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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weiden*, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den *Wölfen wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verföhren und Irrtum einföhren.

Luther

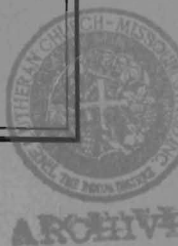
Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behält denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie*, Art. 24

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? — 1 Cor. 14:8

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der Sache sind. So sagt z. B. D. Schöffel: „Luthertum ist nicht Religion. Luthertum ist wie jedes echte Christentum der Gegenpol zur Religion.“ Das wird der Leser nicht verstehen. Aber er braucht sich nicht darüber zu grämen. D. C. Stange tröstet ihn mit dem Hinweis auf „die dialektische Theologie, an die auch die vielfach zugespitzten Formeln D. Schöffels und seine vielleicht für manche unter unsern Freunden mißverständliche Kontrastierung von Religion und Christentum zu erinnern schien“. Auch der Satz Präses Knubels könnte mißverstanden werden: “We must not, however, as a Church suppose that all the truth revealed by God has been included in our Confession.” Viel schöner lautet der Satz Bischof Rahmägis: „Der lutherische Kleine Katechismus enthält wirklich alles, was eine kommende Generation braucht.“

T. H. Engelder

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## The Significance of the Doctrine of the Church and the Ministry

as Professed by Our Fathers on the Basis of Scripture and the  
Lutheran Confessions, for Our General Theological Orientation

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### 1

Both historically and because of its intrinsic value the doctrine concerning the Church and the ministry deserves continuous and careful study. Briefly expressed, its clear perception by our fathers and the consistent application of it saved the troubled and perplexed band of Saxon pilgrims from utter confusion and in the course of years made our Synod what it is today, a confessional, cohesive, active religious group whose influence upon other church-bodies, above all, on Lutheran church-bodies, has been considerable. In the second century of our existence as a denomination the opportunities for leavening Christendom in America by the pure Gospel seem to be still greater than they have been in the past. But whether we shall be a leaven for good or for evil depends largely upon our attitude toward the doctrine of the Church and the ministry, as our Fathers professed it on the basis of Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions. Departure at this point means either a return to the camp of Rome or a yielding to Calvinistic, sectarian, and even modernistic aberrations. Only by occupying the Scriptural middle ground between antichristian Romanism and anti-Biblical sectarianism can our Church in the future (as it did in the past) supply the corrective which ecclesiastical tendencies deviating from God's Word require.

Perhaps the words of Christ's parable "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," Mark 4:28, apply also to the fixation of the Christian doctrine as this has occurred in

history. The end of the apostolic and postapostolic era witnessed the stabilization of the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and, in particular, of Christ's deity. The Reformation, in turn, established once for all the *sola gratia* and the *gratia universalis*, though incidentally, as a result of its constant controversies with Romanism, also the Scriptural teaching of the Church and the ministry, and this not merely in part but in its entirety. Thomasius, one of the greatest Lutheran students of the doctrinal aspects of the Reformation, has called Luther's representation and development of the doctrine of the Church "in a way the central, world-historic accomplishment of Luther" ("*gewissermassen die zentrale welt-historische Tat Luthers*"). (Cf. Meusel, *Kirchliches Handlexikon*, sub voce *Kirche*, 3, 774.)<sup>1)</sup> However, while Luther had fully and altogether correctly perceived the Scriptural teaching of the Church, he lacked the opportunity of organizing the Church according to it. The practical application, or translation into practice of this doctrine, could be witnessed in the small Saxon Lutheran group in our Middle West; for in the United States there existed the suitable conditions and prerequisites for this practice.

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1) It may be well for us to study the entire passage in Meusel's *Handlexikon* in connection with our discussion of the doctrine of the Church and the ministry. Meusel writes: "Erst ein Luther konnte von der lichten Höhe der Rechtfertigung durch den Glauben aus eine richtige Anschauung von der Kirche, ihrem inneren Wesen und ihrer empirischen Erscheinung gewinnen. Mit seiner Lehre vom seligmachenden Glauben als dem zentralen Prinzip des Christentums und von den Gnadenmitteln, die ihn erzeugen und auf denen er ruht, waren die richtigen Voraussetzungen fuer das Dogma von der Kirche gegeben. In seiner Bestimmung des Glaubens waren Objektivitaet und Subjektivitaet, Notwendigkeit und Freiheit, Gemeinschaft und Selbstaeendigkeit in rechter Weise geeint, und so konnte das Wesen der Kirche in die Gemeinschaft der Glaebigen mit Christo und untereinander auf Grund von Wort und Sakrament verlegt werden. Er hat die Bedeutung des Glaubens fuer die Lehre von der Kirche in bahnbrechender Weise geltend gemacht und damit allen falsch objektiven Auffassungen der Kirche als einer blossen Institution und Seligmachungsanstalt die Berechtigung abgesprochen. Die Aufstellung und Entwicklung seiner Lehre von der Kirche nennt Thomasius, *Christologie*, Bd. III, S. 389, 'gewissermassen die zentrale welthistorische Tat Luthers.' Eben als solche zentrale Tat aber musste sie natuerlich die spaetere Entwicklung der Theologie bestimmen, und die Ausfuehrungen unserer altlutherischen Dogmatik reduzieren sich mehr oder minder auf Formulierung und Systematisierung der Lutherschen Gedanken ueber die Kirche. Die Grundanschauung ist dieselbe. Diese aeenderte sich erst mit dem Pietismus und dem ihn abloesenden Rationalismus. Jener verlor den Blick und das Verstaendnis fuer die objektiven Lebensmaechte, welche den Glauben und damit auch die Kirche tragen; letzere wurde ihm zum 'Verein', zu dem die Glaebigen zusammentreten. Dieser verlor den Glauben ueberhaupt und behielt nur die duerre Moral. Unter seinen Unglueckshaenden verwandelte sich die Kirche Jesu Christi in einen Tugendbund." This presentation, we believe, is classic and nicely describes the doctrines of the Church as they are taught both by modern sectarianism and modern rationalism (including Papism and Calvinism).

