

January 2006 - A DRAMATIC SHIFT is a 57 page booklet published in 1983 and made available to all delegates to the 1983 national convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Added here are computer links to various internal and external sources as well as to reference material not available in 1983. The page numbers are those of the booklet with a few minor variations. A comprehensive list of all source material can be found [here](#).

[PDF](#)

**The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod**

**and**

**The Church and the Ministry**

**A DRAMATIC SHIFT**

With an appended review of the CTCR document

*The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*

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**PREFACE**

*It has been evident for some time now that things have changed in the Missouri Synod. Like so many others, I am not happy with what I see and have viewed with increasing alarm the changes that have taken place especially with regard to ordination practices, the*

*proliferation of categories of "ministry" and the obvious shift in direction of authority within the synodical organization.*

*To many it will appear that these changes are necessitated by a need for more efficient operations and to meet the demands and challenges of the world we have to live in. But it goes much deeper than that and can be traced to radical and fundamental changes in outlook toward the concept of church and ministry.*

*It is the purpose of this booklet to show what those fundamental changes are, how they came about, and what effect they have had on the practices that guide and give life to the Missouri Synod.*

*Sections III, IV and V have been written to provide historical perspective and include documentary material that some will find useful. They can, however, be passed over without serious loss to the continuity of the subject. I would much rather those sections not be read than have it happen that someone should begin reading, fall asleep, and never again return to their reading.*

*My greatest fear is that the reader will be turned aside by my ponderous prose and I beg that that shortcoming be overlooked.*

*My thanks to Connie (Zehnder) Prok who did the impossible by transforming a jumbled manuscript into the beautiful typewritten pages you will read, to her husband, Tim, who in the meantime didn't eat, and to Del Welker who extended me the kindness of rendering Connie's work in its final form.*

Clyde Nehrenz  
Lakewood, Ohio  
January, 1983

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*"When I first went to the seminary I was also installed as an assistant pastor in a local congregation so that I would have a valid call and not a professorial call only ( without a congregation); but when I left the seminary last January, the power center had so shifted that I did not even ask a congregation for a release, just the school's Board of Control, and no one thought anything of it."*

This statement, from an essay delivered to the North Wisconsin District Pastoral Conference in September 1975, by the Rev. Lorman M. Petersen, serves as well as any statement could to illustrate the great change that has taken place within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in its understanding of the church and the ministry. The change has come about -slowly - without the knowledge or understanding of the vast majority of pastors, teachers, and members of the congregations of Synod.

In September of 1981, Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) issued a report, [\*The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature\*](#) (PDF), which serves as the culmination of a controversy that has been raging - quietly - for more than thirty years, mostly within the confines of the synodical structure. It is clear from the report that those who have fought for rejection of Synod's historic stance have won the day. The report reflects the thinking of this faction, positing a position that is foreign to both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Time is running out! The CTCR report is sure to be presented to this summer's synodical convention for adoption. If it is in fact adopted, then official sanction will have been given to a radical shift in direction which is tragically significant not merely because of its effect on church polity but - of vastly greater import - because it indicates the rejection of certain principles that are anchored solidly on a clear doctrine of Scripture, one which is absolutely essential to the central doctrine of the Christian faith.

It is the purpose of this paper to convince the reader that what has just been said is in fact true and to point out the grave danger that it poses for the future of the Missouri Synod; that being convinced, he join together with others of like mind to work for a resolution of the matter.

## **Part I**

The command of our Lord Jesus Christ that all nations be taught to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you", demands in the final analysis that "theological theory be translated into ecclesiastical practice." In James 1:22 we are reminded that it is the express will of God that we be "doers of the Word and not hearers only" as Jesus Himself extols us in Matthew 7:24, adding His assurance that not only those who hear what He says but those who do what He says build upon solid rock.

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This principle of hearing and doing was uppermost in the minds of our 16th century fathers, the Reformation bringing reform in both doctrine and practice. Later, Walther and our Missouri forebears felt constrained to leave their homeland for the very reason that both doctrine and practice had fallen to the point of apostasy in the German church. In our own day Synod has been torn by dispute over doctrine and practice.

The doctrine of Justification was central in the reformers' dispute with Rome. Nothing could be allowed to stand in the way of the pure teaching of this fundamental truth. And because the false views of the church and the ministry held by the Roman church produced "transactions and deeds which contribute to the destruction of the entire holy Christian church and come into conflict with the first, fundamental article which is concerned with redemption in Jesus Christ," they considered the doctrine of the church and the ministry to be of vital importance.

Controversy concerning this doctrine was one of the first issues that faced that small community of believers that settled in and around St. Louis and whose members were later to form the Missouri Synod. Twice thereafter, controversy again arose over this matter with those outside their fellowship. In each instance the chief issues were: 1) The nature of the church; 2) The nature of the office of the ministry; 3) The divine call to the office of the ministry; 4) the place of ordination in the order of things.

These matters were supposedly settled for Missouri over 100 years ago. But now Synod is being confronted with them again and the delegates to this summer's convention are going to be asked to put their stamp of approval on the results of the current controversy. But the arguments have taken place almost exclusively within the ivory towers of our seminaries and in the ecclesiastical halls of synodical officialdom in virtual isolation from those whose chief concern it should be - namely, the congregations, pastors and teachers who *are* Synod.

Adoption of the CTCR report will be, after 100 years, a surrender of the hard-won victory of Walther and his contemporaries, a victory that reestablished the God-given dignity of the ministerial office on the one hand and on the other hand staved off those forces that threatened to "Romanize and Episcopalianize" the office of the ministry making of it a "special spiritual estate."

But that is not the worst of it. The dignity of the ministerial office and the Romanizing and Episcopalianizing of it are only outward manifestations of something of far greater importance. To discover what that is one must ask what is the nature of this dignity that Walther and others were so eager to protect and why it was so important to them to keep the ministerial office from becoming a special spiritual estate.

As we will see, the current controversy is important not so much because of its effect on church polity and practice but - of much greater import - because it deals "with false views of the church and the ministry....that come into conflict with the first, fundamental article which is concerned with redemption in Jesus Christ."

## Part II

It is a tribute to the sound practice of requiring children to learn the catechism and related material by rote that Lutheran Christians, no matter how old we are or how distant from our confirmation classes, remain always familiar with the terms "visible" and "invisible" church. If we at times forget what exactly it is that distinguishes the two we at least remember that when we confess our faith in the words of the Apostles Creed - "I believe in the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints" - the words "Christian Church" refer to the invisible church and that the invisible church is "the communion of saints," that is, all true believers in Christ.

Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession puts it this way: "The Christian church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints," who in the words of the Apology, "are scattered throughout the world." It is "a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind and understanding....Through it He gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it He creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in faith and in the fruits of the Spirit." (*Large Catechism*; Tappert, p. 417)

But there is something else about this church that we should remember: Christ has granted it awesome power.

### The Office of the Keys

In Acts 2 and Eph. 2 we are told that God the Father, maker of heaven and earth, made Jesus "both Lord and Christ", "and made Him sit at His right hand in heaven, above all rulers, authorities, powers, lords, and any name that can be mentioned, not only in this world but also in the next. And He put everything under His feet, and gave Him as head of everything to the church."

Jesus could, therefore, with authority, say to His disciples: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." [Matt. 28:18] Being head of everything and having all power, He had the right and the authority to grant to His church a power that even He had, in time, only because He was the Son of God, Lord and Christ.

John records for us how Christ gave this power to His church when after His resurrection He said to His disciples, "'As the Father sent Me, so I send you.' When He had said this, He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they're not forgiven....'" [John 20:21-23; cf. Matt. 16:19; 18:18]

The power to forgive sins; the power to not forgive sins. An absolutely awesome power. Where is the Christian who does not shrink back at the thought that he, miserable sinner, is expected to either forgive or, worse yet, not forgive the sins of other miserable sinners? We shrink back, however, only when we misunderstand the nature of the power, thinking of it in terms of presumptuous finger-pointing and casting the first stone.

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But we must remember that the power of the keys is a purely spiritual power, a power that is derived from the Word. Paul tells us that "our weapons are not those of the flesh" but of the Spirit and that we should take His weapons as our own; "...and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." [2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:17]

The power of the keys, then, the only power given by Christ to His church on earth, is to be exercised by means of the Word - and only the Word. And it is to be exercised until the end of time.

## **The Administration of the Office of the Keys**

### **A. Proclaiming the Gospel**

Just prior to His ascension, Jesus said to His disciples, "Go ye therefore and preach the gospel to every creature." [Mark 16:15] In his letter to the Romans, Paul tells us why this is to be done. He writes that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." [Rom. 1:16] Scripture knows of no other way for man to come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and believe on Him for the remission of sins than by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel: "In the beginning God chose you to be made holy by the Spirit, to believe the truth, and so to be saved. For this purpose He called you by the good news we tell." [2 Thess. 2:13-14]

Although it is through the inspired words of the writers of Scriptures that the gospel is made known as Christ revealed that it would be when in His high priestly prayer He prayed "for them also which shall believe on me through their word," yet that which was made known by them must "be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" until the end of time. [Matt. 24:14] This preaching Christ made the responsibility of His church, the communion of saints. [Matt. 28:19, 20]

That which was made known by the words of the apostles and which is to be preached to every creature by the communion of saints, namely, the gospel, the "ministration of righteousness" [2 Cor. 3:9], is the only means whereby man can come to believe the truth and thus be saved.

The power given to the church to forgive sins encompasses the responsibility given to the church to

preach the gospel, the effective means by which faith is worked in the heart for the remission of sins.

The Office of the Keys is therefore administered by the communion of saints wherever and whenever it proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **B. Baptism**

In Matthew 28:19 it is revealed to us that Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize all nations. It was further revealed by the apostle Peter why the nations should be baptized when on Pentecost he told his listeners, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...1 " [Acts 2:38]

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The remission of sins is effected through the means of baptism, and baptism is to be administered to the end of time. [Acts 2:39] This baptizing Christ made the responsibility of His disciples, that is to say, the communion of saints, the holy Christian Church.

The power to remit sins, then, encompasses the responsibility of the church to baptize for the remission of sins. The Office of the Keys is therefore administered by the communion of saints wherever and whenever it baptizes in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

## **C. The Lord's Supper**

"The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke, and also St. Paul, write thus: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, and when He had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink of it, in remembrance of Me.'"" (*Small Catechism*; Tappert, p. 351.4)

"Here in this sacrament you receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins." "This is plainly evident from the words just quoted. In other words, we go to the sacrament because we receive there a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins." (*Small Catechism*; Tappert, p. 454.70; p. 449.21,22)

The remission of sins is effected through the means of the body and blood of Christ, which was given and shed for us, when it is received by those partaking of holy communion. The words of this sacrament were addressed to Christ's disciples, the communion of saints, the holy Christian Church; and the

command "do this" is included in the commands Christ has charged it with teaching all nations to observe. [Matt. 28:20]

The power given to the church to remit sins encompasses the responsibility given to the church to observe, that is to say, administer the Lord's Supper. The Office of the Keys is therefore administered whenever and wherever it rightly observes the sacrament of Holy Communion.

#### **D. Absolution**

"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." [John 20:23]

"I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." (*Lutheran Hymnal*, The Absolution.)

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"The people are carefully instructed concerning the consolation of the Word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing. It is not the voice or word of the man who speaks it, but it is the Word of God who forgives sin; for it is spoken in God's stead and by God's command. We teach with great diligence about the command and power of the keys and how comforting and necessary it is for terrified consciences. We also teach that God requires us to believe this absolution as much as if we heard God's voice from heaven, that we should joyfully comfort ourselves with absolution, and that we should know that through such faith we obtain forgiveness of sins." "Absolution is the voice of the Gospel forgiving sins and counseling consciences." (*Augsburg Confession*; p. 61.2; *Apology*; 197.105)

The authority given to the church to forgive sins encompasses the responsibility given to the church to pronounce absolution. The Office of the Keys is therefore administered by the communion of saints wherever and whenever it pronounces absolution to one or more persons.

#### **E. Retaining Sins**

"The 'keys of the kingdom of heaven' are nothing else, and can be nothing else, than the means of grace, the Gospel. Through the offer of the Gospel, and through nothing else, Christians remit sins and thus open heaven; through withholding the Gospel they retain sins and thus lock heaven." (Pieper, *Vol. III*, p. 453)

#### **F. Conclusion**

The Office of the Keys consists in this: only God can forgive sins, only God can withhold the forgiveness of sins. He does not need man to do this, He does not need means. Yet He has chosen to use both man

and means. It is His good pleasure to do this. The man He has chosen is the Christian. The means, His Word, the gospel - in all its forms.

Wherever and whenever the means provided by God to forgive sins are exercised, that is, whenever and wherever the gospel is proclaimed and the sacraments administered, there the Office of the Keys is being administered according to the good pleasure of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

### **The Priesthood of All Believers**

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." [I Peter 2:9]

These words were addressed not to elders or bishops but to all Christians; all those who have been "called out of darkness into His marvelous light." By the washing of the blood of Christ - that is, by His merit - all Christians have been made spiritual priests, as St. John writes: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God His Father."

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All Christians are to "shew forth" God's praises. Beck translates the phrase "shew forth the praises" as "tell of the wonderful deeds." All Christians are to "tell of the wonderful deeds" of the triune God - Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Tell! That means "to express with words." And not with our own words but with the words of God: "If you speak, say what God says." [I Pet. 4:11] What God says, He says in His Word, holy Scriptures - and no place else.

Christians, then, the spiritual priests, are to tell - express with words - "the wonderful deeds of Him who called [them] out of darkness into His marvelous light." They are to do this "not in words that man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth," words which He "revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets," upon whose foundation the Christian Church is built, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

Christians are to "tell of the wonderful deeds" of God by means of the Word of God, the Gospel, in all its forms: by proclaiming the gospel, by administering the sacraments, by pronouncing absolution. Luther wrote: "We firmly maintain there is no other Word God than the one all Christians are to preach; there is no other baptism than the one all Christians may administer; there is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than the one any Christian may celebrate; also there is no other sin than the one every Christian may bind or loose." (St. LX, 1590; *Christian Dogmatics*; Pieper, *Vol. III*, p. 442)

In short, the power of the Office of the Keys to forgive sins and to withhold the forgiveness of sins has been given to each and every Christian - man, woman and child - spiritual priests all.

