeckhardt writes: “That the merchants in the temple, without any resistance yielded to the command of Jesus, was not because they wanted to avoid the scourge. The majesty of the person of

¹⁰⁰*The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. 2.2, trs. J. Humberger, J. Schaller, A. W. Meyer, E.G. Lund, J. N. Lenker, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, second printing, August 2007, p. 390, italics added.

¹⁰¹question 148, p. 116.

¹⁰²question 134, p. 109.

¹⁰³**St. Matthew 17:2-6.**

Christ, His holy earnestness, which shone from His face, moved them, and drove them out.”¹⁰⁴

17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:.

A. St. John “fell at his feet as dead.” That is the reaction of the sinful flesh in the presence of Christ’s holiness. The great and holy prophet Daniel likewise collapsed in the presence of the glorified Christ: “Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. and I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them¹⁰⁵, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and *upon* the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy

¹⁰⁴*Wisdom for Today, Volumes II & III, The Biblical History of the New Testament and True and False Statements Covering the Four Gospels*, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 35. “And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables.” **St. John 2:15.**

¹⁰⁵Perhaps when we feel moments of dread for no reason, the Lord is likewise removing some of His gracious presence and allowing a modicum of a fraction of a scintilla of His uncovered, holy presence to press upon us. Upon feeling this holiness pressing in upon us, we then flee to the Gospel to find comfort and grow in faith and thus our faith is fortified. Along these lines it is once said that Luther, working late at night, felt a horrible sense of dread come over him. Luther feared it was God. When he realized it was only the devil, he relaxed and laughed, saying, “Oh, it’s only you, devil.” The devil is not dreadful because Christ has crushed His head. Christ, however, apart from His grace, is dreadful because He is holy and we are unholy. Hence, Jesus contrasts the power of God with any and all other powers of creatures: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” **St. Matthew 10:28.**

words were heard, and I am come for thy words. ... And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, *one* like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me *one* like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be* unto thee¹⁰⁶; be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me¹⁰⁷.”

¹⁰⁶So Jesus said again after His resurrection to His fearful disciples: “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.” **St. John 20:21-23.** Peace with God is the blessing that comes with absolution: “Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which [proclaims peace to me and] is the true voice of the Gospel. {German: The word of absolution speaks peace to me and is the Gospel itself.} Thus we also comprise absolution when we speak of faith, because *faith cometh by hearing*, as Paul says Rom. 10, 17. For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution [*i.e.*, the promise of divine grace] is heard, the conscience is encouraged and receives consolation.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. (V.).39, Triglotta*, p. 261. Because Christ brings peace with God through absolution of all sin, He is called by the patriarch Jacob, Shiloh, *i.e.* the Man who Gives Peace (from the Hebrew word, *shalah*, to be at peace; from *shalah* also comes *shalom*, peace, and *Solomon*). “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* be the gathering of the people *be*.” Peace with God gathers people to Christ and, therefore, to God, and, thereby, creates God’s Church. St. John the Apostle writes: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” **St. John 12:31-33.**

¹⁰⁷How can the Holy God speak to a sinner without destroying him? Absolution. Hence, Jesus says to Daniel in order to strengthen him: “... fear not: peace *be* unto thee.” And this word of absolution strengthened Daniel: “And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.” God’s Word of absolution strengthens the sinner because it removes that which weakens the man, sin, and replaces it with the righteousness of God in Christ. “And because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly remit sins before God [here on earth sins are truly canceled also before God in heaven] according to Luke 10, 16: *He that heareth you heareth Me*. Wherefore the voice of one absolving must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven. ... Thus faith is conceived and strengthened through absolution, through the hearing of the Gospel,

Likewise all the shepherds at Christ's birth had their dread dispelled by the peace of absolution: "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."¹⁰⁸

B. **"Fear not"**: Absolution. In other words, St. John will not be condemned even though in the presence of the Holy God Jesus Christ he can feel the condemned flesh in his very members. Jesus likewise told Daniel of the peace through absolution: "And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be* unto thee ... "¹⁰⁹ Likewise the angel told the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth of the peace of absolution: "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."¹¹⁰ So, Jesus brought the peace of absolution to His fearful disciples after His resurrection from the dead: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained." **St. John 20:21-23**. The Lutheran Church confesses the peace that comes through absolution: "Moreover, the power of the keys administers and presents the Gospel through absolution, which [proclaims peace to me and] is the true voice of the Gospel. {German: The word of absolution speaks peace to me and is the Gospel itself.} Thus we also comprise absolution when we speak of faith, because *faith cometh by hearing*, as Paul says Rom. 10, 17. For when the Gospel is heard, and the absolution [*i.e.*, the promise of divine grace] is heard, the conscience is encouraged and receives consolation."¹¹¹

C. **"I am the first and the last."** Jesus is the True God and, therefore, need not be feared because The True God is the full of mercy toward sinners, fully willing *and able* to deliver from sin. "In using this title Jesus assures John that, as the

through of the Sacraments, so that it may not succumb while it struggles with the terrors of sin and death." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. (V.)*.40, 41, 42, 43, *Triglotta*, pp. 261, 263.

¹⁰⁸**St. Luke 2:9-10.**

¹⁰⁹**Daniel 10:19.**

¹¹⁰**St. Luke 2:9-10.**

¹¹¹*The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII. (V.)*.39, *Triglotta*, pp. 261.

