

# B.A.S.I.C.

*Brothers And Sisters In Christ*

## The Augsburg Confession: Article 13 The Sacraments

By Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

What is a sacrament? How many sacraments are there? When we study these questions, we must realize that the term “sacrament” is a man-made term. The word “sacrament” comes from the Latin *sacramentum* which means *oath* or *rite*. The number of rites recognized as sacraments depends upon how one defines the term sacrament. This article deals with the definition of what a sacrament is, and as a result leads the way for a discussion on the number of sacraments (which is discussed in-depth in Article XIII of the Apology).

### Article XIII

In the Augsburg Confession the Lutheran Confessors stated: *It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. For this reason they require faith, and they are rightly used when they are received in faith and for the purpose of strengthening faith.*

### Not Only Outward Signs

The main purpose of this article was to put the teaching of the Lutherans in contrast to Ulrich

Zwingli and his followers who taught that the sacraments were merely signs by which people identified themselves as Christians. Zwingli adamantly denied that the sacraments had any power to create or strengthen faith. He said: *“I know that all the sacraments are so far from conferring grace that they do not even convey or distribute it,”* and *“They are wrong, by the whole width of heaven, who think that sacraments have any cleansing power.”* This is the teaching of the majority of Reformed churches still today, who also deny the power of God’s Word at work in the sacraments. Lutherans do not deny that the sacraments serve as outward signs which distinguish Christians from those around them, but insist that in addition to being outward signs they are also means by which God creates and strengthens faith. The idea that the sacraments *“are signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith”* was a concept foreign to Zwinglian theology. The Lutherans taught that the sacraments are means of God’s grace - instruments through which God conveys to human beings the forgiveness of sins which Christ won for them on the cross:

***“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of***

***the sacraments are means of God’s grace - instruments through which God conveys to human beings the forgiveness of sins***

*sins” (Acts 2:38);*

***“Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28).***

Zwingli argued that the Holy Spirit does not need a “vehicle” through which to convey God’s grace, but worked without means. We must understand that while it is not necessary for God to use such a means (since He is all-powerful), He has revealed through His Word that these are the means through which He has decided to distribute the forgiveness of sins won by Christ.

#### **Definition of “Sacrament”**

Generally, we have defined the term sacrament in this way: A sacred act, instituted by Christ Himself, in which there are earthly elements connected to God’s Word, and through which God offers, gives and seals for us the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Based on this definition there are two rites which we call sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. But the Roman Catholic Church had a somewhat different definition of the term sacrament. In the Catholic Catechism they define a sacrament as *“a visible sign which imparts grace to our soul.”* According to this definition they list seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, the Lord’s Supper, Penance, Extreme Unction (Last Rites), Ordination, and Marriage. Let’s consider each of these individually.

#### **Baptism -**

There is no doubt that Baptism imparts grace to our soul. Jesus said: ***“unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).***

Instituted by Christ; offers forgiveness; earthly element: water.

#### **Confirmation -**

Though this can be beneficial in laying a solid

foundation for a young person or adult, the practice of Confirmation is not spoken of anywhere in Scripture (The Catholic Catechism refers to Acts 8:14-17 as a Scriptural reference). Since the Word is used in the instruction of the confirmand it can be said to impart grace to our souls in that sense, but the Catholic church emphasizes the ceremony of the laying on of hands, and not the instruction as “Confirmation”.

Not instituted by Christ; does not offer forgiveness; no earthly element.

#### **Lord’s Supper -**

Based on the words of Christ in the institution of the Lord’s Supper we would readily agree that this rite also imparts grace to our soul. Jesus said: ***“Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28).***

Instituted by Christ; offers forgiveness; earthly element: bread and wine.

#### **Penance -**

This also is spoken of by Christ Himself as a means of imparting God’s grace to sinners. Jesus said: ***“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:21-23).***

Instituted by Christ; offers forgiveness; no earthly element.

#### **Extreme Unction -**

This practice is based on James 5:14-15: ***“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”***

Not instituted by Christ; offers forgiveness; earthly element: oil.