So, then, there was found in our Saxon group of Lutherans "the full corn in the ear," or, theologically speaking, the whole Scriptural truth concerning the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ and His vicarious atonement, the *sola fide*, the *gratia universalis*, and, last but not least, the Scriptural doctrine of the Church and the ministry in perfect maturation. In the second century of our Church we are confronted with the doctrines of Biblical inspiration and Scriptural authority as the *obiecta defendendi*. May it be granted us to see as clearly and to act as wisely as did our consecrated fathers!

## 2

The doctrine of the Church and the ministry, as presented by our fathers *ex professo* in Dr. Walther's *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt* (cf. *Walther and the Church*, p. 47) and again, *per accidens*, in his *Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhaengigen evangelisch-lutherischen Ortsgemeinde* (cf. *ibid.*, p. 86), and lastly in his *Die evangelisch-lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden* (*ibid.*, p. 116), is so extremely simple that it could be received in its entirety even into our Synodical Catechism, which is intended for Christian pupils of average intelligence. The reason for this gratifying but exceedingly rare phenomenon in doctrinal presentation is that, on the one hand, Dr. Walther had Luther's popular presentation of the doctrine as a valuable pattern which he could copy, and that, on the other hand, he himself did not try to "deepen" Luther's teaching but merely endeavored to present it to his own generation in its lucid Scriptural purity. If true greatness consists in the ability to say the right word and to do the right thing at the right time, then Dr. Walther was extraordinarily great; for he proved himself a consecrated scholar, who desired to devote every talent which he possessed to the improvement of the Church in such a manner that even "the least of Christ's brethren," the youth of the Church and the ordinary laymen, might understand and judge the divine truth. Also in this respect he departed from the pedantic ponderous German scholarship of his day and became thoroughly American and democratic in spirit.

As Dr. W. H. T. Dau in his introductory remarks on Walther's *The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry* (cf. *Walther and the Church*, p. 47) admirably shows, Dr. Walther's theses on *The Church and the Ministry* were directly provoked by Pastor Grabau's attempts to organize in this country a Church "in accordance with the old Pomeranian statutes that had been enforced in Germany with the aid of the civil authorities." The letter of Pastor Grabau in which he explained his ideal of a Lutheran Church in America was sent (1840) also

to the Lutheran colonists in Missouri, who, however, repudiated it as being at variance with the teachings of Scripture and our Confessions. In consequence of this the Missouri Lutherans were publicly attacked by Grabau, and it was in reply to this attack that Dr. Walther wrote his theses (1851) on *The Church and the Ministry*. However, Dr. Walther's theses were directed also against the hierarchical tendencies in other American Lutheran bodies of that time. Dr. Dau writes: "The earliest Lutheran organizations in America were not called 'synods' but 'ministeria.' To their conventions laymen might be brought along by their pastors, but they had no determining voice in the deliberations of their church-body." The learned author concludes his remarks with the words: "Pastor Grabau's ideal 'Church' had so much in common with the existing Lutheran church-bodies at that time that an attack upon his organization was really a challenge to all the Lutheran ministeria in America and all the national Lutheran churches in Europe. They were all hierarchically oriented and ingrained. What Walther attempted by his treatise was something unheard of since Luther and the early days of the Reformation. It was throwing down the gauntlet to every type of arrogant Lutheran clericalism through the world. Walther regarded the denial of the personal right of self-decision in religious matters to the humblest believer in Christ and of his supreme authority in the Church as wicked arrogance. He championed the right of the Christian with his treatise on *The Church and the Ministry*. Coming from a still little-known author on the American frontier of civilization, it was a remarkable feat of spiritual daring." (Cf. *Walther and the Church*, p. 48 ff.)