### **The Local Church or Congregation**

"The local church is a divine institution." So writes Dr. Pieper in his *Christian Dogmatics* (*Vol. III* p. 420). To which J. T. Mueller adds: "...so that believers living in one place must organize such churches where they do not exist or join them where they do exist...." *Christian Dogmatics*, J. T. Mueller, p. 555)

That Christians gathered themselves together in congregations is abundantly evident from Scripture. L. W. Spitz summarizes this well in *The Abiding Word* (Vol. I. p. 279). It is also abundantly evident from Scripture that this gathering together in congregations was not simply for convenience's sake for "it is indeed God's will and appointment: a) That all believers at one place should establish in their midst the public ministry and make diligent use of it by hearing and learning God's Word as it is proclaimed by the divinely called ministers. [Eph. 4:3-6; Acts 2: 42-47,14:23, 20:28; I Cor. 12:28; I Pet. 5:2, 3; Titus 1:5]; b) That they should together celebrate Holy Communion. [I Cor. 11:26; 10:17] and exercise the duties of Christian fellowship and love. [I Cor. 11:33, 1:10; Acts 6:1-6; Col. 3:15,16]; c) That they should not only privately reprove an erring brother [Matt. 18: 15, 16] but also as a church, or congregation, rebuke and discipline impenitent sinners. [Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:13]

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"From all this it follows that it is indeed God's will and ordinance that Christians should establish and maintain local churches, for without them these Christian obligations, enjoined so definitely, cannot be performed." (J. T. Mueller; p. 555) And Dr. Pieper writes, after making reference to the same Scriptural evidence: "therefore the formation of Christian congregations, and membership in them, is not a human, but a divine mandate." (*Vol. III*; p. 421)

How then are these spiritual priests who are gathered together in congregations, all of whom have been empowered by God to remit and to retain sins, to carry out the imperative of the keys?

### **The Public Ministry**

It is fundamental to the principle of democratic organization that no one person nor any group of persons has the right to speak or act in the name of an organization unless expressly granted that privilege by authority of its membership.

This holds true also when Christians gather together in congregations. Luther wrote: "But because all have the privilege, it becomes necessary that one, or as many as the congregation pleases, be chosen and elected, who in the stead and name of all, who have the same right, administer these offices publicly, in

order that no revolting disorder arise among God's people..." (Pieper, *Vol. III*; p. 442)

Again: "Though all of us are priests, we may and should not on that account preach or teach and govern. However, from the whole congregation some must be selected and chosen to whom this office is to be committed....Behold thus must the office of preaching, or the ministry, be distinguished from the universal priesthood of all baptized Christians. For this office is nothing more than a public service, which is delegated to one from the whole congregation, though all of them are priests together." (*Ibid*)

Although this authorizing of certain people to speak or act for a group is a decision commonly made and mutually agreed to by men when ordering their affairs, yet, in the church it is more than that: for "it is not a human, but a divine regulation that Christians who live in one place fellowship with one another, form a congregation, and appoint men equipped with the necessary teaching ability to preach God's Word in the name of the congregation both publicly (in the public assembly) and privately (to individual Christians)." (*Ibid*)

The office of the public ministry (ministry of the Word; pastoral office), wrote Dr. Walther, "is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers; further, it is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself; finally, it is not an arbitrary office, but its character is such that the church has been commanded to establish it and is ordinarily bound to it to the end of days." (*Walther On The Church*; Theses I, II, III; Tr. John M. Drickamer)

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Dr. J. T. Mueller shows that this doctrine is clearly taught in Scripture by summarizing the scriptural evidence. He wrote that we know that "the public ministry is a divine appointment or ordinance: a) From the practice of the holy apostles [Acts 14:23], and from the command to their successors to ordain elders, or bishops [Titus 1:5], so that ministers or pastors were regularly appointed at all places where local churches had been established [Acts 20:17, 18; Titus 1:5]; b) From the description of the personal qualifications of the public minister [I Pet. 5:3; I Tim. 3:2-7]; c) From the distinction which Scripture makes between elders, or bishops and all believers [I Cor.12:28, 29]; e) From the honor and dignity which are ascribed to all who officially teach the Word [Heb. 13:7; I Cor. 4:1]." (J. T. Mueller; pp. 566, 567)

So God has ordained that from the whole congregation, each member of which is a priest empowered by God to administer the office of the keys, "one or as many as the congregation pleases, [should] be chosen and elected" to administer it "in the stead and name of all."

### **The Divine Call**

Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach

or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call."

One of the early Lutheran dogmaticians defined the ministerial call as "the appointment, made by God either alone or by the intervening aid of men, of certain and suitable persons to the ministry of the Church, with the right to teach in public, to administer the sacraments, and to exercise ecclesiastical discipline." (Hollaz, *Doctr. Theol.*; J. T. Mueller)

As indicated in this last, there is a distinction made between the appointment made by God "alone", and the appointment made by God through the "intervening aid of men." These appointments have been termed, respectively, the "immediate" call and the "mediate" call.

"The immediate call is that divine call which is made 'without any intervening judicial aid of other men' (Baier). As Hollaz correctly states, 'an immediate call is not to be expected in the Church today.'" (J. T. Mueller, p. 571) As an example, the twelve apostles and St. Paul were called immediately, that is they were called directly by Christ without the intervening aid of men

The mediate call, on the other hand, although no less an appointment made by God, is "effected 'through ordinary means' divinely appointed for this purpose." (*Ibid*) That by "ordinary means" is meant the election and call of a local congregation is amply illustrated by Dr. P. E. Koehneke in *The Abiding Word*. (*Vol I*; pp. 372-375) That this call is by divine appointment is established "from the following facts: a) It is referred to God as its Author [I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11]; b) It is based upon apostolic authority [Acts 14:23, 20:28; I Tim. 4:14, 3:1-2, 5:21; 2 Tim. 1:6, 2:2; Col. 4:17]. c) It is confirmed by God's gracious promises [I Tim. 4:16; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 4:11,12]." (J. T. Mueller; *ibid.*)

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Finally, that the divine call to the office of the ministry is alone the prerogative of a Christian congregation is witnessed to by the 17th century Lutheran dogmatician, J. W. Baier, who was highly praised by Walther for his "Lutheran fidelity in doctrine." Baier wrote: "To the Church, **after it has been planted**, belong the right and power to appoint ministers. For she has the keys of the kingdom of heaven [Matt. 16:19, 18:18], given her as a bride, by Christ, her Husband; and, therefore, as it is her prerogative to open and close the kingdom of heaven, so is it her prerogative to appoint ministers, through whom she may open and close [the same]." (*Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*; H. Schmid; p. 608) [**emphasis added**]

## Part III

'We are also convinced that the great decisive battle of the Reformation which our church fought against the papacy in the 16th century centered in the doctrine of the church and the ministry.'" (*Walther On the Church*; Preface, p. 12, Tr. John M. Drickamer)

But wasn't the battle centered in the doctrine of Justification? Right. But false teaching concerning this doctrine was the inevitable result of false teaching concerning the doctrine of the church and the ministry. Because of the latter, "by grace" had become "by works" and the "ministration of righteousness" had become the "ministration of condemnation."

Dr. Pieper wrote: "...the Church is both the product of the means of grace and the body to which the administration of the means of grace is committed." (*Christian Dogmatics*; F. Pieper, Vol. II, p. 420) The communion of saints, the believers, are such because they believe the promise of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins; and it is the communion of saints, the church, to whom the administration of the gospel and the forgiveness of sins is committed.

But it was not so at the time of the Reformation. Dr. Pieper can be paraphrased to describe the church of that era: the Church is both the product of the Law and the body whose chief function it is to administer the Law. And the ministry? A self-perpetuating entity, agent of the church to enforce the Law.

Luther and the reformers rediscovered Justification. But they also restored the true, scriptural doctrine of the church and the ministry. However, by the time of Walther, that doctrine had been thoroughly decimated and justification all but lost. It is no wonder, then, that Dr. Walther and his contemporaries fought so vehemently to maintain a correct understanding of the church and the ministry.

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Yet, that was not always the case. The following summary/digest of Dr. Carl S. Mundinger's classic work, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, pp. 26-40, will provide a look at Walther's transition from a willing participant in the decimation to the staunchest defender of the doctrine as contained in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions:

*The pastor in Saxony belonged to a class which gave him standing and privileges, and while Prussia glorified the lieutenant, the captain and the colonel, Saxony honored the theologian. His membership in a highly privileged class made life comfortable and his remuneration offered attractive security.*

*Upon graduation from the university, the future pastor requested permission from the Consistorium - a group consisting of lawyers and theologians and appointed by the king - to be examined as a candidate for the ministry. Having passed the examination and because there were so few openings, he usually had to wait a few years for an appointment.*

*When an opening did occur, he made application to the collator, that is, either some member of the landed aristocracy who had the right of appointment or to the*

*Consistorium. (In Dresden there were 173 parishes under private appointment by some prince or baron, and 107 under appointment of the king through the Consistorium.) After receiving approval from the collator he wrote to the superintendent of the district who arranged for the examination, conducted to show that the examinee was ready to take over a designated parish.*

*A trial sermon and catechization took place before the congregation with the collator and superintendent in attendance. The representatives of the congregation were asked if they had any objections to the doctrine or conduct of the candidate, and if not the collator issued the call, duly authorized by the civil authorities. Even when a candidate was opposed he was advised to accept the appointment and win the hearts of his opponents. The congregation remained passive and inactive. It was the raw material upon which the pastor worked with the means of grace. Anything which resembled congregationalism was looked at askance.*

*Coming from the most highly privileged class in Saxony, accustomed to the enjoyment of favors and to a mode of living that very few people in their homeland or in any state in Europe could enjoy at the time, the men who later founded the Missouri Synod were not likely to get or promote ideas of democracy either in Church or State. They gladly received appointments from the landed aristocrats, they did not oppose the Consistorium, and there was no demand for a "free church" independent from the state in whose government laymen would have a voice.*

*Rationalism dominated many of the pulpits and administrative offices. It was a crystallized, formalistic, dead rationalism. High sounding philosophical dissertations on trivial matters were declaimed with great solemnity. The church was out of touch with the people.*

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*Rev. Martin Stephan, the man who led the company of Germans to America who were later to organize the Missouri Synod, was at this time pastor of a Bohemian-German congregation in the city of Dresden. The fact that the church was out of touch with the people gave him entrance to many troubled souls. He had a sensitivity to the hopes and fears of people who had a strong desire to be sure of God's grace. He satisfied this desire by preaching the doctrines of Martin Luther concerning sin and grace with warmth and understanding.*

*The result was that people came to him from all walks of life, from Dresden, from the villages round about, and from many parts of Saxony. His correspondence grew. Especially students at universities whose doubts and fears were driving them to despair*

came to Stephan or wrote him letters.

*In the early 1830s, pastors who while at Leipzig University had selected him as their father confessor and counselor began calling him into their congregations for special services. He coached them in their opposition to their rationalistic brother clergymen and men and women from parishes of "unbelieving" pastors walked miles to put themselves under the ministrations of a Stephan-guided or Stephan-controlled "believing" pastor. His control over the "faithful" became tighter and tighter, while the "faithful" became more blind in their allegiance.*

*By the fall of 1837 his word had become law and he exercised autocratic control over the men and women who were soon to emigrate to Missouri.*

*He had by then convinced them that he and they were the Church; that outside the Church so conceived there was no hope of salvation; that his person was their chief means of grace; that only by means of his preaching and his leadership could they receive forgiveness of sins and salvation.*

*"Only we have the true doctrine," wrote one man. "This has been given us by Martin Stephan. Only we are the true Lutheran Church." Others insisted: "Whoever resists Stephan contradicts pure doctrine"; "He who does not cross the ocean (with us) is no true Christian"; "The Church will leave Europe"; "Stay here and go to hell."*

*From the constitution of the association adopted for the emigration: "The supreme administration of all the association's affairs is in the hands of the first clergyman who combines in his person the highest powers in both spiritual and secular affairs"; "the first clergyman is to be treated with the proper respect and honor commensurate with his high position and deep wisdom. He receives the title: 'Most Honorable Lord.' Disrespect for his person and disobedience over against his commands are punishable with serious civil and ecclesiastical penalties. Only pastors and members of the assisting administrative committee have immediate and free access to the first clergyman."*

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*Prior to their arrival in St. Louis, an episcopal polity was legitimized by the company. A document was drawn up at the direction of Stephan ["Declaration of Submission to the Bishop", **A Century of Grace**; Baepler, p. 29] in which all pastors and candidates of theology should formally request him to assume the title and office of Bishop. Twelve delegates elected by the people were to second the request. All dutifully signed. Stephan was anxious that this semblance of democracy be evident in order to show that the episcopal form of government was legitimate because it had its roots in the wishes of the people.*

*In February of 1839 Stephan arrived in St. Louis. Two months later he left there with his entourage for Perry County where the company had bought land on which they planned to develop their community. Just a little over a week later it was revealed in St. Louis "that their leader had become unworthy of the trust reposed in him. Pastor C. F. W. Walther was dispatched by the St. Louis clergy and candidates to Perry County to confront Stephan with his guilt and to secure from the immigrants the support of the colony trustees." (Baepler, p. 32)*

*The laymen did nothing, the pastors everything. The laymen said only "Ja" to the document of excommunication, the pastors considering themselves the final court of trial. When some laymen suggested that the entire group investigate the matter, they were severely criticized and condemned by the clerical leaders. The excommunication had to be done by the clerics since only they had the power.*

*Stephan was excommunicated, deposed and removed from the property.*

*Chaos followed. The colonists were deeply religious men and women. They had emigrated because they felt they could no longer maintain their faith in Saxony. The purity of Lutheran doctrine and purity of living meant everything and Luther's teaching concerning the means of grace had taught them to honor those who proclaimed the Gospel and administered the Sacraments. Stephan had manipulated Luther's teachings in such a way that he had convinced them that he was their chief means of grace and that apart from him there was no hope. He and to a lesser degree the other clerics were the basis of their spiritual life. Now, overnight, this Ministry had fallen into disrepute. Suddenly disillusioned, they lost all confidence in the Church and the ministry.*

*Two factions developed: a clerical faction, gradually led by C. F. W. Walther, and a lay faction led by Dr., Carl Vehse, perhaps the most learned of the entire group. The controversy that followed dragged on for almost two years.*

## 13

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*Having previously accused the clerics of trying to maintain the idea that the power to govern the Church is to be lodged in the hands of the clerics and having made a formal and strong public rejection of the entire Stephanistic concept of church government, Vehse and his colleagues issued the last of several documents in November, 1839. It contained the principles according to which the lay party wished to see the government of the Church based. It was made up almost exclusively of statements from the writings of Luther and other 16th century theologians:*

*1) All Christians are priests through Baptism by faith - the priestly office must be exercised*

*not only by right but by command; 2) As priests, laymen have the right to judge all doctrine and supervise the clergy; 3) Final decisions on all matters rests with the local congregation; 4) The local congregation has the power and the duty to establish all rules regarding liturgy, ceremony, and church constitutions; 5) It is dangerous to extol the clergymen as a class (estate), because such habit engenders servility and hypocrisy; 6) The best type of church government is the one that prevailed in the first centuries when congregations existed independently side by side; 7) An association of congregations is not necessary and may be harmful; 8) All pastors should be placed on the same level and exercise the same authority. The episcopacy develops love of personal glory and leads to papacy; 9) "Faith comes by hearing" does not apply only to men who have studied and who are ordained. It applies to all Christians; 10) In case of emergency, a congregation may engage a man who has not studied; 11) Ordinary laymen may administer the sacraments.*

*Three weeks after this document was issued, Vehse returned to Germany apparently seeing no future for himself in the colony. But he continued to correspond with his friends in America and published a book in which he told all.*