Eternal One, he *is* his Savior; therefore John should not be afraid”¹¹² We should fear Him that can destroy body and soul in hell.¹¹³ But because God is reconciled through Christ, then, we have nothing left to fear. “What shall we say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?”¹¹⁴

18. *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

A. **I am he that liveth, and was dead:** Christ has conquered death and lives, therefore, forever.

B. **have the keys of hell and of death:** So well has Christ vanquished death that He is the one who holds the key to hell and death. Neither death nor the devil hold the keys to death and hell but the Man Jesus Christ. Man, therefore, rules over death, hell, and the devil. “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” **St. John 11:25-26.** The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes: “By His own death and glorious resurrection Christ has vanquished death and all its terrors. And so He also now has the keys of Hades (‘hell’) and death. Hades is the state of death, including the terror of one’s dying and the gloom and hopelessness after death. If Christ is said to have the keys of death and Hades, it implies that He can lock the door to death. He saves His own from death, while He banished all His enemies into death.”¹¹⁵

19. *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;*

Write the things which thou hast seen: The prophets and the apostles did not write what they felt like writing, but what God commanded them to write. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.” **II Pete 1:21.** “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” **II Timothy 3:16.**

¹¹²The Rev. Dr. Louis Brighton, *Revelation*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 52.

¹¹³“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” **St. Matthew 10:28.**

¹¹⁴**Romans 8:31.**

¹¹⁵*Lectures on the Revelation of Saint John*, p. 4.

20. *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

A. **Mystery:** A mystery refers to something that has to be revealed. We cannot know it apart from someone showing it to us or telling us about it. Luther: “I cannot just now find a word in German equivalent to ‘mysterion,’ and it will be well to retain the Greek form, as we have with many other words. It is equivalent to ‘secret,’ something hidden from our eyes, invisible to all, and generally pertaining to words. For instance, a saying not easily understood is said to contain a hidden meaning, a secret, a ‘mysterion’ – something is concealed therein. The concealment itself may properly be termed ‘mystery’; I call it a secret.”¹¹⁶

B. **Examples of mysteries of the Christian faith are the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son of God:** The Lutheran Church states: “Next to the article of the Holy Trinity this is the greatest mystery in heaven and on earth, as Paul says: *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, that God was manifest in the flesh*, I Tim. 3:16.”¹¹⁷

C. **The Seven Stars & Golden Candlesticks:** Christ reveals what is meant by the Golden Candlesticks and the Seven Stars.

(1) The Seven Stars are the angels (pastors) of the seven churches. The basic meaning of angel is messenger.¹¹⁸ The angels on Christmas were messengers bringing to the shepherds the Gospel. Pastors, likewise, are God’s messengers bringing to people the Gospel. Luther: “Like the angels in the stead of the apostles, these are appointed to preach and proclaim God’s Word; for an *angelus* is a messenger or an ambassador who brings his message orally. Therefore Scripture calls preachers *angeli*, that is, messengers of

¹¹⁶*The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. 3.2, p. 70.

¹¹⁷*The Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Of the Person of Christ, Article VIII.33, Triglotta*, p. 1027.

¹¹⁸“**angel**, *n.* [L. *angelus*; Gr. *angelos*, a messenger.] 1. literally, a messenger. [Rare.] 2. a spirit or a spiritual being, employed by God, according to the Scriptures, to communicate his will to men. ... 5. a minister of the gospel, or pastor; as, the *angel* of the church at Ephesus.” *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*, p. 69, s.v. “**angel**”.

God.”¹¹⁹

(2) **The Seven Golden Candlesticks:** The Church is called a candlestick because the Church is the repository of the Light of God, i.e. the Gospel. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” **I Peter 2:9**. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” **St. Matthew 5:14-16**. “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: *Forasmuch as ye* declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” **II Corinthians 3:2**.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹*Luther's Works*, Vol. 30, p. 177. Stoeckhardt says we cannot say with certainty that angel here refers to pastors: “As to whether the seven angels mentioned here were real Angels; i.e., holy spirits of God, whom God also uses to bring messages to men, or whether the usually bishop or pastors are here called angels, cannot definitely be determined from the text. But so much is sure, every one of the seven angels is the representative of his respective church, and what is said to him concerns the whole congregation.” *Lectures on the Revelation of St. John*, pp. 4, 5.

Luther Poellet, however, says it does refer to pastors: “We hold that it does not refer to the world of spirits but that it means ‘messenger’ and refers to the pastors of churches. ‘It is practically inconceivable that John should be commissioned to write to, or act as the messenger to, such a superterrestrial being as an angel, instructing him what to do in connection with each of these churches.’ ... Elsewhere in the Bible we read of God sending angels as messengers to men, but never of God using men to send a message to angels.” *Revelation*, pp. 23, 24.

¹²⁰“The lampstand with its shafts and seven lamps signifies either the Word of God (namely, the spoken Word) by which the church is illuminated, as 2 Peter 1:19 states: ‘We have the prophetic Word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place.’ But the number seven, which is characteristic of the sevenfold spirit, signifies universality (that is, that all the spoken proclamations throughout all the churches have one meaning in common and shine with the same light). Or, if they are connected with Rev. 1:20, the seven golden lampstands are, as is stated in the same place, the ‘seven churches,’ that is, the churches taken collectively. Or, thirdly, as is stated in Zech. 4:10, ‘the golden lampstand and its seven lamps’ are ‘the seven eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth.’ But the eyes of the Lord are called the priests of the churches. For just as the eye directs the body, so

the priest directs the church, as is stated in Job 29:15: 'I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame.' Jer. 15:19 says: 'If you separate the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth.' Fourthly, one can take the lamps to be the consciences of individual persons, as Luke 11:34 states: 'Your eye is the lamp of your body.'" Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 29, p. 200.