The doctrine concerning the *Church* as presented by Dr. Walther may be summed up in the following statements: The Church in its proper sense consists of all believers in Christ, so that in this strict sense of the term no unregenerated person belongs to it, and therefore it is invisible to us in this life, since no man can discern who is a true believer or not. Nevertheless, the Church, though invisible to man, may be perceived by us in its actual presence by its true marks, the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the holy Sacraments according to Christ's institution. In an improper sense the term "church" is applied in Scripture also to the visible sum total of all who profess allegiance to the Word of God and use the holy Sacraments. In the Church, in this sense, there are both good and evil persons, both true believers and hypocrites, though the membership of the latter is external only. Moreover, the term "church" is applied also to local congregations ("particular churches") which hear God's Word and use the Sacraments instituted by Christ, since in these groups there are true believers and therefore true members

of the invisible Church, outside of which there is no salvation. The term "church" is applied even to such erring or heterodox congregations as retain the Word of God and the Sacraments in their fundamental truths, since even in such heretical churches, by God's grace, true believers are to be found. Nevertheless, since such erring churches do not proclaim the Word of God in its purity, all believers in Christ are warned in Scripture to avoid them and to seek membership in visible orthodox churches, because fellowship with the heterodox both endangers the soul's salvation and denies the full truth which God's Word inculcates. In spite of this, it remains true that for obtaining salvation the only requisite is fellowship with the invisible Church through faith in Christ Jesus.

The doctrine concerning the *holy ministry* (*pastoral ministry*) as professed by Dr. Walther may be summed up as follows: The pastoral ministry is distinct from the priestly office which belongs to all Christians as kings and priests because of their faith in Christ. The pastoral ministry is an office established by God Himself and therefore not a human ordinance. For this reason the Church *must* adhere to it and is ordinarily bound to it till the end of time. Nevertheless Christian pastors do not constitute a special state or peculiar order, set up over and apart from the common estate of Christians and holier than the latter, as was the priesthood of the Levites in the Old Testament; but the pastoral ministry is an office of service to preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and, in particular, to exercise Christian church discipline in the name of the congregation, from which the pastoral ministry receives its power, the Office of the Keys belonging properly to all believers as such. The pastoral office is conferred by God through the congregation, as the holder of all church power, not indeed through the church rite of ordination, which is not a divine institution at all, but through the call, extended to the pastor by the congregation in accord with God's own prescriptions on this point in His Word. The pastoral ministry, as the public and official administration of the Office of the Keys, is the highest office in the Church, from which all other church offices are derived. This being the case, reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the office whenever, and as long as, the pastor is ministering the Word of God. However, the pastor may not lord it over the Church, and he therefore has no right arbitrarily to make church laws, inaugurate adiaphora and ceremonies, and impose and execute excommunication *alone*, excommunication requiring a previous definite verdict of the entire congregation. While it is the duty of the pastor to judge the doctrine, this prerogative belongs also to the Christian laymen, for which reason

they, too, have a seat and vote with the pastors in church courts and councils.

Whatever Dr. Walther writes on the subject in his equally famous book *Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staat unabhaengigen ev.-luth. Ortsgemeinde*, published in 1863, may be regarded merely as an appendage of corollaries presented in a most lucid and detailed form. After defining what an Evangelical Lutheran local congregation is, namely, "a gathering of believing Christians at a definite place" for the express purpose of administering the Office of the Keys, he goes on to show that such a local church is independent of the State as long as the latter permits it to govern itself. All rights which such a congregation possesses are included in the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which the Lord immediately and originally gave to His entire Church and so to each local congregation. But these exalted rights of the congregation involve important duties, such as to see to it that the Word of God may richly dwell and have full and free scope in its midst; to care for the purity of doctrine and life in its midst and to exercise Christian church discipline; to regard the temporal welfare of all its members, so that no one will suffer want; to exercise care that "all things be done decently and in order" in its midst; to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; to build up, and promote, the welfare of the Church at large. The last part of the book is concerned with a Scriptural *modus vivendi*; for here Dr. Walther very systematically and simply points out how the rights and duties of Christian congregations may be exercised in a way that is Scripturally enjoined and therefore pleasing to God.

The last of Dr. Walther's amazing trilogy on the Church, *Die ev.-luth. Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden*, offers detailed proof that the loyal confessional Lutheran Church satisfies the glorious pattern of the orthodox visible Church on earth which Holy Scripture depicts before our eyes. In *Walther and the Church* Dr. W. Dallmann writes of the three books of Dr. Walther on the Church: "The American Luther also wrote three monumental works: *Church and Ministry*, *The Proper Form of a Lutheran Free Church*, and *The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth*. These also may be called 'first principles.' From them, and by means of them, the whole of the subsequent movement of 'Missouri' was worked out. And many men in many lands have gratefully acknowledged their deep indebtedness to Dr. Walther. The last work was heard and published by resolution of the Synod at St. Louis in 1866. In the midst of skepticism, rationalism, indifferentism, confusion, and unionism, what an arresting challenge!"

