

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE  
CHURCH  
AND  
MINISTRY  
AND ITS IMPORTANCE  
TO THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR  
AND HIS CONGREGATION  
PART III**

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## **THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR AND HIS CONGREGATION**

Is it right for a faithful Lutheran Pastor to point out error? Should he warn against false doctrine? Dare he even reprove false teachers and errorists, and if necessary also name them?

Many today would reply, "No, indeed! How dare we judge and condemn others! We should rather show love and kindness to false teachers." He is accused of being intolerant and loveless who dares to raise his voice against attacks made against the Word of God. Likewise, protests are often raised when the orthodox Lutheran Pastor shows his hearers the errors that abound in other Lutheran Churches.

But what does God's Word say? Certainly, the foremost duty of a faithful shepherd is to nourish the souls of his hearers through plain and clear instruction in the Word of God (Matt. 28:20; Acts 20:27). So the Apostle Paul wrote in Acts 20:20, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Just as the body becomes strong through the eating of nourishing food, so faith in the heart can only grow and enlarge through regular feeding of the nourishing truths of the Word of God.

At the same time, the Scriptures point out in 2 Tim. 3:16, that the Word of God is, "profitable for doctrine, **for reproof** (Greek: to rebuke, to bring to the knowledge of sin), **for correction** (Greek: restoration to an upright state), for instruction in righteousness." The words of Jesus are plain (Matt. 7:15), "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Again Jesus warns (Matt. 24:23-26), "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not."

Following His own command, **Christ** strongly warned his hearers against the false teachings of the **Pharisees and Sadducees**. To them He said (Matt. 22:29), "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." Likewise Jesus plainly pointed out (Matt. 15:13), "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Also the **Apostles** followed Jesus' example by warning their hearers of the errors against which they should guard for the care of their souls (Acts 15:10-11; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Cor. 15). Finally in the Old Testament, following the practice of the other prophets, Jeremiah exclaims (Jer. 23:31), "Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith." (cf. Jer. 5:30-31; Ezek. 22:26).

Therefore with our Lutheran Confessions we state:

"We have no intention of **yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God** for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do)... Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors." (Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Article XI, Triglotta, p.1095).

Those who love, appreciate and desire to hold steadfast to the pure Word, must therefore be prepared to defend every doctrine of the Bible that is attacked. Also in the doctrine that is before us today, abominable errors have entered the Visible Church which have caused untold damage to souls.

The **Catholic Church** teaches that the Pope has chief authority within the church, not only ruling in earthly matters, but also daring to place himself above the rule of the Holy Scriptures. It regards itself as the only saving church established by God, outside of which there is no salvation. The laity count for nothing, the priesthood being regarded in a special class between them and God having being given this power at their ordination.

Also within many of the **Reformed Churches**, authority is given to archbishops, bishops and priests, the public use of the Office of the Keys being taken away from those who truly possess it, the local congregation.

Sadly also within the Lutheran Church, not all maintain true Scriptural principles in these matters. Some have given rulership to the clergy in earthly matters, establishing an episcopal setup similar to the Roman Catholic Church (liberal Lutheran Churches in America, Lutheran Church of Australia). Others look upon Christ's true Fold (the Invisible Church) as some visible organization from which one must not separate for fear of tearing apart the body of Christ. Again, orthodox Lutheranism has had to combat the error (taught by Grabau of the Buffalo Synod) that salvation could only be found in their visible denomination.

Finally, some have done away with all authority whatsoever, claiming that the local congregation has not been established by God, and does not have the right publicly to use the Office of the Keys. Rather it is taught that the existence of the congregation is merely by human arrangement, having similar authority to other gatherings of Christians. The same is said of the Office of Pastor, that it has not been established by God, but has simply been established for the sake of good order like other offices of the congregation (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Church of the Lutheran Confessions, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia).

It will be the aim of this essay to expose the latter of these errors, to point out how they are contrary to the Word of God, and to show the consequences of clinging to such erroneous teachings.

Let us therefore STUDY **PART III** of:-

## **THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR AND HIS CONGREGATION**

WE SHALL SEE:

- I. A NUMBER OF ERRORS THAT HAVE ARISEN IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH CONCERNING THIS DOCTRINE.**
- II. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY IN REFUTATION OF THESE ERRORS.**
- III. THE DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES WHICH MAY RESULT IF THIS DOCTRINE IS CORRUPTED.**

### **I.**

#### **A NUMBER OF ERRORS THAT HAVE ARISEN IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH CONCERNING THIS DOCTRINE**

The doctrine of the Church and Ministry is one that the Lutheran Church has had to seriously confront ever since the days of Luther. He had to combat serious errors in the Catholic Church, and also various other errors that arose amongst protestants. Likewise, when Walther and the Saxon Immigrants came to America, this doctrine came to the fore. Since the early Missourians

had left behind their churches in Germany, they were plagued with the thought that they were not a real church, not possessing the Office of the Keys and therefore having no right to call for themselves Pastors. Walther mightily strengthened the true Scriptural position when in a debate on Church and Ministry at Altenburg with Marbach, he won the day.

His deep study of Scripture in relation to this matter held Walther in good stead when later he had to grapple with the errors of Pastor Grabau and the Buffalo Synod. Grabau claimed that the one Holy Christian Church (Invisible Church) is a visible organization, membership in which was necessary to salvation. This visible organization he claimed to be his church. At the same time it was claimed that the Office of the Keys was given exclusively to the pastors. The maintenance of the Scriptural teaching of the Office of the Keys possessed by all Christians and used publicly by the local congregation, Grabau ridiculed as "mob-rule." With what delight may we today still read such great classical presentations, written by Walther to combat such errors as these, as, "**The Voice of our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry**," and "**The Proper Form of an Evangelical Local Congregation Independent of the State**."