***There is no doubt that Baptism imparts grace to our soul***

*The genuine sacraments, therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution*

#### **Ordination -**

The practice of "laying on of hands" is Biblical as found recorded in the book of Acts and Paul's letters: **"Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6)**. In a sense, through the ministry of the Word, this can be said to impart grace to souls.

Not instituted by Christ; does not offer forgiveness; no earthly element.

#### **Marriage -**

Marriage, though a great blessing, is not said to impart God's grace to us. If marriage were to be considered a sacrament, one could also consider prayer (as well as other rites) a sacrament as well.

Instituted by Christ; does not offer forgiveness; earthly element: rings(?).

#### **Apology**

In the Apology the Lutherans state: *"If we define sacraments as 'rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added,' we can easily determine which are the sacraments in the strict sense... The genuine sacraments, therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence), for these rites have the commandment of God and the promise of grace, which is the heart of the New Testament."*

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# A Taste of India

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By David Koenig

#### From the Field

I have the pleasure this month of working with the new CLC Missionary, Peter Evensen. In order to give you a taste of the work and joy I am reporting on several Sunday services at which both of us preached.

Jan. 10 – We worshiped at Voddlakuppam where Annadurai is pastor. He has had the additional work of raising his three children alone. I had the pleasure of baptizing Francis, a Hindu convert, who is going to marry Annadurai's daughter. As we drove up to the church another of our pastors, Jeychind, was just finishing up painting a new church sign along the road. Jeychind earns money through his painting in addition to serving as a pastor. After church I met his wife and two children and she is expecting a third. As to the church sign, I prayed over it after the service that it would

beckon people to our services and serve as an instrument of the Lord. In the service another of our pastors was present, Daniel, who is from this village. Daniel asked the Lord for a son and said he would dedicate his son to the Lord's work. Some time back I had the joy of baptizing his new son. Annadurai's son, Milton, has graduated from the BELC's Martin Luther Bible School and is assisting in preaching in another district. In addition to Milton another graduate from that MLBS batch and from this area was present for the service. There were 46 in attendance. This church building is one of the earlier ones that we helped build.

Jan. 17 – Pastor Bhasker, who is one of our district chairmen in the BELC, has been working on a new building for Nindra New Colony. He preaches on Sunday at (old) Nindra and at

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Kaippakkam. While the new building is not complete and not dedicated yet we held a service there with 65 members in attendance. It is a very spacious building with an upstairs to be built also. The work has been going on for two years. In Nindra there are maybe 1500 families. There is one other Christian church in the vicinity. So far Bhasker has gathered around \$11,000 in offerings and loans, of which we have given one tenth of that. Bhasker's wife, who has a job, has taken out a loan to help in the building also. This is the kind of joint effort we carry on with our brothers and sisters. The building still needs such as windows, flooring, plastering and so on. We pray it can be done as it has so far with God's blessing. One thing to note as to Bhasker's dedication. We did have another pastor at Nindra, who even dated back to the beginning, but he sadly became weary with this work at Nindra. He did not attend our monthly meetings for a long time and then left to go elsewhere. Bhasker stepped in to be the pastor in addition to his congregation and chairman's duties. Take the task He gives you gladly, let His work your pleasure be.

Jan. 24th – Pastor Jesurathnam was trained in Martin Luther Bible School many years ago under

the late Pastor Bas. When we had a rupture with Pastor Bas we did not have contact with Jesurathnam until he contacted our present head of the BELC. Subsequently, a new district was started in his area, Tiruttani District. Our worship today was at Palasamudhram with 58 attending. Pastor has been preaching here for twenty years and it is 5k. from his home. There is no other Christian church in the village of about 5000. Our congregation has very substantial building set on a hill. How appropriate as we are to be a city set on a hill for this people and to let our light shine far and wide. Pastor serves one other congregation and is assisting the District Chairman, D. Paul. The building itself still needs to be finished with especially windows. The government gave them the land and we assisted with 60,000 rupees in addition to what they gave in the congregation. Then in '13 we gave another 65,000 with members doing the labor. This is how we work together for His kingdom. They have a service after the main one for the children in their effort to reach out to children.