Dr. Walther's last work is indeed a challenge to all earnest

Christians today to consider why the loyal confessional Lutheran Church ought to be heard in its honest claim of being the true visible Church of Christ on earth. Certainly the Lutheran Church does not identify itself with the *una sancta catholica ecclesia* outside of which no one may be saved; but it does have all the marks of pure Gospel-preaching and of unadulterated administration of the holy Sacraments. For example, it recognizes as the source and standard of faith and life, not reason, not tradition, not new revelations, but only the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, or the canonical books of the Holy Bible; it teaches the intrinsic perspicuity of Scripture and tolerates no "views" and no "open questions" in matters where God's Word has clearly spoken; it acknowledges no human "interpreter" of Scripture (no individual, no order, no particular or general council, not even an entire Church) but accepts God's Word as it interprets itself, letting the original text, not any translation, decide the doctrinal issue; it holds fast to the "usage of language" (understanding and expounding the Scriptural text grammatically) and maintains that the *sensus literalis* is the true sense, as also that the *sensus literalis* has but one sense; it is guided by the context and the manifest intention of the Scriptural statements; it departs from the proper sense only if forced by Scripture itself (*i. e.*, by the circumstances of the text itself or the parallel passages or the "analogy of faith," that is, by "clear and certain passages of Scripture"); it interprets the dark passages in the light of the clear ones; it accepts the whole Bible as God's Word, given by divine inspiration and therefore necessary and important for us to know and heed; it makes the doctrine of justification by faith the foundation and guiding star of all other teachings; it distinguishes sharply between the Law and the Gospel, between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith, between things clearly commanded by God and adiaphora, between the Old Testament (in its ceremonial and political aspects) and the New Testament in its Law demands and Gospel promises; it teaches nothing that is not clearly taught in God's Word; it accepts the Lutheran and the Ecumenical Confessions as declarations of God's Word; it rejects all fraternal and church-fellowship with those who reject Scripture and the Ecumenical and Lutheran Confessions in whole or in part; it administers the holy Sacraments according to Christ's institution; it acknowledges as true Lutheran churches only those which accept the teachings of Scripture and the recognized Christian symbols both in formal declaration and in actual practice; it maintains Christian fellowship with all who profess with it the unity of the Christian faith; it therefore has all the essential marks of the true visible Church of God on earth as they are



found in no other known church communion, and therefore it needs no reformation in doctrine.

Thus Dr. Walther proves that the confessional Lutheran Church in every way satisfies the lofty ideal of the true visible Church which Holy Scripture delineates so clearly and sharply and challenges all earnest Christians to consider its claims, made not in the spirit of carnal boastfulness but with that holy, spiritual plerophoria of faith which Holy Scripture, yes, the very Christian faith itself, demands.

It is not necessary for us to investigate at this place whether Dr. Walther's picture of the Church agrees with that given in Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions. Dr. Walther's theses are so ably supported by clear and unmistakable passages from God's Word and from the Lutheran Confessions that, as Dr. W. Dallmann rightly remarks, "the champion of his King has thrown down his gauntlet to all the world, but so far no one has come to take up the gage." Certain it is that Dr. Walther's doctrine of the Church and the ministry (just because it is God's own doctrine) is most satisfying in helping us to orientate ourselves in a labyrinth of problems which in ancient and modern times have arisen in connection with these institutions. The Church in its proper sense is the (to us invisible) communion of saints, or believers in Christ, to which alone has been entrusted the Office of the Keys and which is present wherever the Word of God is being preached and the Sacraments are being administered according to Christ's institution. If the communion of all who profess Christ on earth and, in particular, individual church-bodies or congregations are called the "Church" or "churches," this is done by way of metonymy, since the *communio sanctorum* is represented wherever the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are administered, even in case such churches should be heterodox (though of course they must hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith to be Christian). Nevertheless it must not be a matter of indifference to us whether we hold membership in an orthodox or heterodox church, since by holding membership in a heterodox church one denies the truth of God's Word and endangers one's soul's salvation.

This, in its essential features, is the simple, Scriptural doctrine of the Church which Dr. Walther presents in his three great works on the Church mentioned above. Equally simple is his doctrine concerning the ministry. All Christians are indeed kings and priests before God; but through the call extended to their pastors they delegate to them the public exercise of their rights and duties involved in the Office of the Keys, so that the function of the Christian pastor is both very great, embracing all that the Office of the Keys embraces, and yet very small, including nothing

that is not his by special appointment of God's Word. The doctrine thus guarantees the rights both of the pastor and of the congregation, inculcates cordial cooperation between the pastor and his church, checks all outbursts of carnal clericalism and carnal congregational arbitrariness and tyranny, and, in the end, truly makes possible, and promotes, the preaching of God's Word and the building of Christ's kingdom in the world. The Lutheran teaching of the Church, rooted in God's Word and restricted by its doctrinal provisions, certainly represents an ideal against which all man-made doctrines of the Church and the ministry sink into insignificance and prove themselves mere sham and pretense, obscuring Christ's glory and dimming the brightness of His Gospel. We shall perceive this important point more clearly as we consider the significance of the Lutheran doctrine of the Church and the ministry for our general theological orientation.

### 3

In the first place, the doctrine of the Church as taught and defended by our fathers helps us rightly to orientate ourselves when considering the two outstanding church groups in Christendom, Romanism and Calvinism. These powerful isms of our time challenge our study and attention especially today, for they are aggressive and are gaining ground, each of course in its own way and sphere. Unless we hold clearly the doctrine which our fathers taught regarding the Church, we shall not be able to view or judge them correctly.

