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The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor

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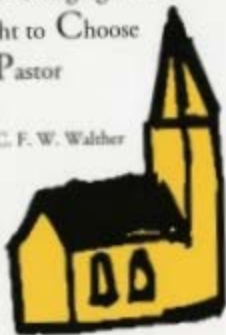
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The Congregation's
Right to Choose
Its Pastor

C. F. W. Walther



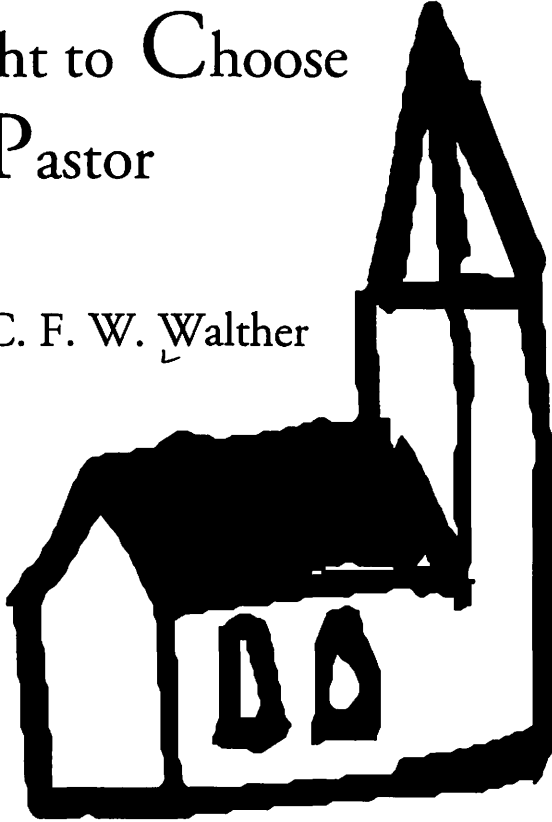
Concordia Seminary Publications
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THE CONGREGATION'S RIGHT
TO CHOOSE ITS PASTOR



The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor

C. F. W. Walther



Translated by Fred Kramer
Edited with Discussion Questions
by Wilbert H. Rosin

Concordia Seminary Publications
Texts Series — Number 1

The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor /
by C. F. W. Walther /
translated by Fred Kramer /
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Texts Series—Number 1

Robert Rosin, General Editor

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CONTENTS

Preface	7
September 18, 1860	19
October 2, 1860	28
October 16, 1860	36
November 13, 1860	39
November 27, 1860	49
December 11, 1860	65
January 8, 1861	79
January 22, 1861	90
February 19, 1861	111
March 5, 1861	124
June 11, 1861	136
June 25, 1861	147
July 23, 1861	160
August 6, 1861	176
Endnotes	183
Discussion Questions	201

PREFACE

The image of the pastor or religious leader, his authority, function and role, is currently a lively topic for discussion, as church groups merge and emerge, as clergy are robed and disrobed, as town and gown and church and state issues erupt and disrupt the peace of the church and the parish. Therefore this translation of Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther's essay, *Das Gemeindewahlrecht*, delineating the voting rights of the congregation, appears at an appropriate time.

One sentence

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has not been immune to the church and ministry debate, harking back to what was perhaps the most serious confrontation in 1839-1841 that had barely subsided when "the Missouri Synod" colony, as it was popularly known, landed in 1839 at Saint Louis, had laid its plans for development in Perry County, and was threatened with dissolution when its bishop, Martin Stephan, was deposed and when laymen, led by Carl Eduard Vehse, attempted to impose a thoroughly congregational church polity. Because C. F. W. Walther emerged at this time as the leader of the Saxons and convinced them of the legitimacy of the colony by providing them with a view of church polity that the Missouri Synod has since held—in theory, if not always in practice—the myth developed that this had always been Walther's view, leaving it only to the occasion of the April 1841 debate to be publicly unveiled.

The evidence, however, clearly shows that Walther, like most of the Saxon colony and particularly the pastors, was seriously demoralized by the Stephan affair. Some pastors

resigned, including Walther, and to all it appeared in the two years from May 1839 to April 1841 that the colony might break up. Walther's illness at this time, exacerbated if not caused by the depressed state of affairs, brought him to the home of his sister, whose husband was the Rev. E. G. W. Keyl. Until 1839 Walther seems to have been a loyal follower of Stephan and certainly gave no hint that he held the views on church and ministry which he advocated in 1841. His biographers are agreed that he arrived at those views while recuperating at the Keyls where he read Luther's writing intensively, much as he had done in 1831-1832, also while convalescing.

Parenthetically we might note that a half century later Christian Hochstetter in his history of the Missouri Synod speaks of differences between Stephan and Walther even before they came to America, differences which allegedly caused Stephan to suspect Walther and even assign a roommate to spy on Walther. No proof is supplied. Walther offers no hint of this. That Walther was chosen to go from Saint Louis to Perry County to confront Stephan in 1839 may have stirred Hochstetter's imagination and influenced his memory and interpretation five decades later. Consider that Hochstetter wrote just two decades after Leopold von Ranke attempted to write his famous history of the papacy *wie es eigentlich gewesen* and historians were just beginning to stress the importance of objectivity in historical writing.

In any event, Walther in 1841 for the first time clearly enunciated the relation and relevance of the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers for understanding the church and the organization of congregations, and, subsequent to the Altenburg debate, for the calling of pastors and the office of the ministry.

Another mistaken theory is that Walther's views of church and ministry grew out of American democracy and that this largely determined the congregational polity of the Missouri Synod. Carl S. Munding in *Government in the Missouri Synod: The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947) has convincingly demonstrated that this could not have been the case, showing that the correlation between American political and economic democracy and Missouri Synod church polity is only apparent, however logical it may seem.

Because Walther's essay, *Das Gemeindewahlrecht*, deals with the important topics of church and ministry, because Wilhelm Loehe, Johannes Grabau, and others alleged that Walther had been influenced by the proponents of American political and economic democracy, and because some present day historians have adopted that view, a listing of Munding's major arguments against American origins for Walther's position is in order:

1. The Saxons were in America less than a year when Carl Eduard Vehse first proposed a totally congregational church polity—far too little time to change the Saxons' opinion.
2. The Saxon Lutherans did not endorse John Locke and other supporters of empiricism and popular sovereignty.
3. All German Lutherans opposed use of the English and anything "American," because they believed there was an inherent relationship between language and faith.
4. Walther and the Saxon Lutherans were not active in politics and therefore could not from that source have imbibed democratic theories.

5. The Saxons tended to isolate themselves from the rest of American society.
6. Because the German pattern of church polity, supported by Grabau and Loehe, had been followed for centuries, there was no demand for democracy in the church. We might add that, as compared with the United States, Europe was far behind in its attempts to establish democracy in government.
7. Scripture was the authority for matters of doctrine and conscience, not popular vote.
8. Laymen, led by Carl Eduard Vehse, were driven by the jolt of the Stephan affair to read Luther. The extreme congregationalism which they espoused was resisted by the pastors for a year and a half. Walther then, after reading Luther thoroughly, used that Lutheran and biblical doctrine of the universal priesthood and placed it in the context of the doctrine of the pastoral office. Luther's exposition of Scripture, not American democracy, became the source for Missouri Synod polity.

How the Missouri Synod would have fared in a nondemocratic setting is quite another question. Religious pluralism flourished in the United States from the beginning to the present. All of American Protestantism enjoyed freedom such as it had never known in Europe. For the most part the church in the three hundred or more political territories of Germany was functioning as a department of state rather than as an independent entity. While democracy developed in all American churches few if any expressed their views on polity by means of stated scriptural principles. Walther's contribution was not merely to articulate the Bib-

lical doctrine of the universal priesthood which Luther as well as other theologians had stressed, but Walther applied it in the unique American setting and in conjunction with the doctrine of the ministry. Thereby he provided the Missouri Synod with the organizational framework that prevails today.

By 1847, six years after the Altenburg debate, Walther's views had been woven into the warp and woof of the Missouri Synod organization, its congregations, and constitutions. Walther, of course, insisted that these views were based on clear teachings of Scripture and as expounded by Martin Luther and other churchmen. That theme runs through Walther's essay *Das Gemeindegewahlrecht*, here translated for the first time into English.

More than internal problems gave rise to the clear articulation of Missouri Synod polity and the doctrine of church and ministry. In 1840, the very time the Saxon colony was struggling for both spiritual and economic survival, Johannes Grabau, who had also arrived in America in 1839 with a group of Prussian emigrants, sent a letter to the Saxons, the so-called *Hirtenbrief* (pastoral letter), with the hope that the Saxons would concur with his high view of the ministry, a position actually not much different from that of Martin Stephan, whom the Saxons had just deposed. All the Saxon congregations were experiencing turmoil following the Stephan affair and therefore delayed their reply, perhaps in part because they appreciated Grabau's strong confessional stance, especially at this time when other Lutherans—for example, in the General Synod—were leaning in the opposite direction. The Saxons may have wondered how they could voice disapproval of Grabau's views on the ministry without alienating him. To add to the delay, the pastor of Trinity congregation, the Rev. Otto H.

Walther, an older brother of Ferdinand (as C. F. W. Walther was known), died on January 21, 1841. Eventually C. F. W. Walther was called as successor, though he did not accept the position until April 26, 1841, six days after the Altenburg debate.

Grabau continued to press for a reply. When the Saxons finally submitted their collective response to the *Hirtenbrief* in July 1843, written by the Rev. G. H. Loeber, it set off a twenty-five year controversy. Eventually, one of Walther's best known writings on church and ministry emerged, *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt*, popularly referred to as *Kirche und Amt* (*The Church and the Ministry*). The English translation originally done by J. T. Mueller was released again by Concordia Publishing House in 1987. Walther's work was published in 1852 after a draft of the treatise had been approved by a synodical convention. The detailed history of the twenty-five year conflict that ensued between the Saxons and Grabau includes Grabau's excommunication of the Missouri Synod in 1859 (all 200 congregations!), the development of two factions in the Buffalo Synod ("the Grabau Synod"), a colloquy with pastors of the Buffalo Synod in 1866 when the General Council was being formed, and the transfer of several pastors to the Missouri Synod. (For an account of the twenty-five year controversy beginning with the *Hirtenbrief*, cf. Roy A. Suelflow, "The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 27 [1954]: 1-19, 57-73, 97-132.)

To add to the external problems of Missouri, conflict had developed with Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, the man who had responded to Friedrich Wyneken's call for help and who had sent numerous pastoral candidates to the Fort Wayne *Nothelferseminar*

(emergency seminary) which he also had founded in 1846 through Wilhelm Sihler, one of his *Sendlinge*. Loehe became more and more upset with the Missouri Synod constitution and the power which it and its congregations gave to laymen because it stressed the universal priesthood of believers. Loehe feared American mob rule (*amerikanische Poebelherrschaft*), expecting that laymen would eventually use their right of suffrage and employ American political election tactics in the selection of pastors. The break came in 1854. The Iowa Synod, subsequently organized with Loehe's support, distanced itself from the Missouri Synod for succeeding decades and seemed to cultivate a natural inclination to differ with Missouri on most issues (such as chiliasm, open questions, conversion, and predestination, as well as church and ministry).

The 1839 crisis over the Stephan matter, Grabau's *Hirtenbrief* and the controversy that followed, the break with Loehe, and the need for clear guidelines as the Missouri Synod organized and as new congregations were established—all of this compelled Walther as the recognized leader to speak and write several times on the subject of church and ministry. The first was at the Altenburg debate in 1841 in which he defended eight theses that were then developed into *Kirche und Amt* published in 1852 after much discussion, even on the convention floor of the synod. The subject was regularly treated in *Lehre und Wehre* (*Doctrine and Defense*), a professional journal that Walther began in 1855, in articles in *Der Lutheraner*, the biweekly newspaper which Walther started in 1844 and which was distributed broadly also to laymen, and directly or indirectly in many of the thirty-five or more essays which Walther delivered at synodical conventions.

Das Gemeindewahlrecht was published serially in volume 17 of *Der Lutheraner* from September 1860 through August 1861. That Walther found it necessary to write at such length, considering that his book on church and ministry had appeared in 1852, indicates how controversial the subject still was and how important it was to him. Grabau's persistent attacks and his excommunication of the Missouri Synod in 1859 probably were the most immediate reasons for writing the lengthy article.

Dr. Fred Kramer, who translated this essay, is well known for his translation of *Examen Concilii Tridentini* by Martin Chemnitz, available as *Examination of the Council of Trent*, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971-86). Dr. Kramer was a long-term participant in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogs and served as a professor at St. John's College, Winfield, Kansas, and twenty-four years as a professor of systematic theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. Before his death in 1991 he had authored numerous articles and essays and had contributed on various levels in various positions in the Missouri Synod such as the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

We were overjoyed several years ago when Dr. Kramer volunteered to translate *Das Gemeindewahlrecht* just when we were finding it impossible to carry out the project in time for a graduate course at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. Dr. Kramer worked swiftly but carefully, thereby making our task much easier.

A few explanations are necessary. Translators and editors usually struggle between a literal rendition *or* a free translation that is more idiomatic and literary. The choice was made to keep the translations as literal as possible, though it meant tolerating the ponderous, involved and

sometimes awkward sentences. The alternative was to subdivide the very lengthy sentences and in so doing occasionally convey a different meaning, however slight the nuances might be. The purpose in making this essay available in English was to convey Walther's views precisely. Walther often inserted parenthetical comments within quotations, where an editor today would use brackets. Walther's parenthetical comments and explanations are retained here. Items in brackets both within the text and the endnotes are supplied by the present editor.

Walther also occasionally supplied more lengthy comments in the form of footnotes. In this printing his footnotes are collected as endnotes following the entire text rather than at the end of each installment as it appeared in an issue of *Der Lutheraner*. Occasionally almost an entire page in *Der Lutheraner* contains no paragraph breaks, and quotations, regardless of length, are imbedded within the text. However, in order to provide readers some relief, while the lengthy paragraphs are generally left as is, the quotations in this translation are indented so that readers need not constantly check whether it is Walther or another churchman speaking. Walther's abbreviated source references in the endnotes have been left as he had them in bare-bones notation and have not been spelled out here, but they can readily be pursued by the interested scholar, though reading more widely in those sources will often require coping with the German or Latin original. Unfortunately not everything worth our reading today is available in English translation. Finally as readers quickly will realize, the divisions noted on the contents page do not signal new chapters but only list the particular issues of *Der Lutheraner* in which those portions of Walther's essay appeared as *Das Gemeindewahlrecht* was serialized. That serial format, coupled with Walther's concern that his

readers understand the serious nature of the topic, no doubt led him to repeat material several times, as readers will see.

Discussion of Walther's essay could become the starting point for exploring several related issues—Walther's reasons for writing at that particular time, his occasional sharp language, his seeming preoccupation with the papacy, subsequent relations with the Buffalo Synod (or Grabau Synod as it was also popularly known). Readers also could focus on additional problems related to church polity in the Missouri Synod at that time, whether the German language affected the synodical view of church and ministry, or which other contemporary leaders within and outside the Missouri Synod may have contributed to the clash of opinion. However, Walther's overriding concern was doctrine, in this case what Lutherans were to believe and teach about the church and ministry.

The questions following the essay focus on those topics and their application. Clearly, these are live and relevant issues, particularly because opinion since the founding of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1847 has in some quarters developed in different directions, as Dr. John Wohlrabe has shown in *An Historical Analysis of the Doctrine of the Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 1987). Just as Walther stressed the universal priesthood of believers and insisted that laymen actively participate in doctrinal discussions (a principle that he as pastor or *Oberpfarrer* of the joint congregation in St. Louis consistently put into practice), congregations today would do well to devote several Sunday morning classes to an airing of the issues on the basis of the attached questions. *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*, a 1981 report of the synodical Commission on Theology and Church Relations, shows that church and

ministry topics are interesting and in some cases confusing or bewildering for parishioners, if not for pastors. The confusion and misperceptions seem to have continued to the present. Walther's essay therefore deserves thoughtful study. Numerous articles and other writings have appeared that deal with the subject at hand, again directly or indirectly reflecting the continuing interest. One lengthy study that may prove useful is *Church and Ministry: The Role of Church, Pastor, and People from Luther to Walther* by Eugene F. Klug (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993).

Continuing, even growing, interest in the general topics of church, ministry, and the role of the congregation has prompted this revision and reprint of *The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*. A project such as this invariably enlists the collaboration of many people. We are indebted to the now-sainted Dr. Fred Kramer for devoting many hours in preparing the original translation—only he knew how many; for the help and support of numerous people at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, in completing the original project in 1987; for Dr. Robert J. Scudieri of LCMS World Mission for his interest and support; for the generous help of Robert and Laine Rosin and Concordia Seminary Publications in recasting and revising the material for the current format; and for the encouragement of many who have said the 1987 edition has been useful—all for the better understanding of Dr. C. F. W. Walther and the greater glory of God!

Wilbert Rosin
November 1997

THE CONGREGATION'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE ITS PASTOR

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (September 18, 1860): 17-19]

In the past we always sincerely rejoiced that Pastor Grabau here in America still granted congregations the right to choose pastors [*Kirchendiener*], while, on the other hand, Pastor Loehe in Germany denied congregations even this right. We were happy that the congregations here were at least able to live in quiet undisturbed possession of this most important right, and that we were thus not compelled to begin a battle also for this treasure that was so dearly won for us by the Reformation.

That Pastor Loehe really denies to congregations the right to choose their pastors may be seen among other things from an article of his which he wrote in the year 1849, and which bears the following title: "Aphorisms about the New Testament offices and their relationship to the congregation." In it Pastor Loehe writes, e.g., the following:

In Acts 14:24 we find that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (pastors) for the new congregations in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch without the least participation on the part of the congregations in the

election of the elders.¹ — And it was not only the apostles who themselves appointed shepherds for the congregations without an active participation being ascribed to congregations in the choice and appointment. Also evangelists and pupils of apostles were able, like apostles, to appoint elders and could continue and complete the work begun by apostles. Whoever had been appointed by them—or by apostles—as presbyter (pastor) of a congregation, could and had to, according to Acts 20:28, consider himself as appointed by the Holy Spirit. (p. 56)

In what follows Loehe admits only this that, because the apostles and evangelists traveled about and therefore were not personally acquainted with the people whom they had to appoint as pastors, that therefore the congregations were asked before the election for their characterization of those who were to be chosen. On such occasions the congregations could of course have brought forward “wishes, requests, and a respectful proposal, yes, it is conceivable within the limits of an evaluation that they could even register a veto and denial, etc.” (p. 57) “However,” Loehe continues, “the final judgment and the final decision about the person to be chosen belonged to the one who had the mandate to appoint (to the pastor). After all, the task belonged to him, and the extent to which the congregations were to be drawn in was left to his love, wisdom, and sense of responsibility.” (p. 58)

In what follows Loehe maintains it is even less proper [now] than at the time of the apostles to grant the right to choose their own pastors. “No,” he exclaims in what follows:

an unconditional right of choice on the part of the congregation is not only unapostolic, but also most dangerous ... The congregations are permitted, and not to be hindered, in asserting their testimony about the person to be elected, in expressing their wishes, but they should recognize that they do not have the right to strive against the wise judgment of the bishop, who does the appointing. The one who does the appointing can err, and his action can be reported to the synod; an entire congregation must not be delivered without recourse to the sovereign action of an individual.² However, if the one who does the appointing is honest, and equal to his task, then he has an interest in performing his office well, and his governing might prove more blessed for the congregations than that of an easily misled crowd that is not familiar with what it ought to have and receive from the office. If the decision there lay in the hand of a wise and godly pastor, how much more must this be true in the case of our corrupted congregations! (pp. 59-60)

The reason that Loehe fights so decidedly against the right of the congregations to choose their pastors is his false doctrine of the ministry. He rejects the biblical doctrine of the Lutheran Church that Christ gave the office to his whole church, and that the pastors merely publicly administer this universal office as servants of the church. Rather, Loehe believes and teaches that the pastors constitute a special, privileged class of people, a special estate in the church, a "sacred aristocracy," a certain ecclesiastical class of nobles and priests. Just as only the children of nobles or such as are created noblemen are members of the nobility, so, Loehe thinks, only a pastor can create a pastor; and as in the Old



Testament only the son of a priest could become a priest, so only ordination by a clergyman could make a clergyman. Loehe writes, e.g.:

Everywhere in the New Testament we see that only the sacred office begets congregations, nowhere that the office is merely a transferring of congregational rights and plenary powers, that the congregation bestows the office. The office stands in the midst of the congregations like a fruitful tree, which has its seed in itself; it replenishes itself ... As long as the presbytery (the pastors) retains the examination and ordination, it is right and defensible that it replenishes itself and propagates itself from person to person, from generation to generation. Those who have it pass it on, and he to whom it is passed on by those who have it, will have it as from the Lord God ... The office is a stream of blessing which flows from the apostles to their pupils, and from these pupils on and on down through time. (pp. 71-72)

But while Loehe is sternly opposed to a choice of pastors by congregations, it is strange that he admits, according to Acts 6, that the congregation indeed has the right to choose deacons and almoners. He writes:

It should be noted how completely different the nomination of deacons (Acts 6) is from the appointing of pastors! The multitude of believers, the congregation, is not invited (?) to this (the election of pastors); it is totally in the hands of the appointing apostles and evangelists, who draw in the congregation and its members at their discretion and as the case calls for. However, for the installation of the

diaconate the multitude is called together, the plan is presented to them—although of course in the imperative (in the form of a command), for the apostles are the representatives of the Lord—³ it gives and witnesses its satisfaction. And how does one now get the deacons? They are chosen by the congregation according to the norm of the necessary qualifications established by the apostles, presented to the apostles, and ordained by them. One could call the presbytery (the pastors) a holy aristocracy (the rule of the distinguished) of the church, while something democratic (the rule by the common people) lies in the election of the deacons. (p. 86)

When Pastor Loehe wrote this eleven years ago and we read it, we were deeply alarmed. For with this he took away from the Christian congregations the most precious and important right which they possess. The poor German congregations groan under the godless rule of thousands of unbelieving preachers who are foisted upon them, who have now for more than half a century robbed them of their orthodox agendas, catechisms, and hymnbooks, and have forced unbelieving books on them, and preached to them the most wretched doctrine of men instead of the Word of God. Now instead of fighting so that the poor, shamelessly tyrannized congregations, which are cheated by their pastors out of their faith and salvation, might be freed from these their tyrants, Loehe rather fights for this, that the congregations only remain tamely in their chains, and praises it as a proper help for them, if the preachers also in the future retain all power in their hands and the congregations remain in the old slavery. However, as deeply as we were alarmed (as we said) eleven years ago, when we read what we have quoted, it was nevertheless a great comfort to us that at that

time no one here in America, not even Pastor Grabau, dared to deny to our congregations here the right to choose their own pastors; for even in the notorious "*Hirtenbrief*" [pastoral letter], which Pastor Grabau caused to be circulated twenty years ago and in which many precious rights are denied to congregations, the right to choose their own pastors is nevertheless conceded to them.