But the Missouri Synod was not now free from controversy in this matter. In 1872, an organization was formed called the Synodical Conference. This had amongst its members the Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Synod. Dr. A. Hoeneke, the leading theologian of Wisconsin, maintained the same position as Walther and the Missouri Synod, being doctrinally united with them also on the Doctrine of Church and Ministry. (This is seen, for example in his essay "**The Teaching Ministry**," reprinted in *The Faithful Word*, 1966, No. 2, p.7). While Hoeneke remained alive, Wisconsin remained orthodox in its position.

However, after his death in 1908, professors of the Seminary of the Wisconsin Synod, including August Pieper (the brother of Dr. Franz Pieper of the Missouri Synod), Schaller and Lehringer, began to come out with errors in the doctrine of the Church and Ministry. These errors were recognized by the Missouri men, and talks were organized in 1916, which resulted in a Statement which was supposed to settle the matter, known as the **Wauwatosa Theses**. Sadly, errors again erupted from Wisconsin men. Talks were again arranged in 1929 to 1931, at which again a Statement was adopted entitled the **Thiensville Theses**. Sadly the dispute still remained unsettled, with the Wisconsin Synod men soon returning to their previous position.

In 1932, President Pfoth, General President of Missouri summarized the position of the Missouri Synod over against Wisconsin to Dr. Theodore Engelder, a professor in Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He stated:

"Regrettably, it appears to be beyond question that Thiensville (the Wisconsin Seminary) has receded completely to its earlier position...."

"As I see it, it (the point of controversy, GLW) is the following:

- "1. St. Louis: The local congregation is of divine arrangement, the synod by human ordinance.  
Thiensville: Local congregation and synod lie on the same plane.
- "2. St. Louis: The pastoral office in the congregation is by divine arrangement. Synodical offices are of human ordinance.  
Thiensville: Both offices lie on the same plane.
- "3. St. Louis: The exercise of church discipline which our Saviour describes in Matt. 18 may only be carried through a local congregation.  
Thiensville: The exercise of church discipline which our Saviour describes in Matt. 18 may be carried through by any group of Christians which is assembled in Jesus' name."

Even at this stage, President Pfotenhauer recognized that this matter, if not resolved, would finally end in a break in fellowship between the two Synods.

However it was a little after this time that discussion began regarding fellowship with the ALC (American Lutheran Church), as well as controversy in the Missouri Synod concerning the **Statement of the 44** and Church Fellowship. Missouri became so embroiled in other matters that little thought was given to the unsettled matters with Wisconsin regarding the doctrine of Church and Ministry.

As time went on, the Wisconsin Synod became hardened in its position, particularly during the 1960's, during which many statements and essays were produced outlining their false position. It was also at this time, as well as in the 1970's, that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS, formerly the Norwegian Synod), which had also been a part of the Synodical Conference, experienced much discussion and turmoil in its midst concerning the Church and Ministry. However since it remained in fellowship with the larger Wisconsin Synod, the ELS was influenced to accept its position on the matter. This is where the ELS stands today.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia, a sister Synod of the ELS in America, and also in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod, also teaches this false position on Church and Ministry.

Finally, a number of Pastors and congregations of the Wisconsin Synod broke fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod and organized the Church of the Lutheran Confessions in 1961. Since however this was on the matter of Church Fellowship and Rom. 16:17-18, they retained Wisconsin's error on Church and Ministry.

### **IN WHAT DOES WISCONSIN'S ERROR ON CHURCH AND MINISTRY CONSIST?**

Let us compare the two side by side.

#### **THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

##### **THE SCRIPTURAL POSITION**

1. The Lord has instituted and commanded the local congregation, to which Christians are commanded to belong.
2. All other groupings of Christians, apart from the local congregation, (e.g. Synod, Pastoral Conference, Sunday School Teachers' Conference, etc), are not the church or local congregation, and therefore are by human arrangement.
3. The local congregation alone has the right and power to exercise publicly, on behalf of the Christians in its midst, the Office of the Keys. Other groupings of Christians (as mentioned above) do not have the right to exercise the Office of the Keys publicly, since their establishment has not been commanded by God.

##### **THE ERRONEOUS WISCONSIN POSITION**

1. God has not commanded any visible grouping of Christians. The local congregation has not been instituted and commanded by God.
2. Whether Christians gather together as congregations, synods, or any other grouping (Sunday School Teachers, Meeting, Pastoral Conference), is merely by human arrangement only. Wherever Christians thus gather together, this is to be regarded as "church". There is no essential difference between a local congregation, synod, or any other group of Christians gathered together.
3. The local congregation does not have the exclusive right and power publicly to exercise the Office of the Keys. Any group of Christians gathered together (congregation, Synod, family, Pastoral Conference, etc.), are "church" and therefore have the right and power to exercise the Office of the Keys.

