

Letter 508: [Middle of April 1533], Basel, Martin Bucer to Capito, Caspar Hedio and Matthew Zell

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[*Summary*]: Bucer would like representatives at the synod [of Strasbourg] to include members of the council, for example, Jacob Sturm and Daniel Mieg, and perhaps even people who are opposed to the evangelicals, to make them aware of the merits of their cause. He would further like to include ministers from the rural parishes to attest to the teaching there and to life in the parishes. He outlines the procedure that should be followed: an introductory speech; a summary of their doctrine and a vote of confidence; a warning not to teach anything contrary to this doctrine; and an inquiry into the lives and teachings of the ministers conducted by senior people. This should be followed by a joint consultation on how to deal with shortcomings, on ways of spreading the Word of God, and on catechizing the young.

Informing the city council of their plans, they must avoid giving the impression that they want ‘to build up a new papacy.’ They should present a summary of their beliefs and answer questions on individual points. Attendance at the synod should be regulated and participation required. Uniformity of rites should be preserved. Baptism in private houses, as done by Anton [Engelbrecht], must be forbidden.

These preliminary remarks are followed by a German summary of Strasbourg teachings to be presented to the council:

- ‘1. We believe and wish to teach loyally what God has given us in his holy scripture, without any human addition or subtraction.
2. We hold that the confession we submitted at Augsburg contains a summary of what scripture teaches us, and we therefore hold to and teach all things as contained in that confession.
3. Thus we believe and teach the essential unity of the almighty God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that there is no difference in their persons.
4. God is the creator and ruler of all things, that all things are from him, through him and in him, and that he arranges and gives everything according to his will.
5. Our nature is, alas, so wicked that we ourselves, without God, desire only what is evil; thus we think, speak, and do only evil (for the natural man cannot comprehend divine things), until we are born anew, given the Holy Spirit, and become holy beings.
6. For this purpose, by the marvellous counsel of God, we needed a mediator. Therefore, the eternal Word of God became flesh, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, true man, like us in everything, except that he is exempt from sin. Thus we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God and man, one person, but of twofold and unmixed nature.
7. He alone has taken away our sins and reconciled us to the Father, and has gained the good spirit and rebirth for all whom the Father has entrusted to him and who hear his Word. The Holy Spirit brings about the final fulfilment.
8. However, there are some who are not born of God, who have not been entrusted to the Son by the Father, who are vessels of wrath, ready for ruin, rams not sheep, who will be condemned to eternal fire.
9. Therefore, we believe and teach that we are endowed with understanding, desire, thought, and worth, to recognize good works and avoid evil through divine election alone and through our sole mediator and Saviour Jesus Christ, if we believe in him in our hearts.

10. This belief is a gift of God, earned by Christ, and given to us through the Holy Spirit. It always brings with it hope and love, a love that unites us in Christ our head, so that we are one with him and among ourselves in his body.
  11. Therefore, we believe and teach that believers have the highest fellowship, a true church, that is, that they are a Christian community, in which no one seeks his own, but everyone seeks his neighbour's advantage and welfare.
  12. God has established public servants of his holy gospel and wanted them to look after it publicly and every day with the greatest devotion.
  13. Furthermore, it is all important to recognize that our whole salvation consists in understanding that our Lord Christ has delivered us through his death.
  14. Baptism signifies the washing away of sins and the new birth, and is given and handed down to us by God for this purpose.
  15. The holy Supper is the true body and true blood of Christ, to make us true members of the body, blood, and limbs of Christ.'
  - 16–19. The sacraments are signs and take effect only according to election.
  - '20. Those deny the church and refuse to take its sacraments deny Christ.
  21. We believe in an eternal afterlife and the eternal damnation of those who deny Christ.
  22. It is the duty of the authorities, if they recognize God, to arrange, as far as is in their power, everything among their subjects according to God's pleasure, and also to admonish the preachers of the Truth to do so.
- Conclusion: Whatever goes against the above we recognize as erroneous, which is therefore justly rejected.'

Continuing in Latin, Bucer invites his colleagues to modify this summary as they see fit. He apologizes for his delayed response, explaining that he had no messenger. He has been asked to be present at the Synod of Basel [of 12 May 1533 and is willing to return for that purpose. He will, however, go to Schaffhausen first, departing on the following day.