However, times change, and men change with them. A short time ago the "sixth synodical letter" of the Buffalo Synod came into our hands. In it we find that this synod, with Pastor Grabau at its head, in its meeting the previous year began to undermine also the right of the congregation to choose its own pastor. For in that synodical letter we read the following:

An abuse was considered which unfortunately has arisen in many congregations at churchly elections, e.g., of elders and of church fathers, and this consists in the fact that the ministry as such is totally robbed of its right, from which unfortunately much mischief has already resulted. When, e.g., elders or church fathers are to be chosen and installed, then particularly the election is totally abandoned to caprice and chance, yes, even laid into the hands of partisans, and besides the error predominates that, the call into office rests on the vote of the majority; this is contrary to all of Christian doctrine, and to the apostolic example Acts chapter 6. For in this way the entire election and installation is placed under the power of only one estate in the church, namely, of the household, and secondly, that right which Acts chapter 6 reserves for the ministry, is trampled under foot; for the election of the congregation is not a lawful act where the power of office is delivered to

the one who is elected, but it is merely a Christian expression of fraternal and public confidence. We, in our circumstances, carry this out in the best way, namely, when the pastor together with the available elders propose a few pious and useful men to be called and leave it to the individual members to choose one or the other from this proposed list, whose integrity, suitability and usefulness is taken for granted. The election after such a proposal of course includes no power to install, but only a designating and identifying power. This is followed by the acceptance of such a call issued by the ministry, which includes a power to install, and according to which the office is to be performed according to our church constitutions. In this way all suspicion, all dishonest electioneering, all usurpation and all excesses are removed, and the Word of God is assured its right. If the case should arise, that a number of members of the congregation should be elected from outside of this proposed list, then this election must be subject to examination and approval of the pastor and of the present church elders, in order that no unsuitable or incompetent person may be chosen for this position by mere self-will or party spirit. (p. 40)

Our esteemed readers will see from the preceding that the Buffalo Synod is not standing still, but unfortunately, instead of going forward, it is going backward. Formerly it granted congregations the right to elect; now it denies it to them. It indeed still speaks of election through the members of the congregation, but it declares that this election is by no means an election, but a mere Christian expression of brotherly and public trust. And even this semblance of

election the congregations are not to have in their entirety, for the candidates to be elected are to be proposed to them by the pastor and his church elders, and at all events "left to individual church members" (to which ones they are not yet saying), to choose one or the other over and above the [congregation's] selection. The appearance of election which then follows is then naturally to have "only a designating or signifying power." Those who are elected in this way are then by no means to be regarded already as elders or church fathers and as such to be only verified and solemnly installed in their office by the pastors; no, the pastors are to make them such first through their installation. It is of course possible that deplorable conditions may prevail at elections in the congregations of the Buffalo Synod; the synod itself says in that connection that "much mischief" has already occurred. But instead of the synod for this very reason being guided the more closely by the example of the apostles, who surely understood best how the matter should be undertaken in Christian order (who, however, as we read Acts 6, first instructed and admonished the congregation with respect to the election, and then permitted the whole congregation alone to hold the election and finally verified the election that had taken place), instead of this the Buffalo Synod departs from the apostolic example, trims down the election by the congregation as much as possible, declares it to be "a mere expression of brotherly and public trust," and ascribes to it only the power to designate,⁴ or to point out those whom the pastors are only later to make officials through their installation. Yes, the Buffalo Synod shows plainly that it thinks that when congregations exercise a right, even when the apostles themselves permitted them to do so, it is always a dangerous thing; that there one must always fear misuse, mischief and disaster; therefore every right of the congre-

gations would have to be curtailed as much as possible, but as much right and power as possible given to the pastors, because these are all good, pious, holy, wise people; if one takes away the rights from the congregations and gives them to the pastors, then "all suspicion, all impure electioneering, all presumption and advertising [*Aussehreiung*] would be eliminated and the Word of God would receive its just claim."⁵

Of course, in the same meeting in which the Buffalo Synod now took away the right of election from the congregations, it also once again excommunicated us, namely, the entire Missouri Synod⁶ and publicly renounced all fraternal fellowship with us. With this it probably wants to declare that we now no longer have any right to attack and refute their false doctrine. However, since Luther, although he was under the ban of the holy father, the pope, nevertheless always continued to attack the pope's errors and tyranny, not in order to convert the pope and the papists, but on account of the dear children of God, that these might not be deceived and misled, so also we, although we are under the ban of the Buffalo Synod, shall nevertheless continue to expose and to rebuke the errors of the Buffalo Synod, in order to warn against them and protect all who love the truth. And we regard this all the more important now, inasmuch as the right of the Christian congregation is more important and sacred, [the right] against which the Buffalo Synod now also wickedly stretches out its hand, and [we] call out to all congregations: Note well what it is they want to rob you of; it is truly a great treasure which is at stake for you!

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (October 2, 1860):
25-27]

The question whether a Christian congregation has the right to choose its pastors itself, or whether this is a special right of the so-called clergy, is an old matter of controversy between the Lutheran and the Roman church. Our church fights for the rights of the congregation to elect its pastors already in the *Smalcald Articles*, which, as Luther says in the Preface, were drawn up with the purpose of showing "what and in how far we were willing and able to yield to the papists, and, on the other hand, what we intended to hold fast and persevere in." Since however the papists do not yield in the doctrine of the right of congregations to elect their pastors,⁷ our faithful old theologians continued in all their doctrinal and polemical writings to defend that important right and to refute the sophisms with which the papists sought to justify or at least to gloss over their sacrilege.

When our old faithful Lutheran theologians defend the right of congregations to choose their pastors, they generally do this in a threefold way. First of all they prove this right from certain teachings of Scripture; secondly they show it from apostolic practice, i.e., from the fact that the apostles permitted the congregations to choose their pastors and other servants of the church; and finally in the third place, they confirm it by the practice of the ancient Christian church before the rise of the papacy.

Since we also are now obliged to defend the right of the congregation to elect, we also know no better way in this matter than the way our faithful fathers followed in such a case. The first question which we answer is therefore the following: Which teachings of Holy Scripture prove that

Christian congregations have the right to choose their pastors themselves?

The first doctrine of Scripture, from which this right clearly follows, is this, that faithful Christians, as the bride of Christ, have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and therefore everything which Christ has earned for his own.

That believing Christians, according to the Scripture of the Old and of the New Testament, are first of all the bride of Christ, and that Christ is their bridegroom, no one can deny. Of this, as is well known, the entire Song of Songs, and the entire Psalm 45 treat, and in the Prophet Hosea, ch. 2:19-20, the Lord says to all believers: "I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord." However, so far as the New Testament is concerned, John the Baptizer, in directing the believers away from himself and to Christ, says: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom," John 3:29. And St. Paul says to the Christians at Corinth, 2 Cor. 11:2: "I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to your one husband." And the Lord himself, speaking of himself and of his believing apostles, says: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Matt. 9:15. Here belongs furthermore the beautiful passage Eph. 5:23-32, where the apostle compares the matrimonial union between man and woman with the marriage of Christ and his congregation, and finally all those parables in which the treasures of grace in Christ here and above are likened to a wedding. Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Rev. 19:7; 22:17. Therefore also the believing Christians are called the wife and *Hausehre* [literally: house-honor] of Christ, Rev. 19:16; Ps. 68:13, and even are called by the

name of mother, Gal. 4:26: "But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother."⁸

But if now believing Christians are called the bride of Christ in the Word of God, we dare not think that this is merely a high but empty title. No, God does not put off his own with empty titles, as the kings of this world frequently do. He is a truthful God. As he calls a thing or a person, so also it is. If God calls believing Christians his children, then that is also what they are, and they really have with God the rights and honor of children; and when Christ calls them his friends, his brothers, his sheep, then they can comfort themselves with this, and be certain that they really have in Christ a true friend, a true brother, a true shepherd, and everything of rights and goods which these words encompass. Thus it is also with the name "bride of Christ," which, as we have seen, is also applied to believing Christians in the Word of God. For as a bridegroom gives to his bride, if he really accepts her as his spouse, the keys to the entire house, and thereby makes her a participant in all his goods and the mistress of his house, and gives her power over all supplies and treasures of his house: so Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, has also given to all believing Christians, as his bride, the keys of his house, made them partakers in all his goods, and given them authority and power over all the treasures of his house, and therefore also the authority and right of calling their pastors. Whoever denies that believing Christians possess all these glories, must also deny, in defiance of the Word of God, that they are by faith the bride of Christ.

Our orthodox fathers, who were so firmly convinced that there is no empty verbal bombast, but that everything Scripture says is the full truth, on which one can firmly rely, and live and die on it, therefore, also with living faith

recognized and believed the great glory which believing Christians must possess, since they are in the Word of God called Christ's beloved bride.

Thus Luther, e.g., writes:

Therefore let us as Christians, (who are supposed to know their treasure and glory) also learn to praise, comfort ourselves and rejoice over this wedding, that by the grace of God we receive this high honor, that we are and are called the bride of his son, Christ. Therefore, I conclude thus: For I have the Word and Baptism, and have begun to believe; and if I remain with it, I am certain that God has received me as such, and has adorned me with his jewels and has taken away all wrinkles and spots, and is cleansing me yet more and more. If now you have become his bride, then you have the keys, and are the mistress in the house, and are sitting among his heavenly treasures. (*Kirchenpostille, Episteltheil XII, p. 2571*)

Elsewhere Luther writes:

St. Peter or a priest is a servant with respect to the keys, the church is the wife and bride; he is to serve her with the power of the keys. (*Kirchenpostille, on the Gospel of the day of St. Peter and Paul, XI, p. 3079*)

Chemnitz writes:

What kind of means does God want to use, through which he will ordinarily call and send preachers? He does not want to do this through angels, but through his church or congregation which is the royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2. For to her, as his beloved bride, he

has committed the keys, Matt. 18, entrusted Word and Sacrament to her, Rom. 3:9, and in sum: The office together with the ministers, all belong to the church. 1 Cor. 3: "All things are yours," whether it be Paul or Apollo, etc., Eph. 4:8, 11. (*Thesaurus Dedekenni* I: 2, 418)

Balthasar Menzer (Professor at Marburg and Giessen, died 1627) writes:

In ordinary calling God does not use the service of angels, but the service of his church, to which Christ has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 18:17-18, and the Word and Sacraments, Rom. 3:2; 9:4, as his bride. Therefore the whole office belongs to the church, Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 3:21, and pastors are called servants of the church, 1 Cor. 3:5. (*Exeges. A.C.*, p. 643)

Friedrich Balduin (Professor at Wittenberg, died 1627) writes:

The church is the bride of Christ, John 3:24, and wife, Ps. 45:10, and mistress in his house, Ps. 68:13; therefore as the keys are given by the master of the house to the mistress, so also Christ, the master of his house, which is the church, has given the keys to his bride, which she transmits to her servants, who are called stewards or administrators of the mysteries of God. (*De casibus conscientiae*, p. 1104)

Johann Gerhard (Professor at Jena, died 1637) writes:

He to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven have been given by Christ himself, to him belongs the

right to call ministers, because by the keys is understood the church power, part of which is the right to call and appoint ministers of the church. Now, however, Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the whole church, Matt. 16:19, therefore, the church is Christ's wife, Ps. 45:10, bride, John 3:29, *Hausehre*, Ps. 68:13, and in Matt. 18:18 the church is given the power to excommunicate stubborn sinners. Therefore the right to call ministers of the church belongs to the church. (*Conf. cathol. f.* 795)

Conrad Dannhauer (Professor at Strassburg, died 1666) writes:

The church is a holy congregation through the immediate and inalienable possession of the churchly rights and offices. For the church is first of all the bride of Christ, who distributes the booty, Ps. 68:13, the mistress of the house who bears the keys, to whom the keys have been given through Peter, Matt. 16. (*Hodosophia*, p. 79)

Wilhelm Baier (Professor at Jena, died 1695) writes:

To the church, after it has been planted, belongs the right and the authority to appoint ministers. For it possesses the keys of the kingdom of heaven which have been given her as the bride of Christ, the bridegroom, Matt. 16:18, and 18:17; and as it therefore belongs to her to open and to close the kingdom of heaven, so she also has the right to appoint ministers, through whom she opens and closes. (*Compen. th. posit.*, p. 1057)

This is repeated among others by the well known theologian David Hollaz (Pastor and *Synodalpraepositus* at Jakobs-hagen, died 1713) in his *Examen theol.* p. 1334, in exactly the same words.

However, in the Word of God the believers are not only given the keys of the church indirectly, that is, mediately, in that it is called bride of Christ and *Hausehre*, but also directly, that is, immediately and straight out.

For it is written: When Jesus had asked his disciples:

Whom do you say that I am? Then Simon Peter answered and said: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah; for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I also say to you: You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you shall bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven. Matt. 16:15-19.

With this passage the pope of course wants to prove that he alone has the keys of the kingdom of heaven or the keys of the church, because he is the successor of Peter, to whom alone Christ here gives the keys. But first of all the pope cannot prove in all eternity that he is the successor of Peter, because he does not teach Peter's doctrine, but rather, as a true Antichrist, rejects Peter's pure evangelical teaching, condemns and curses it.⁹

And secondly, even if the pope could prove that he is the heir of the chair of Peter, he would not thereby have proved by a long way that he alone possesses the keys of the

kingdom of heaven or of the church. Of course, in the passage quoted Christ promises Peter these keys, but why? Because he had made confession of his faith that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. If, however, Christ gave the keys to Peter for this reason, then also all those must have them who believe and confess like Peter. By no means therefore can Matt. 16:15-19 give even the least bit of support to the papacy; on the contrary, it sweeps out all papistry, the coarse and the fine, whether it is found in the papacy or elsewhere, in the most thorough manner. This passage shines like the sun into all hiding places of that hierarchical conduct, that is of every kind of priest-rule, of all priestly pride, and brings its antichristian character to light. It is a thunderbolt from heaven against all who have the impudence to exalt themselves above even the most insignificant believing Christian. For in this passage the keys of the church or of the kingdom of heaven are clearly and plainly given to all who believe and confess with Peter, therefore to all true, believing Christians, to the whole church, to every group of Christians, be it ever so small and despised, that is, they are promised all church rights and powers by Christ the Lord himself. Whoever denies these to them is a *sacrilegus*, that is, a robber of churches and of God, and therefore enters the kingdom of Antichrist as his servant and helper.

Therefore also the teachers before the rise of the papacy and the witnesses of the truth during its reign in the temple of God and all orthodox teachers of our church at all times interpreted the passage Matt. 16:15-19 in such a way that in and by it the keys of the kingdom of heaven or of the church are by no means given to Peter alone, but in and through him to the whole church, that is, to all believers.

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (October 16, 1860):
33-34]

We mentioned in the last issue that also the teachers of the church before the rise of the papacy and also the witnesses of truth during the reign of the same in the temple of God understood and interpreted the passage Matt. 16:15-19 in such a way that in it the keys of the kingdom of heaven or of the church are by no means given to Peter alone, but in and through it to the entire church, that is, to all believers.

As far as the ancient teachers of the church or the church fathers are concerned, there belongs here above all the church father Augustine, formerly bishop of Hippo in Africa, whom Luther sets above all the fathers, and to whom Luther in reality also owed much. He died A.D. 430.

This Augustine writes, e.g.:

It is not without cause that Peter among all the apostles represents the person of this church; for to this church have been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven when they were given to Peter. We are also not to listen to those who deny that the church can forgive all sins. Therefore those wretched people, who do not want to understand in Peter the *Petra* (the rock) and to believe that the keys of the kingdom of heaven are given to the church, have themselves lost them out of their hands. (*De Agone christ.* c. 30)

The same man writes in the recantation of his earlier errors:

I know that later I very frequently interpreted the saying of the Lord: You are Peter, and on this rock I

will build my church, in this way: that Peter had received his name from the Petra (from the Rock Christ), portrayed the person of the church which is built upon this rock, and has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For it is not said to him: You are the *Petra* (the Rock), but you are Peter (the rock-man). The Rock however was Christ, whom Simon had confessed, even as the whole church confesses him. (*Retract.* 1. 1. c. 21)

The same [Augustine]:

As the prototype of unity the Lord gave Peter the authority that should be loosed on earth what he had loosed ... The Lord said: "As my Father has sent me, so also I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit; whosoever sins you shall forgive," etc. Therefore if they represent the person of the church and this was said to them as though it had been said to the church itself, then the peace of the church (Absolution) forgives the sins.¹⁰ (*De Bapt. contra Donat.* c. 17-18)

The same [Augustine]:

A wicked person (namely Judas) denotes the totality of the wicked, a Peter denotes the totality of the good, the body of the church. For if there were not in Peter a mysterious significance of the church, the Lord would not say to him: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, whatever you shall loose on earth," etc. If this is said to Peter only, then the church does not do this; however if it is also done in the church that whatever is bound on earth is bound

in heaven, and whatever is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven, because, when the church excommunicates, the banned person is bound in heaven, when he is reconciled to the church, the reconciled person is loosed in heaven: — thus, when this is done in the church, then Peter signified holy church when he received the keys. When in the person of Peter the good in the church are signified, then the wicked in the church are signified by Judas. (*Expos. in Ev. Joh. Tract. 50. c. 12*)

We could quote a whole multitude of church fathers who taught the same. However, the example of the most enlightened church father Augustine will suffice. As far as the witnesses of the truth on the present point within the papacy are concerned, Johann Gerhard quotes a passage from the writing of a Roman Catholic of the year 1612, in which we read the following:

The school at Paris has always and persistently taught according to the sense of the earlier teachers of the church, that Christ, at the founding of the church, committed the keys or the church power earlier, more immediately and more essentially to the whole church than to Peter; or, what is the same, that he committed the keys to the entire church, in order that they may be carried out by one, as her servant, since the whole jurisdiction of the church originally, properly, and essentially belongs to the church, but to the Roman supreme bishop and the other bishops only as tools and servants, and only with respect to its exercise. (*Loc. th. de minist. par. 87*)

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 7 (November 13, 1860): 49-51]

If the entire congregation, i.e., all true believing Christians, have received the power of the keys from Christ, then it is beyond doubt, that the entire church, i.e., all true believing Christians also have the right and authority to choose their own pastors. However, that the entire church really possesses the keys of the kingdom of heaven is, as we have seen, clear already from Matt. 16:15-19.

Having further seen that this passage was so understood not only by the church fathers before the time of the papacy, but that even in the midst of the papacy witnesses have arisen, who confessed that according to Matt. 16:15-19 not Peter alone, but all the apostles, yes, the entire church received the keys from Christ, we shall now proceed to show that also the entire orthodox Lutheran church understands the passage in this way.