Take *Romanism*, which even some "Protestants" today regard as the seat and center of Christendom. Romanism has a very distinct doctrine of the Church, an outwardly considered impressive, convincing doctrine, inducing many in our time to join the Catholic Church just because of its very definiteness, organization, and solidarity. The Protestant regards the Church in its proper sense as the communion of *saints*, the *congregatio sanctorum*, or *credentium*, in other words, as a group of *individuals*, in which each single believer matters very much. But while Romanism, too, says that the Church is *congregatio fidelium*, it looks upon the Church as an institution, of which one may be a member and thus share in its prerogatives.<sup>2)</sup> To the Romanist the Church is a corporate body, or establishment, with certain inalienable rights and powers given it, all of which are embodied in its head, "the vicar of Christ," or Roman Pontiff, whose power is far higher than that of any other ruler in this world. The Church therefore is visible just because its hierarchy is visible, *ita visibilis et palpabilis*,

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2) Cf. W. Walther, *Lehrbuch der Symbolik*, p. 68 ff.

*ut est coetus populi Romani vel regnum Galliae aut respublica Venetorum* (Bellarmine). But just as the hierarchy is visible, so every one is visible who submits to the hierarchy and *eo ipso* holds membership in the Church. Such a person may even be living in mortal sin, yet his membership in the Church is certain as long as he subjects himself to its ecclesiastical authority. Properly speaking, only heathen, heretics, schismatics, and excommunicated sinners are *extra ecclesiam*. All baptized persons are *de iure* members of the Church and thus *in potestate ecclesiae*. The bull of Boniface XIII declares: *Subesse Romano Pontifici omnes humanas creaturas declaramus, dicimus, definimus et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis*. This visible Church is ruled by a *castrorum acies ordinata* (cardinals, patriarchs, bishops, archbishops, priests, orders, congregations) under the leadership of the Holy Father, *verus Christi vicarius, ipsius Dei in terris vicarius, caput ecclesiae*, who is infallible *cum ex cathedra loquitur*. This hierarchical corporate body is the *ecclesia, extra quam nulla est salus*, though a person who because of *invincibilis ignorantia* refuses to become a member of the papistic Church is only a "material" heretic, who might yet be saved, while a "formal" heretic, that is, one who knowingly and deliberately refuses to acknowledge the power of the Pope has no hope whatever of being saved.

Such is the Romanistic doctrine of the Church; and this conception is exceedingly popular among all who have failed to grasp the *spiritual character* of the kingdom of God. Romanizing Protestants (and the Romanizing tendency among Protestants is everywhere gaining in strength) find it quite suited to their taste. They may criticize this or that *accidens* in Romanism, may reprove its externalism, its paganistic reverence for the saints, its array of extra-Biblical teachings, its exclusiveness and hierarchical impudence; nevertheless, they have not much fault to find with its ecclesiastical constitution as such. In fact, the basic *Calvinistic* idea of the Church is, in the final analysis, very similar to that of its Roman antagonist and competitor.

We admit, of course, that *Calvinism* to the casual observer seems to be the very opposite of Romanism. The common view is that, while Lutheranism mediates between Romanism and Calvinism, the latter is commonly regarded as the extreme antipode of the former. In some respects this may be true. Strict Calvinism, for example, disavows the authority of the Papacy and its *ex opere-operato* view of the Sacraments and teaches instead of the papistic salvation plan *per opera salvation per gratiam*, and, in particular, *per solam gratiam*, though even in its *ordo salutis* there is to be observed an approach to the Roman idea of work salvation, since in the last analysis the Calvinistic believer is forced to base the

assurance of his salvation on the Holy Spirit's operation in his heart, i. e., on a sort of *gratia infusa*. But despite all this the Calvinistic church ideal approaches that of Rome; for while Lutheranism properly applies the term "church" to nothing else than the *congregatio sanctorum*, Calvinism speaks of two churches, one that is invisible and whose members only God knows (*societas fidelium, quos Deus ad vitam aeternam praedestinavit*)<sup>3)</sup> and one that is visible and consists of "the multitude who worship the one true God and confess Christ." In this multitude of worshipers there are indeed many who cannot be designated as Christians at all, but whose membership in the outward body, or the visible Church, because of their outward connection with it, cannot be denied. Apparently Calvin here walks in the footsteps of Luther; but after all his doctrine of the Church is not the *spiritual* doctrine of the Church which Luther so earnestly inculcated. The more Calvin thought and wrote on the doctrine of the Church, the more his thoughts turned away from the *ecclesia invisibilis*, and the more his attention became concentrated on the *ecclesia visibilis* in the sense of an earthly institution and organization ordained for the sanctification of human society. In this institution no "vicar of Christ," of course, could be accorded the rule; but there could be a sort of hierarchy nevertheless, that is, a sort of regnant body, enacting laws and ordinances, demanding submission to the *ordre de L'église*, and disciplining and punishing all licentious forces opposing the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church. The Calvinistic ideal is best understood when it is viewed in its expression of the relation of Church and State. Already Zwingli had tried to organize the commonwealth of Zurich "according to the Law of God," in other words, to realize the ideal of a Christian or theocratic state. While Zwingli's spiritual reorganization plans ultimately failed in Zurich, those of Calvin succeeded in Geneva to such an extent that its church pattern was adopted in practically all Reformed countries. Calvin's ideal of the Church, in the last analysis, was that of a spiritual body in the State, supported by the civil government but wielding a constant sanctifying influence on the state. Calvinism as well as Romanism thus returned to the Old Testament for an ideal in which both Church and State found proper and mutual accommodation. In both Romanism and Calvinism therefore the emphasis ultimately rests upon the *external*. There must be external unity, external action, external display, external power. Doctrinal emphasis is secondary, for as long as persons confess Christ, they may be regarded as members of the Church, even if they should differ from one another in "non-essentials."