*Another layman, Lawyer Marbach, a Stephan liaison man prior to leaving Germany, now came to the fore as leader of the lay faction. On March 3, 1841, he issued a manifesto: their whole church polity was built on a sinful foundation and until the foundation was demolished no polity could be established that could expect the blessings of God. By demolish he meant a public confession of guilt by the company and a return to Germany.*

*Some of the cleric party now came over to the lay side. By the end of March the whole colony was fast approaching a state of complete disintegration. The spirit and influence of the clerics reached its lowest ebb. Vehse's theories, now espoused by Marbach, had many adherents throughout the colony.*

*Although Walther had disagreed violently with Vehse's premises and conclusions at the beginning of the controversy back in September, 1838, as a result of extensive study he now saw that these premises purged of certain extremes, could serve to save the day. Having thoroughly familiarized himself with the many quotations from Luther which Vehse had incorporated into his document, he was now ready to set forth his plan to the fast-growing lay party and rapidly diminishing clerical party. A public debate was set for April 15 and 20, 1841, in Altenburg, Perry County, between himself and Marbach.*

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*Marbach's view of the situation was this: Their's is a false church built on something that looks like the Word of God but is not. Since such people have a false word, a false spirit,*

*and a false Christ in their hearts, they cannot be saved. There is no salvation in such a church. It has no God-given authority to administer the mysteries of God. Until they have repented and renounced the false word and false Christ and return to Christ they cannot call a pastor or administer the sacraments. Until such time they are only a godless mob. Until it destroys the foundation, it is under the wrath of God.*

*Walther was violently opposed to this view that saw only a moral issue in their problem. He took his cue from Vehse and attacked the problem from the viewpoint of 16th century theology. The burning issue was whether they were a part of the Christian Church and whether they had the right to call ministers and to be called as ministers and whether their ministerial functions were valid also in the sight of God. He advised that they follow Vehse back to Martin Luther and John Gerhard, an early 17th century orthodox theologian, and to the definition of the Church which those men learned from the Word of God.*

*Five of Walther's theses supplemented Vehse and show the real issue between him and Marbach. Thesis IV-VIII: It is not improper to apply the name church to a heterodox society [that's them]; it is in keeping with the manner of speech in God's Word; members of such societies may be saved; separation of heterodox societies from the orthodox church is not necessarily a separation from the universal Church; even heterodox societies have church power and the treasures of the church may be validly dispensed, the ministry established, the sacraments administered and the keys of the kingdom exercised; heterodox societies are not to be dissolved but reformed.*

*Walther succeeded in establishing that they were still a part of the Church in spite of the Stephanistic errors still among them. These errors were not sufficient to destroy faith since there was sufficient remnant of the Word of God to create faith in the hearts of some and thus there were still Christians among them. Therefore the church was represented in their midst and they had not only the privilege but also the duty to call ministers and the official acts of these ministers were valid in the sight of God. The immediate objective of the company must not be destruction but a thorough reformation of doctrine and life based upon a purified doctrine and thorough reconstruction of their church life.*

## 15

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*The Altenberg debate was a turning point in the development of church polity and from that time on the colonists knew where they were headed. It helped to clarify the people's thinking and was the making of C. F. W. Walther. He was 30 years old at the time.*

## Part IV

Several months prior to the Altenberg debate there arrived in Perry County a Pastoral Letter from Pastor

J. A. A. Grabau of Buffalo, N.Y. It was dated Dec. 1, 1840. He and 1000 of his followers had emigrated from Prussia a few months after Stephan and his group left Saxony. Most settled in Buffalo but some continued on to Wisconsin. They had left Germany after determining that it was futile to any longer protest against the Union State Church (Lutheran-Reformed) invented by the royal house of the Prussian king.

In the letter he warned the Wisconsin congregation against itinerant preachers and stated why they must be avoided. He sent a copy to the Saxons in Missouri asking them for an opinion. The Saxons immediately recognized that some of Grabau's views on church government were identical with those of Stephan's but because of their own internal turmoil at the time, they set his letter aside until July of 1843. After some urging by Grabau's associates, three of the Saxon pastors, Loeber, Gruber, and Walther, prepared a 16-page reply dissenting from Grabau's views. On receiving their reply Grabau charged them with 17 errors. And thus a controversy developed between these two bands of immigrants, into which a third was soon to be injected, several years before any of them organized into synods. The controversy continued unabated until the year 1866. Involved once again was the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry, touching particularly upon the exercise of the Office of the Keys:

*(Except for the opening paragraphs, this section (IV) is, in its entirety, a summary/digest of materials gleaned from the following publications: **Sketches From the History of the Church**, Hageman; **Century of Grace**, W. A. Baepler; **Government in the Missouri Synod**, C. S. Munding; **The Doctrine of the Church in the Writings of Dr. C. F. W. Walther**, J. M. Drickamer, published ThD Thesis; **Walther On The Church**, Tr. J. M. Drickamer)*

*Regarding the Church, Grabau taught that: 1) "the one holy Christian Church is a visible Church, that by it is not meant scattered believers, but those who gather about the Word and Sacrament; 2) Members of the true Church are not found in communions that teach error; 3) Communion with the invisible Church is not sufficient to obtain salvation.*

*On the basis of Scripture, the Missourians maintained that: 1) The Church in its true sense is invisible [Luke 17:20 Acts 1:24. Col. 3:3-9]; 2) Christendom is scattered physically but united spiritually; 3) As in the Galatian and Corinthian church so likewise today Christians are found in churches that hold false doctrine but do not deny the Word of God outright; 4) Whosoever makes salvation dependent on communion with any visible church overthrows the article of justification of a poor sinner before God by faith only [Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3:26; Gal. 3:9; Rom. 11:2-4].*

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*Regarding the ministry, Grabau maintained that: 1) Ordination is of divine institution and that it is essential to the validity of the ministry; 2) The efficacy of the sacraments depends*

*not only on the Word of God, but also on a valid ministry; 3) The right to exercise the Office of the Keys is vested in the ministry solely, demanding not only obedience to the ministerial office when the Word of God is applied, but in all things not contrary to God's Word; 4) The ministry is a separate rank or class within the Church; 5) A combination of congregations, a synod, not an individual congregation, is the supreme tribunal to decide what is in accordance or at variance with the Word of God in faith and practice; 6) The congregation is not to call a pastor without the advice and consent of a representative of the clergy.*

*On the basis of Scripture, the Missourians maintained that: 1) Ordination is not of divine institution but merely an apostolic-ecclesiastical institution, a public confirmation of the call extended by the congregation; 2) The administration of the sacraments depends not on a valid ministry; 3) Obedience to the ministry is due only insofar as it sets forth the Word of God; 4) All the rights and powers of the Church are vested originally and immediately in the congregation; 5) The duty to judge in matters pertaining to faith and practice rests with all Christians; 6) To enable a congregation to carry out these rights and duties it is not necessary to be a member of some synod or general body; 7) The ministry does not form a distinct rank since all Christians in the New Testament are called priests; 8) While the importance of having a qualified pastor should induce a congregation to consult with other ministers before calling a pastor, yet its call is valid without the presence and co-operation of a clergyman.*

*Regarding the Office of the Keys, Grabau taught that: 1) Christ did not give the keys of the Kingdom of heaven to the Church and to every true believer, but solely and exclusively to the pastors; 2) A congregation dare not judge and declare that the sinner is to be held an heathen and a publican, for the pastor alone has the power to excommunicate.*

*On the basis of Scripture, the Missourians taught that: 1) On the basis of Matt.18:17-20, the Keys have been given to the whole Church originally and immediately; that is, not mediately through the ordained pastor, but in such a way that they belong in like measure to every congregation, the smallest as well as the largest.*

*As the years progressed, and the Missouri and Buffalo Synods were organized, this bitter controversy continued. Grabau refused all overtures to meet with Missouri in a colloquy. In 1859 he prevailed upon his synod to renounce all fraternal relations with Missouri and excommunicated the Missouri Synod en masse. In the year 1866 a conference was held between representatives of the Buffalo and Missouri Synods, in consequence of which 11 pastors of Buffalo joined Missouri. The small faction that remained broke into two factions of which one ceased to exist after 1877.*

*Concurrently with the controversy with Grabau, the Missourians were also engaged in controversy with Pastor Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau, Bavaria. Loehe sent a constant stream of workers to the Church in America, many of whom were later to join the Missouri Synod. Among other endeavors, he established a seminary at Fort Wayne where men who had been given preliminary instructions were sent to complete their studies. In 1848, after the Missouri Synod was organized, he presented the Fort Wayne seminary to the Synod. For several years his and Missouri's relations were cordial and intimate. Then Loehe underwent a change.*

*Drawn into the controversy between Buffalo and Missouri his views inclined toward those of Grabau. In a pamphlet he published in 1849 he expressed views on the church and the ministry which were very similar to Grabau's. Furthermore, living in State Church surroundings he regarded the democratic ideals of America with suspicion and was not happy with the popular rule prevalent in the Lutheran congregations. When Synod was formed, he objected to the equal representation of pastors and laymen and protested that the congregations had been given too much power and that the prerogatives of the clergymen had been curtailed.*

*In 1851, Walther and a colleague were sent to Germany by Synod in an effort to remove whatever misgivings Loehe had about the doctrine of the Missouri Synod. Two years later Grabau and an associate visited him and they came to an understanding in which Loehe appeared to remain neutral. A break with Missouri became imminent.*

*Concerning the Church and the ministry, Loehe maintained, similar to Grabau, that: 1) The office of the ministry was given by God to the whole Church, not to its single members and that the Church possessed the office in and with the means of grace; 2) Conversely, every Christian does not have all the rights and privileges of the Office of the Keys nor is the office of the ministry derived from the priesthood of all believers; 3) Therefore a congregation cannot by virtue of the spiritual priesthood of its members confer the office of the ministry on whom it chooses because it is not through the local congregation but through the clergy that the Lord calls and ordains men for the ministry; 4) Ordination is more than merely a Church ceremony which publicly attests the validity of the call; 5) The Church is a visible institution.*

*In the year 1853, there were two conferences held in Germany in which the position was taken that the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry must remain an open question among Lutherans until the proper terminology was found to express a consensus opinion. Loehe expressed agreement with this position, considering the issues between the Missourians and himself open questions. But the Missourians considered them settled by Scripture and already expressed in the Lutheran Confessions. This, finally, was the decisive reason for the break between Loehe and the Missouri Synod.*

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*In a letter dated August 4, 1853, Loehe spoke his final farewell to those pastors and congregations in the Saginaw Valley which had joined the Missouri Synod and with whom he had been intimately involved. This ended his fraternal relations with the Synod and one year later a number of pastors who were in accord with his position organized the Iowa Synod in keeping with his views.*

As painful as these controversies with Grabau and Loehe were, they did serve the purpose of driving Walther and his colleagues into a deep and intensive study of Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the writings of the 16th and 17th century church fathers. The result was a publication that once and for all settled the matter for the Missourians - at least that was the hope and, until recently, thought to be the effect.

## Part V

Six years prior to the final break with Loehe, on April 26 1847, the "German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other states" was organized at Chicago with 12 congregations, 22 pastors, and two candidates of theology taking part. Walther was chosen President.

Three years later, at the height of the controversy with Grabau and Loehe, the synodical convention requested Walther to prepare theses on the doctrine of the church and the ministry. The work was completed in the fall of 1851 while he was in Germany on his visit to Loehe. They were thoroughly discussed at the 1851 synodical convention and published in a book in 1852 under the title *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of Church and Ministry*, which came to be known popularly as simply *Church and Ministry*.

Although the theses were prepared "in defense against the attacks of Pastor Grabau of Buffalo, New York," on examination it becomes clear that Walther had others besides Grabau in mind. Not only is it in many places an elaboration of the theses delivered at Altenberg in the debate with Marbach but also included in his thoughts are the teachings of Stephan, Loehe and the entire "hierarchically oriented and ingrained" Lutheran church both in America and Europe. *Church and Ministry* "was throwing down the gauntlet to every type of arrogant Lutheran clericalism throughout the world." (*Walther and the Church*, Dallman, Dau, Engelder; p, 50)

*Church and Ministry* is comprised of nine theses on the [Church](#) [alternate] and ten theses on the [Ministry](#) [alternate], each supported by copious evidence from Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the writings of the 16th and 17th century church fathers.

## *"Concerning the Church"*

### **Theses I-III: IX**

Against the teaching variously of Stephan, Grabau and Marbach that the Christian Church is a visible church comprised not of scattered believers but only those gathered about Word and sacrament. External fellowship with such a visible church is necessary for salvation.

Walther showed, to the contrary, that the "Church in the proper sense of the word...is the totality of all those who have been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel..., truly believe in Christ, and are sanctified and incorporated into Christ through faith"; that in this sense there are in the Church "no godless person, no hypocrite, no unregenerate person, and no heretic; that since no man can see into the heart of another and thus perceive if he truly believes, therefore "the church in the proper sense of the word is invisible"; that "absolutely necessary for the obtaining of salvation is only fellowship in the invisible church."

### **Thesis IV**

Against the teachings of Stephan, Marbach, Grabau and Loehe that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were not given to the Church and to every believer but solely and exclusively to the pastors; that the efficacy of the sacraments depend on the Word of God **and** a valid ministry; that therefore the rights and privileges of the office of the keys do not belong to each Christian.

Walther refuted this by showing it is the "true church of believers and saints (invisible church - the communion of saints) to which Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And it is therefore the proper and only possessor and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly goods, rights, powers, offices, etc. which Christ has procured and which are found in His church."

### **Thesis V**

Continuing against the teaching that the holy Christian Church is a visible church comprised only of those who gather around the Word and sacrament and that where there is no holy Christian Church **so understood** there is no salvation.

Walther wrote that although the true holy Christian Church, that is, the communion of saints - all believers - is invisible, nevertheless "its presence can be definitely recognized, its marks (being) the pure teaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution."

Dr. Pieper would later write concerning this point: "Such terminology (the church is visible) confuses the marks of the church with the church proper. The Church is, of course, dependent on the means of grace. The Church is begotten through the means of grace, and is sustained only through the means of grace. But the means of grace are not on that account the Church itself or a part of the Church, any more than air and food are man himself, or a part of him, though man cannot live without air or food. However, Word and Sacrament are correctly called signs of the Church. Just as wheat can be found only where it has been sown, so the Church can be found only where the Word of God is in use...The signs of the Church, however, do not make the Church, the communion of believers, visible, because the constitutive factor, faith, remains invisible," (Pieper, *Vol. III*; p. 409)

### **Theses V-VIII**

Against Stephan, Marbach and Grabau's claims that the visible Lutheran Church is the only true church outside of which there is no salvation; that set apart from this visible church men are, even if they call themselves Christian, nothing more than an unruly mob with a false God and a false Word; members of the true church are not found in communions that teach error.

Walther answered that although the only proper sense in which the name "church" can be used is in the sense of all those who truly believe in Christ for salvation, yet, Scripture also applies the name "church" in its improper sense to the universal church; that is, "to all who profess allegiance to the Word of God that is preached and make use of the holy sacraments" even though "this church is made up of good and evil persons."

Furthermore, Scripture also applies the name "church" to the several divisions of the universal church, that is, the congregations that are found here and there, in which the Word of God is preached and the holy sacraments are administered. These are called "'Churches' (particular churches)...because in these visible assemblies the invisible, true, and properly so called church of believers, saints, and children of God lies hidden."