First of all, as far as the confessional writings of our Evangelical Lutheran Church are concerned, all orthodox Lutherans confess in them publicly and solemnly the doctrine that according to Matt. 16:15-19 the keys were given to the entire church by Christ "not to certain special persons," and indeed, that the church does not have them mediately, through the pastors, but "immediately," not from a remote hand, but "originally."

The chief passages which in the public confessional writings of our orthodox church treat this are found in the appendices of the *Smalcald Articles*, which, as a more recent scholar says was the ultimatum, i.e., the final decision and the letter of renunciation the Lutherans finally gave to the papists after they had rejected the *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology*.

The *Smalcald Articles* have two important appendices. The first appendix treats of "The Power and Primacy of the Pope." In this appendix we read first of all as follows:

Here certain passages are quoted against us: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Again: "I will give you the keys" (Matt. 16:19). Again, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17), and certain other passages. Since this whole controversy has been treated fully and accurately in the writings of our theologians, we would refer to them here again and this time answer briefly how the stated [alleged proof] passages are basically to be understood. In all these Peter is representative of the entire company of apostles, as is apparent from the text itself, for Christ did not question Peter alone, but asked, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). And what is here spoken in the singular number ("I will give you the keys" and "whatever you bind") is elsewhere given in the plural ("Whatever you bind") etc. In John, too, it is written, "If you forgive the sins," etc. (John 20:23). These words show that the keys were given equally to all the apostles and that all the apostles were sent out as equals.¹¹

If the teaching of the *Smalcald Articles* about the power of the keys ended here, if nothing else had been added, it would indeed have the appearance as though those were right who insist that according to Lutheran teaching the keys had of course not been given to Peter alone, but to the apostles alone, and therefore to the pastors alone, as their successors. But here it is proved first of all on account of the papists that not Peter alone, as the papists say, but all the apostles received the keys from Christ; in the following it is

secondly also proved that the whole church, that is, all true Christians, received the keys from Christ. For we now read further in that passage of the *Smalcald Articles*:

In addition it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys do not belong to the person of one particular individual but to the whole church, as is shown by many clear and powerful arguments, for after speaking of the keys in Matt. 18:19, Christ said, "If two or three of you agree on earth," etc. Therefore he bestows the keys especially and immediately on the church, and for the same reason the church especially possesses the right of vocation.¹²

These words are of the greatest importance. Every Lutheran Christian ought to know them by heart, especially now, or to find them quickly in his *Book of Concord*. They are a conclusive proof that the symbolical books of our orthodox church were written under the special providence of God. For if we could not point out this passage to the opponents of Luther's teaching, who call themselves Lutheran, that the whole church, i.e., all believers, have received the keys from Christ and possess them immediately, they would far more boldly pretend that their false doctrine is Lutheran, and would much more easily confuse and mislead even honest and sincere Lutherans. But here it is written in clear and unadorned words: "The keys belong to the entire church." And in order that there can be no doubt, first of all, about what the *Smalcald Articles* understand by the church, we read finally: "Christ indicates to whom he has given the keys, namely, to the church: Where two or three are gathered in my name, etc." Also when the *Smalcald Articles* say the keys belong to the church or to the whole church, this does not mean that only entire congregations

which have a pastor, possess the keys through him, as a whole [congregation], but even “two or three,” who are gathered in Jesus’ name, therefore in short, all true believing Christians. Furthermore, in order that there may be no doubt as to the manner in which the church or the Christians according to the teaching of our church possess the keys, we read further: “For even as the promise of the Gospel certainly and immediately belongs to the entire church, so also the keys belong immediately to the entire church.” Here it is affirmed first of all as something indisputable that every Christian has the promise of the Gospel immediately, which is also in fact indisputable; for it is this only which makes a Christian a Christian! If an alleged Christian did not have the promise of the Gospel immediately, he would not be a Christian. However, according to the last-quoted words of the *Smalcald Articles*, Christians or the entire church have the keys in precisely the same way as they have the promise of the Gospel, namely immediately, i.e., not mediately through the fact that the ministers of the church possess them, but the reverse; the ministers of the church have them mediately, namely from the fact that the church possesses them and transmits them to them [the ministers] with their call into office. Therefore we read also this in the Latin text of the passage quoted: “When Christ speaks of the keys he adds (Matt. 18:19): If two of you agree on earth, etc.; therefore he gave the keys to the church originally and immediately.”¹³

Here it is therefore added that the church not only possesses the keys immediately and without a mediator, but originally, i.e., that it does not have the keys from a second hand, but that it has them first, and only then the ministers [get them] from the church. Even as the mistress of the house does not have the keys through mediation of the hired

hands and maids, but the reverse, that they have them through mediation of the mistress, and just as the mistress has the keys first and only then do the hired hands and maids receive them from her, so the church does not have the keys from the fact that the pastors have them, and then not only when the pastors bring them to the church for its use and benefit, but immediately and originally.

The *Smalcald Articles*, however, in the words quoted, indicate clearly and plainly why it cannot be otherwise. They say: "Because the keys are nothing else than the ministry through which this promise (of the Gospel) is communicated to everyone who desires it." The deduction which the *Smalcald Articles* make here is this:

1. The entire church or all Christians have the promise of the Gospel immediately; this no one can deny. For as every person can live only by his own faith, because no one can believe the promise of the Gospel for another, therefore also every Christian must possess it immediately, and not from the fact that the pastor or other people have it.
2. *Now*, however, the keys, or the office and power of the *keys* is nothing else than the ministry of the *Gospel*, or the office through which the promise of the Gospel is communicated.
3. *Therefore* the Christians, or the entire church, which has the promise of the Gospel immediately, must also of necessity have the keys immediately and originally: for whoever really possesses something naturally also has the office and power to communicate it to others.

—The deduction is clear and indisputable. From this at the same time, however, it follows: Whoever therefore denies

that Christians or the entire church have the keys immediately, must also deny that Christians or the entire church have the promise of the Gospel immediately. Such a person, as much as in him lies, tears away the ground from under the church's feet and makes the Christians into unbelievers, for whom others must believe in the Gospel; as much as in him lies, he destroys the church, denies justification before God by faith and makes an end of all Christianity; he denies to Christians and to the church what makes them Christians and church, and thus overthrows God's entire order of salvation.

From this one can see how grievously and dangerously the Buffalo Synod, Pastor Loehe, the Synod of Iowa, and all those err from the truth who together with them assert that the church or the Christians do not have the keys originally and immediately but through the pastors! For—just to quote something from the Buffalo people—we read among other things in the Buffalo "*Informatorium*," in the second year of publication, p. 23: "The congregation does not have the keys *immediately*, but *mediately*, in the Word of God and *in the holy ministry*." Already in its first year of publication we read further: "When it is said that the peculiar church power was given by Christ to his church on earth, nothing is said except that it is instituted in the Gospel, and set up in the church through orderly means by virtue of the Gospel, whether it be in the form of the episcopacy or of the ministry." Finally we read there, p. 22: "In this house of God the keys are administered by means of the Gospel and ministry, not as though they had their origin (from this house), but that its ordered spiritual place is there, where they show their power for the comfort and welfare of souls, and are in use. And it is in this sense(!?) that the *Smalcald Articles* say that the keys have been given to the whole

church." Through these declarations the Buffalo Synod has decidedly and publicly in clear words renounced the confessional writings of our Evangelical Lutheran Church and thereby separated itself from this our church and from the Lutheran Church Reformation. And herein the Buffalo Synod shows itself in a far sadder light than, e.g., Pastor Loehe. For when Pastor Loehe had in his heart fallen away from the symbols of our church, then he also confessed honestly and publicly with mouth and pen that he could no longer subscribe to the symbolical books of our church unconditionally because he had found errors in them. The Buffalo Synod, on the contrary, asserts obstinately that it is pure and strictly Lutheran and that it adheres strictly to the symbols of our church; and yet, while the symbols of our church teach in clear words that the church has the keys immediately, and after this has been demonstrated to the Buffalo Synod, this synod nevertheless teaches and confesses in a straightforward contradiction of this statement that the church has the keys *not immediately*, but mediately! What our symbols assert unconditionally the Buffalo Synod therefore denies unconditionally. What the Lutheran symbols confess as the doctrine of our church, the Buffalo Synod rejects in us as false doctrine and *Schwärmerei*. Our readers will say: How is this possible? —The reason is this: The Buffalo Synod knows very well how important and how decisive this controverted point is against her.

This synod knows very well, that if with the symbolical books she admits that the entire church has the keys immediately, then her entire hierarchical doctrinal system will collapse like a house of cards. Therefore, as long as she is unwilling to give up her hierarchical system, she cannot admit that the church has the keys immediately and originally, and not through the office of the ministry.¹⁴

Instead of now honestly confessing, as Pastor Loehe does, that it can no longer subscribe to the symbolical books in all points, e.g., on the point that the congregation or church has the keys immediately, it simply says "no" to that to which the symbolical books say "yes," and nevertheless insists with unprecedented, unheard-of impudence that it is holding fast to the symbols of our church; however, [in effect that it holds] whoever considers that true, which the symbols say, that the church has the keys immediately, has fallen away from the pure Lutheran doctrine and church! Such a piece of impudence has perhaps not occurred as long as the Christian church has existed.

That with such an obvious game of deceit, there are still people who consider the teaching of the Buffaloes to be the pure Evangelical Lutheran symbolical teaching can be explained only by the present truly incredible ignorance with respect to doctrine, or by the now ever increasing lack of sound common sense (i.e., of the ability to draw the simplest deductions), or boundless thoughtlessness, or from the fervent desire of hierarchically minded persons that the matter might be so, for "what one wishes, that one hopes, and what one hopes, that one believes." Nevertheless the Buffalo Synod, by its audacity, which borders on the unbelievable, with which she rejects the pure teaching of the churchly confession as error and "*Schwärmerei*," and nevertheless boasts that it is genuinely Lutheran and symbolic, may now mislead many ignorant and dishonest people; let her give herself the appearance as though she has the best conscience in the world, so that she even excommunicates us on account of our symbolical doctrine, — error can always parade as truth for only a short time; the truth will finally nevertheless triumph, and those who want to be honest will finally, even if they were led astray for a

time, perceive and confess the teaching of the confession of the Lutheran church.

We know very well, that many who are indifferent to the pure doctrine or at least do not perceive the importance of the doctrine of the keys, are angered when we mention the Buffalo Synod. They think that we should simply state the truth and let that end the matter. What business of ours are the Buffalo people! However, we cannot be guided by such indifferent or at least inexperienced persons. As often as the attempt is made to smuggle a false doctrine into the church as true doctrine, so often must true teachers bear witness against it. Quite rightly Bishop Gregorius, called the Great, says: "In no way does one lay a foundation for sound truth unless one tears down the edifice of error beforehand."¹⁵

If the old-time pious witnesses of the truth had kept silent when false teachers arose in the church, we would not now have the pure doctrine, which they gained for us by fighting and bequeathed to us, and would thereby have taken upon themselves a great responsibility. If at this time false teachers again arise in our church, then it is our turn to unmask them, and to warn and guard the inexperienced against them. Woe to us if we now keep silence, if we want to be dumb dogs, in order to be considered peaceable men by false Christians! Our responsibility would be great and weighty, and we would already here lose the undefended fortress of pure doctrine that was handed down because we would be betraying and surrendering it to its opponents. Let false Christians call us contentious persons on account of our earnest fight against false teachers; let them place our sincere and honest fight for the sake of the truth on the same plane as the carnal and dishonest fight of our opponents; let them gloat as over a stage play which shows them the disunion in the church which calls itself the orthodox church;

let them judge it all from their high throne as unchristian wrangling, while one can see in their example what it means to fight correctly, telling the truth in love—: This must not and cannot mislead us. We believe; therefore we speak. We know that the purity of the Word of God is more important than external peace and comfort in this world. The latter is, of course, when God gives it, a good gift of God; however, the church and the salvation of men can well exist without it, but without the pure Word of God neither the church nor the salvation of men can exist. But if people say: Ought you not, on account of the offense which many take at it, cease your fight?— We answer with St. Bernard: “It is better that offense should happen than that the truth should be forsaken.”¹⁶

Now finally, so far as the second appendix of the *Smalcald Articles* is concerned, it says there among other things by way of proof that “the churches must retain the power to demand, choose, and ordain pastors” as follows: “Here belong the sayings of Christ which witness that the keys were given to the entire church, and not to a few special persons, as the text says: Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them etc.” Whoever can after this still insist that the keys were not given to the entire church, to all believing Christians, but only “to a few special persons,” be it only Peter, or only the apostles, or only the pastors, let him say what he will, Lutheran doctrine it is not.

In the next article we want to see how the old orthodox teachers present this doctrine of our symbolical books and enlarge on it in their private writings.

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 8 (November 27, 1860): 57-60]

We proceed now to the testimonies which the old Lutheran theologians, Luther in the forefront, set down with respect to the power of the keys. For understanding of the matter we divide these testimonies into three classes. The first class contains testimonies from which we see what our old teachers understood by the keys or the power of the keys; the second class contains testimonies in which the old teachers confess that the keys have been given to the entire church or to all Christians; the third class finally contains testimonies in which it is proved that the congregations therefore have the right to elect.

a. Usually one thinks that under the keys nothing more is to be understood than the power to forgive and to retain sin, to excommunicate and to receive again into the Christian church. Although this is indeed one of the most important parts of the power of the keys, nevertheless this includes even more. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are the keys of the house of God on earth, or the church. Whoever has the keys to a house, not only has power over this and that in the household, but all power which is necessary for the management of the household; therefore whoever has the keys of the church has power not only over this and that in the church, but all power which is necessary for the government of the church. This is not only biblical doctrine, it is also the clearly enunciated doctrine of our biblical church, the Lutheran church. In order not to become too verbose here, we shall quote as proof only one passage from the famous evangelical *Harmony* of Chemnitz, Leyser and Gerhard, in which the keys are described equally as brief

and as thorough in their significance. The passage reads as follows:

Above all things we must examine what is to be understood by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ here (Matt. 16:19) promises. We remind ourselves, however, that Christ, in this conversation, which he instituted with the apostles, compared his church with either a city or a house which he himself would build. And the church of Christ is indeed his city, in which he gathers the citizens and subjects of his kingdom, his house, in which he has deposited all his goods and treasures, which are: the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, salvation and the like ... However the delivery of the keys is from ancient times the symbol of a certain entrusted, delivered power; for whoever has the keys, has access to everything. When, e.g., the husband delivers the keys to his wife, he testifies that he acknowledges her as his mate and that he is charging her with the care of the household. In a similar way the keys are transmitted to housekeepers and stewards by their masters, whereby there is at the same time given them authority over the rooms, cellars, chests and whatever is stored in them. In the same way the keys are delivered by the citizens to rulers when they are admitted into a city, which is an indication that they are submitting to their rule, and acknowledge that they have the authority to admit someone to the city or also to exclude him. Christ here applies this picture to the church, the keys of which he promises to Peter and his colleagues, thus teaching that he wants to make them his trustees and stewards, that they should open the treasures to those

who are worthy and admit them to possession and use of the same, but lock them against the unworthy and unholy, and deny them entrance into the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 4:1. The expression "keys of the kingdom of heaven" includes also that function (performance), power and fullness of power by means of which everything is done which is necessary for the kingdom of Christ or for the government of the church. This cannot be more fittingly explained than through this parable of the keys. (*Harmon. ev.* on Matt. 16:19)

b. Concerning the keys our old teachers unanimously say that Christ gave them to the entire church, i.e., to all believing Christians.

Thus, e.g., Luther writes:

O that this passage, Matt. 18:15-19, were not in the Gospel; that would suit the pope well! For here Christ gives the keys to the entire congregation, and not to St. Peter. And here belongs also the same passage, Matt. 16:18-19, where he gives the keys to St. Peter instead of to the entire congregation. For in this eighteenth chapter the Lord provides his own gloss (i.e., the Lord interprets himself) to whom he gave the keys in the former chapter in the person of St. Peter. And to this also the passage referred to above, John 20:22-23, must fit. (Tract: *Von der Beichte*, 1521 Erlangen Edition, XXVII, 363, 364)

The same [Luther] writes:

The keys do not belong to the pope (as he lies), but to the church, to the people of Christ, the people of God, or the holy Christian people, everywhere in the

wide world, or wherever there are Christians. For they cannot all be at Rome, unless the whole world were at Rome, which will not happen by a long way. Even as Baptism, Sacrament, the Word of God do not belong to the pope, but to the people of Christ, and are also called *claves ecclesiae*, not *claves papae*, i.e., keys of the church, not keys of the pope. (Writing: *Von Conciliis und Kirchen*, 1539 A.D. Tom. XVI, 2791)

The same [Luther]:

The congregation of all believers in Christ alone has the keys; this you are not to doubt. And whoever else takes the keys to himself is a real crafty, sacrilegious person, a robber of churches, whether it be the pope or any other person. From this it follows that the pope in his office is to be a servant of all servants, as he boasts, but does not do it; so that also a child in the cradle has a greater right to the keys than he, together with all who have the Holy Spirit. (Tract: *Von der Beichte*, 1521 A.D. Tom. XIX, 1052, 1054)

The same [Luther]:

Here we hear (Matt. 18:17-20), that also two or three, gathered in the name of Christ, have the same power as Peter and all the apostles. For the Lord himself is there, as he also says in John 14:23. This is the reason that frequently one person, who believes in Christ, resisted a whole crowd; as Paphnutius at the Council of Nicaea¹⁷ and as the prophets resisted the kings, priests and all the people of Israel. In short, God does not want to be bound

by the multitude, greatness, might, and whatever is personal in men, but wants to be with those only who love and keep his Word, even if they were nothing but stable hands. He is not impressed by great, high, mighty lords. He alone is the greatest, highest, and mightiest. Here we have the Lord even over the angels and all creatures who says: they are all to have the same power, keys, and office, even two ordinary Christians, gathered in his name. This lord neither the pope nor all devils are to make into a fool, liar, or drunkard; but we shall trample the pope under foot, and say that he is a hopeless liar, blasphemer, and idolatrous devil, who has snatched the keys for himself alone under the name of St. Peter, although Christ gave them to all equally, and wants to make the Lord, Matt. 16, a liar; yes, for that one is supposed to praise him. (From Luther's writing which bears the title: *Wider das Papsttum zu Rom, vom Teufel gestiftet*, in the year 1545, therefore a year before Luther's death! *Tom. XVII, 1336. 7*)

The same [Luther]:

The keys belong to the entire congregation of all Christians, and to everyone who is a member of this congregation, and that not only according to the power, but also according to use in all kinds of ways which may exist; in order that we may not do violence to the words of Christ, who says straightforwardly and to all in common: "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." (Matt. 18:17); likewise "Whatsoever you shall bind," etc. I would like to treat also this passage here for a confirmation,

which Christ spoke to Peter alone: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Likewise Matt. 18:19: "Where two shall agree on earth." Likewise v. 20: "Where two are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." In these passages the most complete right and use is given and confirmed most fully, that they may be able to bind and to loose. Unless we wanted to deny to Christ himself the right and use of the keys, when he dwells in the midst of two. (*Sendschreiben an den Rat und Gemeinde der Stadt Prag. Tom. X, 1846, 7*)

Now, now, Luther, what are you doing there? Don't you know what Pastor Grabau wrote in his *Informatorium*? Just read in the first volume page 86 where it says:

Accordingly our symbols do not teach that Christ manifested himself in the hearts of the little assembly, in such a way that he drew his power of the keys along in, for that is pietistic, enthusiastic, yes, downright papistic.