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3) W. Walther, *Lehrbuch der Symbolik*, p. 207 ff.

Thus more and more the Calvinistic church ideal became legalistic, externalistic, unionistic, and superficial, until modernistic religious socialism has corrupted that *a-priori* faulty ideal into a bare shadow of what the Church, as originally conceived by Calvin and his coworkers, should be. Under the baneful influences of destructive Modernism the Christian doctrine in our so-called sectarian churches has largely disappeared, and the Church, as represented by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ, paganized and Judaized as it is, has today not even a social message that is worthy of acceptance. The Calvinistic church ideal, under modernistic influence, is indeed a tragic, if not even ridiculous, thing. Its futile attempts at external union today are nothing more than frantic efforts to show outward strength where the inward decay long ago has fully destroyed all spiritual power.

Of course, there are left the Fundamentalists, that is to say, men who still purpose to insist upon the fundamentals of the Christian truth. But Fundamentalism today is so badly organized and so hopelessly helpless in bringing about any real and permanent reform, just because of its intrinsic unionistic tendencies, that its testimony to the truth, while not entirely in vain, can never become an effective factor for the revival and dissemination of the Christian truth. Fundamentalism, of course, is somewhat stronger in those smaller sectarian groups which have separated themselves entirely from the larger modernistic denominations; but these, alas! are commonly so utterly erratic that little good can be expected from this movement. Unless we hold to the true church ideal of our fathers (which is that of Scripture), we shall be swallowed up by the same folly of rationalism to which both Romanism and Calvinism have succumbed.

#### 4

The doctrine of the Church as professed by our fathers moreover helps us in orientating ourselves rightly in *solving the numerous problems* confronting the Church today in various forms, for example, in unionism, millennialism, the recognition of Antichrist, the relation of Church and State, and the like.

Of all problems facing us today *unionism* is perhaps the most disturbing. Broadly defined, unionism is spiritual fellowship between the orthodox and the heterodox. Such spiritual fellowship is forbidden in God's Word, as many clear and unmistakable passages prove; cf. Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10; Matt. 7:15; Gal. 5:9; etc. The condemnable feature about unionism is that by this offense divine truth is being denied and error given an opportunity to reign and destroy. Unionism apparently is very charitable; but in reality it is extremely uncharitable and destructive. The trouble

with unionism, too, is that it does not confine itself to certain limits but gradually increases and finally does the extreme. Prayer-fellowship, altar-fellowship, pulpit-fellowship, and other forms of spiritual fellowship, practiced at first with Christians of moderately different views, in the end becomes fellowship with Romanists, Jews, and outspoken non-Christians, such as Unitarians and atheistic Modernists. With their doctrine concerning the Church and the ministry deeply implanted in their religious consciousness, our fathers opposed every form of unionism, the finer as well as the more gross and extreme forms. They recognized the fact that the Church in its proper sense, that is, in that of the communion of true believers, is represented also in erring Christian churches; but at the same time they were so afraid of the errors taught by such heterodox churches that they avoided all fellowship with those who did not agree with them in doctrine and practice. We shall be safe in future only, if we adopt that same course. In the end every unionistic Church has proved itself to be weak, while every anti-unionistic Church possesses in itself a remarkable overcoming strength, the result of firmness of conviction.

There is hardly any danger that the error of *millennialism* will ever cause much trouble in our own denomination, since the Scripture witness against this false doctrine is so very distinct and decisive. And yet it is well for us to guard also against this evil, just because it is so very insidious. Millennialism is the unfortunate dream of those erring church groups which, because of the constant affliction in which the confessing Church finds itself, believe that God's redemptive and saving plans have in some way been frustrated by Satan and that it requires a thousand years of victorious reign on the part of the living Savior to bring about the glory of His kingdom which He predicted in His Word. But our Augsburg Confession rightly condemns this thought as a "Jewish dream," which is as dangerous as it is subtle. If we believe that the Church in its proper sense is invisible, that God through the preaching of the Gospel is calling His elect saints into His kingdom even in those erring churches which do not possess the Word of God in its entire truth, and that in the fulness of His appointed time He will victoriously gather His children into the eternal Kingdom of Glory in heaven, we shall be preserved from the unscriptural view of a millennium, which, by drawing our minds away from heaven, needs must impair and injure the genuine Christian hope. Millennialism has never been able to find a place in the Lutheran Church where the doctrine of the Church and the ministry as maintained by our fathers was strictly adhered to.