Accordingly, since within these particular churches which contain both good and evil men the "true invisible church of true believers (can) be found, so also they possess the authority which Christ has given to His whole church" - the communion of saints; namely, the authority to forgive sins or to withhold the forgiveness of sins, the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Furthermore, because "there are children of God (even)...where His word is not taught in complete purity and the sacraments are not administered according to the institution of Jesus Christ also there the true church is made manifest by the pure Word and sacraments **which still remain.**" [**emphasis added.**]

Walther warns, however, that "everyone is obligated by his salvation to flee all false teachers, to avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and to acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and their pastors, wherever he finds such."

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*"Concerning the Holy Ministry or the Pastoral Office"*

**Theses I-III**

Supports the pre-Altenberg Debate views of Vehse but also powerfully dismisses the Vehse view which relegated the parish pastor to virtual ecclesiastical serfdom. Also refutes the view of those who denied the priesthood of all believers or, if not denying it, made it of no account.

Walther wrote that although Scripture teaches that all Christians are priests, it also teaches that there "is an office distinct from the priestly office," namely "the holy ministry of the Word or pastoral office." Furthermore "the pastoral office is not a human institution, but an office which God Himself has established." Therefore it "is not an optional office, but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time."

Let me remind the reader again that all the points Walther made he supported by lengthy testimonies from Scripture the Confessions and the later church fathers.

**Thesis IV**

Against all the hierarchical-minded in America, Germany and the whole world who maintain that the ministry is a separate rank or class within the church.

Walther showed that "the ministry is not a special and holier estate apart from that of ordinary Christians, as was the Levitical priesthood, but is an office of service."

**Thesis V**

Not in contest, but integrally vital to the development of the doctrine of the church and the ministry.

"The ministry of the Word has the power to preach the Gospel and administer the holy sacraments and the authority of a spiritual court."

**Theses VI, VII**

Against Stephan, Grabau, Loehe and the whole of episcopal-minded Christendom which taught that the office of the ministry was given by God to the whole church, not to its single members; that every

Christian does not have the rights and privileges of the office of the keys nor is the office derived from the priesthood of all believers; it is not through the local congregation but through the clergy that the Lord calls and ordains men for the ministry;

that the keys were not given to the church and to every true believer but solely and exclusively to the pastors; the pastor alone has the power to excommunicate; the efficacy of the sacraments depends not only on the Word of God but also on a valid ministry; the right to exercise the office of the keys is vested in the ministry solely; a congregation must not call a pastor without the advice and consent of a representative of the clergy; ordination is of divine institution and is essential to the validity of the ministry.

Walther had already shown in Thesis IV on the Church that the keys had been given to each and every believer by Christ. He now expands that principle by showing that "the ministry of the Word [the pastoral office] is conferred by God through the congregation as possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the power of the keys, by means of its call which God Himself has prescribed"; that "the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as possessor of the priesthood and all church authority," is the authority "to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation."

Ordination, on the other hand, "is not of divine institution but is an apostolic ecclesiastic arrangement and only a solemn public confirmation of the call."

Walther goes to great lengths to affirm all of this by testimony from the aforementioned sources.

### **Thesis VIII**

Against the low view of the pastoral office espoused by Vehse, and perhaps also those who feared a resurgence of Stephanism and were prone to adopting an extremely defensive attitude toward the parish pastor. (e.g., Walther's congregation in St. Louis for a time would not permit him to attend voters meetings.) Also vital to the emerging church polity in the Missouri Synod.

Since the "keys embrace the whole power of the church....and the incumbents of the public ministry of the Word have been entrusted with the keys....in order that they may administer them publicly and officially on behalf of the congregation," therefore "The ministry of the Word is the highest office in the church and from it all other offices in the church flow."

### **Theses IX, X**

Against Stephan, Grabau and Loehe's views that since the exercise of the office of the ministry is vested only in the clergy without the intervening authority of the congregation, unconditional obedience is due the ministerial office not only when the Word of God is applied but in all things not contrary to God's Word. Only a combination of congregations, or synod, not a congregation, is the supreme tribunal to decide what is at variance or in accord with the Word of God. Only a pastor can excommunicate.

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Walther showed that "respect and also unconditional obedience are due to the ministry of the Word if the preacher presents God's Word. But the preacher has no lordship in the church": he cannot "introduce new laws, arbitrarily establish adiaphora or ceremonies, (nor) impose and carry out excommunication alone without the preceding acknowledgement of the whole congregation."

And although the duty to judge doctrine belongs "by divine right to the ministry of the Word, also laymen possess the right to do so. Therefore in the ecclesiastical courts and councils they have both seat and vote."

On this note Walther ends his theses on the church and the ministry. In formulating them, Walther codified and championed principles clearly taught in Scripture, the "clear and pure teaching" of which is the heritage of the Lutheran Confessions. The "striking differences" that existed at his time were not caused because the points at issue had never before been clarified but because of "the fact that the doctrine set forth in the public Confessions of our church and in the private writings of its orthodox teachers has been **disregarded and abandoned.**" (*Walther On The Church*; p. 14) (**emphasis added**)

Although Walther's immediate purpose was to set down "the principles on which according to God's Word and the Confessions of our church the polity of a true Lutheran fellowship is based and according to which it must be constituted," "it was, according to his own assertion, the article on justification which guided him in the formulation of the teaching on the church." "We are not fighting for a particular constituted division which calls itself Lutheran....The object of our struggle is nothing else than the true faith, the pure truth, the unfalsified Gospel, the pure foundation of the apostles and prophets." (**Ibid**; *Concordia Theological Monthly*; Oct., 1961, pp, 601, 605)

When the doctrine of the church and the ministry fails to be preserved from all error, the administration of the Word and the sacraments will ultimately be affected. If the administration is affected so must the power being administered. The power being administered is the forgiveness of sins, the "ministration of righteousness", justification. What then was the chief purpose of Walther's *Church and Ministry*? Answer: to preserve from all error the administration of the forgiveness of sins and thus the doctrine of Justification itself.

Walther's work became the benchmark against which all discussion on the articles in controversy could

be gauged and the bright light under which the polity of the Missouri Synod was first developed and afterward maintained for almost exactly 100 years - until, in other words, very recently - as we will see.

[2006 update - [cf.](#); [cp.](#)]

## Part VI

"When all Europe failed, and failed again, and failed yet again, to reform the Church, Luther alone reformed the Church. How? 'Ye are a royal priesthood.' This has its roots in justification by faith." It is "the third great principle of the Reformation, the logical consequence of the other two (the supremacy of the Bible; the supremacy of faith)." (*Walther and the Church*; Dallman-Dau-Engelder, p. 42; *Four Hundred Years*; pp. 297, 298) "Ye are a royal priesthood." These words appear in his own handwriting under a familiar portrait of Walther. They are characteristic of the man, for the universal priesthood of all believers remained constant with him - as it had with Luther - throughout his life. And it is a principle that has remained constant in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod throughout its life.

At our seminaries and colleges, from our pulpits, in our confirmation classes, in our theological journals, in pamphlets and periodicals, this principle has been drummed into the heart and mind of pastor, teacher, and layman alike from the very first: You, together with all other believers, are a priest before God. It is to you and your fellow believers and to no one else in the world that Christ has entrusted the means of grace - immediately, without the intervening aid of any man or group of men. You therefore hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven and have been given the authority, indeed the command, to exercise the power of the keys; that is, to forgive sins through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, the only means whereby lost and condemned sinners can come to the knowledge of their Lord Jesus Christ, believe, and thus be saved.

All other principles formulated in defense of the true, Scriptural doctrines of the church and the ministry either lead up to or follow from this principle, to wit:

The Church in the proper sense of the word is the communion of saints, that is, the sum total of all those who truly believe in Christ, outside of which there is no salvation. The Church is, in this sense, invisible since only God can know who truly believes. It is to this Church that Christ has entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that is, the power to forgive or to not forgive sins, and the means whereby this is to be accomplished, namely, the Word and the sacraments. All believers are therefore priests before God.

Although this Church is invisible as to its essence, "its presence can be definitely recognized its marks being the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution."

In order that the Word might be preached and the sacraments administered "it is abundantly evident from Scripture that it is God's will and ordinance that Christians should establish and maintain local churches (particular churches; congregations)." (*Christian Dogmatics*; J. T. Mueller, p. 555)

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Although by virtue of his priesthood every believer has the authority to administer the office of the keys, yet God has Himself established a special office, namely, "the holy ministry of the Word or pastoral office (which) is an office distinct from the priestly office which all believers have." This office "has the power to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments and the authority of a spiritual court."

This special office is "conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical power - or power of the keys - by means of its call which God Himself has prescribed." Furthermore, this special office has the authority, "conferred by God through the congregation as possessor of the priesthood and all church power, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood" - that is, administer the office of the keys - "in public office on behalf of the congregation."

"Since the incumbents of the public ministry of the Word have been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven which the church possesses originally and immediately [Matt.16:19; 18:18], in order that they may administer them publicly and officially on behalf of the congregation [John 20:21-23], their office must of necessity be the highest in the church, from which all other offices flow; for the keys embrace the whole power of the church." Respect and unconditional obedience are therefore due the pastoral office when the incumbent presents God's Word; nevertheless, he has no lordship in the church.

Finally, the duty to judge doctrine belongs to all Christians. Therefore both pastors and laymen have "seat and vote in the ecclesiastical courts and councils." (Re Quotes above cf. Sec. V)

These are principles that have guided the Missouri Synod throughout its history and principles that Walther repeatedly insisted guided Luther and orthodox Lutheranism throughout its history - even though at times it was not possible to carry them out in practice because of existing circumstances.

The very purpose of formulating principles is in the first place to inform practices. And the Missouri Synod has at all times diligently sought to pattern its practices in conformity with the principles laid down in Scripture, the bottom line ever being the proclamation of God's Grace in Christ Jesus for salvation's sake.

Scriptural principles, correctly formulated, are for all time. Practices, on the other hand, are for the most part subject to a certain latitude. But there are some practices which are so definite and unchangeable that they cannot be altered without at the same time altering or setting aside the principles that guide them.

This is the case in several instances as the Missouri Synod has sought to do His will in carrying out His Great Commission through the agency of the church and the ministry which He established for this purpose:

**1) Only a local congregation can establish the ministry of the Word (office of the ministry: pastoral office)**

As one reads over the wealth of doctrinal and practical material produced by Synod over the years, it becomes irrefutably clear that it has from the very beginning insisted that only a local congregation has the authority to establish the office of the ministry. It is the local congregation alone which is organized for the express purpose of administering the Word and sacraments, the marks of the one, true, invisible Church of believers.

Those first congregations and pastors who were charter members of Synod were in no mood with the memory of Stephan and his Priest-rule fresh in their minds to agree to anything that even hinted of a class of clerics apart from and out from under the control of the local congregations. Never again would they permit themselves to come under this kind of tyranny. It should not be thought, however, that it was for this reason that they ruled out the existence of any ministerial office apart from the congregations. They would not permit it because God's Word would not permit it. Stephan had misled them.

Later Walther wrote: "Since the congregation or church of Christ, that is, the assembly of believers, has the power of the keys and the priesthood **immediately** [Matt. 18:15-20; I Pet. 2:5-10] so through it and it alone can the ministry of the Word (pastoral office)....be conferred upon certain competent persons, namely through the election, call, and commission of the congregation." (*Walther On The Church*, p. 86) [**emphasis added**]

Again: "....the office of the holy ministry of the Word cannot essentially be anything else than the authority conferred by God through the congregation...." (*Ibid*; p. 98)

Dr. Pieper, president of our St. Louis seminary from 1887 to 1931, president of Synod from 1899 to 1911, "the foremost instructor of Biblical Dogmatics at Concordia Seminary and the spokesman of orthodox Lutheranism," was more direct: "Only a congregation can establish the public ministry." (*What Is Christianity*, Foreword. *Christian Dogmatics*; F. Pieper, *Vol. III* , p. 439)

Actual practice confirms this position. No synodical official, whether elected or appointed, including professors at our seminaries and colleges, was considered an incumbent of the pastoral office, or office of the ministry, by virtue of his synodical position. As we have seen in the very first lines of this paper, as late as the early 1950s professors called to our seminaries were not considered by virtue of their

professorial calls to be incumbents of the office of the ministry. Congregations were encouraged to consider calling them as pastors because it was thought wise that those preparing future pastors ought to themselves hold the office. No one, however, thought that the pastoral office was necessary to the validity or efficacy of their teaching office.

Dr. Wyneken, who succeeded Walther to the presidency of Synod and served from 1850 to 1863, was pastor of Trinity Church, St. Louis, at the time of his election. All during his presidency he continued in the pastoral office established by Trinity when it called him. In 1859 he moved to Ft. Wayne. Yet, even then, he retained his pastoral office at Trinity. Why? Because at the time it was a requirement of the synodical constitution that the president of Synod be an incumbent of the office of the ministry. This requirement could be fulfilled only by retaining his pastorate at Trinity since not a Synod but "only a congregation can establish the public ministry." (*Century of Grace*, p. 116)

If a service of Holy Communion were offered during the course of meetings held by any synodical organizations, including pastor/teacher conferences, it was required that a local congregation sponsor the service. Why? Because only a local congregation has the authority to publicly administer the office of the keys .

Synod is not a church, that is, it is not an assembly of believers "in which the Word of God is preached and the holy sacraments are administered." It therefore has no authority - indeed, no reason - to establish the office of the ministry.

The establishment of a congregation, as we have seen, is a divine ordinance. The establishment of a synod is a human arrangement. God has ordained that an assembly of believers who congregate together to administer the means of grace - the forgiveness of sins - will be His agent in placing certain men into an office which He has commanded be established by the congregation in order that the Office of the Keys might be administered on behalf and in the name of the whole assembly. God has commanded nothing about a synod. It is not an assembly of believers gathered together to administer the office of the keys, it does not have the marks of the one true church, namely, the Word and the sacraments, and it does not have the "authority of a spiritual court", that is, the authority to excommunicate.

Nowhere is it claimed that the purpose of Synod is to administer the office of the keys - not in its articles of incorporation, not in its constitution, not in its by-laws. And so it remains as Synod has always taught: the office of the ministry can be established not by a consistory, not by a synod, not by a federation of local churches, but only by a local, "particular" church. Only by a congregation.

[2006 update: [COP](#); [Ft. Wayne](#); [St. Louis](#) ; [others](#).]