Do you hear, dear Luther, your praise? Behold, according to Pastor Grabau's infallible judgment you are "pietistic, enthusiastic, yes, downright papistic" because you want to prove from the fact that Christ also "dwells in the midst of two," that also the believing laymen have the power of the keys. Be glad, dear Luther, that the great church-light Grabau did not live at your time. It would have gone badly for you. This clear-sighted man would have revealed to the people that you are not a real reformer, but a wretched pietist, enthusiast, yes, a real genuine papist, who only acts as though he were fighting against the papacy. Consider, dear Luther, that the true meaning of the words: "Where two

or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20), is this, according to the teaching of Grabau: Where two or three are gathered with a pastor, there am I in the midst of them. For thus writes the above mentioned great theologian in his *Informatorium*, vol. I, p. 87:

Matt. 18: 20: Where two or three are gathered in my name, etc., for (here) our Lord speaks his *ubicunque* (wherever) of the entire church, and indeed of that church which is assembled according to the ordinance of the Gospel, in Jesus' name, and *selfunderstood, provided with proper ministry*, there is he, Christ, going to be in the midst of them.¹⁸

Yes, the entire assembled Buffalo Synod has solemnly declared in its second *Synodalbrief*: "Therefore it follows that the opinion of the Missourian teacher is false, since he seeks the keys in the faith of the little flock, and since he thinks that Christ is in the midst of us by virtue of faith." (*Informatorium*, I, p. 93) But why is that false?! It happens to be the basic doctrine of the Lutheran Church?! It happens to be the chief comfort of all Christians?!—The Buffalo Synod itself gives the reason in its second *Synodalbrief*,³ for in it, it confesses the doctrine: "Church and teacher of the church are divinely combined, where the one is, the other is to be. They are correlatives; as no bride can be without a bridegroom." (p. 97) There you hear it, dear Luther, how grievously, how heretically you have erred. How dare you say "that Christ is in our midst by virtue of faith"? You don't consider that the church without pastors or teachers is no church at all, for church and pastors are correlatives! That is: as a girl cannot be a bride without a bridegroom, as a valley cannot exist without one or more mountains, thus no little

flock can be a church without a "Herr Pastor." If, however, the little flock is in that case no church, then Christ is also not in the midst of them; if Christ is not in the midst of them, then the little flock also does not have the keys. However, if there is a pastor, namely a "proper" one among them, then they are gathered in Jesus' name; then they are an entire church; then therefore they also have the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But joking aside! What do you think, dear reader of this Buffalo teaching? —I probably do not need to tell you what is to be judged concerning it. It is clearly—antichristian! May God preserve our poor church against such a dreadful error.

Moreover, how serious Luther was with the confession of the doctrine that Christ, Matt. 16 and 18, gave the keys to the whole church may be seen, among other things, from the fact that he burned the papal law codex publicly for this very reason because that doctrine was condemned in it. Luther himself issued a writing under the title: "Why the books of the pope and his disciples were burned by Dr. M. Luther." In it he lists thirty errors of the pope as the reason, and says that of these errors this is the thirteenth: "That the keys were given to St. Peter only, although Christ, Matt. 16:19 and 18:18, gives them to the entire church." (XV, 1933)

Whoever is acquainted with the other teachers of the Lutheran church in the 16th and 17th century knows also how faithfully and conscientiously they proclaimed the doctrine which is laid down in our confessional writings, and how faithfully they, as pupils of Luther, followed in his footsteps. For such people it is therefore also not necessary to quote testimonies from the old teachers, who followed Luther. But too many people, without having read them, make for themselves the most erroneous mental pictures of

their teaching. Therefore we shall here present a very few testimonies from their private writings.

We read among other things in the *Evangelienharmonie* of Chemnitz, Leyser, and Gerhard:

Christ bequeathed the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the church, Matt. 18:18. In this matter we pay no attention to the ridicule and scorn of those who cry: "With you therefore also cobblers and tailors, all cooks and tradesmen have the power of the keys, and so you build Babel itself and introduce complete confusions!"¹⁹ I answer: Who will deny that in a case of necessity every believer can baptize another believer, teach him, absolve from sin, and thus as it were open for him entrance to the celestial city? This case of necessity the church has always granted as an exception, as Jerome writes and testifies against the Luciferians, and Augustine to Fortunatus. Outside of a case of necessity such a thing is granted to no one if he is not a rightfully called and installed minister of the church. For this would militate against the divine rule: "How shall they preach, unless they be sent?" Rom. 10:15. Likewise: They ran, although I did not send them. Nevertheless, the right of every believer, even of the least of them remains inviolate, that he has the keys conferred by Christ. For even as all citizens of a free city of the kingdom, as many as live in the city, have a common right and equal liberty, so far as the republic is concerned, and as they nevertheless for the sake of good order elect senators, and place a mayor over them to whom they deliver the keys and statute of the city, in order that he may exercise them in the common name of all and govern the republic according to them, so do also the

citizens of the city of God. They have of course a communion of all saints, and all things are theirs, whether it be Paul or Peter, life or death and present or the past, 1 Cor. 3:21: they possess all things under the one Head, Christ, who by his bloody merit has purchased everything necessary for salvation for his church, and in it in particular for every member, also for the most insignificant one: nevertheless, for the sake of good order they elect certain persons to whom they transfer the administration of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, as there are with us deacons, pastors, doctors, bishops, or superintendents and the like in order that everything with us may according to the teaching of Paul, 1 Cor. 14, be done decently and in order. (*Harm. ev. c. 85, p. 1687*)

If we had been the first to write this, our opponents would cry murder against us. They would exclaim: There you see how the Missouriians introduce their American democratic ideas into the church's doctrine. However, it is well known that neither Chemnitz, nor Leyser, nor Gerhard were Americans or democrats. Nevertheless, the church is here likened to a free republic, in which all power of state, all offices and titles originally, so far as their root is concerned, rest in all citizens, none of whom can, however, make himself president, or mayor or senator, but whom the citizens through free election clothe with these powers, offices and titles which originally rest in them. Thus, the *Evangelienharmonie* wants to say, it is also with the church. It is of course, as far as Christ is concerned, a monarchy, in which Christ, as the sole king, rules through his Word and Spirit; among themselves, however, all members of the church are a republic, a free city of the realm (as once upon a time the German *Reichsstädte*, which of course stood

immediately under the Emperor, but in their citizens constituted a free state). All members of the church are therefore also originally, i.e., from their Baptism, by faith, equal, and in them rests the entire church power, or the power of the keys. However, since God has instituted the sacred order of the public ministry, the Christians clothe persons who are particularly suitable to it with the powers, titles, and offices which Christ has purchased and given to them.

In a very similar manner as here under the picture of a free city of the realm our old theologians also depict the relationship of the congregation and its pastors with respect to the keys or the church power under the picture of the feudal system. When for instance a person was the chief owner of, e.g., a smallholding, and the peasant had only a limited right to this holding, which he could of course use, but for which he had to pay a rent, and which he could not, like a free owner, sell, then the former was called *Ober-eigentümer* or feudal lord, the steward of the property, however, a vassal.

Thus writes, e.g., Ludwig Dunte (school inspector at Reval, died 1639) in his beautiful book about cases of conscience:

Every Christian has his part and right to the holy ministry and to everything that belongs to the ministry of the church; Christ gives to the whole church the power to forgive sin to the penitent according to the Word and promise of God. This power the entire church must transfer to one person. When, however, no such person is available, the office returns again to the church, to whom it belongs to bestow; thus when a vassal dies, the smallholding reverts to the feudal lord. (*Decis. c. 14. Sect. 1. g. 1. p. 453*)

Quite similarly Tilemann Heshusius (died as Professor at Helmstedt 1588):

Therefore whoever is an orthodox Christian and a living member of Christ has his part and right to the holy ministry and to everything that belongs to the ministry of the church. When the pastors do not perform their office as they are in duty bound to do, or when there are no pastors, the office reverts to the churches whose right it is to bestow it. Thus when the vassal dies or forfeits his fief, the smallholding reverts to the feudal lord. (Article: “*Who Has the Right and Authority to Call Pastors*”)

The old theologians also picture the relationship of the church or the believers and the pastors with respect to the power of the keys under the picture of the root, and of the tree which grows from it. Thus writes, e.g., the Strassburg theologian J. Conrad Dannhauer in his *Glaubenslehre*:

The Church is the key-bearing mistress of the house, to whom the keys are given through Peter, in order that he might (with them) not only faithfully care for the welfare of the church, but that he might also faithfully represent the person of the church, intercede for the church, and stand in her stead; after the death of Peter the keys are reserved for her hand; in her that power is rooted, and can be propagated without interruption when the pastors die or turn into wolves, and when the sons of Levi (i.e., the so-called clerical state) defile themselves. (*Hodosoph. Phaen.*, I, p. 79)

It is therefore wholly un-Lutheran when Pastor Loehe writes: “The office stands in the midst of the congregations

as a fruitful tree, which has its seed in itself; it replenishes itself." (*Aphorismen.*, p. 71) According to Lutheran doctrine it is, according to Dannhauer, the exact opposite. The office or power of the keys and congregation or church are not two trees, standing side by side, which have their seed in themselves and replenish themselves; but the congregation or church is the one root, from which the office or the power of the keys grows forth; for Christ gave the power of the keys to his church immediately and originally, and from it the pastors receive this power to administer it. That the church has the keys at all times does not result from the fact that it has at all times pastors, who bear the propagating seed of the power of the keys in themselves; but on the contrary, the church can never lose the keys, even though all pastors were to die, or if all were to become wolves, whom she would have to flee, for the church has the keys in a possession "which is inseparable from her" (as also Dannhauer says earlier); they have their root in her, even as in a republic all its offices, titles, and powers have their root, which it transmits to its officials, and as the mistress of a house has the offices and powers of man-servants and maid-servants according to the root, and therefore retains them even if all the servants die or run away. Moreover Dannhauer is not the only one who expresses himself in this way, that the church possesses the keys according to the root, but also other pure theologians, e.g., Johann Meisner (Professor at Wittenberg, died 1681), who writes concerning Matt. 18 that in this passage the church, "insofar as it is contrasted with one or a number of ministers of the church" has ascribed to it the power to bind and to loose, even as it "possesses in addition all rights of her bridegroom according to the root, but causes them to be exercised through the office of the ministry." (*Exercit. in Matt.* ad c. 18)

It is false also when the Buffalo Synod says that the church has the keys only insofar as these are in use in the church through the pastors. This is merely a dishonest evasion, in order to escape the reproach that the Buffalo Synod contradicts the symbolical books which ascribe the keys to the church. For we read in the *Informatorium*:

In this house of God (in the church) the keys of Christ move by means of the Gospel and of the office of the ministry, not that they have there (from this house) their origin, but that there is the ordered spiritual place, where they show their power for the comfort and welfare of souls and are in use. And it is in this sense that the *Smalcald Articles* say that the keys have been given to the entire church. (I, 22)

But these are bad fish, for the *Smalcald Articles* say expressly that the church has the keys immediately and originally,²⁰ therefore not through the medium of the ministry and because it alone is the place where they are in use. Thus therefore Johann Gerhard writes:

Bellarmino (the Jesuit) raises the objection: that Peter had received the keys in the person of the church because he had received them for the benefit and use of the entire church, and because he would not himself be the only one to use them, but would leave them to his successors and communicate them to all bishops and priests. Answer: We grant that Peter received the keys for the benefit and use of the church and has them in common with the other bishops and pastors, but we deny that this is to be understood exclusively, as though the keys had been given to Peter and the bishops only, not however to

the entire church. For even as Peter had confessed Christ in the person of the church, not only in this sense, because that confession redounded to the benefit of the entire church, but because also the church itself confessed in the confessing Peter: so also the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter in the person of the church, not only because they were given to him for the benefit and use of the entire church but also because the church received them in the person of Peter, in order that she herself might exercise their use, both in other points denominated with the name of the power of the keys, and also in the choice and calling of competent servants of the Word. (*Loc. th. de ministerio*. Par. 87)

According to our old theologians the church does not have the keys through the medium of the ministerium, i.e., through the medium of the office of the ministry, but the reverse: if the church did not have the keys already originally and immediately, then the ministerium could not have them at all. Thus writes, e.g., Friedrich Balduin (Professor at Wittenberg, died 1627):

Even as all the disciples received them (the keys) under the name of Peter, so the entire church received them in the name of the disciples, Matt. 18:16, which today causes them to be exercised through the regular ministers of the Word, otherwise there would be no power to bind and to loose sins in our ministerium. (*Commentar. in epp. Pauli. Proleg.*, p. 3)

Thus writes furthermore E. Val. Loescher (died 1749): "Likewise it is proved that the key which binds and looses was of course given to the entire church, but that its solemn use has in an orderly manner been entrusted to the ministry." (*Unschuld. Nachrr. Jahrg.* 1711, p. 387) One could therefore say the reverse: the pastors use the keys, the congregation possesses them, rather than to say: The pastors possess them, the congregation however uses them. However, with those words Loescher does not want to say that the church itself does not exercise the use of the keys.

Finally Salomon Deyling (Professor at Leipzig, died 1755) writes very beautifully in his *Anweisung zur Pastoral-klugheit*:

As the right to teach and to administer the Sacraments according to its root belongs to the entire church, however the public exercise of them belongs to her rightly called servants: so every member of the church, even as the entire *coetus* (assembly, congregation) likewise has the keys, for instance, the power to teach, however only for private use, not for public or solemn use, in order that no confusion may ensue, which would miserably rend the church. However, when the people come together for the public meeting, then the keys are to be used by those only to whom the whole church has transferred them for exercise and use through a public call. (*Instit. prud. pastor.*, pp. 403-05)

In order not to take away too much space in this issue, we defer the proof that the congregation, because she has the power of the keys, also has the power to elect, until the next issue.

The readers of American newspapers as a rule want to have only very brief essays. Therefore most American newspapers also look like an American quilt which is pieced together from all small pieces of cloth. We hope that our readers have better taste, and believe that they will not object if we for once set forth the basic doctrine of the congregation's right to elect and in that connection go back to the first arguments. We prefer to do this because the incontestable ground of the congregation's right to elect rests on the correct doctrine of the ministry, which doctrine is now being so badly confused and falsified.

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (December 11, 1860): 65-68]

c. After we have now finally seen what, according to Lutheran doctrine, is to be understood by the keys and by the power and office of the keys and that the entire church, that is, all true Christians possess the keys, we must now still show in the third place: that according to Lutheran doctrine the right of the congregations to elect follows of necessity.

First of all, as far as the public confessions of our church are concerned, the passages which belong here have already been quoted. Therefore we shall repeat them here only briefly. In the second appendix of the *Smalcald Articles* the right of the congregation to elect is proved with three strong proofs. The second of these arguments is stated in the following words: "Here belong the statements of Christ which testify that the keys were given to the entire church and not to a few special persons, as the text says: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst

of them,' etc." Of course the Buffalo Synod seeks to invalidate also this important passage in our symbols by a false explanation. She writes in her second *Synodalbrief*:

It is evident (!) that by these few special persons the papal bishops are meant, who appropriated the keys of Christ to themselves alone by divine right ... In this way the keys are given to the entire church, namely in such a way, that the entire church everywhere has the keys in this institution of God, in the holy ministry, everywhere the keys. (p. 98)

However everyone can see that this is a willful perversion. According to this Buffalo interpretation the statement "that the keys have been given to the entire church and not to a few special persons" is supposed to mean: the keys have been given to the pastors, and not to a few special persons! This would be downright nonsense, for this would mean nothing else than this: the keys have been given to a few special persons, not—to a few special persons. Or are perhaps only the papal bishops, not however Lutheran pastors, a few special persons? Are the Lutheran pastors by any chance the entire church? It is in fact horrible when an entire Synod, which calls itself Lutheran, can dare not only to twist the words of the churchly confession quite openly, but also can expect its public at the same time to accept downright senseless conclusions. Why does not the Buffalo Synod, when it can no longer consider the teaching of the symbols to be true and is unable to accept them as such, come right out, as Loehe does, and renounce them? —However, let us not worry about those perversions, and return to a simple consideration of the words of the confession which we quoted. They show clearly that according to the faith of our orthodox church it follows from these words that the keys

have been given to the entire church and not to a few special persons, that the entire church also has the right to elect.

This same conclusion the *Smalcald Articles* also make in the first appendix. For after the confession of faith has been expressed there that "the keys belong to the entire church immediately, because the keys are nothing else than the office, through which this promise is communicated to everyone who desires it," —we read immediately in the following: "Just as also for this reason the church has principally the right of calling." In Latin this is translated thus: "therefore he awards the keys to the church originally and immediately even as the church for this reason has the right of calling originally."²¹

The words are clear, and admit no other interpretation: Because the entire church has the keys, therefore not individual special persons or a special class in the church, but the entire church itself has the right to elect.

What the symbolical books of our church briefly confess, that the orthodox teachers of our church also teach unanimously. Thus Luther writes:

Where there is a holy Christian church there the Sacraments must be, Christ himself and his Holy Spirit. Should we now be a holy Christian church, and have the greatest things, such as the Word of God, Christ, Spirit, faith, prayer, Baptism, Sacrament, power of the keys, and not also have the most insignificant thing, namely, the power and right to call a few persons to the ministry, who will dispense to us the Word, Baptism, Sacrament, forgiveness (things which are already present) and minister in them: what kind of church would that be? What would here become of the word of Christ, when he says Matt. 18:20: Where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there am I in the midst of them? And again, v. 19: Where two of you shall agree together on earth for what they want to pray, it shall be done to them by my Father in heaven? If two or three have so much power, how much more an entire church? (*Schrift von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe vom Jahre 1533. Tom. XIX, 1565, 6*)

Johann Gerhard writes thus:

Whoever has been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven by Christ himself, with him is the right to call ministers of the church. Now, however, the keys of the kingdom of heaven have been given to the entire church. Therefore the right to call ministers rests with the entire church. The first sentence is proved from the definition of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: for by the term keys is understood the church power, of which the right to call and install ministers of the church is a part. (*Loc. de. min. par. 87*)

Abraham Calov writes (Professor at Wittenberg, died 1686): "It is well known that the right to call has been entrusted to the church, even as the keys and church discipline, Matt. 18:18; 1 Cor. 3:21; 4:1; Rom. 3:2; 9:4; 1 Cor. 5:1ff. The church has, however, not transferred this to the holy ministry alone, but it orders this itself in consultation with all estates." (*Syst. loc. th. tom. VIII, p. 334*)

Johann Andreas Quenstedt (Professor at Wittenberg, died 1685) writes:

Whoever has been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven by Christ himself, has the right to call ministers of the church, because by the keys is

understood the church power of which the right to call ministers is a part. Now, however, according to the passages quoted, the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to the entire church; therefore the right to call ministers of the church rests with the church. (*Theol. didact.-pol.* p. IV, f. 402)

Before we close this chapter it will be necessary that we respond to an objection which some people now raise against this teaching. They say: If it is really so, that the entire church has the right to elect, then it is proved at the same time that also pastors and persons in government have a part in this right! For do not these belong to the church as well as the common people? To this we answer: without doubt. The election of a pastor is of course a rightful and valid one only when all who belong to the church which he is to serve have elected him, whether they have done this by registering their vote in their own person, or have done it through such persons to whom they have transferred the duty to perform this act in their stead as their representatives. If therefore there are in the calling congregation pastors and persons in government, then these of course also belong to those who do the calling. If one wanted to exclude them from the work of calling, if the so-called *Volk* would want, after the manner of the Anabaptists, to perform the election alone, then this election would be illegitimate and without any validity. When therefore at one time the people at Zwickau without the knowledge and consent of their pastor had deposed a minister and called another in his place, Luther advised the pastor to say to his parishioners from the pulpit among other things:

Dear people, you know that I am your pastor, and have to give an account of you, and to risk life and

limb for you every day against the devil and every danger to souls; therefore also it is my duty, and I must take care of the preaching in this city. Now you have chased away a preacher before he was found guilty by a court, and without my having any part, although I ought to be the first in such a matter; furthermore you have placed another in my office, without my consent, and thereby have taken away my office as pastor. (Article: *Vermahnung an einen Pfarrherrn, dass er zu unbilligem Absetzen eines Predigers nicht stille schweigen solle*. Year 1531, 1895)

However, we very gladly concede even more. We grant that a congregation, if it is able, should draw one or more orthodox pastors to their election, even though no pastors should belong to their congregation. Except in a most urgent emergency it should never elect and accept a pastor alone,²² but first have him examined by pastors who are already in office and, when he has passed the examination, ordain him and install him in office in an orderly manner. This is demanded, as we have already said elsewhere, (1) by love and unity, which, according to the will of Christ, should be found and show itself among all members of his body; (2) The honor, which the believers owe to the public ministry and all faithful bearers of the same; (3) The sacredness and importance of the matter itself, which demands of careful and conscientious Christians, that in such a matter they should not act according to their own understanding, but make use of the counsel of experienced servants of Christ; and finally (4) The example of the apostolic church, in which at all times those who were already in the public office first examined the new preachers, and, when they had passed the

examination, confirmed their election and solemnly installed them in office. 1 Tim. 3:10; 4:14.

One must however not, as is clear from what has been said until now, picture the matter to himself in this way, as though the power of the keys were distributed among the so-called three estates in the church, namely among the people, the government and the clergy in such a way that the common Christians possess a third, the government a third, and the pastors a third, and that these all together possess the whole, so that an election would be valid only when each of these three estates had done its part to it. One must not think this way: To a rightful call there belong according to the divine ordinance three things: (1) the electing; (2) the examination together with ordination and installation; (3) the confirmation; the first only the people can do, the second only an ordained preacher, the third only the secular government; for each of these three estates is understood to have received a special power which the other estates do not have, that therefore all three would have to combine their power if a valid call before God should ensue. No, this is a completely false picture. We have already seen that the church has the keys, that is, all true believing Christians. By the keys there is, however, to be understood the entire church power, therefore not only the right to elect, but also everything connected with it, the examining, the ordination, the installation, the confirmation.²³

Since however everything in the church is to be done decently and in order, it is necessary that the exercise of the church power be distributed correctly. It is evident that it is distributed best when the people elect, when those who are already in public office do the examining, and the persons in the government of the land, if they belong to the church, confirm or ratify the one who has been chosen and exam-

ined. All this is, however, not done by one or the other estate because he does what he does by divine right, and that he could not also do differently, but [he does it] because he is a member of the church which has all church power, and because the church has, for the sake of good order, distributed the exercise of the church power in this way.