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| <p>4. Only the local congregation has the right and power to exercise the third step of Church Discipline (excommunication), according to the Lord's command in Matt. 18:17, "Tell it unto the church."</p>   | <p>4. Any group of Christians gathered together may exercise the third step of Church Discipline. Once they have "excommunicated" ("Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"), Matt.18:17 has been obeyed, even though it has not come before the local congregation.</p> |
| <p>5. Only the local congregation has the power of the Office of the Keys, as a church, publicly to call Pastors, baptise, appoint someone to distribute the Lord's Supper, etc.</p>                          | <p>5. Any group of Christians may perform this job. It is not the exclusive right of the congregation.</p>  |
| <p>6. The congregation alone has the right to decide what it wishes to be done in its midst in matters of adiaphora. It cannot be dictated to in such matters by other groups of Christians (e.g. synod).</p> | <p>6. Other groups of Christians (e.g. synod) have just as much right to decide what is to be done in matters not decided by God's Word as the congregation. There is no Scriptural Principle to prevent Synod forcing its will in such matters upon the local congregation.</p>        |

## **THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY**

### **THE SCRIPTURAL POSITION**

1. God has instituted and commanded the Office of the Ministry in the local congregation. It is the only such office that has been divinely commanded.
2. All other offices (e.g. Sunday School Teacher, Day School teacher, Elder, Theological professor) in the church are different from the office of the pastor in that they are of human arrangement only. They are established by the congregation for the sake of good order and where the need arises.
3. A congregation is divinely commanded to establish the Office of the Ministry in its midst, to call an orthodox Pastor or Pastors to exercise publicly the Office of the Keys on its behalf.
4. Since God has established the Office of the Ministry, its duties are also established by the Lord. A Pastor is obligated to fulfil these duties by virtue of his call.

### **THE ERRONEOUS WISCONSIN POSITION**

1. God has not instituted and commanded the Office of the Ministry in the congregation or any other group of Christians. No offices have been divinely commanded in the local congregation.
2. The office of the pastor is like all other offices in the church, being of human arrangement only. The Office of the Ministry has been established merely for the sake of good order because the need arose in the church.
3. A congregation may please itself whether it wishes to call a pastor according to God's command that things must be done "decently and in order", just as it may according to its own need appoint Sunday School Teachers, Day School Teachers, Elders and any other persons to an office in the church.
4. Since God has not established the Office of the Ministry, neither are its duties defined. A congregation may of itself define the duties and responsibilities of the Pastor. Others therefore without the Pastor's permission have the right to be

appointed to perform some of the functions of the Office of the Ministry.

In order to show that these errors are actually taught by the churches mentioned, we have devoted substantial room in **Addendum I** to give such proof. Numerous Essays and Statements are available to adequately show these errors in doctrine as they are taught in the church bodies mentioned previously.

## II.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY IN REFUTATION OF THESE ERRORS**

The doctrines of God's Word are clearly revealed in simple and plain passages of the Bible (Psalm 119:105, 107, 130; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Peter 1:19). In order to determine what God's will is, for us to believe, teach and practice, we must go to these proof-texts, and accept what they place before us. So also with the doctrines of the **Church and Ministry**.

Dr. Pieper states:

"The entire Christian doctrine is revealed and set forth in Scripture passages so clear that the learned and unlearned alike can understand them.... If the Scripture did not have this quality, it would not be for all Christians 'a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path,' nor would all Christians be able to establish the truth of their faith by Scripture and in the light of Scripture to mark and avoid false teachers." (Christian Dogmatics, I, p.360).

#### **A. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

##### **GOD'S ORDER FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

When the Lord gave the general command to all Christians to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16), He foresaw that the Word of God would be preached "for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14; Rom. 10:18), and that many would be converted to the Christian faith (John 17:20). At the same time He saw the need for these Christians to gather together as a group, for at least one to be appointed to preach God's Word (Acts 20:28), for Christian fellowship (Acts 2:42), for regular public worship (Heb. 10:25), for celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:26, 10:17), for discipline of straying souls (Matt. 18:15-18), as well as mutual care and edification (Acts 6:1-6; Col. 3:15-16).

He therefore did not leave it to Christians themselves to decide what was best, nor to determine this merely according to good order, nor did God allow the Christians gradually to develop or evolve their own system of church structure. Rather He established the local congregation (Greek: ἐκκλησία), as the divinely-commanded grouping of Christians where these functions were to take place.

##### **IN WHAT WAYS IS THE WORD CHURCH USED IN THE BIBLE?**

The word **Church** is used, of Christians, in only **three ways** in the New Testament.

**Firstly**, the Bible uses the word "Church" to describe the **Invisible Church, the true Christians scattered throughout the world**, invisible to the eyes of men (Eph. 2:10; 3:15; 4:6; Heb. 1:14; 12:23; Rev. 5:9). Thus the Lord speaks in the following passages of Scripture.

- **Matt. 16:18**, "Upon this Rock I will build My **Church**."
- **Eph. 1:22**, "Gave Him (Christ) to be the Head over all things to the **Church** which is His body."
- **Eph. 5:27**, "A glorious **Church** not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

- **Eph. 5:23**, "Christ is the Head of the **Church**."

**Secondly**, the Bible uses the word "**Church**" to describe the **local Christian Congregation of true believers**. This is the local Christian Congregation as God sees it, composed only of true believers. It is they alone who truly possess the power of the Office of the Keys.

Thus the Lord speaks of the true Christians in the local congregations in particular places in the following passages of Scripture. These passages refer to these **local congregations, as they are seen through the eyes of God**, i.e. the true Christians that are there.

- **1 Cor. 1:2**, "The **Church** of God which is at Corinth, to them which are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."
- **1 Thess. 1:1**, "The **Church** of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ."
- **Acts 2:47**, "The Lord added to the **Church** (at Jerusalem) daily such as should be saved."
- **Phil. 1:1**, "To all the saints which are in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi."

**Thirdly**, the Bible speaks of local Visible Christian Congregations as they are seen by men. These **local visible congregations**, are composed of both true Christians and hypocrites. Since man cannot see into the heart, and see the faith that dwells there, he cannot tell who are Christians and who are hypocrites. He can only judge by the outward profession of the Christian faith. The group of those who outwardly profess the Christian faith, who gather together around the Word of God, who have the Office of the Ministry established in their midst, who have God's Word preached and the Sacraments administered and who perform the other duties of such a local congregation (e.g. Church Discipline, Christian Fellowship and love), we call a local **visible Christian Congregation**. Scripture uses the word "church" in this way in the following passages.