## 2) A divine call to the office of the ministry cannot be limited as to time

"From the very beginning our Synod had to take a definite stand on this question. Among the conditions of membership in Synod the following is listed: 'Regular (not temporary) call of the pastor.'" (*Abiding Word*; Vol. 1, "The Call into the Holy Ministry," P. F. Koehneke, p.380)

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"This has been the consistent practice of our Synod since (its formation) and has been stated again and again in official papers at conventions and in our periodicals. 'Those whom a congregation has called, God has called through that congregation, and a congregation has no right to remove them from office.'" (*Ibid.*)

"According to these plain Scripture passages [I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11] the time any person is to serve is in the hands of God. He is to determine how long a man is to serve in any special office. To make the service of a pastor or teacher a matter of contract, subject to termination by either side upon ample notice, is contrary to the Scriptural doctrine of the call." "'A congregation has no right to call a pastor or a teacher or to dismiss him on the basis of a contract.'" (*Ibid.*)

Every call with a fixed time, however, is not "to be condemned." If a congregation is temporarily without the service of its pastor due to illness, physical weakness, etc., it can "call an assistant for the pastorate with the express condition that the call is to have only temporary validity, that is, only as long as sickness or overburdening with work makes such help necessary...**This call for temporary assistance** stays within the bounds of divine order and has nothing in common with the objectional **temporary call.**" (*Ibid.* p. 381) (**emphasis added.**)

Pieper: "The essence of the temporary call does not consist in this that a call is limited as to time, but in this that human beings arbitrarily limit a call as to time, that is, that they want to determine how long a pastor is to be active at a certain place. This is indeed contrary to the divinity of the call to the ministry...Dr. Walther says: 'Neither is a congregation authorized to issue such a call, nor has a pastor the right to accept it.'" (*Ibid.*)

"But (with) the call for temporary assistance the factor of human arbitrariness is not present....Sickness, weakness, overburdening, necessary absence are sent by God, and the congregation which provides for temporary help...is not going its own way." (*Ibid.* p. 382)

Those who wish to limit the divine call in an "objectional" way, no matter how they try to rationalize it, want to dictate to God the Holy Spirit. They must therefore be numbered among the most presumptuous and arrogant men on earth.

**3) The office of the Word (pastoral office) is the only office that God has Himself established. All other offices in the church are part of this one office or are auxiliary to it.**

Luther writes: "If the office of the Word is conferred on a man, there are conferred on him all offices which are to be administered in the Church through the Word..." (Pieper, *Vol. III*, p. 462)

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Likewise Walther: "When the Lord instituted the apostolate, He instituted in the church only one office, which embraces all others and by which the church of God should be provided for in every respect. The highest office is the ministry of the Word, with which also all other offices are conferred at the same time. Every other public office in the church is part of the same, an auxiliary office which supports the ministry, whether it be that of the elders who do not labor in preaching and teaching [I Tim. 5:17], or that of the rulers [Rom. 2:8 (Luther's translation)], or that of the deacons, or whatever other offices the church may entrust to particular persons for special administration." (*Walther On The Church*; p. 103)

The Missouri Synod never wavered from this teaching although it often had to be defended against attack. Synod, too, was organized for the express purpose of assisting member congregations in carrying out those auxiliary functions which are supportive of the pastoral office established by a congregation but which can better be performed in concert with other congregations. Training church workers, including pastors, establishing mission stations, publishing educational material, etc., are all incumbent of a congregation in the performance of its duty to administer the Office of the Keys.

Member congregations authorize Synod to perform these duties for them. Never, however, can a congregation empower Synod to administer the Office of the Keys or authorize it to establish the office of the ministry. This power and authority can be given by God alone and He has authorized its transferal only to those upon whom a congregation confers the office of the ministry in its midst and to no one else.

Nor have the congregations attempted to empower Synod in this manner. Nowhere in its constitution or by-laws is Synod authorized to administer the Office of the Keys, that is, administer the means of grace, or to perform the "authority of a spiritual court." Just the opposite is in fact true. It is enjoined not to do these things.

**4) Ordination is nothing more than the public confirmation of the divine call to the office of the ministry of the Word or pastoral office**

That this is true should need no proof. It is a principle that orthodox Christianity has affirmed from its earliest days. It nevertheless has been necessary to reaffirm time and time again, generation after generation: **ORDINATION DOES NOT MAKE A MAN A MINISTER OF THE WORD; NOR IS ANY POWER OR AUTHORITY CONFERRED BY IT.**

The acceptance of a call to the office of the ministry and the conferring of the office by a congregation makes a man an incumbent of the office - nothing else! When and if he resigns the office, for whatever the reason, he becomes, as Luther and all orthodox Lutherans since have stated tirelessly, nothing more than an "ordinary Christian." And his ordination at that point has no more meaning than his installation - except, perhaps, to the State.

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But in spite of this, it so happens that any time the true doctrine of the church and the ministry is under attack, there will be found, standing tall in the center of the battle, the warrior ORDINATION. And by keeping your eye on the warrior you will be able to determine how the battle is progressing. If he continues to stand tall in his shining armor, surrounded by trumpets and flowing banners, you will know the battle is being lost; if he is laid low, there is hope for victory. So faithful a sign has the warrior proved to be that a maxim is in order: as ordination goes, so goes the church and the ministry.

Watch the warrior.

[**2006 update:** [Ordination review](#) ]

The doctrine of the church and the ministry has been under constant attack throughout the history of the New Testament church. It could be no other way. It is the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the universal priesthood to whom Christ has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And He has committed to its care the means whereby the power of the keys - the forgiving and retaining of sins - is to be exercised, namely, the Gospel.

But Christ has also commanded His church to proclaim the Law in order that man might come to the knowledge of his sins. The Law, however, apart from the Gospel, can lead man nowhere but to despair and hopelessness.

The goal of the Enemy is to see to it that man keeps his eyes on the Law and off the Gospel, for the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." And that's what he is determined to beat man out of - salvation. It is only natural, then, that the Enemy would attack at the point at which the Gospel, the power of salvation, is administered and the point at which that power is transferred. History has revealed his plan. If he can separate the administration of the forgiveness of sins from the priesthood and place it directly into the hands of a special, arrogant class of clerics, he can soon turn the "ministration of righteousness" into the "ministration of condemnation."

Since the assembly of believers looks to this class of clerics, the hierarchy, for training and guidance, removing the forgiveness of sins from the 'Gospel' that the hierarchy proclaims, effectively removes it

from the assembly. Salvation by grace alone is lost. Justification dies.

This is the situation that existed when the 16th century reformers came on the scene. Luther rediscovered "grace alone" and placed the administration of the forgiveness of sins back where it belonged, with the universal priesthood. But the Enemy did not rest. Within a short time he was successful in undoing the reformers' work. By the time of Walther and his contemporaries the priesthood had again been relieved of its God-given power and "grace alone" had been all but lost. Fighting the same battle that Luther fought 300 years earlier, they once again restored "grace alone" to its proper position and returned God's power to the priesthood. And so it remained for almost exactly 100 years, up until about the early 1950s. Then something happened. The Enemy was back.

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### Part VII

Experience has shown that whenever a doctrine of scripture comes under attack and controversy develops, the antagonists follow a tried-and-true, well-worn pattern of attack, two features of which especially stand out: 1) the meaning of words, phrases and terms is thrown into hopeless confusion, and 2) sophistry abounds.

Experience has also shown that when the doctrine being attacked is the doctrine of the church and the ministry the bottom line is always the removal of the power of the keys, the power to forgive and to withhold the forgiveness of sins, from the priesthood to be placed into the hands of a special group or hierarchy .

If all these things are kept in mind, what follows will be easier to comprehend. If it is lost sight of, the reader will become hopelessly confused - which may happen in any case. Be advised also that no one is going to be found leaping up and shouting, "We want to take the power of the keys away from the priesthood." The Enemy is not dumb.

And there **has** been a controversy in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod over the doctrine of the church and the ministry. It has been going on for more than three decades. To introduce the reader to its salient features, the following is offered as taken from the February, 1951, *Concordia Theological Monthly* (CTM) pp 81-83, a journal edited by the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis:

*EDITORIAL PREFACE: In hope of resolving the points of disagreement relating to the doctrine of the call, the ministry, and the Church, which for a number of years threatened the unity of the constituent bodies of the Synodical Conference [the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, the Norwegian Synod, and the Slovak Synod], the convention in 1946 appointed an Interim Committee. In 1948 this committee of eight men submitted its findings to the Synodical Conference in a majority and a minority report.*

The majority report goes on to list all the principles that had guided the Missouri Synod during the previous 100 years as already enumerated in this paper with one or two exceptions. The report continues:

*According to the author of the minority report the differences are not in doctrines as such, but in application. The pertinent section of the minority report reads as follows:*

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*Some restrict the concept of a divinely instituted church local (the Church of Christ as it appears on earth - ekklesia, Matthew 18) to the local congregation and consider all gatherings of believers, groups or Christians beyond the local congregation, such as synods, conferences, etc., a purely human arrangement.*

*Others find in the descriptive name of church (ekklesia , they who are called out) a term which applies with equal propriety to the various groupings into which the Holy Spirit has gathered His believers, local congregations as well as larger groups.*

*Some restrict the idea of a divinely instituted ministry to the pastorate of a local congregation and consider such offices as teachers, professors, synodical officials, etc., branches of this office without a specific command of God, established in Christian liberty.*

*Others see in "ministry" a comprehensive term which covers the various special offices with which the ascended Lord has endowed His Church.*

It wasn't going to take long to figure out who the "some" and who the "others" were. The "some" was Missouri, the "others" the others. But what exactly were the differences and what was there about them so serious that "the unity" of the Synodical Conference was threatened? To discover the answer to that question we will examine the positions held by Missouri and Wisconsin on the church and the ministry.

Concerning the Church, it has already been enumerated in this paper that Missouri taught that the holy Christian Church is the communion of saints, all those who truly believe in Christ. Christ has given this Church the power to remit and to retain sins and the means whereby this is to be accomplished, namely, the Word and the sacraments. Furthermore, it is "indeed God's will and ordinance that Christians should establish and maintain local churches (congregations) for without them the Christian obligations so definitely enjoined (in Scripture) cannot be performed." (cf. [p. 7](#) above). Larger groupings of Christians, such as synods, are not commanded by God but are established in Christian freedom to further the work of the local congregation. Such man-ordained organizations do not have the authority to administer the Word and the sacraments in the name and stead of the congregations and indeed they cannot be given this authority.

For the Wisconsin position on the church and the ministry we must anticipate here its [doctrinal statement](#) entitled "Theses On The Church And The Ministry" published in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly in 1970.

Concerning the Church, Wisconsin taught that "A. The Church is the communion of saints. B. The Church....is of necessity invisible....; C. The Church....is a blessed reality; D. The Church is present there where the means of grace are in use."

With the possible exception of "D" - dependent on the definition of the words "where" and "use" - Missouri could agree with Wisconsin in all these points. The point of departure comes, however, as this last point is expanded: "D.4. The specific forms in which believers group themselves together has not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church; D 4. a....the local congregation will usually be the primary grouping of Christians;

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D. 4. b....the Holy Spirit....draws Christian congregations together in larger groupings, such as a synod....; D.4.c. In essence the various groupings....lie on the same plane. They are all church in one and the same sense, namely, in this sense that on the basis of the marks of the Church the Lord lets us apprehend the presence of the holy Christian Church...."

It goes on to state that these various groups should not compete with each other in the scope of the "ministry of the keys" to which each applies itself; that "every added grouping....will be for the purpose of assisting the primary groupings...." What the primary groupings are it does not say, but refers to "secondary groupings" and counsels them to "function in accordance with love and good order."

Finally, at the end of the section on the Church the emphatic statement is made: "**Antithesis:** 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 public ministry of the keys has been given exclusively to the local congregations.

[*So there, Missouri. Take that!*]

Concerning the Ministry, Missouri taught, as heretofore presented (cf. [p. 8](#) above), that although all believers are priests, yet there is an office in the church which Christ has established that is distinct from the "priestly office," namely, "the ministry of the Word or pastoral office"; that God has commanded that this office be established; that it "has the power to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments and the authority of a spiritual court"; that it "is conferred by God through the congregation as possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the power of the keys, by means of its call"; that "ordination is not a divine institution but an apostolic ecclesiastical arrangement and only a solemn public confirmation of the call";

that the pastoral office "is the authority conferred by God through the congregation....to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation"; that "the pastoral office is the highest office in the church, and from it all other offices flow."

Concerning the Ministry, Wisconsin taught that "A. Christ instituted one office in the 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."

The one office established by Christ, according to Wisconsin, is that authority given to all Christians to administer the Office of the Keys. All Christians, in other words, are in this "ministry of the Gospel." It was instituted at the time the keys were given.

"B. The purpose of this ministry is the edification of the Church." Since it is what all Christians have been commanded to do, Missouri would agree.

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"C. There (are) men especially appointed to discharge publicly the duties of this one ministry. [Acts 13:1-3; Acts 6:1-6]"

Again, Missouri would agree. But it must be remembered that by "men especially appointed" Wisconsin is not talking exclusively about pastors. It is including other offices established in the church: school teachers, deacons, professors, certain categories of administrators. All Christians hold the one office but certain qualified Christians are set aside for special tasks.

"D. This public ministry....constitutes a special God-ordained way of practicing the one ministry of the Gospel."

Missouri would have agreed that it is God who gives different people different talents and uses them in His service. It would have vigorously disagreed with the way in which the term "public ministry" is used here. At the time of the Synodical Conference debate (1940s) there were four terms that Missouri held to be interchangeable: ministry of the Word, pastoral office, office of the ministry, public ministry. There is one God-ordained way of **publicly** practicing the ministry of the Gospel, namely, the pastoral office established by a congregation, all other ways are man-ordained and are auxiliary to it.

And now things really become complicated:

"D.1." states that since all Christians have this "ministry of the Gospel" in order to administer it publicly one must have a "legitimate call. The authority to call is **implied** in the authority to administer the Gospel....The right of the congregation is a **derived** right." [**their emphasis**]

"D.3. Christians are not all qualified to perform publicly the functions of the ministry [the ministry of the Gospel that all Christians have]. The Lord has set forth the needed qualifications (for these offices)...and gives men qualified for the various forms of the work required." (Many Bible passages are quoted here setting forth the qualifications that we generally use in reference to the pastoral office but which they imply are much more inclusive, allowing seminary professors and all types of synodical officials to be considered incumbents of the public ministry or office of the ministry.)

All Christians, even though they all have the office, do not all have the qualifications to publicly serve as pastors or professors or overseers of a whole flock. The qualifications for these tasks are set forth in Scripture. God prepares men with the qualifications and He gives them as gifts to the church.

"D.5. Thus these public ministers are appointed by God.... and it would be wrong to trace the origin of this public ministry to mere expediency."

Nor would they trace this ministry to that instituted by Christ when He called the apostles and which He maintains through the call of a congregation. They reject the idea of a ministry so conceived.

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"D.6. There is **no direct word of institution for any particular form of public ministry. [emphasis theirs]** The one public ministry of the Gospel may assume various forms....specific forms have not been prescribed....The Holy Spirit leads believers to establish the....forms....In spite of the diversity of forms the ministry is essentially one....The various forms of the preaching of the Gospel (including) those developed in our day are all gifts of God to His church...."

The section on the Ministry ends with this: "**Antithesis:** We hold it to be untenable to say that the pastorate of the local congregation as a specific form of the public ministry is specifically instituted by the Lord in contrast to other forms of the public ministry."