As surely as the church has the keys or all church power, so surely it cannot be otherwise. Whoever votes at an election, whoever examines, ordains, installs one who has been elected, whoever confirms a pastor, does all this by virtue of the keys, which no one has originally and immediately except the church, i.e., all true believing Christians.

Whatever therefore one member of the church is permitted to do before other members, he does because it has been transmitted to him by the church, because the church has so ordered it, either at God's command, as, e.g., in the ordering and transferring of the public ministry, or according to Christian liberty, as, e.g., in establishing a consistory or a patronage.²⁴

Therefore a pastor does not only publicly preach, baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, absolve in the name and at the behest of the church, but also examines, ordains, and installs those who have been examined.²⁵

Therefore Luther writes thus:

The keys are given to him who by faith stands upon this Rock, to whom the Father has given it. Now one cannot show regard for a person who is standing on the Rock, for one falls today, another tomorrow, even as St. Peter fell. Therefore no one is appointed that the keys should belong to him except the church, i.e., those who stand on the Rock. The Christian Church alone has the keys, no one else, although the bishop and the pope can use them, because they have

been commanded by the congregation to do it. A pastor exercises the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Sacrament, and performs other duties, in order that he may serve the congregation, not for his own sake, but for the congregation's sake (i.e., not on his own personal authority, but in the name, at the behest, and in the stead of the entire congregation), for he is a servant of the whole congregation to which the keys have been given, even though he should be a scoundrel. For if he does it in the stead of the congregation, then the church does it. However, if the church does it, then God is doing it; for one must have a minister. For if the whole congregation wanted to go and baptize, the child might very well be drowned; for a thousand hands would be trying to do it. This would be no good at all. Therefore one must have a minister who takes care of these things in the stead of the congregation. (*Kirchenpostille vom J. 1525*, XI, 3070)

In another place Luther writes:

Therefore there is only an outward difference, on account of the office, to which one is called by the congregation; but before God there is no difference; and only a few are drawn forth from the multitude, that they should hold and exercise the office, which all have, in the name of the congregation, not that one has more power than another. (*Auslegung der 1. Ep. Petri vom J. 1523*, IX, 702 3)

Johann Gerhard writes:

As the right of calling concerns the whole church, so also the ordination, which declares and testifies to the call, is performed in the name of the church. The assembled ministers lay on their hands; however, the church joins its prayers to them. Although it is therefore done for the sake of lawful good or by right that the bishop together with the presbyters lays his hands on the person to be ordained, he is here nevertheless not acting in accord with his private will and on his own authority, but in the name, according to the right, after the vote, under the authority, with the consent, the corroboration, yes, with the prayers of the entire church; thus the execution is done by the bishop; the action, however, is the action of the church as may be seen from Acts 6:3; 14:13. (*Loc. th. de min. par. 154*)

It is therefore a serious error to think that ordination must be performed by an ordained pastor, who alone has this power, through which a person chosen by the people first becomes a pastor. No, also the power to ordain is a power of the church, i.e., of the believers, which the pastor receives through the believers and in whose stead and under whose authority he exercises it.

Friedrich Balduin (Professor at Wittenberg, died 1627) writes the same:

The ordination of ministers of the Word rests with the church; she exercises this right through the (public) ministry and the government of this exercise is not performed by a bishop or church inspector on account of a greater eminence which he has, not by divine right, but on account of good order and

propriety, as the church has according to its liberty arranged it. (*Ad Philipp.* 1, 1. *quaest.* 2. p. 965)

The case is similar also with the actions of governmental persons in the church. As government it is concerned with the members of the church only insofar as these are its subjects, citizens, members of the state; if it takes part in churchly actions, e.g., in the calling of a pastor, it does not do this as government, but as a member of the church, and that, in the case of sovereign kings and rulers, as the *Smalcald Articles* have it, "as the foremost members of the church."

On this Luther writes:

The calling and election of ministers of pure preaching is not essentially and originally a matter of the government, but of the church. If the government is believing, and a member of the church, it calls, not because it is the government, but because it is a member of the church. For it is written: My kingdom is not of this world; however it is the duty of the government of this world to appoint rulers, soldiers, knights, burgomasters, senators, village mayors, prefects, and bailiffs. It needs these offices in this world. However, Christ, in his kingdom, together with his bride, has other things to do, namely, to order the offices of his kingdom, apostles, teachers, interpreters, evangelists, Eph. 4. The government, however, has the duty to admit the apostles, teachers, pastors, evangelists, Ps. 2. When kings, kingdoms, governments and cities do this and receive the apostles who come into their homes, then peace will rest on them. Matt. 10; Luke 10. If however they do not receive them but drive them

away, their peace will return to those who were sent. (This is a passage from a judgment which Luther, together with Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, Jonas, and Myconius rendered in the year 1536 in writing with respect to the church at Erfurt, and which V. E. Loescher published in his *Unschuldigen Nachrichten*, 1715, p. 383.)

Now one must not think that most of the older pious rulers acted against these principles, and took the right to elect away from the congregations and appropriated it to themselves alone. Wholly in accord with the truth the old Superintendent at Rothenburg, Ludwig Hartmann (died 1684) writes in his *Pastoralanweisung*:

Thus also in our time the distinguished piety of our rulers is to be praised, according to which they placed skillful and competent teachers over their subjects, not in order that congregations should be deprived of their rights; but because the people neither understood their rights nor used them, and the right judgment of the people was hindered through old (papistical) errors, they took the people under their tutelage and represented the church. (*Pastoral.*, p. 76)

From this it is clear how one should judge when the Buffalo Synod writes in its latest (sixth) *Synodalbrief* as follows:

From the natural-philosophical (!) world trend of this country the opinion has in part taken hold in the minds of our church-children that the power lies radically (so far as the root is concerned) and originally in an election by the congregation ...

Concerning this we have only to say that Holy Scripture knows nothing at all of this that a power rests radically and originally about a congregational election which through such an election is transferred to the person who is elected. Even less does the power lie in an election through mere majority vote. In the Word of God the election has a quite different sense; namely, nothing else than the expression of the public and brotherly trust in order to be in charge of some need of the congregation of Christ. Thus this election (Acts 6) had only a designating sense, which the selection to a call includes. For of these godly men the baptized Christians believed that the apostles could accept and install them without contradiction for this need, namely to help them in necessary matters and to serve them; which was done with prayer and the laying on of hands by the apostles. Therefore the office of these seven does not rest in the designating election of the Christians, but in the acceptance and installation of the apostles ... If the designating election was held in an orderly manner, then the acceptance is performed by the ministry to aid the pastor in necessary matters. Only through this acceptance is there a real call. (pp. 15-17)

From these declarations one sees of course that the Buffalo Synod does not lack the courage publicly to deprive its congregations of the most important rights, or, so to say, to turn them into water. They seek to impress on them that the power of office or the power of the keys does not lie, as our symbols and the old orthodox teachers say, originally and according to its root in the believing Christians, but in the *Herren Pastoren*, whether they are believing or unbelieving, pious or godless, provided only that they are

correctly ordained; that therefore also the election does not make a Christian a pastor, but the installation and consecration on the part of ordained pastors; that ordination is therefore not, as the *Smalcald Articles* say, “nothing else but a confirmation of the chosen bishop” or pastor, but through ordination a person who through the election by Christians was only designated to the office of bishop or pastor, but is thereby by no means “an elected bishop” or pastor, first (through such ordination) becomes a bishop or pastor. That ordination is therefore not a way merely to carry out the call of the Christians in an orderly manner, whereby the pastors, even as in other official acts, act in the name at the direction, according to the right, under the authority and power and in place of the believing Christians, but by virtue of an authority, a right, a power, a privilege which Christians do not possess immediately and originally, and the pastors have derived through the Christians, but which the pastors have immediately, originally, and according to the root.

These principles are nothing else than the old basic principles on which the entire Roman hierarchy rests. Ignorant persons may think that these things are theological subtleties and hairsplitting; yes, that the Buffalo teaching has at least this benefit, that by it much wrangling and strife is avoided and a certain unity established; however, whoever knows the doctrine in its context and is acquainted with the history of the church knows that through the Buffalo system the firm ground, so far as the Buffaloes are concerned, is taken away from under the feet of our church, and it is rendered defenseless against her hereditary foe, the pope, to say nothing further here of other sad consequences.

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2. Among the doctrines of Holy Scripture which prove that Christian congregations have the right to elect their pastors themselves the second is this: that all believing Christians are spiritual priests.

In order that all our readers may also understand this proof clearly, we shall observe the following order in our presentation: (1) We want to examine what, according to the Word of God, a priest really is; (2) We want to see whether really according to God's Word and the belief of the orthodox church all believing Christians are such priests; and finally (3) We want to make it clear to ourselves how from the fact, that all believing Christians are spiritual priests, it follows that they also have the right to elect their pastors themselves.

In this we shall also be more verbose than usual, because now so much is being written and said about the spiritual priesthood; however, its true nature and importance is properly understood by few. While some stretch the spiritual priesthood of Christians too far, others circumscribe it in too narrow limits. And particularly those who think and teach of the holy ministry almost entirely papistically are already alarmed the moment the spiritual priesthood of all Christians is so much as mentioned. They don't take the trouble to learn to know the pure doctrine concerning it; they shrink from it as from a horrible *Schwärmerei* by which the office of the ministry is wholly abolished, all lay people, men and women, are made pastors, and the worst kind of confusion is to be introduced. In the following we intend to make it clear that the spiritual priesthood of all believing Christians is on the one hand a very glorious thing, which Christ has

earned for them, and that to want to take it away from them would be the most dreadful sacrilege; that on the other hand a true understanding of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians by no means poses a danger to the holy ministry, but rather teaches us to regard it as all the more sacred and precious. But to come to the point!

a. What then, first of all, is a priest according to the Word of God? If we briefly put together what the Word of God says about it, we see that a priest is a person consecrated by God, who possesses a twofold glory. The first consists in this, that such a person can deal with the holy God himself, approach him, step before him, serve him, confidently pray to him for himself and for others, and can offer him acceptable sacrifices. The other glory which such a priest possesses consists in this that he, as an angel or messenger and as a servant of God, can in the name of God deal with other persons, make the will of God known to them, bring them his Word, preach and interpret, and also bless them in his name. All this is expressed in clear words in Holy Scripture. There priests are first of all described as persons chosen by God, who belong to the Lord, are holy, and are to sacrifice to him. When the mob of Korah rebelled against the priesthood of Aaron, Moses said to them: "In the morning the Lord will show who is his, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to him," Num. 16:5. Furthermore priests are described as persons "who come near to the Lord," Ex. 19:22; "the ministers of the Lord," Joel 1:9; as persons whose inheritance is the Lord himself, Deut. 18:2. As far as the other priestly glory is concerned, it is written clearly: "The lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," Mal. 2:7. Furthermore God says to Aaron, and to his priest-sons:

“You are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by Moses.” (Lev. 10:11. Cf. Hagg. 2:12)²⁶ And finally the Scripture says of the priests: “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them,” and this indeed after Aaron and his priestsons had been instructed with what words they were to bless the children of Israel. (Num. 6:23-27) Therefore Luther writes:

What, then, is a priest? The one into whose mouth the Lord lays his Word, as Malachi says, ch. 2:7: The priest's lips should guard knowledge [German: *Die Lehre bewahren*]; likewise, he sacrifices and prays for others. Such a priest may come in faith before God, pray for the people, speak the Word for them and seek what is best for them from God; thereafter he is to come forth from God to the people, and present God's answer and command to them. (On Ex. 19:6, *Opp. Tom.* III, 1520.)

b. Now the question arises: Are all believing Christians really such priests according to the Word of God? — Answer: Yes, of course, and indeed these alone.

Of course the papists insist that there are according to Scripture two kinds of priests in the New Testament church, priests, properly speaking, or churchly priests, and figurative or spiritual priests. The priests, properly so called, they say, are the official priests; we generally call them preachers, pastors, or ministers. The papists however preferably call them priests, made priests through a certain consecration in order to be able, as priests, to make the Sacraments a reality, to absolve validly, to sacrifice for the living and the dead, to make the body of Christ, as they express themselves and to be able to perform other similar priestly works. They say

that the believing Christians, on the other hand, are only figurative priests and that they are called priests only because they are able and commanded to sacrifice themselves through fasting, giving of alms, through prayer for themselves and others, through singing, praise and thanksgiving, and through all kinds of works of self-denial. If, however, we open the Scripture of the New Testament, then we find that there only the believing Christians, and indeed all of them, are called priests, and that there those who occupy the public ministry are never called priests. Those who occupy the public ministry are there rather called servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1), bishops or elders, (Phil. 1; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Pet. 5:1; James 5:14), servants (1 Cor. 3:5), leaders (Heb. 13:17 in the Greek says *tois hegoumenois hymoon*, which really means your “*Vorsteher*” [elders; cf. 1 Thess. 5:12], shepherds and teachers (Eph. 4:11), servants of the Lord (2 Tim. 2:24), servants and ministers of the congregation (2 Cor. 4:5; Col. 1:24-25). Even those who are called immediately are in the New Testament not called priests, but apostles, prophets (1 Cor. 12:28), yes, also pastors and teachers 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), fellow elders (1 Pet. 5:1), elders (2 John 1), etc.; the assistants of the apostles, however, are called evangelists in the narrower sense (Eph. 4:11, cf. 2 Tim. 4:5, where Luther translates the Greek word evangelist with the words “*evangelischer Prediger*” [evangelical preacher]). The entire New Testament mentions priests expressly only five times: 1 Pet. 2:5 and 9-10; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. In the first passage, 1 Pet. 2:5, we read: “And like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” In the other passage, 1 Pet. 2:9-10, we read: “You are a chosen race, a

royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy." In the third passage, Rev. 1:6, we read: "And (Christ) made us a kingdom of priests to his God and Father." Similarly we read in the fourth passage, Rev. 5:10: "Thou hast made them a kingdom of priests to our God." The fifth passage, finally, Rev. 20:6, reads: "Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years." That in the first passages, 1 Pet. 2:5 and 9-10, not the pastors but their hearers or the believing Christians are called the holy and royal priesthood is not subject to doubt; for those whom the apostle calls thus are in what precedes addressed by him thus: "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up." (1 Pet. 2:2) From this we see, according to the Word of God, not only a strong and perfect believer, but also every inexperienced, young, weak beginner in Christianity, who must still be given "milk" and not strong food, is a holy royal priest. It is also equally clear that also in Rev. 1:6 and 5:10 the believers, and not the preachers as preachers, are called priests, for in both passages those to whom the name priests is given are immediately before described as those "whom Christ has washed of their sins and purchased to God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." (Rev. 1:5; 5:9) But who would dare to maintain that only the pastors had been redeemed and reconciled with God? Finally, as far as the passage Rev. 20:6 is concerned, all those are called priests of God and of Christ, who have part in the first resurrection, where without

any doubt not the preachers as such, but the believers are to be understood, “who had not worshipped the beast nor its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or on their hands.”²⁷ (Rev. 20:4)

That, however, the Messiah, our dear Lord Jesus Christ will make all Priests who are his own is already clearly foretold in the writings of the Old Testament. Thus we find in the Prophet Isaiah, in chapter 61, the glorious prophecy: that the Messiah would come, would comfort all that mourn in Zion and make them glorious, which finally, in verses 5 and 6, is described thus: “Aliens shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; but you shall be called the priests of the Lord, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God.” The old excellent interpreter of Scripture, Sebastian Schmidt, explains these words as follows: “As in the Old Testament a few were priests, the rest shepherds and plowmen, so in the New Testament all believers are priests, as persons who have the saving knowledge; the heathen outside of the church are the plowmen, shepherds and vinedressers, as persons who lack this knowledge.” (*Commentar. in Es. 61:6*)

In a similar manner also Johannes Brenz, the famous Württemberg reformer, explains the passage Is. 61:6. He writes in his commentary on the Prophet Isaiah on the passage cited:

The prophet is here not speaking of merely one class of persons in the church (of preachers) but of the entire church which through the apostolic message is gathered, from among the Jews as well as from among the heathen.²⁸ He promises to all in the church the highest dignity and authority when he says they would be priests and ministers of the Lord our God; aliens, however, and foreigners would be

their servants, shepherds, plowmen, and vine-dressers, in order that they, free from dirty work which is left to others, would be able to discharge the duties of their priesthood. In the commonwealth of Moses only the one tribe of Levi was designated and consecrated for the performance of the public worship in the sanctuary, and among these there were steps; some were priests, others Levites; however no one from among the other tribes was permitted to arrogate to himself the function of the former, as is written Num. 18. In the church however, after the revelation and dissemination of the Gospel in the whole world not one family, or one tribe, or one class of men, but all who believe in Christ and are members of the church, are consecrated as priests. (*Opp. Tom. IV, fol. 790*)

Similar prophecies that in the New Testament the privileged Levitical priesthood would cease and that therefore every believer would be a priest are found also in Is. 66:21; Jer. 3:16-17; Mal. 1:11; Ps. 110:3-4.

From this one dare, however, not conclude that it was only the believers in the New Testament who became spiritual priests, and that the believers in the Old Testament had no part in this glory. Far from it! The case of the gift of grace of the priesthood is similar to all other such gifts. In many passages in the Old Testament grace, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, power, life are represented as only to be expected with the advent of the Messiah, not as though all this had not already been there, but because all these benefits are only a fruit of the redemption by the Messiah, and therefore New Testament benefits in the Old Testament. Therefore also the apostles in the New Testament speak as though light, grace, righteousness, adoption as children,

life, in short, the Gospel with its benefits, had only come into the world with Christ, and that before there had been only night, darkness, law, wrath, servitude, death, in short, only the law with its terrors; the reason was that the former belongs to the New Testament, the latter to the Old, although both were in existence in the time of the Old Testament as well as of the New. The Old Testament was of course a different economy or housekeeping of God, under which God led his people and governed his kingdom in this world; however, the grace and the treasures of grace which the believers under the old covenant had were the same which the New Testament believers possess. There is only one faith and one way of salvation, Eph. 4:5; Matt. 7:14. We Christians believe, according to Acts 15:11, that we will be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, just as the fathers before the birth of Christ. All prophets bear witness of Christ, that through his name all who believe in him are to receive the forgiveness of sins, Acts 10:43. As we now believe in Christ, who came 1800 years ago, so they believed in Christ, who would come only after thousands or hundreds of years. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, Heb. 13:8. The power of his death reaches back into the past even as into the future. Therefore also the prophets speak as though Christ had already been born and died in their time: "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given," Is. 9:6; "Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," etc., Is. 53:4-12. Therefore we not only read that already Abel and Cain (the latter without having a right to do it) and Job exercised the priesthood by sacrificing (Gen. 4:3-5; cf. Heb. 11:4; Job. 1:5), but that God, shortly before the giving of the law, caused it to be said to the Israelites: "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my possession before all nations; for the whole

earth is mine. And you are to be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy people.” Of course God here ties the right to the priesthood to righteousness through fulfilling the divine Law, but from this very fact it is clear that all true believers also in the time of the Old Testament were priests in the sight of God; for whoever believes in Christ, in him the righteousness demanded by the Law is fulfilled (Rom. 8:4); for Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom 10:4)

Nevertheless there is a great difference between a spiritual priest who lived under the law economy or dispensation of the Old Testament and a spiritual priest who lives under the New Testament dispensation. The apostle indicates this difference when he writes: “I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; when we were children. we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe. But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying: ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.” As long, therefore, as the law of the Old Covenant still lay upon the children of God, they stood, as it were, under the tutelage of the law. God therefore among other things selected one special tribe, the tribe of Levi, and one special family, the family of Aaron, that through them alone certain priestly works might be performed in a valid manner. A sacrifice could have been performed ever so exactly according to the prescription of God, if the sacrifice had not been performed by a Levitical

priest, it was not a sacrifice in the eyes of God. (Lev. 17:1-6)²⁹

When Uzzah dared merely to touch the ark of the covenant in order to steady it, when it seemed that it would upset, he had to die, 2 Sam. 6:6-7. Therefore no one was permitted to perform the priestly office publicly who could not prove his descent from Aaron. (Ezra 2:62; Neh. 4:67) Therefore, although already at the time of the Old Testament all truly believing Israelites possessed the priestly dignity, they nevertheless stood under the tutelage of the Levitical-legal priesthood. This tutelage has now been removed. After Christ, the true High Priest, had brought the only sacrifice that truly reconciled us to God on the altar of the cross, the curtain in the temple was rent in two pieces, from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51), by the invisible hand of God himself, so that now everything which otherwise only priests were permitted to see, lay open to everyone who entered, in order to show that the true High Priest had entered into the true Holy of Holies, that therefore now the typical priesthood with its shadows in the divine worship was at an end (Heb. 8:1-7; 10:1-18) and that all those who believe in the one true Aaron or High Priest who has come, and have been spiritually born of him, are the true priest-children, "the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy people, God's own people" (1 Pet. 2:9), who have the right "to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:14-16) and to perform all priestly works.