- **3 John 9, 10**, "I wrote unto the **church**," John says, at the same time warning against "Diotrephes, who.... receiveth us not." Diotrephes was a member of this congregation.
- **Acts 20:17, 29, 30**, "the elders of the **church**," these including also "grievous wolves.... not sparing the flock."

Never in the Scriptures is the term "**Church**" used to describe other groupings of Christians, such as a synod, family gathering, or meeting of believers, apart from the local congregation.

### **AT GOD'S COMMAND, THE APOSTLES FORMED LOCAL CONGREGATIONS**

When on Pentecost Sunday many souls were converted to Christ, they were formed into a **local Christian Congregation at Jerusalem**. "The same day were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). They then began to perform the **functions** of a local congregation. "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). It was not of their own free will that this congregation was formed and grew. It was at **God's command**, as we learn in Acts 2:47, "And **the Lord added to the church** daily such as should be saved."

Wherever the Apostles went preaching the Word of God, souls were converted to Christ. They were not just left to themselves to organize whatever groups they pleased. At God's command, the Apostles gathered them into **local congregations**. Thus, local congregations were formed at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), Rome (Rom. 1:2), throughout Galatia (Gal. 1:2), Ephesus (Eph. 1:1; Acts 20:28), Philippi (Phil. 1:1), as well as other places (Acts 14:23). Such practice of the Apostles was at the Lord's direction.

We hear of **no other divinely commanded visible body of Christians being formed**. Nowhere does the Lord command, nor did the Apostles follow the practice by divine command, of organizing and establishing **synods**, pastoral conferences, ladies societies, or other

groupings of Christians. These may be organized by man if the need arises, but they are just that, bodies established by man, **human arrangements**. They are never called "church" in the sense of the local Christian Congregation, and therefore are not by divine arrangement.

In his parting instructions to the Pastors of the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul instructed them in the "**counsel of God**" (Acts 20:27). He said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the **church** (Greek: local congregation) of God" (Acts 20:28). What clearer Word of the Scriptures could we have, that it was **the Lord** who had established this congregation at Ephesus, and that it was **the Lord** who had appointed these pastors to care for the spiritual needs of the congregation. How could these words be true, if the congregation at Ephesus were merely by human arrangement?

## **GOD COMMANDS DIVINELY ESTABLISHED CONGREGATIONS TO CALL PASTORS**

The Lord has commanded that Pastors be called to fulfill the functions of the Office of the Ministry in the local congregations. Christians in the local congregation are to make diligent use of the pastoral ministry by hearing and learning God's Word as this is purely proclaimed by the divinely called ministers. Such calls are to be extended by the divinely established local congregations.

Thus the Lord commanded Titus through the Apostle Paul, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest **set in order the things that are wanting**, and **ordain elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5). The local congregation had already been established by the Apostle Himself through the preaching of the Word. Now the Apostle gives the order ("appointed", not just advised), that pastors be called to fill the Office of the Ministry.

Likewise, Paul and Barnabas, in various congregations, were "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). One of these doctrines of God's Word that they practiced was that they "ordained them elders in every church (local congregation)" (Acts 14:23).

Nowhere do we learn of the Apostles having any other group than the local congregations call pastors to serve over them. Therefore on no Scriptural basis can it be claimed that also other groupings of Christians (e.g. Synods), have the authority to call Pastors.

## **GOD HAS GIVEN TO THE CONGREGATION ALONE THE RIGHT TO PUBLICLY EXERCISE THE FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS**

To every individual Christian, as a member of the Invisible Church, God has given the power of the Office of the Keys (Matt. 16:18-19; John 20:22-23; Matt. 18:17-20). However Christ has instituted the **local congregation**, and requires that the Office of the Keys be **publicly administered** through it.

In **Matt. 18:17**, the Lord has given to the **local congregation**, the duty to administer the final step of Church discipline, excommunication. Here we learn, "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the **church** (Greek: local congregation): but if he neglect to hear the **church** (Greek: local congregation), let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." It could not be to the Invisible Church (all Christians scattered throughout the world) that the Lord gives this duty. How could they fulfill it? And since they are invisible, how could we see that it has been done? Rather the **local congregation** has been given the duty publicly to use the binding key and announce to an impenitent sinner that the door of heaven is closed to him.

This shows us that the Lord not only commanded congregations to exist, but also knew that this command would be followed in order to carry out His commands in connection with Church Discipline. Thus the Apostle Paul gave the command to the congregation at Corinth to carry out the steps of Church Discipline against an impenitent sinner (1Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

## **GOD HAS GIVEN OTHER FUNCTIONS TO THE LOCAL CONGREGATION**

According to God's command, true believers in the one locality are to assemble themselves together for **public worship** (Heb. 10:25; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19), celebrate the **Lord's Supper** often in their assemblies (1 Cor. 11:26), **baptize** (Matt. 28:19-20), maintain the **unity of the Spirit** (Eph. 4:3; 1 Thess. 4:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:10) and perform **works of charity** (1 Cor. 16:3; Acts 6:1-6). These functions are to be performed publicly through the institution of the local congregation.

Thus we have seen that the Lord has given to the **local congregation**, the exclusive right and high privilege of being that divinely instituted local body of Christians of the one faith, who have the rights and powers to publicly administer the Office of the Keys. The Scriptures say nothing of any other grouping of Christians as being divinely established. Therefore to claim that other groups established by man (Synod, Federation, Young People's Society) have the right to publicly administer the Office of the Keys, and are on the same level as the local congregation is a distortion of the Scriptures, false teaching, and laying oneself open to many dangerous abuses.