*[And take that, too, Missouri. And that! And that!]*

Following the Interim Committee report in the February, 1951 *Concordia Theological Monthly*, there is a lengthy article entitled "The Public Ministry In The Apostolic Age." It is enlightening because it completely rejects the Missouri Synod position on the church and the ministry and gives some insight into the implications of the Wisconsin position. "It is a mistake to identify the pastorate with the ministry or to speak of other church offices as auxiliary to the pastorate. To assume that the pastorate is one divinely instituted office [Walther: "When the Lord instituted the apostolate He instituted in the church only one office, which embraces all others."] and that all other offices flow out of the pastorate is a misapprehension. The ministry of the Word is one divinely instituted office and the pastorate is a branch

of the same ministry."

"...Those who have been called to serve the church in a representative capacity, and who have been given supervisory responsibility, and those who have been charged with the care of souls for the purpose of edifying the saints and building the Body of Christ, are all members of the public ministry, be they pastors, parish teachers, college professors, chaplains, superintendents, synodical officials, or institutional missionaries."

The word game had begun. And the goal became immediately clear: wrench from the one office instituted by Christ Himself - the pastoral office - its intrinsic power, relegating it to an office of auxiliary functions, one among many. The pastoral office was not to be the highest office because of its essence - its power to forgive sins - but because of the relative importance of its functions - preaching, administering the sacraments, overseeing the whole flock as opposed to teaching children, directing the choir, teaching Sunday school, etc.

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It was for the express purpose of preventing this destructive view of the pastoral office that our Missouri fathers had always insisted on using the term "confer" when speaking of the office of the ministry. A man is not placed **into** the office; rather, the office is **conferred** on the man. The office of the ministry is not just lying around the parish like an empty box waiting for someone to be placed into it. The office of the ministry is an office of power - to forgive and to withhold the forgiveness of sins in the name and in the stead of the assembly. Until that power is given - is conferred on someone - the office does not exist. *This had always been the teaching of the Missouri Synod.*

Now this was to change. The office exists at all times like a box of gospel tools. If anyone in the course of his functioning uses one of the tools, he is in the public ministry. This not only dis-empowers the pastoral office, it relegates the parish pastor who holds the one office established by God Himself and who is especially chosen by Christ for the office, to the position of common workman - at the very best, foreman. And it removes, at least in part, the office of the keys from the priesthood and places it in the hands of an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

But the real gut issue of the controversy was principles, not practices. Wisconsin simply rejected the teaching of Scripture that God **has ordained** that Christians living in one place gather themselves into local congregations in order to administer the Word and the sacraments publicly. From that rejection follow all its false notions about the church. And it rejected the teaching of Scripture that Christ **instituted** a special office when He called the apostles and that He maintains that office today through the agency of the local congregation. From that rejection follow all its false notions about the ministry.

Wisconsin's position was a total repudiation of fundamental principles taught in Scripture. Her's and Missouri's positions were irreconcilable. And it should be noted that Wisconsin's position was in

substance the position of the Norwegian Synod (ELS) as stated in their published [\*Doctrine of the Church\*](#)

In spite of this, questions were beginning to be asked back there in the early 1950s. Some people in the Missouri Synod were getting restless.

Rev. Petersen, in the essay quoted at the beginning of this paper, states: "...throughout the 25 years I was at the (Springfield) sem we periodically attempted to ascertain what a seminary is in relation to the concept 'Church.' We were Christians residing in one place, but did not use the Sacraments. We could train men but not ordain them. We could say who is going into the ministry but not decide who was a member of a congregation. We could teach men to baptize, but could not baptize. We could keep men from or put men into (sic) the ministry, but could not defrock or excommunicate."

But these items should not have caused a problem. The answers were simple: Synod is not a church, it does not have the Office of the Keys; therefore it cannot establish the office of the ministry. You are in the employ of Synod, therefore you are not an incumbent of the pastoral office. Synod can do none of these things; ergo, you can do none of these things.

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So what was the problem? The problem was that there were people roaming around our seminaries asking whether the essence of the office of the ministry is power or function. And they were getting everyone confused. In reality they were pushing for rejection of the Missouri position on the church and the ministry.

Strange things began to happen. Men were called to teach at the seminaries but congregations were no longer being encouraged to call them as assistant pastors. Yet on Sunday mornings they were found officiating at divine services. The words "divine call" and "limited tenure" were spoken in the same breath. The seminary communities were asking why can't we have our own pastor here at the sem and hold regular church services on Sunday morning with communion and all.

Funny things were going on over at the teachers' colleges, too. Graduates were beginning to come into the parishes talking like they and the pastors were operating on the same plane. Call documents were printed containing funny-type language: "The following Description of the Call is applicable to a male or female candidate"; "Tenured call \_\_\_\_\_ Nontenured call\_\_\_\_\_ "

New categories of Ministry were piling one on top of the other in the *Lutheran Annual*. Each convention seemed to bring another category or two. Scripture has its guides and rules but the Internal Revenue Service, the American Association of Theological Schools and the Concordia Plan have their guides and rules, too. Scripture's were getting in the way.

It was slow but it was sure: practices that were formerly guided by the principles contained in the Scriptural doctrine of the church and the ministry taught in the Missouri Synod for over 100 years were beginning to be guided by principles contained in the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods' doctrine. Clearly the scriptural doctrine was in descendancy; the Wisconsin-Norwegian doctrine in ascendancy. Things were hastening along toward the big moment. And then it came....

## PART VIII

In 1962 a resolution was submitted to the synodical convention by the Council of Presidents. It was adopted by the convention and at the moment of adoption a dramatic shift of historic proportions took place. The scriptural principles that were formulated by Dr. Walther, adopted by the 1852 synodical convention, published in *Church and Ministry* and used as the guide for Missouri Synod polity from that time on, were set aside. In their place were set the principles of the Wisconsin-Norwegian doctrine of the church and the ministry. The reverberations are still being felt.

Prior to 1962, Synod's *Handbook* (Constitution and By-laws) read: "B. ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS. 4.15 Ordination of Candidates: A candidate for the ministry may be ordained only when he has received a legitimate call from and to a certain congregation and after previous examination has been found to be sound in doctrine, apt to teach, blameless in life, has made application for membership in Synod, and has submitted a request for ordination to the respective District President."

The resolution adopted at the convention ( [6-35](#)) amended 4.15. The amended 4.15 read as follows:

### B. ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

#### 4.15 Prerequisites for Ordination

a. A candidate for the office of the pastoral ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod may be ordained when the following prerequisites have been met:

...2. He shall have received endorsement by the proper faculty or the Colloquy Board **for the Pastoral Office** and in every respect have been declared qualified by them for the **office of the ministry of Word and sacrament in the church.**

...4. He shall have received and accepted a call **to a position** the incumbent of which may be ordained **according to the regulations of the Synod.**

5. He shall have received and accepted a call extended **through the proper channels** to assume **full-time work in the Church.**

6. He shall have....submitted a request for ordination to the proper official of **the board** through which the call was extended.

...b. Graduates who wish to continue their professional studies shall be **assigned and ordained** upon their request under the following conditions:

1. A call shall have been extended by a congregation **or a proper board** expressing preference for a particular candidate to be assigned to **the function of pastor or other synodically approved office.**

2. The **District President** shall **approve the call** and the candidate shall be assigned by the Board of Assignments. [**emphasis added**)]

Space does not allow a point by point analyzation of the salient points of the amended constitution. But the reader should by this time understand the significance of the features that have been highlighted. Principles inform practices. But what happens when practices change? What then are we to say about the principles that inform them?

With this change, it can no longer be maintained:

1) That "when the Lord instituted the apostolate, He instituted in the church only one office," namely, the ministry of the Word, the office of the ministry, the pastoral office, "which embraces all others";

2) That God has ordained that Christians living in one place assemble into local congregations in order that they might do together publicly what each member can do individually, administer the Office of the Keys, the power to forgive and to withhold the forgiveness of sins;

- 3) That the pastoral office established by a congregation is an office instituted by God Himself and "an office distinct from the priestly office which all believers have";
- 4) That this office "has the power to preach the Gospel and administer the holy sacraments and the authority of a spiritual court";
- 5) That God confers this office "through the (local) congregation as possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the power of the keys, by means of its call which God Himself has prescribed";
- 6) That the "ordination of those called is only a solemn public confirmation of the call";
- 7) That the pastoral office "is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as the possessor of the priesthood and all church authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the congregation";
- 8) That "the ministry of the Word, or pastoral office, is the highest office in the church, from which all other offices flow";
- 9) That the marks of the Church are "the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution." (cf. *Walther On The Church*; Tr. John M. Drickamer)

In short, like the Ten Commandments, when one principle is set aside, all must be set aside.

[**2006 update:**[\*An Appeal To Laymen and Faithful Pastors..\*](#)].

It is impossible to harmonize Scriptural principles with the Constitutional changes adopted at the 1962 convention. However, given the Wisconsin-Norwegian principles, all things are possible, to wit:

There is no special office in the church instituted by God. The only ministry there is, is the ministry of the Gospel, which all Christians have and which was inaugurated when Christ gave the keys to all believers. There is no particular type of organization that can claim to be ordained by God. Christians have complete freedom to organize or not organize as they see fit. But when they do organize, no matter the form the organization takes, they have the authority to administer the office of the keys publicly. Every member of the organization is "in the ministry." Each organization can institute as many offices as it pleases and those who serve in these "public" offices are in the "public ministry."

The "public ministry" in each organization has various offices and the offices will have varying degrees

of responsibility. Scripture lays out qualifications that those who serve in several types of public-ministry offices must have and tells us that God prepares men for these offices and gives them as gifts to the church. The men who are called to these offices are preaching, teaching, overseeing "flocks", administrating important church offices, etc., etc. This does not mean, however, that there is rank in offices. All the incumbents are in the same "public ministry" and any preeminence that exists or whatever relative authority is vested in an incumbent is due entirely to the relative importance of the functions he performs. A pastor has a higher office, for instance, than a deacon, but it must only be considered higher because its functions are of greater importance. It is not a matter of rank; both are in the same "ministry of the Gospel." All those who serve in offices the incumbents of which have been given by God as gifts to the church are in the ministerial office and they comprise the ministerium.

Now that's more like it! Two point eight million people "in the ministry." A congregation is church; a Synod is church; a high school association is church; a children's aid society is church; LWML is church; LLL is church; Valpo is church. All can establish offices and those who are appointed or called to them are all in the "public ministry." If any offices are established of the type that God appoints people to, then those who are in those offices are in the ministerial office. If they happen to be recent graduates of a seminary, then they are qualified for ordination. Ordination, of course, is just the public ratification of their call to the ministerial office. It is permissible for all the organizations to hold divine services and administer Holy Communion because they are all 'church' and have the power of the keys to forgive and to retain sins. This will not normally be done out of love and keeping with the mandate to do all things decently and in order. But if an occasion arises....

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There is no need to elaborate the changes that have taken place in Synod since 1962 when the Wisconsin-Norwegian church-and-ministry principles were de facto adopted by the Missouri Synod. They are evident everywhere. What is especially annoying to this writer is the speed with which those principles that were the very heart of Missouri's history of fidelity to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions were overturned. For over one hundred years those principles made Missouri what it was. It took less than 15 years, from the late forties to 1962, to destroy them. Obviously, there were powerful forces at work.

A number of years ago Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) was given the unenviable task of developing a statement on the church and the ministry. The troops out in the field were not all happy with what had happened since 1962 and they were asking a lot of questions. The commission's job was to find some middle ground between the power inherent in the priesthood of all believers and the portion of that power that was being either drained off and given to or usurped by an increasingly bold hierarchy. Hierarchism is, of course, fostered by the Wisconsin-Norwegian system; except in the congregation, most incumbents of the ministerial office are called or appointed by the heads of organizations or a ruling committee thereof.

The committee worked hard at their task and no doubt gave it their best, but the results were inevitable. They came down on the side of hierarchy. When I first started writing this paper - a millennium ago - I had it in mind to somewhere along the line review the CTCR report , *The Ministry* . I've changed my mind. It is a hopelessly confused and confusing document and would take as many pages again to review it. But if the reader should by chance take it up to study, and if he keeps in mind what has been written in this paper, he will quickly recognize it for what it is: The Apology to the Wisconsin-Norwegian Doctrine of the Church and the Ministry. [See later addition - [Appendix](#) - pg. 46]

[2006 update:[The Ministry \(PDF\)](#). Reviews: [Drickamer](#); [Nehrenz](#)]

## Part IX

Dr. Walther pointed out that the real controversy of the Reformation was over the doctrine of the church and the ministry. The power of the keys had been taken from the priesthood early on in the history of the Christian Church and by the time of the Reformation, justification by grace alone had been lost - the inevitable result of the blight of hierarchism.

Exactly the same situation existed when Dr. Walther and his contemporaries came on the scene in the 19th century. We now are on the threshold.

The system that has developed in the Missouri Synod under the Wisconsin-Norwegian principles of the church and the ministry threatens to emasculate the one office established in the church by Christ Himself, the ministry of the Word or pastoral office conferred by God through the congregation. The incumbents of the office, chosen by Christ Himself as surely as He personally chose the apostles, have become, as one writer recently lamented, "low in rank, frequently frustrated, competing with gorgeous vestments (of district officials), infected with the ambition to enlarge his turf."

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A dilemma now presents itself. The parish pastor cannot continue to be looked on as just one of a crowd, set apart only by the relative importance of the functions he performs among his fellow Christians, all of whom are "in the ministry." But, not to worry, a solution has already been found: ORDINATION.

Orthodox Lutheranism has always taught that ordination is a practice instituted by the apostles without a command from God. They have always held it in the highest regard but have also always taught that it is nothing more than the public ratification of the call to the pastoral office. The Missouri Synod has taught in accordance with this position throughout its history.

(2006 update:[Ordination review](#).)

But things have changed. To the CTCR's credit, they did say the required words: "Ordination...is a solemn ecclesiastical rite (and) a public ratification of the call..." (*Ministry*; p. 9) It will have little meaning. Ask ten Missouri Synod laymen what it is that makes their pastor a pastor and nine will respond: "Ordination." Ask ten pastors and five will say the same. Why shouldn't they? One cannot pick up a church paper these days without finding pictured inside at least one group of splendidorous ordination celebrants. District officials come into congregations and pronounce the Absolution: "I, as a **called** and **ordained**..." And has anyone ever heard of someone celebrating the 25th anniversary of the day that their first congregation conferred the office of the ministry on them?

Taking advantage of this misconception of ordination, a movement has begun. Every movement, it seems, must have its manifesto and ordination is no exception. In fact, the ordinationists' manifesto has already been written - call it Ordination Manifesto I. It is entitled [Ordination: Human Rite or Divine Ordinance](#), and is published by the "Concordia Theological Seminary Press, Ft. Wayne, Indiana."

In it the author espouses a doctrine that is essentially no different than that of Stephan, Grabau and Loehe's. Using I Tim. 4:14, 5:22 and 2 Tim.1:6 as his references, he comes to the conclusion that: 1) Persons are admitted into the pastoral office through ordination; 2) Laying on of hands is essential; 3) Only those who already hold the office can participate; 4) A gift is bestowed which "exists continually in the recipient"; 5) Like baptism, the "gift may fall into disuse and be revitalized"; 6) God is the Giver of the gift; 7) In order to receive the gift one must meet certain criteria; 8) Its "misapplication carries a threat"; 9) Through it those who bestow it share in the ministry with the one who receives it; 10) The Holy Spirit bestows the gift; 11) It is "encompassed within an apostolic command"; 12) It is to be continued.