The error concerning *Antichrist* is perhaps more important than some at first glance might think. At any rate, the many foolish interpretations and applications of 2 Thess. 2:3 ff., as if Antichrist were an emperor, like Nero, or some other temporal ruler, such as Napoleon, and the like, show how little Protestantism in general has sounded the depths of corruption that are revealed in the tragic fact that a sovereign ruler of the largest Christian church-body anathematizes all Christians who accept Scripture alone as the source and rule of faith and life, and Christ as the only Mediator, Propitiator, and Savior of sinful man. While showing himself as God, the Pope of Rome condemns both the *sola Scriptura* and the *sola gratia*, the very foundation of the Christian faith and Church, teaching in the place of these cardinal doctrines of Christianity a pagan work-righteousness, which needs must damn all who truly accept it, Gal. 3:10; 5:4. The "godless opinion concerning works," of course, pleases natural man, and hence the outward piety of the Papacy makes a deep impression on all who rely on works to save them, for which reason the Pope is now commonly regarded not as Antichrist, but as a *defensor fidei*. But if we hold the Scriptural doctrine of the Church and the ministry and we view the Papacy in the incandescent Gospel light of these two great truths, then indeed we must accept the verdict of our Lutheran Confessions: *papam esse ipsum verum antichristum*. (Smalcald Articles, II, IV:10; *Trigl.*, p. 474.) Christians who look for an "Antichrist" other than the Papacy have reason to ask themselves whether they have an adequate conception of the horror of work-righteousness and the exceeding sinfulness of obscuring and destroying the glory of Christ and His Gospel.

Lastly also we shall rightly judge the problem of the *separation of Church and State* when we hold to the doctrine of the Church and the ministry as professed by our fathers. Just because our fathers perceived the doctrine of the Church and the ministry so clearly, they understood perfectly also the Scriptural doctrine regarding the powers of Church and State. The Church has the power to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments (Augsburg Conf., 28:12; *Trigl.*, p. 85), while the State possesses that of wielding the sword. And because our fathers regarded the Church in its proper sense as the *congregatio sanctorum*, they never thought of interfering with the functions of the State or of setting up a sanctified state under legalistic church rule. On the other hand, however, they also remained free from the fanaticism of enthusiastic sects who refused to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and branded such things as civil magistrates, war service, and the like, as sinful. Romanism, Calvinism, and

sectarianism needs must collide with, and in the end endeavor to abrogate, the principle of the separation of Church and State. Confessional Lutheranism, which holds the Scriptural doctrine of the Church and the ministry, is rightly and Biblically orientated also on this most important point.

## 5

The doctrine of the Church and the ministry as professed by our fathers helps us, moreover, in rightly orientating ourselves in the *Christian work* which we are to do as individual believers and collectively as Christian congregations. There is, first of all, the paramount work of *missionary expansion*. Missouri Synod Lutheranism has been noted for its aggressive expansion program through the spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad. To all who rightly understand the Scriptural doctrine of the Church and the ministry this does not seem strange at all; for if it is our duty as a Church not to set up a sanctified state or a Biblically socialized society but to add to the *ecclesia invisibilis* the elect of God through the preaching of the Word, then we must publish the glad tidings of salvation unceasingly and most urgently. Nor does it trouble us very much if at times and at some places the seed of the divine Word does not seem to bring forth as much fruit as we desire; for we know that, after all, God's purpose is always accomplished and His saints are brought in without fail. Again, since all believers are priests and kings before God, we urge all church-members to take part in this work eagerly and gladly and not to fall behind in their privilege of witnessing to Christ.

This very fact again leads us to the paramount work of training our children and youth in the fear and love of the Lord. *Christian education* of the masses of believers follows as a corollary from the Christian doctrine of the Church and the ministry. If Christians are properly to perform their important task of witnessing to Christ and His Gospel as spiritual kings and priests, they must be thoroughly grounded in the truth and be adequately trained in the meaning and obligation of Christian discipleship. Our parochial-school system with its emphasis on religious training, our confirmation instruction, our old-fashioned *Christenlehre*, our examination and reexamination of those who come to the Lord's Table, all flowed from the keen perception of our church group of what the Christian Church truly is and what it is to do in the world.

Today we are giving special attention to the training of an intelligent Christian laity. By this we do not wish to intimate that in the past our laity groups, both male and female, have failed in such intelligence and in such intelligent action and



cooperation as we might expect of them. But today many new problems are awaiting solution on our part, and for the successful execution of them we need more than ever before the vigorous working fellowship of our Lutheran men and women, who are both devout and competent. Romanism begrudges its laity the opportunity of intelligent service because it is given to hierarchical rule; but Lutheranism, recognizing that the Office of the Keys and with it all the rights and privileges of the Church belong to the believers as such, is by virtue of this very doctrine in duty bound to assist its laity in taking its rightful place in all forms of Christian service.

We might continue this application *ad infinitum*; for the right understanding of the Biblical doctrine of the Church and the ministry is the true foundation of, and a potent incentive for, every kind of Christian church-work. But what has been said may suffice to show the importance of the doctrine for the practical aspect of the Church's place in the world. In the past we have perhaps not always and not fully applied the truths that follow from the given premises; but actually there is no other doctrine than the one professed by our fathers that will spiritually enable and move Christians to do the work in the Lord in the spirit of their blessed Savior. Legalism may compel their labor; but the Gospel truth, wrapped up in the doctrine of the Church and the ministry, will make them ready and able to do with a cheerful heart what God expects of His saints while they sojourn on earth.

