

Letter 233a: 26 December 1524, Strasbourg, The Preachers of Strasbourg to Frederick, Count Palatine

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[*Summary*]: This is a summary of doctrine taught at Strasbourg. It was composed by Martin Bucer and signed by Capito, Caspar Hedio, Matthew Zell, Symphorian Albiesser, Diebold Schwartz (Nigri), Johannes Latomus, Anton Firn, and Martin Hag.

It begins with accusations against the worldliness of their Catholic opponents and criticism of their unwillingness to engage in disputation with the reformers. Instead, their opponents insist that the teaching of the reformers has been condemned by the imperial estates and the Council of Constance. This is irrelevant. What matters is that the gospel is being preached (*Dann Concilium hin, concilium her, das wort gottes soll man predigen*). The reformers are wrongly accused of inciting rebellion. They support civic authority and public peace.

The following points concerning doctrine and ceremony are clarified: The Eucharist is not a sacrifice but is celebrated in memory of Christ's death. The reformers respect the authority of secular rulers over persons and possessions, but in spiritual matters will obey God alone (*mit leyb, eer und gut wöllen wir aller menschlichen ordnung und gewalt underthenig sein und gehorchen, der geyst aber sol gott ergeben sein, und wie kein mensch den rath und willen gottes wissen mag, also würt uns niemant mögen leren, wie und womit wir im gefallen mögen denn er selb allein*). Mass is to be renamed the "Lord's Supper," and communion is to be taken in both kinds and celebrated in memory of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (*das nachtmal nichts dann ein gedechtnuß ist solches opffers*). To avoid idolatry, the host and chalice must not be elevated. Christ's death has liberated Christians from the law and obliges them to serve him in the spirit and through faith rather than external ceremonies. The priest should wear ordinary clothes when celebrating the Lord's Supper, which ought to be celebrated only on Sunday. The liturgy is described in detail.

With respect to the question of the Real Presence of Christ in the bread and wine, the Strasbourgers refer the reader to Capito's pamphlet *Was man halten und antworten sol von der spaltung zwischen Martin Luther und Andreas Carlstadt* [above, Ep. 224]. Summarizing the matter, they emphasize that the flesh does not benefit a Christian; only eating the flesh and blood of Christ spiritually brings salvation. Still, it is important to avoid quarreling over this matter, which concerns externals. The Eucharist is celebrated in memory of Christ, and it is this memory that allows a person to eat his body and drink his blood "spiritually and truly" (*geistlich und warlich*); the bread and wine are signs and symbols of the new covenant (*zeichen oder figur des neuen testaments*).

Concerning baptism: The ceremony is a sign of faith and a rebirth in Christ. Scripture does not specify any time of life when this ceremony should take place. The Strasbourgers support infant baptism. In this point, too, they counsel that quarreling over an external ceremony be avoided.

They have abolished feast days because the Bible commands believers to celebrate God every day; only the Sabbath is mentioned in the Ten Commandments. There must be daily preaching, however. Images must be removed from the churches because they promote idolatry; the vernacular must be used in the liturgy; singing should be confined to the psalms.