He concludes: "I personally find it very difficult to designate (ordination) as a human rite or adiaphoron (in light of all the above)."

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That it should ever happen in the Missouri Synod! Reading this document should make every Missourian's hair stand on end. It is a papist's doctrine that in another day would have meant expulsion from Synod. But not today. And the fact that it is published by the seminary says more than a thousand pictures. No one need have any illusions about this popish doctrine's place in the classroom. Professors do not keep their lights under bushels.

So that's the way it is going to be. No longer will the parish pastor be just one of the crowd. No longer a lackey to the Voters Assembly. He might be "in the ministry" like everybody else but he has been empowered by the ordination given him by the brotherhood and thus his estate is a special spiritual one. It sets him apart. He will also be *a part* - a part of a powerful hierarchical system that has wrenched the power of the keys away from the priesthood and placed it into the hands of an arrogant class of clerics.

The warrior is standing tall in the Missouri Synod. The trumpets are blaring, the banners are waving - the battle is being lost. The generals are on the line and the final assault has begun.

On Reformation Day, 1980, a professor at our Ft. Wayne seminary wrote to his students:

*"On March 29, 1971....I began (a) class period with this remark: `Genesis 12:3 is the first clear statement in the Old Testament of what we call "objective Justification."' The twenty-three students who were taking this elective course objected almost unanimously. I thought they were kidding. But they told me that there is no such thing as objective justification. I told them that...subjective justification is destroyed if there is no objective justification....I was staggered when they informed me (who) they had learned this from....The next morning I spoke to (the professor)....He told me that our fathers have taught wrongly and that the situation must be corrected."*

A controversy soon developed with sophistry its chief feature. It was denied that objective justification was being denied, yet, it was claimed that all those Bible passages that everybody says teach the doctrine really don't teach it. It was all quite maddening. Factions developed on both sides. Fine orthodox statements on Justification were produced with the strange aside that those who produced them apologized for (defended) those who denied what their fine statements said.

However, that is all beside the point for the moment. The point is that twenty years after the Wisconsin-Norwegian principles of the church and the ministry were effectively adopted, the hierarchy is abuilding and Justification is in controversy. But then, that was inevitable, wasn't it?

Dr. C. F. W. Walther? - we have come full circle back to you.

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## CONCLUSION

In the August, 1950 *Concordia Theological Monthly*, an article appeared entitled "The Pastor and the Synod's Handbook" in which the author extols the blessings that had abounded in the Missouri Synod up to that time. He writes that "As you browse through your Handbook, you will note how marvelously this kind of government has worked out," and then notes that the same principles had guided the Church throughout. "You will also discover," he continues, "the one reason why under God all this expansion was blessed. It was because by His grace our Church today, as the Handbook shows, has kept the same basic principles intact. Do your part as a minister of the Word to maintain these principles. Then God will continue to bless our Church because it exalts His Word and gives His congregations the rights and privileges He has bestowed upon them."

The principles he was referring to were those laid down in Walther's *Church and Ministry*. Those principles have long ago been discarded and the inevitable results are evident everywhere. What can be done? Efforts to change practices will be to no avail, since current practices are in full accord with prevailing principles. It is the problem of principles that needs to be addressed. There is no better place to start than back at the beginning with Walther's theses on the church and the ministry.

The only way that is going to happen is by intense pressure being brought to bear on the synodical administration by pastors and congregations across the land. By pressure I mean the kind that encouraged the previous administration to take action in the Battle for the Bible ten years ago. A tremendous educational effort was set in motion at that time to educate the membership of Synod in preparation for later efforts to resolve the problem.

The same must be demanded now. There is still time to prepare memorials for this summer's convention petitioning the convention to direct the president of Synod to inaugurate an intense study of Walther's *Church and Ministry*. Literature on a par with the "Report of the Synodical President" (Bluebook) should be prepared and pastors and professors who are in full accord with Walther's work chosen to fan out over Synod during the next three years to bring the message to the parishes.

Secondly, since the orthodox position on ordination is still the official position of Synod [**2006 update:** [2001 Res. 717A](#) ], it is not too late to memorialize the convention to take pointed action against the ordinationist movement. The seminary should be directed to cease its publication of the ordination document spoken of above and a statement should be developed for convention action resolving that the teaching of this papist doctrine of ordination will not be tolerated at our seminaries.

Finally, but really foremost, the CTCR document, *The Ministry*, must be rejected. If it isn't, the ball game is over. W-N will be chiseled in stone.

[**2006 update:** [The 1998 Church and Ministry Convocation](#); [A Layman's Response](#)]

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## APPENDIX

*The following review relies heavily on Dr. C. F. W. Walther's theses on the church and the ministry. Although only the propositions themselves are quoted, it should be understood that in each case Dr. Walther supports them at length with "proof from God's Word," "testimonies of the church in its official Confessions," and "testimonies of the church in the private writings of its teachers."*

*Therefore it is my conviction that to use Dr. Walther's theses in examining the CTCR report is to examine*

it in the light of Scripture, the Confessions and the writings of the later church fathers. Walther's theses with supporting evidence can be found in **Walther On the Church** by John M. Drickamer and **Walther and the Church** by Dallman-Dau-Engelder.

May 1, 1983

## A CHURCHLESS MINISTRY

A review of [The Ministry](#) (PDF), a report produced by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations

[2006 update:[Drickamer](#); [Nehrenz](#)]

Question: Can only a local congregation establish the office of the ministry or pastoral office?

Answer: No.

This question and answer represent the sum and substance of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations' (CTCR) report, *The Ministry*. From beginning to end it is an effort to justify the answer by establishing that, yes, agencies other than a local congregation can indeed establish the office of the ministry.

In order to accomplish this it was necessary for the authors to attempt studiously to avoid defining the term "church" for 45 pages. They succeeded admirably. In the end the doctrine of the church and ministry of Scripture has been replaced by the rationalizing doctrine of the Wisconsin (WELS) and Norwegian (ELS) Synods, the same doctrine held also by Lutheran liberals the world over. It is this doctrine which has allowed our national contingent to surge ahead in its hierarchical quest, making comfortable its mating with the Episcopal Church. [ref. *A Dramatic Shift*, pp. [32-42](#); WELS Thesis on the Church and Ministry; 1970 *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*; ELS *Doctrine of The Church*]

Dr. C. F. W. Walther, in the forward to the first edition (1852) of his classic *The Voice of Our Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry*, popularly known as *Kirche und Amt* ( [Church](#) [[alternate](#)] and [Ministry](#) [[alternate](#)] ), wrote: "We are persuaded that the present differences among Lutherans concerning the doctrine of the church and the ministry, and whatever is immediately connected with them, stem from the fact that the private writings of its orthodox teachers have been disregarded and abandoned." (*Walther On The Church*, Tr. J. M. Drickamer, p. 12). As it was then, so it is now.

Dr. Walther went on to prove by means of 19 theses that it was not he and the Missourians who shaped the doctrine of the church and the ministry, rather, it was the doctrine of the church and the ministry of Scripture and the Confessions that shaped them. It is this true scriptural doctrine, formalized by Walther at Synod's request, that more than any other set the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod apart from all other Lutherans. It is this doctrine that served for over 100 years as a guide in determining polity and practice, and the doctrine whose underlying principles prepared generations of Missourians to stand fast during the theological upheavals that seemed constantly to assail them.

It seems quite evident, then, that the delegates to the 1962 synodical convention were for the most part totally unaware of what they were being asked to do when [Resolution 6-35](#) was presented to them for adoption. It seemed harmless enough. Up to that time in accordance with paragraph 4.15 of the by-laws to the constitution, only those who had received a call from a congregation to serve as pastor were qualified to be ordained:

*"B. ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS. 4.15 Ordination of Candidates: A candidate for the ministry may be ordained only when he has received a legitimate call from and to a certain congregation and after previous examination has been found to be sound in doctrine, apt to teach, blameless in life, has made application for membership in Synod, and has submitted a request for ordination to the respective District President."*

The delegates were asked in Resolution 6-35 to amend this paragraph in such a way that positions other than that of pastor qualified one for ordination. Since Synod was on record as holding to the scriptural position that ordination is nothing more than the public confirmation of the call to the office of the ministry (pastoral office), adopting this amendment would mean adopting a view of the doctrine of the church and the ministry that was entirely foreign to that held by Synod throughout its history. In fact, it was a view Synod had repeatedly rejected.

The delegates *did* adopt the amendment, thus setting aside the one distinguishing mark that set the Missouri Synod apart. Since that day, it has been necessary when talking about Synod prior to 1962 to refer to it as "Old Missouri".

The doctrine of the ministry cannot be correctly understood apart from the doctrine of the church. And to discuss either without first defining what is meant by the term "church" must necessarily lead to ambiguity, equivocation, and confusion. This is exactly the case with the document under consideration.

It is difficult to understand how they did it, but the authors of the CTCR document managed to employ the term "church" no less than 270 times on 32 pages of copy and yet were able the whole while to avoid defining the term.

Walther did not have this trouble. His first order of business was to define the term and tell us exactly what the church is - in concise, unequivocal language:

**Theses I** - "The church in the proper sense of the term is the congregation of saints, that is, the totality of all those who have been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel out of the lost and condemned human race, truly believe in Christ, and are sanctified and incorporated into Christ through this faith."

**Theses III** - "The church in the proper sense of the word is invisible."

**Theses IV** - "Although the true church in the proper sense of the term is essentially invisible, its presence can nevertheless be definitely recognized, and its marks are indeed the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution."

**Theses VI** - "In an improper sense Holy Scripture calls "church" (the universal church) also the visible totality of all the called, that is, of all who confess and adhere to the proclaimed Word and use the holy sacraments, which consists of good and evil persons; so also it calls "churches" (particular churches) its several divisions, that is, the congregations that are found here and there, in which the Word of God is preached and the holy sacraments are administered. It does so because in these visible assemblies the invisible, true, and properly so called church of believers, saints, and children of God lies hidden...."

From this it can be seen that Walther recognized, in agreement with the Lutheran confessors and the later church fathers, that Scripture uses the term church in only three senses: 1) the entire invisible body of believers (the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints); 2) the visible totality of all the called (universal church); 3) the individual visible assemblies or congregations (particular churches).

Common - and essential - to all three concepts of "church" is the proclamation (preaching) of the Word and the administration (use) of the sacraments. Each, in other words, has the authority to publicly administer the office of the keys, the power to forgive sins and to withhold the forgiveness of sins. Included in this authority is the power to pronounce absolution and the power of a spiritual court (excommunication). (*A Dramatic Shift*, [pp. 3-6](#))

**Thesis IV** - "It is this true church of believers and saints [invisible church] to which Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And it is therefore the proper and only possessor and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly goods, rights, powers, etc., which Christ has procured and which are found in His church."

**Thesis VII** - "As visible congregations which still essentially have the Word and the sacraments bear the name "church" according to God's Word because of the true invisible church of true believers which is found in them, so also they possess the authority which Christ has given to His whole church, on account of the true invisible church which is hidden in them, even if there were only two or three."

Taking leave of Walther's work - so clearly expressed - to consider the CTCR document is like wandering off a well-marked path into a maze. The authors, while avoiding defining the term "church", do use it in just about every sense that can be conceived - including the three Scriptural senses. But in most instances it is left to the reader to decide in which sense it is being used, guided only by the context in which it appears. Even then it is not always clear. Furthermore, if the reader does not understand the ways in which use of the term is limited in Scripture or is not even aware that it is at all limited in Scripture he will become easily misguided. And even if one fully understands all the senses conceivable he will time and time again be uncertain as to exactly how the term is being used.

"The Church", "The Lutheran Church", "The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod", "the whole church", "in the church", "to the church", "of the church", "from the church", "in a church", "through the church", "the church exists", "the church has", "our church", "wider church", "segments of the church", "the whole church". This is but a sampling of the array of 270 instances where the word "church" is used.

In the great majority of cases it appears, from the context, that the synodical organization is being referred to. However, interspersed here and there the same phrases are used to indicate the invisible church of true believers, the universal church, and, occasionally, specifically the congregations or a congregation. Thus, by means of association and interpolation, rights and duties that are prerogatives of the latter three alone are made to be prerogatives of the synodical organization. It is as if Synod were being made to rub shoulders with the congregations in the hope that it might take on some of their God-given aura; that, being thus puffed up, it might itself appear God-ordained.

It is not.

Avoiding defining "church" in the scriptural sense is, of course, essential to the CTCR document's governing proposition expressed in passing - and somewhat matter-of-factly - in two places:

Service in a local congregation is not the benchmark in determining who is in the office of the ministry or its auxiliary offices. [p. 41]

Confusion arises when we assume the the church (sic) can function only as one congregation at a time, or that the ministry of the Word and sacrament must be defined only in terms of the activity of a parish pastor. [p. 21]

Defining "church" in the scriptural sense, after all, necessitates expressing the truth that "since the congregation or church of Christ, that is the assembly of believers, has the power of the keys and the priesthood immediately [Matt. 18:15-20; I Pet. 2:5-10] so through it and it alone can the ministry of the Word [office of the ministry; pastoral office] which administers the office of the keys and the priestly

offices in the congregations be conferred upon certain competent persons, namely through the election, call, and commission of the congregation." (*Walther On The Church*, p. 86).

Later, Dr. Pieper would write, "Only a congregation can establish the public ministry [pastoral office]." (*Christian Dogmatics III*, p. 442). And in an essay on this subject published by CPH after his death, he wrote, "These are matters which are generally known and practiced among us." (*What Is Christianity?*, pp. 108 -123, esp. p. 113; *A Dramatic Shift*, pp. 6-10).

It is clear, then, that the authors of the CTCR document have eliminated as a tenable position one of the essential features of the true, scriptural doctrine of the church and the ministry. Having accomplished this, the way is clear to counsel practices that can be supported only by adoption of the rationalistic church-and-ministry principles long held by the [Wisconsin](#) and Norwegian ([Church](#); [2006 update: [Ministry](#)]) Synods, practices emphatically rejected by our Missouri forebears.

The results are devastating to the one office established by Christ Himself, namely, the office of the Word or pastoral office. It is likewise devastating to the assembly of believers or local congregation and its position in God's order. On the other hand, it elevates those organizational structures established by men and those who labor in them to positions of eminence so lofty that it is not inaccurate to say that the prerogatives of God have thereby been usurped by men.

Synod is a church in no sense of the Word as it is used in Scripture. It does not have the marks of the true church and therefore does not have the authority to establish the office of the ministry. Furthermore, nowhere in its constitution is there any indication that Synod or anyone in the employ of Synod has been given authority to administer the office of the keys in the name of anyone. That is, no one in Synod - the organizational structure - or any of its agencies has been given, nor can they be given, the authority to publicly forgive sins in the name of others by means of preaching the Gospel, baptizing, administering the Lord's Supper or pronouncing absolution. Nor does anyone have the authority of a spiritual court or the power to excommunicate.