## 6

In the last place, the doctrine of the Church and the ministry as taught by our Church will assist us also in orientating ourselves rightly with regard to *certain vexing questions* that have always troubled the Church. There is first of all the question of *adiaphora*, or things neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. Keeping in mind that the Church has no right to enact laws where Scripture is silent, our Lutheran Church has never made any ruling on such matters but has left them to the wisdom of each Christian or group of Christians, subject, of course, to the principle of God's glory and the welfare of the Church, in short, of the Scriptural canon of Christian love. While Romanism, Calvinism, and sectarianism have failed in a hundred ways on this point, Lutheranism was preserved from error by its very doctrine of the Church and the ministry, which demands loyalty to God's Word as the foremost prerequisite.

This suggests the question of *purity in doctrine and practice*, a question that is troubling Christendom especially today. Neither Romanism nor Calvinism insists upon doctrinal purity and a church

practice that is in accordance with Holy Scripture. The social-gospel religion of Modernism even suggests that definite doctrines are a hindrance rather than a help to the building of the kingdom of God; and the thought of a creedless Christianity has permeated almost the entire Protestant wing of the Church. Interchurch conferences on faith and life are in vain seeking for a definite doctrinal formula which is acceptable to their various constituents. Even in some Lutheran circles the question has been asked, "Why doctrine?" But the question regarding purity of doctrine is easily answered if the fundamental distinction of *erring* and *orthodox* churches is borne in mind and proper emphasis is placed on the Christian's duty to confess the divine truth even against the "little heaven" of corrupt doctrine. It is not our Christian duty primarily to build up imposing church-bodies; our duty rather is to witness to the entire divine truth, leaving the final results to God, who gave us His holy Word as our only guide to heaven.

But what, then, of the continued *existence of the Church*? What of the *divided condition of Christendom* with its many denominations and sects? As long as God's Word is being proclaimed and His Sacraments are administered according to His institution, the Church in its true sense, as the *communion of saints*, will always exist; and only the existence and spread of *this Church* really matters. Not the things that we see but those that we do not see are abiding. It is, of course, the duty of every Christian and every Christian Church to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" or to do all that is possible that the external Christian Church may become united. But the union which true Christians are to seek is not outward but inward; it is a unity of faith rather than of organization; it is spiritual, and not earthly such as are the external unions of the great worldly empires and kingdoms. Every Christian who thoroughly understands the Scriptural doctrine of the Church and the ministry will, because of this very fact, do his utmost to secure a Scriptural church union, based upon true unity of faith; yet, at the same time, he will also avoid all churches that are indifferentistic and unionistic. That is the true application of the doctrine of the Church and the ministry which the sincere believer in Christ must make just because he is a true believer.

There remains lastly the question of the Christian's *personal piety*, or *personal sanctification*. We need not prove that such personal piety is required by God, for Scripture speaks very clearly on this matter. But there is no greater incentive for the individual church-member to consecrate himself to personal piety than the conviction that there is a *communio sanctorum*, to which only such belong as are true believers in, and true servants of,

Christ. External Christianity will never move any one to true, inward, spiritual piety. At best it can produce only a piety of the Law, of works; the true piety of the Gospel is found in those only whose conception of the Christian Church is that of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; in other words, in those who hold precisely the doctrine of the Church and the ministry which our fathers by God's grace so consistently and loyally confessed in their own time.

## 7

Our purpose has been to present this article of our Christian faith in a practical rather than in an academic way. So Dr. Walther has treated it, and so we must treat it today; for the doctrine of the Church and the ministry is one that properly belongs in the Christian life and not in the professor's armchair. It is *per se* a practical and comforting doctrine and should be so taught and treated that souls redeemed with the precious blood of Christ may be gathered into that invisible but truly real communion of saints, which is as glorious as its divine Head is glorious and which will finally be revealed in its full splendor in heaven. There, of course, the Church Triumphant will be visible not only to God but also to all who are God's dear children in Christ Jesus. That holy, paramount thought was uppermost in the heart of St. Paul, who by divine inspiration wrote the imperishable words: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.

J. THEODORE MUELLER



## Entwürfe über die von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Epistelreihe

### Neujahrstag

R o l. 2, 6—15

Dem Kind, an dem einst heute die Beschneidung vollzogen wurde, wurde auf Gottes Befehl der Name *Jesus* beigelegt, das heißt, Heiland, Helfer, Retter, Seligmacher. Und so steht nun über jedem neuen Jahr der teure *Jesus*-name als ein leuchtender Stern. Voll und ganz liegt in diesem Namen die Gnade unsers Gottes gegen die Sünderwelt, voll und ganz auch Christi Erlösungswerk. Laß Jahr um Jahr vergehen und das letzte immer näher rücken, laß das kommende Jahr bringen, was es will, wir können allem ruhig entgegengehen, weil wir *Jesus* haben.