What, therefore, does that person do, who wants to deny the priestly dignity to a believing Christian? He denies that Christ is the true High Priest, or at least that faith unites with Christ and gives the new birth and makes a Christian a true priest-child, as descent from Aaron made a figurative one. And whoever in the New Testament wants to make other

persons in Christendom, the real priests—the so-called consecrated clergy, beside and above the believing Christians—turns the New Testament again into the Old, places the Christians, who were set free by Christ, again under the tutelage, the yoke of the Law, and thus denies that he who was to come, the Messiah, and with him the body of the Old Testament shadows and types has come (Col. 2:16-17; Gal. 4:9-10; Heb. 9:6-10) and turns the Christians again into Old Testament Jews.³⁰

However, people say, are you not yourself calling Christians only *spiritual* priests and kings? Are you not yourself admitting that they are as little real priests as they are true, real kings, although they bear both honorary titles in Scripture? We answer: Precisely because Christians are *spiritual* and not physical priests and kings, they are alone the true and genuine priests and kings. The physical priests of the Old Testament received their dignity through physical birth and descent and were consecrated for it with earthly, physical oil; Christians however become priests through spiritual birth, namely in Holy Baptism, through faith, and they are anointed for this with the true, heavenly anointing-oil, the Holy Spirit. The physical priests of the Old Testament were descended from Aaron, who was merely a shadow and type of the true High Priest, dealt with shadows and types, and as priests were only external priests; the believing Christians as spiritual priests are, however, descended from Christ, the Son of God, the true, essential High Priest, who has come; they have to do with the body itself, with the essence and truth of the types and shadows, and are not external but internal priests before God and Christ. They “have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat” (Heb. 13:10); their priestly garments are not made of linen, which moths eat, or of gold,

which rust destroys, but the eternal, heavenly “garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness,” Is. 61:10. While thousands of Old Testament physical priests could not, for their own person, either sacrifice or pray, or perform any God-pleasing priestly work, and thus were not real priests, believing Christians, by contrast, are the kind of spiritual priests whose sacrifices are all acceptable through Jesus Christ. They are therefore true priests, 1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1. It is the same also with their kingship. While the physical, secular kings, in spite of their royal pomp and outward might, are only shadow-kings, who rule only over physical and earthly things, and in death, and frequently already in this life, lose throne and crown, believing Christians, on the contrary, as spiritual kings, are in spite of the beggar garments which they often wear, nevertheless real kings, who overcome the whole world, and rule over flesh, sin, disaster, death, devil and hell, and precisely when they die receive the crown of glory which does not fade away, in order to wear it forever, and to rule eternally with Christ.

In the next issue we intend to communicate to our readers a few testimonies of orthodox teachers of the church about the spiritual priesthood of all Christians and then to show how from this dignity [*Würde*, position of honor] of Christians there follows their right to elect their pastors themselves.

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 12 (January 22, 1861): 89-93]

In the last issue we promised our readers to communicate to them, as an excellent addition to what had been presented, a number of testimonies from the old orthodox teachers of

the church concerning the spiritual priesthood of all believing Christians. This our promise we now want to fulfill; first, because according to an old Latin proverb *omne promissum cadit in debitum*, i.e., because everything promised becomes a debt; secondly, in order to stop the mouths of those who would like to make ignorant people believe that the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all believing Christians is an entirely new doctrine, or at least an old *Schwärmerei*; and finally in the third place, because the old teachers speak of it so beautifully and powerfully as I am not at all able to do.

As is fair, we begin with our dear Luther, in comparison with whom all other Lutheran teachers are only pupils.

Luther writes in the first place as follows concerning Ex. 19:5-6: "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation":

In 1 Pet. 2:9 St. Peter quotes this passage and applies it to all Christians. Why then does Moses apply it only to the Jews? Answer: This passage was spoken to the Jews before they received the Law: if you will keep my Law, and not break my covenant, then you shall be kings and priests. Therefore they were not yet a people of the Law; they were the equals of those who are believers after the Law, to whom no Law had been given. Whoever therefore believes God apart from the Law becomes a priest and king, be he Jew or Gentile, [whether] before or after [knowing] the law. They are however not such mad kings as the kings in the world are. For these are not the true kings, they are only nominal and are painted as kings [*Zahlpfennige und gemalte Könige*] compared with the believers; for they rule only

temporarily and outwardly. The believers, however, are genuine kings; not that they bear a golden crown on their head, wield a golden scepter, come dressed in silk, velvet, with golden embroidery and purple; but much more gloriously, they are lords over death, the devil, hell, and all disaster. The worldly kings can only deal with gold, silver, money and goods, have riches and power, strangle and plague people, tax their subjects, flay and scrape them [*schinden und schaben*]; but themselves they cannot help, they cannot prevent the tiniest boil on a finger, or prevent their belly, head or members from hurting. How much less can they fight against sin, death, devil, hell, sickness, disaster, etc. Therefore kings are like counter-guilders and kings painted on cards. For to the true believing kings in the kingdom of Christ shame is an honor, hell [is] the kingdom of Heaven, death [is] life, the devil a strawman, sin [is] righteousness, disaster [is] fortune, poverty [is] riches, etc. For they are children of God, and have God as a dear friend, yes, as a dear father, Rom. 9:26, with whom they find riches, great treasures, and all goods in rich abundance. Therefore sin, death, the devil, hell, hunger, thirst, cold, heat, sword and all disaster cannot harm them; yes, in all this they are more than conquerors, and find in all the reverse: in poverty [they find] riches, in sin righteousness, in disgrace great honor, in hunger and thirst all fullness, as already said. Thus, because they have such inner riches, they despise the golden crowns purple, silk, gold, silver, money and goods.³¹

A golden crown, purple and ornaments belong to the kings in the card game; it is far too worthless to children of God ... Therefore, the words of Moses, where he says: If you will keep my words, etc., you are to be priests and kings, are not to be understood by earthly kings, but [understood] by inward and spiritual kings in faith, who are in the kingdom of Christ, in which they are all kings, have equal power with the supreme King, Jesus Christ, in whose kingdom everyone is king for himself. If you will now, he says, keep my covenant, then you will not be worldly kings, but spiritual, and in addition priests. This is the sum total of this passage: Whoever has my Word and believes it, is a priest. If you are now my people, then you have faith. Whoever has faith is a king and lord over sin, death, the devil, hell and all disaster; for faith alone makes you possessors of such goods and glory. Whoever has faith, has all things, can do all things, conquers all things, Rom 8:37-38; nothing can harm him, neither things temporal nor eternal, not even the portals of hell, Matt. 16:18. Thereafter, whoever has the Word of God, is a priest, and whoever hears him, hears God himself. To be a priest and king is therefore nothing else than to have faith and the Holy Spirit, to preach the grace of God to others, to come before God in good confidence, as a child to its father. It looks insignificant: preaching, asking and pleading in a right faith; but before God it is a very mighty thing, that a man, a poor bag of worms, should come to such honor. Such honor he promises them (the Jews), if they will keep his covenant. Beside the spiritual kingdom and priesthood he has

also instituted a physical kingdom and priesthood, of which Moses treats thereafter. Here he speaks only of the spiritual priesthood and kingdom and of the people who kept this covenant. Those who were unbelieving and did not obey his words—them this passage did not concern, but they were under the worldly kingdom. Nevertheless God had at that time a few who were subject to both the spiritual and the physical kingdom and priesthood. However, when the Gospel came, he abolished the physical priesthood, and the spiritual priesthood was preached in all the world by the apostles. Thus David was a spiritual and a physical king, nevertheless he was subject to the physical priesthood; yet he was a true spiritual priest, and as a result of this priesthood he wrote many beautiful psalms. Thus every Christian is now a king for his own person, and a priest for others. The priesthood is higher than the kingdom; it extends farther. For a priest does not proclaim the Word only for himself, but for others; the faith however, by which he first becomes a king, he has for himself. (*Opp. Tom.* III, 1517-22)

Furthermore Luther writes on Gen. 20:17-18:

Whoever is not a prophet can neither teach nor pray and can do no other good work. Therefore the name of prophet belongs to all Christians in common, and whoever denies this may also deny that he has been baptized and instructed in the Word. There is only this difference that some have the Holy Spirit in richer measure, the others in lesser measure. (*Opp. Tom.* I, p. 2053)

Luther writes furthermore on 1 Pet. 2:5:

There he (Peter) has put down the external and physical priesthood, which was before in the Old Testament, and also the external church; all this he takes away. Therefore he wants to say: the external trappings in connection with the priesthood have now ceased; therefore a new priesthood is now beginning; it offers different sacrifices, so that everything is spiritual. We have argued much that those whom we now call priests [German: *Pfaffen*] are not priests before God, and have based this on this passage of Peter. Therefore grasp it well. For if someone comes along with this passage and wants to interpret it, as some have done, that it speaks of two kinds of priesthood, namely of external and of spiritual priests, then tell him to put on glasses, in order that he may see, and take hellebore, that he may purge his brain. St. Peter speaks thus: "You are to build yourselves up to a spiritual or holy priesthood." Therefore ask those priests whether they are holy; their life shows it very well, as one sees that the wretched people are sunk in greed and fornication and all kinds of vices. Whoever has the priesthood must be holy; whoever is not holy does not have the priesthood; therefore Peter certainly is speaking of only one priesthood. We ask furthermore whether he distinguishes between spiritual and secular, as people now call priests spiritual, the other Christians secular: therefore they are compelled to confess, whether they like it or not, that St. Peter is here speaking to all who are Christians, namely to those who are to put away all wickedness, craftiness, hypocrisy and hatred, etc., and be like newborn

children who drink unadulterated milk. Thus a lie must bite its own mouth. Therefore this stands firm: Because St. Peter is speaking to all who are Christians, it is proved that they are lying, and that St. Peter says nothing about their priesthood which they have invented and claim for themselves alone. Therefore our bishops are nothing but Nicolausbishops,³² and as their priesthood is, so are also their laws, sacrifices and works; it would be a good play for carnival time, except for the fact that the name of God would be blasphemed by the show. Therefore only those constitute the holy and spiritual priesthood, who are true Christians and are built upon the Rock. For since Christ is the bridegroom and we are the bride, the bride has everything which the bridegroom has, also his own body. For when he gives himself to the bride, he gives himself entirely his whole being, and the bride gives herself to him. Now Christ is the high and supreme priest, anointed by God himself; he has also sacrificed his own body for us, which is the highest priestly office; thereafter he prayed for us on the cross; in the third place, he also proclaimed the Gospel and taught all men to know God and himself. These three offices he has also given to all of us; therefore, because he is a priest and we are his brothers, all Christians have power and the command, and must do it, that they preach and come before God, one pleading for another, and offer himself to God. And let no one begin to preach or tell the Word of God unless he is a priest ... This is now the right priesthood which consists in three parts, as we have heard, that one offer spiritually and pray for the congregation and

preach; whoever can do that is a priest; these all are obligated to preach the Word, to pray for the congregation, and to sacrifice themselves before God. Therefore away with those fools who designate as “the spiritual state” priests who perform no other office except to have shaved pates and to have been smeared, if shaving and smearing make a priest, then I could also smear and anoint the paws of a donkey, that he also might be a priest. (*Auslegung der 1. Ep. Petri. IX, 699ff*)

Furthermore Luther writes on 1 Pet. 2:9:

We are all priests before God if we are Christians, because we are set upon the Rock (Christ), who is the highest priest before God, and we also have everything he has. Therefore I would greatly wish that this word “priest” were as common as it is to call us Christians, for it is all one thing: Priest, baptized Christians. Now as I am not to grant that the smeared and shorn alone want to be called Christians and baptized persons, so little am I also to tolerate it that they alone want to be priests. Therefore they have appropriated it [priesthood] to themselves alone. Thus they have also called the church what the pope together with his pointed hats decide; however the Scripture reverses the matter. Therefore mark this well, in order that you may be able to distinguish how God calls a priest, and how they call themselves priests. Therefore we must again bring it about that this little word *priest* becomes as common as the word *Christians*. For to be a priest does not belong into an external office; it is entirely an office that acts in the sight of God. So it is also with the fact that we

are all kings. Priest and King are all spiritual names, like Christians, saints, church. And even as you are not called a Christian because you have much money and goods, but that you are built upon the Rock, and believe in Christ, so also you are not called a priest because you shaved a pate, or wear a long coat, but because you are permitted to appear before God. Similarly also you are not a king because you bear a golden crown or are over much land and people, but because you are a lord over all things, death, sin, and hell. For you are a king just as well as Christ is a king, if you believe in him. (Ibid., pp. 714-15)

Furthermore Luther writes in his Church Postille:

They (the papists) must certainly confess that this figurative priesthood, which existed in the Old Testament, is now no longer present; therefore we ask them whence they have the power that they can say that they themselves were foreshadowed by those priests, and make themselves alone priests of the New Testament. There is not one letter in the entire New Testament in which they are called priests. What can they say to this? Those afflicted with leprosy are to go to the priests; where are the priests? St. Peter says in the first Epistle, ch. 2:9, that in the New Testament there are no special priests, but that all Christians are priests, foreshadowed by those priests. (XII, 1889)

The same [Luther] writes:

For a priest, especially in the New Testament, is not made, but must be born, is not consecrated but created; however, he is not born through fleshly

birth, but through the birth of the Spirit, of water and Spirit, in the washing of regeneration. Therefore all Christians together are priests, and all priests are Christians, and it would be a damning speech if one wanted to say that a priest were something other than a Christian; for such things are spoken without the Word of God, based only on the doctrine of men, or on old custom, or on the multitude of those who believe this. If one wants to set up one of these three, any one, as an article of faith, it is blasphemy and an abomination. (*Sendschreiben an den Rat und Gemeinde der Stadt Prag, vom Jahre 1523, X, 1834*)

Finally Luther writes in his article *Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe* in the year 1533:

This is, however, first of all one of the genuine abominations against the dear, blessed Baptism that they boast, how they with their chrism³³ and consecration make priests in the holy church; that is, a far, far higher and holier state than Baptism gives. For a priest who has been consecrated and anointed with chrism is, compared with other Christians, like the morning star compared with a glowing wick; and so Baptism, in which we are washed with Christ's own blood and anointed with his Holy Spirit to eternal life, compared with the filthy chrism or oil, which came up through men, without God's Word and command, must glisten like dirt in a lantern compared with the sun; yet with such chrism they are not appointed to eternal life but to the private mass. For this they are helped by the shaved pate and special clothing, the name "cleric," as though they alone belonged to Christ; likewise, they invent the

character, the spiritual mark in the soil, which no common Christian is said to have, but only the consecrated priests. Likewise, the pomp when a priest is to be demoted; many bishops, at times seven, had to be present, although he was consecrated by only one; yet they could not take away from him the character with such a pompous degradation. These are the real splendid words and powerful working of the devil, 2 Thess. 2:9, with which the glory and power of Holy Baptism is weakened, that its spiritual, divine chrism, which is the Holy Spirit himself, had to be nothing compared with the physical and temporal chrism of the papists, invented by the devotion of men. Baptism, with the blood of Christ and anointing with the Holy Spirit, was not able to consecrate a priest; but a papal bishop could consecrate and make priests with his stinking and filthy chrism. Against this you are again to exalt your Baptism very highly and praise it as much as you can, to weaken and reduce to nothing the shameful abomination. For Christendom does not need the making and consecration of priests; chrism (I say) and a bishop will not make us priests; neither do we want to become and be made such by them. I say it again: unless we are true priests beforehand without bishop and chrism, the bishop and his chrism will never make us priests. Masks and carnival priests he may make us, even as he himself is a carnival bishop and mask, and as boys in a play make kings, virgins, and other persons or masks. We do not want to be and be called "made," but "born" priests, and have our priesthood by inheritance through our birth from father and mother; for our Father is the true priest

and high priest, as is written in Psalm 110: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.' " This he has also proved, and has offered himself for us on the cross, etc. This same priest or bishop now has a bride, a priestess or a bishop's wife, as is written John 3:29: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." Of this bridegroom and bride we have been born through Holy Baptism, and thus became by inheritance true priests in Christendom, sanctified through his blood, and consecrated through his Holy Spirit, as St. Peter calls us, 1 Pet. 2:5: "You are the royal priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices"; and St. Paul, Rom. 12:2, also praises us as priests, for he bids us offer up our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. However, sacrificing to God is the office of the priests alone, as the pope himself and all the world must confess. Moreover, we are not only his children, but also his brothers, as he says, Ps. 22:23: "I will tell of thy name to my brethren," and Matt. 12:50: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother." So we are *Pfaffen* and priests not only according to the right of children, but also according to the right of brothers. This our inherent and inherited priesthood we want emphasized, proclaimed and praised, untaken away, unhindered, and unobscured. in all honor, that it may shine like the sun³⁴ and poke the devil together with his masks and abominations in the eye, so that his private consecration and chrism may by comparison seem and stink worse than *assafetida* [German: *Teufelsdreck*]. Therefore, also the Holy Spirit

diligently prevented it, that the term *Sacerdos*, priest, or *Pfaffe* should not be given to any apostle or any other offices, but is given only to the baptized, or to Christians; it is therefore an inborn, hereditary name which we have from our Baptism. (XIX, 1536ff.)

Furthermore Johann Gerhard writes:

In the New Testament the term priest is never given in particular to the ministers of the church, but generally to all truly pious Christians, who have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and therefore as spiritual priests offer spiritual sacrifices. Rev. 1:6: Christ has made us kings and priests! Cf. 5:10; 20:6, with which also the apostolic statement agrees, 1 Pet. 2:5: "You are a spiritual priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ." V. 9: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." Augustine writes in the twentieth book of the *City of God*, ch. 10: "Now in the church only the bishops and elders are called priests, but that is what all Christians were called on account of the mysterious anointing, because they are members of the One Priest." The first meaning is the ecclesiastical one, the other the one customary in the Scripture. This must be remembered against the papists, who from the name Priests, which is used of the church fathers and ministers of the New Testament, want to prove the sacrifice of the mass. (*Loc. de ministerio eccles. par. 14.15*)

Thus writes Johann Jacob Otho (Pastor and member of the consistory in Gaildorf in the county Limpurg, died 1669): "It shall never fail; there shall be priests before me,

says the Lord, who will bring burnt offerings and light cereal offerings and slaughter offerings forever." (Jer. 33:18) Who does not see how highly we have been ennobled by and before God? It is a very mighty thing that a man, a poor bag of worms, should come to such dignity. Yes, it is, as the gifted Selnecker writes, the highest honor with God and all angels, and there is not a more glorious name on earth than the name priest. Rejoice, whoever can, in the honor which God has bestowed on him!