Nevertheless, since 1962 it has come about that synodical officials, seminary professors and anyone with a theological degree who serves in any agency of Synod, in agencies established by federations of congregations, and even agencies outside Synod and the congregations have come to be considered incumbents of the office of the ministry or pastoral office. In addition, a multitude of "ministry" positions have been created for the purpose of fitting people to the requirements of government, insurance retirement plans and accrediting agencies.

The CTCR - 20 years of confusion later - was given the unenviable task of trying to justify all of this and make it palatable to those who have become increasingly alarmed by it.

The first problem confronting the CTCR was the necessity of establishing that Synod is a church on a plane with the local congregation. But this could not be done since Synod is a man-ordained organization and can never carry the name church in the sense that its congregational members carry it; that is, in the scriptural sense. Therefore it was necessary to confuse and obscure the distinction by a "blitzkrieg" of the word church.

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The next problem was the necessity of supplying a rationale for this "church's" recently developed "ministry". That took some doing.

Dr. Walther, in his theses on the ministry, Thesis V, wrote, "The ministry of the Word [pastoral office] has the power to preach the Gospel and administer the holy sacraments and the authority of a spiritual court." The office of the ministry, in other words, has the power of the office of the keys, the power to forgive and to retain sins. This is the essence of the office. It is an office of power.

Thesis VI: "The ministry of the Word" - together with its power - "is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the power of the keys, by means of its call which God Himself has prescribed." Note the word "the". The congregation is **the** possessor, not **a** possessor. It is not one possessor among many. It is the exclusive possessor. This is scriptural.

Synod does not possess this power. If it does not have it, of course, it cannot confer it. If the office of the ministry is a conferred office of power; and if Synod does not have this power to confer; and if, in spite of this, Synod still claims that it can establish an office of the ministry, the question then arises: what kind of an office is this synodical office of the ministry? More importantly, what is the essence of this office? The CTCR enlightens us:

*....Public ministry - To be in "public ministry" a person must be **formally assigned** to labor in the work of the church on behalf of those in the church who are not in public ministry (laity). It refers to offices that have **specific duties, responsibilities, and accountability.***

*....The office of the Public Ministry - It is the divinely established office referred to in Scripture as "**shepherd**", "**elder**", or "**overseer**". This term is equivalent to "pastoral office". Within this office are contained all the **functions** of the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the church....*

*....the word "public" connotes **accountability** to those who have placed them into "public" office....*

...There is a bishops office and **oversight** is one of its definitive **functions**....

...Paul admonishes the elders: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the **flock**, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to care for the church of God which He obtained with the blood of His own Son...."

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...the office of the public ministry....may exist in various forms, that is, the "**flocks**" to which a man ministers have various forms....

...The question is also asked: Is it possible to exercise the office of shepherd and overseer in the church only in a parish situation? In the case of "administrative officials", for instance, is the church calling as an "elder of the church" a man qualified to exercise oversight when it calls him to be a District President? Or a seminary professor? Or a campus pastor? The answer may be yes or no. It depends on the call. If a man is asked merely to perform a necessary but only secular function for the church but is not called to public accountability as an overseer in the church, he is not in the office of the public ministry. However, District presidents who are charged with the oversight of the overseers of the flock, or professors who are charged with the oversight of the men who are preparing to be shepherds of the church, or men who are charged with the oversight of the faith and life of the church's youth on a college campus or in the military can be properly said to be serving in the office of the public ministry of the church....

...If the office (**District or synodical officials**) is such that it is an exercise of the office of the ministry by virtue of its functions, or if the functions are definable as directly auxiliary to the pastoral ministry, then a person accepting such a call retains ministerial status in the church....[**emphasis added**]

So. Now we know what the essence of the synodical "office of the ministry" is. Function. It is not that the CTCR has ignored the Word and the sacraments. They quote the pertinent passages from the Confessions, e.g., "....the power of the keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments...." "Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is, the command to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless."

But the problem is that not one person within the synodical structure has the authority to do any of these things in the name of anyone - nor can anyone give this humanly-devised organization or anyone employed by it this authority. Therefore if one is to find the synodical "office of the ministry" he must search not for Word and sacraments but rather for **its** mark, namely, **functions**.

This ministry of function is quite a novel idea. It works something like this:

The office of the ministry instituted by Christ when He called the apostles has the power to remit and to retain sins through the administration of the Word and the sacraments. It is conferred by God through the local congregation by means of its call. In order to administer something one must perform a task - function. Besides functioning by preaching, baptizing, administering the Lord's Supper, absolving and judging in spiritual matters, scripture directs pastors to perform other functions. Taken all together the functions are referred to as "shepherding" and "overseeing" the "flock". In all of these things the pastor is, according to God's Word, accountable to those who conferred the office on him.

The congregations of Synod have authorized certain men to perform for them certain auxiliary functions which are the responsibility of the office of the ministry each has established in its midst. The men who are "formally assigned" these functions fulfill in varying degrees the pastoral "responsibilities" of "shepherding" and "overseeing". In addition, each has a "flock" - all of Synod, pastors of congregations, students, whatever. Although God chose them and they are responsible to Him, they also have "accountability" to those who placed them in office. Most important of all, they have a theological education, proof that God has chosen and prepared them to be presented to the church as His gifts. Since they perform pastoral functions, have a "flock", are accountable to others and have a theological degree they are in the office of the ministry.

The office of the ministry, of course, administers the Word and sacraments which are the marks of the one true (invisible) Church. Since these men are incumbents of the office of the ministry by virtue of their functioning, they also have the authority to perform the function of administering the office of the keys through the administration of the Word and sacraments. Conclusion: their ministry is the ministry of Word and sacraments.

Very novel. Very specious. Very false. If you can't get in the front door, try the back.

The CTCR tried hard to convince us that Synod is a church in the same sense and on the same plane as the local congregation. To do this it was necessary to confuse the meaning of and avoid defining the term "church." It tried to convince us that Synod has the authority to establish the office of the ministry. To do this it was necessary to virtually ignore the true essence of the office - power to forgive sins and to withhold the forgiveness of sins -concentrating instead on its auxiliary functions and duties.

But in spite of all its efforts the fact remains: Synod is not a church in the scriptural sense of the word and cannot establish the office of the ministry. If it is still maintained, in view of this, that Synod has an office of the ministry, it must be concluded that it is a charismatically contrived ministry. It cannot be the one true office of the ministry established by Christ and conferred through the local congregation. It is, in

short, a ministry without a church.

Paragraph 5.21 ([old 4.15](#)) of the by-laws to the synodical constitution is unconstitutional because it is based on the false teaching that agencies other than a local congregation have authority to establish the office of the ministry. Since Synod is pledged to Scripture as "the only rule and norm of faith and practice," this will have to be dealt with soon. No group of Christians pledged to God's Word can continue compromising it for long without harm coming to the group.

The danger is real. Dr. Walther wrote: "We are convinced that the great decisive battle of the Reformation which our fathers fought against the papacy in the 16th century centered in the doctrine of the church and the ministry." (*Walther On The Church*, p 12)

When the doctrine of the church and the ministry fails to be preserved from all error, the administration of the Word and sacraments will ultimately be affected. If the administration is affected, so must the power being administered. The power being administered is the power to forgive sins, the "ministration of righteousness", justification. To contend for the doctrine of the church and the ministry is to contend for the doctrine of justification.

The Wisconsin-Norwegian doctrine of the church and the ministry now firmly entrenched in the Missouri Synod promotes hierarchism. It invents a "church" that is not divinely instituted and an "office of the ministry" that has no connection with the office established by Christ. Neither has the power of the keys to forgive and to retain sins.

Yet, in practice, this "ministry" becomes a powerful, autonomous class of "clergymen" separated from and out from under the control of the priesthood; this "church" becomes its protector. Thus an environment is created which history has shown serves as an incubator for the development of all kinds of false notions about God's Word. Given time, history has also shown, the doctrine of justification is attacked, subverted and finally lost. And when it is lost to the hierarchy it is lost to the priesthood which looks to the hierarchy for training and guidance.

Hierarchism is well on its way to full maturity in the Missouri Synod, having had twenty years to develop in an atmosphere of unopposed freedom. One necessity, however, has eluded it. It needs legitimacy. Since it cannot get the legitimacy it covets from its man-ordained "church"; and since the local congregation or God-ordained church cannot and will not give it legitimacy, it must look elsewhere to justify its existence. It must look to ordination - but to ordination redefined.

"Ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not a divine institution, but is an apostolic ecclesiastical arrangement and only a solemn public confirmation of the call." (Walther, Thesis VI)

Synod does not ordain. Congregations do: "The power to ordain inheres in the congregation and other persons have this authority only by commitment." (Pieper, *III*, p. 455nl9). Synod merely acts as an agent of the congregation in performing the rite. Only in this sense is it correct to say that Synod ordains. It is the congregation who confers the office of the ministry and it is the congregation who through the rite of ordination is telling not only its sister congregations but the whole world: we have conferred the office of the ministry on this man, he has the authority to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments publicly in our name. For this reason, prior to 1962, Synod insisted that "The ordination or installation shall take place in the presence of the congregation which has called the candidate or pastor." (former 4.19)

[2006 update: [cf.](#)]

Throughout Synod's history ordination and installation were viewed as qualitatively similar. Ordination was reserved for first-time calls; installation for all subsequent calls. Both were merely public confirmations of a call to serve as pastor of a congregation and the occasion to pray for God's blessings on the ministry of the one called. But things changed sometime after 1962. Ordination and installation became distinctly dissimilar rites.

Ordination took on new meaning. While it continued - and continues - to be insisted that installations "must always take place in the presence of the (calling) congregation", "the President of the District in which the calling congregation is located may permit the ordination to take place in the home congregation." (5.25a,b) Furthermore - and especially significant - not only men who had already been ordained and were already pastors but also candidates were to be **installed**: "The installation of candidates and pastors shall always take place in the presence of the congregation to which they have been called." (5.25b)

It is not uncommon today for a candidate to be ordained in his home congregation and then travel to his calling congregation to be installed. Other candidates talk about being ordained and installed on such and such a day in the presence of the calling congregation.

The CTCR enlightens us on the subject. At first glance it seems to affirm the "Old Missouri" (orthodox) position: "(Ordination) is a public ratification of the call...." (Of course we know now that by "call" and "minister" is meant not only candidates called by congregations but also those called to the "office of the ministry" of the synodical "church").

But there is more: "We stress the fact that ordination is the declaration of the whole confessional fellowship....admission into the pastoral office is not an act of a single congregation." "Since ordination

is a public statement of the whole church body, one cannot say that it **must** take place in the local congregation." "This is seldom advisable (since) it is fitting [not necessary, but nice] that the calling agency (sic) of the church should be involved in the ordination." [**emphasis added**]

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Ordination has been taken from the only legitimate ordaining authority, the local congregation, and handed over to synodical officialdom as an exclusive right and responsibility. Installation however, remains with the congregation. Since candidates are installed in addition to being ordained it is obvious that ordination has been imbued with a quality that installation does not enjoy and has been placed in a different realm.

At this point the checklist of the developing synodical hierarchical system looks like this: 1) A synodical "church" has been created; 2) A synodical "church" "office of the ministry" has been instituted; 3) Exclusive authority to ordain has been secured.

All efforts to legitimize this "church" and its "office of the ministry" by providing a scriptural foundation have been abandoned as futile since there is no such foundation. Attention instead has turned to ordination. What is needed is to find a way to make ordination the means by which the office of the ministry is empowered - both the office instituted by Christ and the synodical "office". If this can be done the hierarchical system will be completed.

A [document](#) published by the Ft. Wayne seminary, *Ordination: Human Rite Or Divine Ordinance*, already defends such a position. The author comes very close to setting ordination alongside baptism as a means of grace through which special gifts are given and the pastoral office is conferred.

The authors of the CTCR report attempt to bridge the chasm that exists between this position and the orthodox position:

...Ordination as an act does not impart an additional authority that the call does not have....  
...Ordination is a public ratification of the call....  
...(Through ordination) a qualified member...is presented to the church as a gift of the Holy Spirit....

The first sounds traditional enough and will serve to still the fears of those who are aware of the Ft. Wayne Movement. And the qualifying phrase "as an act" will, for the moment, satisfy the Movement leaders.

The second sounds traditional too. But by replacing the traditionally used word "confirmation" with the word "ratification" ordination is given a new connotation. When something is confirmed it is simply

recognized or acknowledged as already in effect. When something is ratified it becomes effective at that point.

The last comes closest to making ordination, if not an empowering act, then an act by which we know whether or not a man is a gift from God. This does in a sense give power to the one being ordained. And it replaces the conferring act of God exercised through the congregation as the sign that a man is God's gift to the church (in all the scriptural senses).

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The CTCR report, however, does not quite finish the job of making ordination the means of empowering the office of the ministry. That task has been taken up by others and we must wait for the results of their endeavors.

The CTCR concludes its report by appending Walther's 10 theses on the ministry and adds in a note that it is doing so "as a testimony to the theological and practical consistency of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod." We could wish for its integrity's sake that it had not made that statement because it is patently untrue. The principles laid down by Walther in his theses and those promoted in the CTCR report stand in direct opposition to each other. They cannot exist together. Likewise the former practices of the Missouri Synod and the practices promoted in the CTCR report: the latter replace the former; they have nothing in common.

The CTCR has done the congregations, pastors and teachers of the Missouri Synod a great service. It has shown us, twenty years after the scriptural doctrine of the church and the ministry was replaced by the Wisconsin-Norwegian doctrine, what happens when God's people desert His Word for the doctrines of men. Thanks to its report the members of Synod have been given fair warning: return to God's Word or suffer the consequences experienced by other Lutheran bodies.

## ADDENDUM

By approving the "Proposed Agenda" appearing on pages 251-431 of the "Convention Workbook", the delegates to this summer's synodical convention will be completing the transition from the Word of God to the doctrines of men begun by their counterparts in 1962.

Note the following: Pg. 376 (97 of the Agenda): "2...first **field of service**." Could be anything from a pastor to a synodical staff position. Pg. 99: "...call....to **Minister in the church**." The same. Pg. 100: Whatever the field of service, it is "the public ministry of the **Word and the sacraments**." Really? Pg. 106: "14--I ordain you....to the office of the ministry...." What can this mean to the assembly, especially when it is not the calling congregation, other than that by this act the office of the ministry is being entered into. Pg. 107: "19" - It's official: ordination and installation are two distinct, qualitatively

different rites. The calling congregation has no part in ordination. Worse yet, ordination is an act of clergymen empowering clergymen. Pg. 121, 136: Missionaries, chaplains, seminary professors all installed into the synodical "office of the ministry." There is more. [**emphasis added**]

But note especially another place, pgs. 40 41: the entire clause, "...I, **by virtue of my office**, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you...." is omitted - a glaring omission that tells it all: The public administration of the office of the keys, the power to remit and to retain sins, has been taken from those to whom Christ gave it, the local congregation, and placed into the hands of a self-perpetuating clergyman brotherhood. The office of the ministry has become a "special spiritual estate." [**emphasis added**]

And that's the grand finale. The job is done.