### **B. THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY**

#### **THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ALL CHRISTIANS AS SPIRITUAL PRIESTS, AND THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY MINISTRY (PASTORAL OFFICE)**

Not only to Pastors, but to all Christians, the Apostle Peter writes, "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 marvelous light" (1 Peter. 2:9). To all Christians God has given the command to preach and profess the Word of God to others (1 Peter. 3:15; Col. 3:16). This is also called the **Priesthood of all believers**.

However, in order to avoid disorder and confusion, God has established a special office to perform the duties of the Office of the Keys **publicly, on behalf of the local congregation**. This is the **Office of the Public Ministry**. Men who are properly gifted and trained are to be called by the local congregation, publicly to proclaim God's Word, administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper, care for souls, and perform the other functions God has assigned to them.

This Office of the Ministry was established by God, at the same time that the Lord gave to His disciples the command to teach and proclaim the Word (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 9:1-10; Mark 16:15; John 21:15-17). "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:22-23).

Thus the Bible refers to **Ministers** (2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:6; 1 Cor. 3:5; Col. 4:7; 1 Thess. 3:2), **Bishops** (Acts 20:28; Phil.1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7), and **Elders** (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4; Titus 1:5). These names do not refer to different ranks of Pastors, but simply are different terms for one and the same office.

#### **THE PRACTICE OF THE APOSTLES, ACCORDING TO GOD'S COMMAND WAS TO HAVE THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY ESTABLISHED IN EACH CONGREGATION**

Wherever the Apostles went and established local congregations, they were not left to their own devices, nor was it a matter of Christian liberty as to the public preaching of the Word. Rather the Apostles and their helpers saw to it that **pastors were called** to perform the functions of the Office of the Ministry. This they did, not just to establish good order, but because **the Lord Himself commanded** this pastoral office to be established.

So we learn in Acts 14:22-23, that in "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith," Paul and Barnabas also "ordained them elders in every church." This

practice took place in "every church" that the Apostle visited in this part of his missionary journey. Who would dare to claim that this was only done by Paul as his own human arrangement?

Likewise, Paul instructed Titus concerning the Lord's will for the congregations, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5). Note particularly that the calling of pastors was something that was "wanting" and therefore needed to be "set in order." Thus the Lord through Paul "appointed" (Greek: commanded, charged) Titus to do these things. Therefore the Office of the Ministry could not be of human arrangement. Paul would not give a command if it were a matter of Christian liberty.

In a similar manner, the Apostle Paul commanded the pastors of Ephesus who had gathered before him, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God" (Acts 20:28). These pastors had not been appointed and called by human arrangement, but at the command of the Lord.

### **THE SCRIPTURES SET APART THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY AS A SPECIAL OFFICE DISTINCT FROM ALL OTHERS IN THE CHURCH**

The Bible clearly shows the Office of the Public Ministry to be a **special God-ordained office in the church**. It is set aside as different from all other offices of human appointment, by the way in which the Word of God spells out the **qualifications, function and duties, honor and dignity, and even method of support of this office**.

Consider the following passages which describe these matters.

#### **PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

- **1 Tim. 3:1-6**, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
- **Titus 1:6-9**, "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

#### **FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES**

- **1 Peter 5:1-3**, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."
- **Eph. 4:11-12**, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ."

- **2 Cor. 4:5**, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake...."
- **2 Cor. 5:20**, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us."
- **1 Cor. 4:1**, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

### **HONOUR AND DIGNITY**

- **Heb. 13:7**, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."
- **Heb. 13:17**, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."
- **1 Thess. 5:12-13**, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."
- **1 Tim. 5:17**, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."
- **1 Pet. 5:4**, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

### **METHOD OF SUPPORT**

- **Gal. 6:6**, "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."
- **1 Cor. 9:14**, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

From all this it can be seen that the Lord regards the Public Ministry of the Word or the Pastoral Office as a divine institution to be established through the local congregation. The Bible speaks of no other office, such as Day-school teacher, Seminary Professor, Synodical Official in this way, nor defines their duties and responsibilities.

Therefore it is clear that it is quite unscriptural to claim that the Office of the Public Ministry has not been established by God but is by human arrangement. Also to state that the Office of the Ministry is on the same level with other offices established by the congregation, is ignoring the clear statement and command of God and false teaching.

### **III.**

#### **THE DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES WHICH MAY RESULT IF THIS DOCTRINE IS CORRUPTED**

The individual teachings of the Bible are not isolated beliefs which are totally independent of each other. Rather, each doctrine is intertwined or woven together with many other teachings, so that the truths of one doctrine are dependent upon the truths of many other teachings in the Scriptures. Just as one organ of the body (e.g. the heart, the lungs), cannot function entirely by itself, but relies upon many other organs in the body to support it, so also every teaching of the

Scriptures can only be upheld, if other teachings on which it is based and to which it is connected remain firm.

At the same time the opposite is true. One doctrine of the Bible cannot be corrupted with error, and leave all other teachings unaffected. Just as in the human body, the failure of one organ will soon cause another to collapse, so the entry of false doctrine into one teaching of the Bible, will automatically have effects on other vital teachings of the Bible. Thus Scriptures themselves warn, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9), and "their word will eat as doth a canker" (2 Tim. 2:17).

## **HOW DOES THIS SCRIPTURAL WARNING APPLY TO THE FALSE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY?**

### **AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD UNDERMINED**

As has been shown, the doctrine of the divine institution of the local congregation and the public ministry is based on clear texts of the Word of God. In this matter, we can say, "Thus saith the Lord." Those who do not accept the teaching drawn from these Bible texts, attack the Scriptural Principle that the Word of God alone establishes the doctrines of the Christian Faith. If clear evidence from the Bible is not accepted here, will this same attitude be revealed with regard to other plain teachings of Scripture?