To be a priest and a king is entirely too much honor to receive at one and the same time. Dear Christian, let the love of God have its way; it raises you to kingship; it bestows the office of priest on you. You were born a priest, anointed a priest. A born priest! In the Old Testament the priests were not chosen; they were born. The tribe of Levi was set aside for this purpose, that they had to be taken from it. Thus birth brought them the priesthood. You also were reborn through Holy Baptism, and into the right of divine sonship, yes, placed into the spiritual priesthood, which is joined to it. James says: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." Jerome writes: We baptized people are all in Christ a priestly and royal race.³⁵ This priesthood, says Luther, cannot be made or ordained. Here is no manufactured [*gemachter*] priest; he has to be born a priest, and must have it by inheritance from birth. However, I mean the new birth of water and the Spirit. There all Christians become such priests, children and heirs of Christ, the supreme priest. You also are an anointed priest. If Aaron and his sons were to become priests, then Moses had to anoint them for this with holy oil. They were to have this anointing to a perpetual priesthood. The Son of God himself did not enter upon his high priestly office without anointing. David

says of him: God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. He is God, and yet anointed by God with God, with the holy oil of gladness, the Holy Spirit. Therefore he is called Christ, the anointed one. Even as he was anointed, so he has also by grace made you a partaker of such anointing, although in lesser measure. From his fullness we have all received grace for grace. Therefore, Christian, you are a spiritual priest, no matter who you are; here is no slave nor freedman, here is no man nor woman; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Therefore conduct yourself spiritually; show yourself priestly! This shall redound to your honor before God and all believers: A king and a priest! ... Therefore a Christian is to walk not only for himself, but also for others, his fellow Christians, and look after their souls. A Christian is another's preacher; one the priest of the other. It is for this that the anointing was given to him. To this end he was filled with the gifts of the Spirit. What is the use of the ointment, if it does not, by its smell, give strength to bystanders? What is the use of a Christian, if he does not, after he has been converted, as much as in him lies, strengthen his brethren and lead the ignorant to God? Nature (which, as Basil says, is a school of knowledge and understanding) furnishes us an example: in nature all creatures lead us to our and their Creator. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands. One day tells it to the other. Ask the cattle, says Job; they will teach it to you; and the fish in the sea, they will tell it to you. Here stands speaking reason and the natural teaching of the dumb creatures as a warning and admonition to rational man: why not then [does not] much rather one person [warn and admonish] the other, but most of all a spiritual priest [warn] his fellow-Christian? This will indeed remain, that the ministry is a special estate,³⁶ in

which the servants ordained by God and the Church baptize the children, instruct the youth together with the adults in the foundation of the faith, and administer Holy Communion. If someone would want to arrogate this to himself without a call, this could not be tolerated. No one takes this honor to himself, but he who is called to it by God. Only those perform the public ministry who are regularly called and have been provided with the necessary gifts by God. This office is not committed to all, but only to a few. Meanwhile every Christian has the right, according to the measure of grace given to him, to teach his fellow Christian, to rebuke, to strengthen, to comfort him. If the pastors have their public office of the ministry, all true Christians have their spiritual priesthood. The former does not annul the latter; and the latter does not take the former from the ministers. Both have their designated [*gewisse*, certain] functions. By virtue of the spiritual priesthood a Christian is to perform his office among his fellow Christians through salutary instruction. There are the words of Christ: If your brother sins, rebuke him between you and him alone. The apostles received from Christ what they presented to their congregations. Paul says: Admonish the unmannerly; comfort the downhearted. James agrees: "My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." Jude writes one single chapter, yet he announces: "You, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith ... Convince some, who doubt; save some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear." Therefore do not laugh! Consider your priestly duty well, and always watch over the souls! The care of your own and of your fellow man's soul is your duty. How quickly we neglect

something! You will have to answer for it there, on that great day. Don't think that it is up to your discretion whether you will show your neighbor the right way or allow him to go astray ... Godeschalculus, the duke of the Wends, exhorted his subjects earnestly, wherever he saw an opportunity; and he achieved so much among them with his spiritual speeches, that they were the more eager to retain the Christian faith. What the pastor at Schackau in Prussia presented from the Word of God in high German, the village mayor interpreted to the peasants in old-Prussian, in order that the souls might be led to Christ. A true Christian, a spiritual priest, imitates these praiseworthy examples. Paul's teaching strengthens him in this more and more, Col. 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God." On this Luther writes in the Church Postille: "Here Paul makes the office of teaching common to all Christians, when he says: Teach and admonish yourselves, i.e., among yourselves, one the other, moreover also every one [admonish] himself, outside of the common office of preaching, so that the word of God may be everywhere in use, publicly and privately, common and special." But in order that every one may know how he must watch, we state the proper supervision of a spiritual priest thus: first, a Christian should help another as much as he can to escape error in doctrine and life; then, if he is in violent grief over sin, he should comfort him and raise him up; if he finds him obdurate after so much diligence and effort, he is to ban and discard him. The first is necessary; it is the duty of spiritual priests to teach and rebuke. With respect to teaching, as the priests of the Old Testament had to deal with the law, teach and present the Scripture—as God himself

indicates through Haggai: Ask the priest about the law; and through Malachi 2:7: "For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth"—so must every Christian, as a spiritual priest, continue to teach and admonish according to need. Paul says: Desire spiritual gifts; try to improve the congregation. Thereby the duty to rebuke is also imposed on him to some degree. See to it, says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, dear brethren, that no one among you have an unbelieving heart, which departs from the living God, but admonish one another every day, as long as it is called today, lest one among you be hardened through the deceit of sin. And again we read in the just quoted Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. 12:15: "See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God, etc." Already in the time of Moses every Israelite was instructed to teach and to rebuke: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbor, lest you bear sin because of him." (Lev. 19:17) How much more now! Therefore Paul says: "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." (Eph. 5:11) The words of Theophylact (on 1 Thess. 5) aim at this: "Don't say: I am no teacher, I am no schoolmaster, it is not my duty to teach and to edify others. There are not enough teachers to admonish every individual, but it is the will of God that every one should instruct and edify the other, at least through his example and good life." Luther is even more earnest in this matter, he wills that one should under no circumstance from ill-timed love or fear keep silence with respect to the sin of another.³⁷

It is, however, not enough for a spiritual priest, on account of the supervision which he has over his neighbor, to speak his mind to him with teaching, admonition, and rebuke. He is also, for God's sake, to comfort his heart

when he is in sorrow, yes, even in a case of necessity absolve him from his sins. The priests in the Old Testament confessed their own and the people's sin and comforted themselves with the promised Seed, at which so many bloody sacrifices aimed. All believing Christians have a certain measure of right to do this. They not only can, but should also confess before God and men, Ps. 32:5; James 5:16. They have the power to comfort one another. "Therefore comfort one another with these words," says Paul to his Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 4:18. And again: "Encourage the fainthearted." (1 Thess. 5:14) Yes, they have authority to loose one another from sin. Christ's words are clear:

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone; if he hears you, you have gained your brother. If he does not hear you, then take one or two with you that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 18:15-20)

Paul's declaration to his Corinthians has the same aim: "Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ." (2 Cor. 2:10) The teachers of the church have also understood this meaning. Theophylact writes on Matt. 18: "Not only that is loosed, which the pastors loose, but everything will also be loosed and bound which we, when a wrong has been done us, either bind or

loose." The first church did this already earlier in a case of necessity. Two Christians on the sea got into apparent danger of death. Then one absolved the one who confessed his sin, and the other baptized the other, who was still a catechumen.³⁸ This they had authority to do, and Christians today have the same authority in case of necessity, "not by virtue of an office entrusted to them, since this always remains with a certain class, distinguished from all other Christians, who are not so much instruments as rather members of the church, but by virtue of the spiritual priesthood, to which they have been exalted," as Dr. Osiander writes.³⁹

All Christians have been made spiritual priests by virtue of the spiritual anointing which they received in Holy Baptism. Now they are to look out for one another. (Heb. 10:24) They should raise themselves up with the promise of God, and one should encourage the other and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Is. 2:3) Oh, accept it, one might say to the other, and comfort yourself with it! Forgiveness of sins is offered to you in it; only believe! Your conscience will be cleansed. Surely [*Traun!*] whoever can teach in case of necessity can also absolve. For Absolution is nothing else than a special application of the teaching of the Gospel to a particular person. Luther says of it in the Church Postille for the twenty-first Sunday after Trinity: "God fills every one's mouth, so that he can say to another: Your sins are to be forgiven you. We are all equals in faith, and one has the treasure as fully and completely as another." Likewise blessed Heinrich Mueller says in his *Evangelische*

Schlusskette for the Sunday *Quasimodogeniti* on the words "To whom you remit sins": "This word concerns not only the apostles and their successors in office, but also all believing Christians. The former in all ordinary cases, the latter in a few extraordinary cases and where necessity demands it." It is not said only to those, says Luther, who are pastors or ministers of the church, but to all Christians. There every one may comfort the other in danger of death or where it is necessary otherwise, and pronounce Absolution to him. The keys were given to the church, and by the church entrusted to the pastors as stewards of the mysteries of God, yet in such a way that every member of the church can retain his right to the keys, and also exercise this right to his neighbor in case the ordinary pastor is not present. Every Christian has the power, yes, he is in duty bound, by virtue of the anointing which he has received from God, to announce the comfort of the grace of God in Christ on the basis of the Word to a terrified heart which wrestles with hell. But what is that, except to forgive sin? Therefore that is not meddling with another person's office when one teaches the ignorant, strengthens the weak knees, but this is rather not neglecting one's own office; and faithful teachers are not hindered in their diligence, but rather are furthered, and every lack caused by the negligence of teachers, in populous congregations, is thereby made good. Dr. Osiander decides the issue thus:

We hold that Absolution may be pronounced by private persons, however privately, not publicly in the regular meeting. For even as a private person is permitted, yes, in duty bound to admonish his neighbor privately, to comfort and to rebuke him, so also it is not forbidden him to impart the comforting word of the Gospel to him and to absolve him, see-

ing that, so far as the common and validating ability for this is concerned, he is the equal of the pastor. Cf. Osiander's *Gewissenstheologie*, p. 1625.

(The above glorious testimony is taken from a booklet which bears the title "Joh. Jac. Otho's *Koenigliches Priesterthum oder rechtschaffene Ausuebung des wahren Christenthums*. Nuernberg, 1692." This booklet would be worthy, as one of the most succulent and powerful soundly Lutheran devotional books, to be reprinted. It shows in a truly evangelical manner what a zealous godly life the high dignity of the spiritual kingship and priesthood of a Christian demands.)

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 14 (February 19, 1861): 105-08]

c. If, according to God's Word, all believing Christians are really spiritual priests, as we have seen, what follows from this?—Are they by chance also all public preachers, ministers of the church, pastors, bishops? May they also, on account of their spiritual priesthood, interfere with the office of the public preachers, publicly teach side by side with them, publicly pray, publicly absolve and retain sin, baptize, celebrate Holy Communion and the like?—By no means!—Of course the opponents of the Lutheran doctrine say not only that this necessarily follows from the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood, but at times they go so far as to assert that we actually draw this conclusion! This is, however, a crass untruth. Neither does the equality of the spiritual priesthood and the public ministry follow from that doctrine, nor do we draw this conclusion. It is clearly written: "Are all

apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?" (1 Cor 12:29) The fact that the apostle asks these questions is clearly an indication that his answer is "No"! The apostle wants to say: "Are you going to say that all Christians are apostles, prophets, teachers? Surely not!" The same apostle writes further: "How shall they preach unless they be sent?" (Rom. 10:15) Therefore the apostle declares hereby that to be a public preacher one not only needs to be a baptized, believing Christian, but also that one is sent, that means, that one has been regularly chosen and called for this. And finally James gives the earnest warning: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness." (James 3:1) To appoint oneself as a public teacher on the plea that one is a spiritual priest, James declares, is an outrage, an audacity [*Frechheit*] which must expect not a reward, but a grievous judgment. Therefore it is also clearly expressed in the confessional writings of our church, namely in the *Augsburg Confession*: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the Sacraments in the church without a regular call." (Article 14)

It also by no means follows from the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all true Christians that therefore the special public ministry of preaching is merely a human, churchly institution, made by men in order to maintain good order in the church and to avoid confusion, that, namely, the public ministry is a creature, and in this sense flows naturally from the spiritual priesthood of Christians. Of course, also this is attributed falsely by papistical Lutherans to those who hold fast and confess Luther's teaching of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians in order to make this doctrine hated, for we know very well, and have always testified and taught, that this doctrine is false. The Word of

God says plainly: "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers." (1 Cor. 12:28) Furthermore: "His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." (Eph. 4:11) Therefore it was not men, not the Christians as spiritual priests, but the eternal High Priest Himself, Christ, the Son of God, and, because it is a work outside the Godhead, the Triune God himself has established the order of the public ministry. It is a creation of the great all-wise God himself, and an ordinance in his church on earth, even as the secular government in the state. Therefore we read in our symbolical books: "We have a sure doctrine, that the ministry of preaching comes from the common call of the apostles." (*Smalcald Articles, Appendix, Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope*) Herewith an immediate divine origin is ascribed to the public ministry, for the call of the apostles—whose successors in the ministry of preaching church servants are—stems immediately from Christ, the Son of God. Therefore also we read in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*: "The church has the command to appoint preachers and *Diacanos*." For that reason whoever troubles the public ministry interferes with it, abolishes it, resists it, troubles God's ordinance, interferes with God's office, abolishes God's institution and resists God's ordinance, and will have to give God a severe account, in which he will not be able to stand, but will be put to shame before all angels and all the elect. He will not be helped by the fact that he had "a good intention" in what he did, namely the intention to save souls; for whether a work is good or bad is not judged by whether it was done with a good intention, but above all things by whether it was done according to God's Word and command. Saul is a warning example. When he had undertaken a sacrifice contrary to

God's command, with the good intention of serving God, the prophet Samuel said to him in the name of the Lord:

Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams, for rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the Word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king. (1 Sam. 15:22-23)

Whereas, true, sacrificing had been instituted by God himself and was a work of worship, but Saul, because he had no call to it, was not serving God but was rejecting him and heaping wrath upon himself, so also the public ministry, as instituted by God, is also "a noble work" (1 Tim. 3:1); however, anyone who performs it without having been regularly called to it is not serving God by his act, but is rejecting God and heaping wrath upon himself. He is a rebel against God's ordinance. He is in this not acting in accord with the right of his spiritual priesthood, but is misusing it. Let him say ever so often "that the Spirit is driving him to do it." The spirit is indeed driving him, but it is not the Holy Spirit, but his own spirit, for the Holy Spirit is a spirit of self-control (2 Tim. 1:7), and of the truth; he does not contradict himself, so that he would institute the holy ministry and then would drive a person to disturb and abolish it.

We must not be surprised that some people misinterpret our doctrine of the universal priesthood of all true Christians, in order to make it hated, as though by it scorn for and disturbance of the public ministry were approved, and the seal placed upon it; for Luther, whose doctrine we teach, as no one except an ignorant and rash person can deny, had the same experience. Luther experienced this, e.g., from Emser, whom Luther answered among other things as follows:

You also lie when you say that I make all lay people bishops, priests, and clergy, so that they can at once without a call also exercise the ministry; being so godly, you say nothing of the fact that I write further: No one should himself dare to undertake that to which he has not been called except in a case of extreme need. (*Answer to the Overly Christian etc. Book of Emser of the Year 1521*, XVIII, 1597)

But here some may perhaps say: "If this is really so, then what does the spiritual priesthood of Christians give them except the power and duty to come before God, to offer their heart and life to God, to pray for themselves and for others, and to promote the Word of God as heads of households with their own and to speak about God's Word with their fellow Christians? If Christians, according to biblical Lutheran teaching as spiritual priests are no pastors, as you yourselves hold, then why do you make so much ado about their priesthood? If being a Christian is being a spiritual priest, and being a spiritual priest is the same as being a Christian, then who in the world will want to deny the rights of the spiritual priesthood? One merely needs to be convinced that the priesthood of Christians has nothing to do with the ministry of preaching, then no one will speak against it."

We answer: It is true, to be a Christian is to be a spiritual priest, and to be a spiritual priest is to be a Christian; but precisely because this is so, being a Christian must have an honor and power which it would not have if being a Christian did not amount to being a priest, and vice versa. Although a spiritual priest is a long way from being a pastor or public preacher, one can nevertheless by no means say that the spiritual priesthood has nothing to do with the public ministry; on the contrary, it is very closely connected with it.

Only consider: what a preacher has to do is all priest's work; whether he teaches, prays, blesses, absolves, administers the Sacraments, admonishes, rebukes, comforts, watches over his flock, etc.; even when he teaches—according to the Scriptures he is offering; as the Apostle Paul says: "I am to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:16) Since, however, all Christians are, according to the Word of God, spiritual priests, therefore the preachers can be nothing else than servants of the priests or the serving ones among the priests. For that reason in the New Testament the office of bishops, of presbyters or elders, of shepherds and teachers, i.e., of pastors and preachers, is called a service. For as often as the word *Amt* appears in our German Bible, so often the original Greek text has the word *diakonia*, which in Latin means *ministerium*, in German *Dienst* [service]. A Senior *Ministerii* is therefore nothing more than the oldest, or the first in the order of service, not in ruling and commanding. All this was already foreshadowed in the Old Testament; for it is well known that in the Old Testament priests and Levites did not all serve all the time, but also among them a certain order had been introduced, according to which some were serving at certain times, while others did not serve. Therefore we read, e.g., of John the Baptizer's father Zacharias: "Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple and burn incense. ... And when his time of service was ended he went to his home." (Luke 1:8, 9, 23)

From this difference between serving and non-serving priests in the Old Testament it does not, of course, follow

that also the believing Christians as spiritual priests have to administer the public preaching ministry, only that they perhaps had to change off in this service with the called preachers, like the non-serving priests and Levites in the Old Testament [changed] with those who served! Far from it! It is an ancient rule of interpretation that a New Testament antitype has only so much of the Old Testament type as the Holy Spirit himself shows in the New Testament. However, the Holy Spirit in the New Testament not only says that not all are teachers (1 Cor. 12:29) but also that whoever has an office is to perform it faithfully, and that a special competence and a special call and mission belongs to it (2 Tim. 2:2; Rom. 10:15), that he is to perform it until he has received the crown of glory which does not fade away (Rom. 12:7; 1 Pet. 5:2-4), that therefore the bearers of the public office should administer it all their lives, that it is to be their life's calling.

That all believing Christians, teachers and hearers are priests, the teachers serving priests, the hearers non-serving priests—from this it rather follows (1) that there is no difference between teachers and hearers in the matter of rank, that the public preachers do not constitute a special rank; that there is between them a difference with respect to service or duties; that the public ministry is only an ordinance, albeit a divine ordinance.

If it is, however, certain that the public preaching ministry is only a divine ordinance and not a special rank, since all believing Christians are of priestly rank, it follows from this (2) that there is in this a great difference between the New Testament and Old. In the Old Testament a sacrifice or any other action committed to the priests was invalid if it was not performed by a descendant of Aaron or of Levi, because only these were of priestly rank; in the New

Testament, however, all priestly acts are valid, whether they are performed by a public preacher or by a so-called layman, because also the latter are of priestly rank together with the believing pastors. From this it is clear that all those who maintain that an official act performed by a lay person or by an unordained pastor, whether it be preaching or a Baptism or Absolution or Holy Communion, is invalid—that all these with this teaching deny the priesthood of all Christians, make the public preachers to be the only priests of the New Testament, and declare the public ministry to be, instead of a divine ordinance, a special rank, like that of the priests and Levites in the Old Testament. That this is being taught by some—concerning that we have quoted the example of a pastor in the Ohio Synod in No. 8 of *Der Lutheraner*, who expressly maintains: If an unordained person preaches the truth, the Holy Spirit does not work through such preaching; if he baptizes, blesses, absolves, celebrates the Lord's Supper the way it is prescribed in the Word of God, it would all be “without power and blessing,” an “empty sound and a form without substance”!⁴⁰

From this one sees how important the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians is; if one denies this, then one finally comes (if only one is rash enough to draw logical conclusions) to the most manifest and dreadful blasphemies. Pastor Grabau and the entire Buffalo Synod of course don't say everything as bluntly as that member of the Ohio Synod; but because they also are opponents of the biblical Lutheran doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians, they also in reality arrive at the same dreadful doctrines. Pastor Grabau writes, e.g., in his *Hirtenbrief*: “Thus we are convinced that a man recklessly chosen by the congregation can neither give Absolution nor dispense the body and blood of Christ, but gives nothing but bread and

wine.” (p. 15) Therefore Pastor Grabau here goes so far as to deny power to the Word of God even if it is proclaimed by a man who has been called by the congregation, if he has not been called according to good order, i.e., has not been ordained by a minister, but is a man “recklessly chosen by the congregation”! How he believes about this matter he shows plainly when shortly before he maintains: “The words of institution are, however, efficacious on account of the office which the Lord acknowledges.” Thus the Word is not efficacious because it is the Word of God, but because it is spoken by an ordained person in office; if the Word is spoken by an unordained person, then, according to Grabau, God does not acknowledge his Word, but he does acknowledge it when it is spoken by an ordained person; why? Because God acknowledges the office! This teaching of Pastor Grabau the entire Buffalo Synod has publicly acknowledged and solemnly confirmed when in its review it adds the following to that passage of the *Hirtenbrief*: “Therefore we rightly hold that our dear Lord Christ imparts his body and blood in the Lord’s Supper only through the sacred, true ministry as in his own divine ordinance.” (Cf. the second *Synodalbrief* of the Buffalo Synod, p. 11.) It is unspeakable what a dreadful doctrine that is. One must by no means think the dreadful part lies only in this, that therefore those, who knowingly administer the means of grace or cause them to be administered contrary to the ordinance, are robbed of the comfort, that the means of grace are nevertheless valid and efficacious. This would still be a small harm. However, the matter has a far wider significance. If one teaches that Absolution, Holy Communion, etc., are valid and efficacious only when they are administered by a correctly ordained preacher, then a Christian can never know whether he is receiving a valid and

efficacious Absolution, and whether he is really receiving the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. For those who teach the former are at the same time also teaching, and must teach if they are consistent, that no person who is not himself ordained, or a lay person, can ordain, but only a preacher who has been correctly ordained himself. From this it follows, however, that one can only know whether a preacher was rightly ordained, if one knows at the same time whether also the person who ordained him was correctly ordained; therefore one must necessarily know, whether all previous ordainers were themselves correctly and truly ordained, therefore whether the ordination of our present pastor goes back in uninterrupted succession to the apostles! For if at any time a gap had occurred, if at any time an unordained person had ordained someone who is in the succession, namely the succession which ends with our pastor, then our pastor would not be rightly, i.e., not truly ordained, and everything he does would then, according to Grabau's teaching, be ineffective and invalid. This is the abyss to which this teaching leads! With this the devil intends no less than to make for Christians all means of grace shaky, and uncertain and together with them all comfort, all grace, all forgiveness of sins. And this is also the reason why we oppose this false doctrine so earnestly, and fight for the spiritual priesthood of all Christians. Our opponents seek to make people believe that we fight so hard for it because we have a low opinion of the ministry, yes, because it is our intention to overthrow it, to cause a dreadful confusion in the church, make all lay-Christians (whom they call the rabble) into pastors and public ministers and the pastors into wretched servants of men who, because they are only the servants of spiritual priests are compelled to preach and do everything which the so-called spiritual priests want.