### **CONFUSION IN THE AREA OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

Scripture teaches that the final step of Church Discipline must be taken by the **local congregation**, as the Scriptures teach, "Tell it unto the Church" (Matt 18:17). Since those who support the false view on Church and Ministry believe that any group of Christians may be called "church", why could not any group of Christians excommunicate? If it need not be the local congregation, why not the Young People's society, or the Sunday School teacher's meeting, or the Synod or Federation?

Imagine the **confusion** that would result from this false teaching. Consider the harm that would be brought to the sinner's soul through the failure to properly admonish him as the Lord has commanded. What an offence would be caused through this person's soul being lost, while his fellow Christians try to decide where the matter is to be dealt with. Some have appealed to the command for things to be done "decently and in order," (1 Cor. 14:40), and for "brotherly love" (Gal. 5:13), but finally this false teaching leaves it up to **man** to decide what Scripture itself has already decided.

### **CONFUSION IN THE AREA OF OTHER CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES, SUCH AS CALLING OF A PASTOR, AND ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

These important duties God has placed under the authority of the local congregation. But if the false claim is made that any group of Christians is "church," what is to stop a men's club or ladies aid society, a Sunday school or elder's meeting, a Synod or Pastoral Conference from performing baptisms, distributing the Lord's Supper or calling Pastors to serve? If, for example, a Baptism is to take place, who is going to settle the argument as to who has the authority to appoint someone to perform this job?

If Scripture has not given this authority to the local congregation, men will soon be led to arguing amongst themselves to obtain this power.

### **CONFUSION AS TO OUR DUTY TO REGULARLY ATTEND THE SERVICES OF OUR LOCAL CONGREGATION**

In Heb. 10:25, the Lord commands us, "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." Here the Lord places before us the command that, unless we have valid reason, we are to attend the public worship services of our local congregation to which we belong. If, then, as false teachers claim, any gathering of Christians is "church," could not any family say that since they can assemble together in their home, they need not attend the worship service of their congregation? Why need any Christian attend his congregation's services, since then his duties according to the Third Commandment could quite easily be performed elsewhere? What confusion and neglect of God's Word would soon arise!

### **CONFUSION REGARDING THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

In 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12, the Lord commands that women are not to lead the worship service of the local congregation, nor be public teachers of male adults, nor vote and speak at the meeting of the local congregation. If there is confusion as to what really composes the "church," the following questions may then be asked. Would it not be wrong for a woman to speak at a Young People's meeting, or a Sunday School Teacher's Meeting, since these, as groups of Christians could be called "church"? Would not a woman be sinning by teaching a Sunday School Class? Where would these principles of the Scriptures apply?

### **DUE HONOUR AND RESPECT TAKEN FROM CALLED MINISTER**

As we have seen previously, the Lord requires "double honour" (1 Tim. 5:17-18) and high "esteem" (1 Thess. 5:12-13) to be given by the members of a congregation to the man who occupies the Office of the Ministry in their midst. If all appointed to fulfil responsibilities in the church or Synod (Sunday-school teachers, elders, Synod officials, congregational office bearers) are really in the Office of the Ministry, are not all of these worthy of such respect? Would not the pastor of the local congregation be robbed of that special respect and honour that the Lord has given to him?

### **DANGER OF THE INTRUSION OF THE SYNOD INTO THE AFFAIRS OF THE LOCAL CONGREGATION**

Scripture has given to the local congregation supremacy, in earthly matters, to decide its own affairs. No one has the right according to the Bible to dictate to it what it must do. However if, as false teachers state, the congregation is on the same level as other bodies such as Synod and Church Council, what in Scripture is to stop these other bodies **intruding in congregational affairs**? Is it not natural that the larger the body (e.g. Synod), the greater will be the power that it wields? Will not the temptation therefore be to overrule the decision of the local congregation? The ultimate consequence of this is the development of a system similar to the Papacy in the Catholic Church.

Satan is ever trying to use false teaching to undermine as many teachings in a congregation as he can. Since his **AIM is TO DESTROY THE PREACHING OF THE WAY TO SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST, THAT SOULS BE LOST TO THE LORD**, he will do all in his power to promote the spread of his poison.

### **CONCLUSION**

May it be our fervent prayer that the Lord give to us the strength to uphold in teaching and practice the Scriptural Doctrine of the Church and Ministry. May our Pastors not only proclaim this doctrine purely, but also rejoice in the duties and privilege of the special office in the church that God has given to them. May our congregations always maintain their sovereignty, bowing alone to the authority of the Lord in His Word. May we, one and all be blessed by this special institution of the congregation and the public ministry the Lord has established. May we through the Word be guided through this world, certain that the Lord will answer our prayer,

Oh, may Thy pastors faithful be,  
Not labouring for themselves, but Thee;  
Give grace to feed with wholesome food  
The sheep and lambs bought by Thy blood;  
To tend Thy flock, and thus to prove  
How dearly they the Shepherd love!

Oh, may Thy people faithful be,  
And in Thy pastors honour Thee,  
And with them work, and for them pray,  
And gladly Thee in them obey;  
Receive the prophet of the Lord,  
And gain the prophet's own reward! (ALHB, 239 v. 2-3).

## ADDENDUM I

### PROOF FROM THE OFFICIAL WRITINGS OF VARIOUS LUTHERAN CHURCH BODIES OF THEIR FALSE POSITION ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY

#### WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

"The **plea is not sound** that only the local congregation has the power of excommunicating an unrepentant sinner, because it is divinely instituted and has the express command to do this, while a synod, or under whichever name beyond the limits of a local congregation may be comprehended, is not even mentioned in Scripture....

"There is no **word of institution of the local congregation** in the sense we speak of it today....

"Similarly we **look in vain in Holy Writ, for a word of institution of the pastorate in a local congregation**.... It came as a shock to some members of our Synod and in Missouri, when, e.g. Professor J. Schaller spoke of the historical development of the pastorate through the centuries into what is in our congregations today. **And yet it is true.**" (Quartalschrift, Vol. 47, No. 2, p.103f).

"Therefore it **(the Synod) has all ecclesiastical authority, the power of the Word, the power of the Keys.**"

"The **local congregation has no monopoly on the exercise of the Means of Grace, the Gospel, the Sacraments, the power of the Keys.**" (Quartalschrift, July 1911, pp.140, 146).

"From this it follows that it **(the Synod) possesses all power which Christ has given to His Church on earth.**" (Quartalschrift, 1913, p.99).

"The public office in the Church is, as soon as it is concretely established, an **external institution**. But in the whole New Testament there is **nowhere a clear word of formal institution** for any specific form of it, if one looks away from the apostolate." (Quartalschrift, January 1913, p.40).

"We too say that the Office of the Ministry, the worship service in the parish, etc., are ordained of God, and that is so because the public preaching ministry, the public preaching and administration of the Sacraments and so on and so forth, is God's institution and establishment; but of course, not only the office of preaching in a local congregation or the parish ministry which results from the external circumstances of the church, as, e.g., the Christian (and the synodical) office of a theological professor and other forms of it, as God's institution and establishment."

"From the very composition of a synod it is evident that **synod is Church in the same sense as each local congregation.**"

"If the **synod is Church in the proper sense of the word**, then it not only has the power of the keys, but must also use it on its members who sin or err in doctrine."

"Here the principle applies, that **every church body, be it a local congregation, a conference, a synod, or any other can administer a valid excommunication before God....**"

"If the synod is Church in the true sense of the word, then it not only has the keys, but should and must also use them on its members...." (**Concerning the Doctrine of the Church and of its Ministry, with Special Reference to the Synod and its Discipline.**)

by Prof. August Pieper. Quartalschrift, Oct., 1929. Trans. Prof. H. J. Vogel, reprinted in Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. 59, No.2, April 1962, pp.106, 117, 124, 131, 136).

**"All local groups of people, then, which show the identifying marks of the Church, manifest thereby the presence of the universal Church of Christ (called the Una Sancta), and are themselves simply called churches (in the singular or in the plural), literally, assemblies.**

**"We find no instructions to the believers to organize local congregations."**

"Thus in the New Testament we find that there were local congregations and groupings of local congregations; although **about their organization nothing is said in either case. No divine institution is ever hinted**, although the neglect of cooperation both in a congregation and between congregations is sternly reprimanded."

"The thought of authority in any church organization violates the idea of Church; it is an erroneous concept. **Both the local congregation and the synod** are working organs through which the individual Christian in communion with his brethren provides for his own spiritual needs and carries out specific phases of the task assigned to him.... **Both are equally divine, both are Church**, and must be reverently aware that they are, each in its own sphere, supplying a want and carrying out a definite part of the task which Christ assigned to His believers, the Church on earth." (Synod and Congregation, by Prof. Joh. Meyer. read to the Arizona-California District Convention, WELS, June 23-25, 1964. Pages quoted: 21, 24, 26, 33. Reprinted Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Oct. 1964, pp.233-265).

"The **specific forms** in which believers group themselves together for the fellowship and work of the Church, the specific forms in which they arrange for the use of the means of grace in public worship, **have not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church.**"

"We hold it to be **untenable** to say that the **local congregation is specifically instituted by God in contrast to other groupings of believers** in Jesus' name; that the **ministry of the keys has been given exclusively to the local congregation.**" (W.E.L.S. Convention Proceedings, 1961, pp.189-190).

"Christ instituted one office in His Church, the ministry of the Gospel." "This office or service, the ministry of the keys, has been given to the Church, i.e., to the believers individually and collectively." "D. This public ministry [exercised by men specifically appointed] is **not generically different from that of the common priesthood of all Christians.** It is merely a special God-ordained way of practicing the one ministry of the Gospel."

"There is, however, **no direct word of institution** for any particular form of the public ministry."

"We hold it to be untenable to say that the **pastorate of the local congregation** (Pfarramt) as a specific form of the public ministry is specifically **instituted by the Lord** in contrast to other forms of the public ministry." (W.E.L.S. Convention Proceedings. 1967, pp.288-289).

**"Nor did He (God) give a command to the individual Christians to unite in local congregations."** (Continuing in His Word, p.70).

"This normally is done through the external forms of the **local congregation**, synod, and denomination. Although it is God's will that Christians gather for public worship, **these external forms, as such, however are not divinely instituted.**" (The Doctrine of the Church, Thesis IV).

"The position that the use of the **Office of the Keys is restricted to the local congregation is unknown to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.**"

"We **reject** the position which puts the **local congregation** in a class by itself, as a **divinely instituted** external organization and derives all other church organizations from it, as from their source."

"We **reject** the position that any visible or external form, be it **local congregation**, conference, synod, or denomination, is **divinely instituted.**" (A Statement on the Doctrine of the Church, prepared by the ELS Doctrine Committee, and presented to the 1977 ELS General Pastoral Conference, Minneapolis, MN, Jan. 4-6, 1977).

## CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

"**Any group of professing Christians** gathered in Christ's Name (Matt. 18:20) can rightly be called "**church**" because of the Christians in it.... The outward organizational form of a **congregation is of human arrangement** and may vary widely as it did even in the Apostolic Church."

"In the same sense in which a 'local congregation' is 'church,' therefore, a **wider association of Christians** reaching beyond the boundaries of a 'local congregation' is also rightly called '**church**'. In our circles such a larger fellowship has often resulted in an outward organizational form which is properly known as 'synod'."

"As the sum of all such congregations and their individual members, a synod therefore naturally and originally **possesses all treasures and powers that Christ has given to His Church on earth:** the authority to preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, the **Office of the Keys**, etc...."

"The **peculiar idea** that only the **local congregation** has been **ordained or instituted by God**, and can possess the Gospel, Sacraments and power of the keys only in this form, that the **synod** on the other hand is a purely **human organization** serving as human advisor to the congregation and for purely human efforts in furthering the Gospel,.... rests upon a **confusion of the essence with the outward form.**"

"To say, then, that a '**synod**', an ecclesiastical body or federation, consisting of a number of congregations of the same confession, or any similar permanent organization, is **not a 'church'** in the sense of Scripture, but is solely a **human institution**.... is to **misstate the case**...."

"We **deplore and reject** any doctrine of the Public Ministry which interprets Scripture as teaching a **divine institution of outward form**.... We hold in Christian liberty the Church may and does **exercise the functions of the Public Ministry** when it calls qualified persons into the pastorate, into the work of **Christian Day-school teaching**, into a **professorship** at its High Schools and Colleges, or as **elders** and **deacons** who are to assist pastors and teachers in their ministry." (Concerning Church and Ministry, pp.6, 14, 15, 17, 35).

## EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD OF AUSTRALIA

"Since these **visible gatherings** (for example, congregations, **synods**) confess themselves to the marks of the Church and make use of them, they are called **churches.**"

**"We reject.... any claim that the Church must function in the world through specific organizational forms."** (This We Believe. A Statement of Belief of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia. VII. The Church and its Ministry).

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## ADDENDUM 2

Recently the following statement was made in a publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia (Pastor D. Schroeder, Pastor):

"In 1989, the name 'Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia' was chosen, which among other things, would give a sort of fellowship identification with its two sister synods in the United States, but with a unique and totally Australian identity of its own. The ELSA had been a name used by the former ELCA up until 1941, when it was officially dropped. The name ELSA had historically been an identifying mark of confessional Lutheranism in Australia; **and indeed we are the true doctrinal and spiritual heirs to the original synod.** It is our prayer that our current reorganized ELSA will continue in the same tradition as our former synod" (Thank Heaven For Home Made Cooks, A Brief History of the ELSA, p.iii).

We **challenge this statement.** Not only is the position of the present Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia on the Doctrines of Church and Ministry **contrary to the Word of God**, but they also are certainly not the "**true doctrinal and spiritual heirs**" to the original synod. The former Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Australia taught quite differently than the present ELSA in matters of doctrine. They differed quite markedly in the doctrines of the Church and Ministry.

But to make it quite clear that this is not just our opinion, let us allow Pastors from the old ELSA answer the question,

### WHAT WAS THE POSITION OF THE FORMER ELSA (LATER ELCA) ON THE QUESTION OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY?

"It is true, it is not expressly commanded by the Word of God that congregations should thus unite to form a Synod; nowhere in the Holy Scriptures do we find this stated as the will of God, so that the individual churches, or congregations, would find themselves compelled, for conscience' sake, to found Synods. The **congregation is the only visible, or external, church union instituted by God**, and to whom He has given the **command to establish the holy Office of the Ministry**, in order that His Word may be proclaimed in public, and His holy Sacraments publicly administered, by persons properly called to this office and by this call have been made ministers of Christ, shepherds of the flock, through the Holy Spirit, to feed and to teach the church of God. To **such a local congregation**, where the Gospel of Christ is, in its truth and purity, proclaimed by the Office of the Ministry of the Word, properly called and established, the **Christian believer is in duty bound to belong.**" (The Advantages and Blessings of Synodical Fellowship, by Pastor E. Darsow. Essay presented at the Qld. District Convention, 1914, p.4).

"Such a **local congregation is an institution of God.** That is, it is **God's will that where a number of believers live together, they should form a congregation.** Not only individuals are commanded to admonish an erring brother, but **whole**

**congregations are to exercise Church discipline** and also to celebrate Holy Communion."

"**Parishes and Synods**, however, are **not essential parts of the Church**. Having **no God-given status, rights and duties**, they are **only human arrangements and advisory bodies to the congregations**. **The congregation is above the Parish or the Synod.**"

"**The Public Ministry** - It is clear that if in a congregation the Gospel is to be preached, children baptised, holy communion celebrated, absolution pronounced, there must be someone to do this. Also here Christ has **not** left His Church **without definite instructions**. If there had been no regulation, the greatest disorder would arise. Therefore **Christ has instituted the office of the public ministry**. It is **through this ministry that the congregation formally carries out her duty under the office of the keys**. Those who are entrusted with this office the New Testament calls elders, bishops, presbyters, teachers, pastors; these names being used for the one and the same office. (Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:17; 20:28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Cor. 12:28; 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:5; Rom. 10:15.) Whilst this is a **special office distinct from the priesthood of all believers**, pastors are not a special order or rank like the Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament." (The Call to the Ministry in the Church in Doctrine and Practice, by Pastor H. E. Temme. Presented at Qld. District Convention, ELSA, at Nobby, 1941).

"**The Synod is not above the congregation**, as so many mistakenly believe, for whereas **Synods are but human institutions, congregations are divine**, that is, the **congregation has been instituted by God, Synod by men**. Moreover, it is **God's will that Christians belong to congregations.**"

"Hence as **congregations are divine institutions** they are **higher than Synods and are free over against them**. Not a single passage can be quoted from the Bible that God instituted Synods, or that He has commanded the congregations to form Synods." (Church Government, by Pastor W.F. Noack. Essay presented to the ELSA, Qld. District Convention, held at Marburg, 1928. p.21).