But this is the gentleman's "lie." We are here dealing with something quite different. We hold, as I have said, so firmly to this that the pastors do not constitute a special rank into which they enter through ordination as through a divine institution as a kind of Sacrament above all things, and that all Christians are of priestly rank, in order that the power and validity of the divine means of grace may not be made uncertain and shaky for Christians. Whoever knows that all Christians are of priestly rank, and that pastors are only those who serve among New Testament priests, will not have to worry when his pastor absolves him and dispenses the Lord's Supper to him, whether he is receiving a genuine Absolution and the body and blood of Christ in reality, if only his pastor in that connection uses the efficacious words of the divine institution and performs everything in accord with the divine institution. But whoever does not know that all Christians are of priestly rank and that the public pastors are only the serving ones among the New Testament priests; who rather believes that pastors are efficacious and valid only because of their special office, because of their correct ordination, because of their rightful, in every respect orderly call to absolve and to bring the body and blood of Christ into the elements and dispense them; whoever therefore makes pastors into the king of priests such as the Levitical priests were in the Old Testament, can never know whether he is being efficaciously and validly absolved by them, and whether he really receives Christ's body and blood, because he can never know whether his pastors have been correctly ordained, since according to that doctrine a lay person cannot ordain, because he cannot know whether the ordination of his pastor does not perhaps go back to a lay-ordination; for if at some time a layman had ordained someone as pastor,

then, according to that doctrine, all who so to say are descended from that ordination are also not truly ordained.⁴¹

It is true, in the Old Testament the works committed to priests were valid only if they were performed by priests; but the validity of the sacrifices was not made uncertain in the same manner, because one was certain because of physical descent from Levi and Aaron who among the people were priests; for about this they of course kept exact, publicly certified genealogical records, as may be seen from Ezra 2:62; Neh. 7:64.

If, however, it follows from the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians (1) that the publicly employed and called pastors are only the serving ones among the New Testament priests, and (2) that therefore the validity of the means of grace administered by them is not dependent on a special priestly character, which they have while other Christians do not, then something also follows in the third place. It follows, namely, on one hand that while Christians are not permitted to abolish the divine ordinance of the public ministry, disturb it, and take it onto themselves without a call, on the other hand, when Christians in a case of necessity perform some work which may normally be performed only by the publicly called ministers, this is nevertheless valid and efficacious. So also in the Old Testament certain orders had been instituted among the priests, according to which now these [in one week], now those [in another week] had the "office," i.e., the service, yet no one needed to be doubtful about the validity of the sacrifice if it was, in a case of necessity, performed by a priest who was not serving that week. Therefore we read in our symbolical books:

So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another. It is like

the example which Augustine relates of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen) and the latter, after his Baptism, absolved the former. [*Smalcald Articles*, p. 331]

The same naturally is true also of all other priestly works. Although almost all orthodox Lutheran theologians declare that no layman should administer Holy Communion, and we agree heartily with them, one must not think that a common Christian is not to administer Holy Communion because he could not bring it about, that this necessarily calls for an ordained pastor! By no means! The reason is that in the case of the Lord's Supper no genuine case of necessity can arise. For the Lord's Supper is the Sacrament of confirmation or strengthening. Baptism, however is, the sacrament of initiation or consecration, and the proclamation of the Gospel together with Absolution the means by which faith is engendered. This alone is the reason why the orthodox teachers of our church were opposed to a layman ever administering Holy Communion. In this they follow the principle: where the salvation of people is in danger unless one breaks the order, then it should also be broken, for our souls are not there for the sake of the order, but the order is there for the sake of our souls, namely for the sake of our salvation; but wherever the welfare of our soul is not endangered by strict observance of the order, there also the order is not to be broken. But whoever maintains that a lay person has indeed the ability to impart Baptism and Absolution, but not the Lord's Supper, does not know what he is saying, and must be caught up in two grievous papistic errors; in the first place he must believe and teach that not all Christians are priests, and in the second place that the word and institution of God do not have their power in themselves, but receive it from the person who exercises and

administers them. It is a manifest contradiction to maintain that Christians are indeed capable of performing the priestly works of Baptism and Absolution, but not other priestly works. Those who commit this contradiction in the Lutheran Church show that they admit the former only because it is clearly expressed in our symbolical books, namely, in order not to be revealed as Antilutherans; deep down in their hearts, however, they do not believe both, or they are angry over the fact that they must believe it, although it does not fit into their hierarchical system.⁴²

The fourth consequence, finally, of the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians is that they must have the right to choose their pastors themselves. To prove this last consequence we must again for lack of space defer to the next issue.

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 15 (March 5, 1861): 113-16]

There can be no doubt with respect to the question whether our church teaches that Christians, by virtue of their spiritual priesthood, have the right to choose their pastors themselves. We not only find this clearly expressed in the public confessions of our church, but repeated also in all the writings of our orthodox teachers in which the right of the election of pastors is discussed.

So far as first of all our symbolical books are concerned, three reasons chiefly are stated in the *Smalcald Articles* why "the churches must retain the power to choose ministers of the church." As the third reason the following is given:

Finally this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter: "You are a royal priesthood." (1 Pet. 2:9) These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers. (Second appendix: *Of the Power of Bishops*) [Quoted according to Tappert, op. cit., p. 331]

As far as Luther is concerned, he wrote an entire article on this that the Christians as spiritual priests have all church power; this is the *Sendschreiben, wie man Kirchendiener wählen und einsetzen soll, an den Rath und Gemeinde der Stadt Prag*, of the year 1523. After Luther has in this work enumerated all priestly rights of Christians, he finally closes thus:

Here we have it more clearly than the day and more certainly than certain from where one is to take priests or servants of the Word. Namely, one is to choose them from the flock of Christ and from nowhere else. For since it has been sufficiently shown that every one has the right to serve in the Word, yes, that everyone has also been commanded to serve in the Word, if he sees that there is either no other, or that those who are available do not teach rightly, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:27ff. in order that the wonderful deeds of God may be proclaimed by all of us, 1 Pet. 2: 9: how then would not rather a whole congregation also have the right and this command that it could commit this office through a common election to one or several persons in her stead. (X, 1861)

Furthermore, as far as Luther's faithful followers are concerned, Martin Chemnitz, the chief author of the *Formula of Concord*, who died A.D. 1586, writes:

What kind of means does God want to use, through which he wants, by orderly means, to call and send pastors? He does not want to do this through angels, but through his church and congregation, which is the royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2. (*Thesaur. Dedekenni* ii, 418)

Andreas Quenstedt (died 1685), the great Wittenberg theologian and a nephew of the famous Johann Gerhard, lists five reasons in his *Glaubenslehre* why the right to elect pastors is a right of the entire congregation, and as the fifth reason he names:

The high titles of honor given to the church: it is called the royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2:9, to which the Savior, as his bride and the mistress of his house entrusts the treasure of his Word, Rom. 3:2, and the Sacraments, to whom he has also given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16:19; 18:18. (*Theol. did.* II, 1510)

Therefore it is not only necessary to furnish proofs and testimonies that Christians, because of their spiritual priesthood, have a right with respect to the election of pastors, for this even Pastor Grabau admits because of the symbolical books; but this, rather, is the question: why really is priestly dignity, which all true Christians have, an argument that they also have the right to elect their pastors?

The reason is simply this: The parish ministry, or the public office of preaching, is the divine ordinance and the call to perform the priestly works publicly, for everything

that a pastor does is nothing but priestly actions. Since however all Christians are already from their Baptism by faith priests or of priestly rank, since the Christian congregation has the priesthood originally and immediately, since originally all Christians are equal and have the same priestly rights: therefore they also, and they only naturally have the right and power to choose those who are to exercise the common right. In the Old Testament, e.g., all male descendants of Aaron were of priestly rank and priestly dignity, and had priestly rights, for according to the special Old Testament economy God had placed the priesthood into their family [*Gesammtheit*]; no one save those who at a given time were members of the family of Aaron were therefore to choose and ordain those who were to administer the priestly office, perform the priestly works, or to "serve," then (unless a different order has already previously been established by agreement, that perhaps the firstborn assumes the throne) they naturally have the right and the power to choose the one who is to exercise their common right. If a state is not a free state, but a hereditary monarchy (a kingdom) then the sovereignty (the highest power of office or the supreme power in the land) continues through transmission or usurpation in the royal family; however if a state is an independent free state, then the sovereignty reposes in the community [people]; this has therefore then the right and the power to choose those who are to administer and exercise its rights of sovereignty. If a number of persons have an equal right to a property, then they of course also jointly have the right to designate and choose the one who is to administer the joint property. If a number of men form a corps of volunteers with equal rights, then it is naturally up to them to choose their leaders and officers. As surely therefore as all Christians are priests and have priestly

rights, so surely and undeniably they also have the power to choose the one who is to exercise these common rights publicly in the name and stead of all.

Therefore Luther already in the year 1520 writes in his book about the Babylonian captivity of the Church:

Therefore every one who wants to be a Christian should be certain and well consider that we are all priests, i.e., that we all have equal power in the Word of God and in every Sacrament. Yet every one ought not to use them except through permission of the congregation or a call from those in authority. For what belongs to all in common no one can take to himself until he is called to it. (Cf. *Luther's Works*, Walch's Edition, XIX, 139)

This statement of Luther angers the papists more than a little. The theologians at Paris prepared an excerpt from this book of Luther's in which they wrote:

Martinus (Luther) writes: All Christians have equal power in preaching and in every Sacrament. The keys of the church belong to all in common. All Christians are priests. Every one of these three articles is derogatory to the clerical estates and heretical. (*Luther's Works*, Erlangen Edition, XXVII, 387, 388)

When we are therefore now also on account of this doctrine declared to be false teachers and heretics even by so-called Lutherans, we can comfort ourselves with our dear Luther, who began his reformation with precisely this doctrine and with it unhinged the papacy which our opponents would love to repair, but under another title.

Furthermore Luther writes against Emser in the following year:

Priesthood and power must first be there, brought with Baptism, common to all Christians through faith, which builds them on Christ, the true high priest, as Paul here says. But to exercise such power and to put it to work is not proper for every one, but for the one who has the command and will⁴³ of the multitude, and is called. He does this work in the stead and person of the multitude and common power. (*Luther's Works*, Erlangen Edition, XXVII, 316)

Luther writes further in the already quoted writing on the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*: "The sacrament of consecration" (this means that the papists have made ordination into a consecration, through which alone a person is thought to receive power and the ability to administer the means of grace efficaciously and validly)

has been and still is a capital device to confirm all the cruel wonders which have until now been done in the church and will continue to be done. Here Christian brotherhood came to an end (i.e., through the consecration of ordination they brought it equal right and power, Matt. 23:8); here the shepherds became wolves, the servants tyrants, the clergy more than worldlings. What if they should be forced to admit that all of us, as many as have been baptized, are also priests (as we also are in truth), and the ministry of preaching were committed to them only, however with our consent? Then they would also at the same time know that they have no right or power to give

us orders, except to the extent to which we ourselves from our own goodwill granted them. (However) it is written, 1 Pet. 2: 9: You are the chosen generation, the royal priesthood and priestly kingdom. Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But those whom we call priests are servants, chosen by us, who also are to perform everything in our name. (Ibid., p. 134)

Luther writes further in his reformatory writing *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation*, also in the year 1520, where he had to lay the right foundation:

They have contrived that the pope, bishops, priests, cloister people are called the spiritual estate; government people, lords, trades people and plowmen are the secular estate, which is a very excellent invention and concept. But no one should be intimidated by it. And that for this reason: for all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them, and except with respect to the office (i.e., the service) only, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:12, that we are all one body, but that every member has its own work with which it serves the others. This is because we have one Baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are equal Christians (Eph. 4:5); for Baptism, Gospel, and faith, these only create spiritual and Christian people. However, that the pope or a bishop anoints, shaves heads, ordains, consecrates, dresses differently than the laity, these may make a hypocrite or a blockhead, but never a Christian or spiritual person. Therefore we are all consecrated priests through Baptism, as St. Peter says, 1 Pet. 2: 9: You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom. And

Rev. 5:10: You have made them a kingdom of priests to our God. For if there were not a higher consecration in us than the pope or bishop gives, then no one would ever be made a priest by the consecration of pope or bishop and he could neither conduct mass (the Lord's Supper), nor preach, nor absolve. Therefore the consecration of the bishop is nothing else than if he would in the stead and person of the entire assembly take one out of the crowd, all of whom have equal power, and were to command him to exercise this power for the others. Just as if ten brothers, all of them children of the king, equal heirs, were to elect one to rule the inheritance for them; they would all be kings and of equal power, yet one would be commanded to rule. And to say it still more clearly: if a small group of lay Christians were to be captured and placed in a desert region, who did not have a priest consecrated by a bishop, and would there agree and would elect one among them, married or not, and would commit to him the office of baptizing, conduct mass (the Lord's Supper), absolve, and preach, he would truly be a priest (pastor), as though all bishops and popes had consecrated him. From this it comes that in case of necessity everyone can baptize and absolve; this would not be possible if we were not all priests. This great grace and power of Baptism and of the Christian estate they have all but overthrown for us and made it unknown through the spiritual (church) law. (Walch, XIX, 202)

Luther writes in his exposition of the epistles of Peter in the year 1523:

In the New Testament priests should by right not wear shaved heads, not that this is an evil thing in itself for one could very well cause himself to be shorn, but for this reason, that one would not make a distinction between them and a common Christian, which faith cannot tolerate; so that those who are now called priests would all be laymen, and only a few official people would be elected by the congregation to preach. There is therefore only an outward distinction, on account of the office (service), to which one is called by the congregation; but before God there is no distinction and a few are drawn forth out of the multitude only that they may conduct and perform the office in behalf of the congregation, which office all have, not that one has more power than the other. Therefore also no one is to get up on his own and preach to the congregation, but it is necessary to take one out of the multitude and install him. (Walch, IX, 702-3)

Luther writes further in his writing *Vor der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe* in the year 1533:

None of us is born an apostle in Baptism, [or a] preacher, teacher, pastor, but all are born priests. Thereafter one takes from among such born priests and calls or elects to such offices those who in our behalf (that is, in behalf of the fellowship) are to exercise this office. This is the basis in this matter which no one can overthrow. And if the papal consecration wanted to do right, it should do nothing else but call such born priests into the pastoral ministry, and not make new, holier and better priests than the baptized Christians are. Behold, this is the

other part (as stated) with which they have desecrated our Baptism, darkened and weakened it, and in addition have so wickedly and blasphemously suppressed and hidden this our glorious, eternal, inborn, hereditary inheritance, and instead have put forward their dead, nasty chrism so high and gloriously, that we did not fear and honor God himself as highly as these their worthless masks and carnival plays. However that the fathers called their consecrated persons priests (*Sacerdotes*), and that thus it became accepted usage, we are to forgive them together with many other things. And if it had remained with their consecration and ordination, the name would have done no harm, for they consecrated parish pastors. But the abomination has retained the name (because it was so glorious) and has forsaken the consecration of the fathers, and instead instituted its shady consecration [*Winkelweihe*], thereby shamefully wasted and destroyed our true priesthood and Baptism.⁴⁴ (Walch, XIX, 1536)

Finally Luther writes in his exposition of Psalm 110 in the year 1539:

Behold, therefore every Christian has and performs such priestly works. But beside this there is the common office, which publicly proclaims and teaches the doctrine; for this there must be pastors and preachers. For in the congregation not all can perform the office; neither is it proper to baptize and to dispense the Sacrament in every house. Therefore one must elect and set aside a few for this, who are capable of preaching and in addition train themselves in the Scripture, who are able to perform the office of

teaching and to defend the Scripture; likewise also administer the Sacraments in behalf of the congregation (i.e., for the sake of the fellowship, in the name, at the direction. and instead of the fellowship), in order that one may know who has been baptized, and that everything may be done in an orderly way. Otherwise the church would come into being or be established slowly, where every neighbor would preach to the other or they would do everything among themselves without good order. That is not what the priestly state is in itself, but a common public office for those who are all priests, i.e., who are Christians. (Walch, V, 1509)

As far as Luther's faithful successors are concerned, we cannot but call attention once more to a passage which makes the matter particularly clear, why the fact that they are themselves priests gives Christians this power. For thus writes Polykarpus Leyser in his continuation of the *Evangelienharmonie* of Martin Chemnitz:

We are not concerned here about the mockery and scorn of the Jesuits who cry: "So cobblers and tailors among you, all cooks and trades people, have and use the right of the keys, and so you yourselves build the Babel and introduce complete confusion."⁴⁵ I answer: Who will deny that in case of necessity every believer can baptize another believer, teach and absolve him from sin, and thus as it were by means of the keys open for him the entrance to the heavenly city? This case of necessity the church has always made an exception as Jerome (died 422) against the Luciferians and Augustine (died 430) writing to Fortunatus testify. However, outside of a case of

necessity such a thing is permitted to no one, unless he is a rightfully called and appointed servant of the church. For this would militate against the divine rule: How can they preach unless they be sent? Rom. 10:15. Likewise: They ran, and I did not send them. Nevertheless every individual believer, even the most insignificant, retains his uncurtailed right, which (as spiritual priest) he has to the keys which Christ has bestowed on him. For as all citizens of a free city of the realm, as many of them as live in the city, have a common right and equal liberty, as far as the republic is concerned, and as they nevertheless for the sake of order elect senators and place a burgomaster over them, to whom they deliver the keys and statute of the city, in order that he may exercise them in the common name of all and according to which he is to govern the republic, so do also the citizens of the city of God. They have of course a communion of all saints, and everything is theirs, whether it be Paul or Peter, life or death, things present or things to come, 1 Cor. 3:21: they possess *all* things under the one Head, Christ, who has purchased everything necessary for the salvation of his church and in it for every member in particular, also for the most insignificant one, by his bloody merit: nevertheless they elect certain persons for the sake of good order, to whom they commit the administration of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, such as deacons, pastors, doctors, bishops or superintendents and the like, in order that everything among us may be done decently and in order according to Paul's teaching. (*Harm. Ev. Cap. 85, f. 1627*)

Quite similarly the old Lutheran theologian Baier writes in his *Glaubenslehre*:

When we think of the fact that the church is a kind of republic and the servants of the Word as it were the government or the public representatives to whom the care of the entire republic has been committed and for which they are responsible, one easily sees that the power to place them in office is in itself and by its very nature rests in the entire church, and that it does not belong to an individual part, unless it has been transferred to an individual part by common consent. (III, 14, 3)

According to this it is clear when it is stated in our symbols that the Christians, because they have the priesthood, also have the right to elect, this means nothing else than this: since they are all of priestly rank, and possess the priestly rights, titles and offices originally, they naturally also have the right to choose and designate those who are to administer these rights, titles, and offices in their name and stead according to the ordinance of God, even as in the Old Testament the tribe to which in particular the priesthood was given, and which was therefore a type of the Christians, also had to elect and ordain those who among the priests were to perform the services, and how often they were to do it.

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 22 (June 11, 1861): 169-71]^{4 6}

3. In earlier issues we have already proved on the basis of two clear doctrines of Holy Scripture that congregations have the right to elect, namely first, from the fact that

believing Christians, as the bride of Christ, have the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and secondly, that all Christians are spiritual priests. A third doctrine of Holy Scripture which proves that Christian congregations have the right to choose their own pastors themselves is that the church, i.e., the believing Christians, have the command and right to preach the Word of God, therefore, in one word, that they have the office originally.

That the means of grace themselves, Word and Sacrament, are a treasure which has been given to the church (i.e., to all believers, and therefore naturally also to all greater or smaller communities of believers by God) which possesses all this as the supreme owner, about this there is probably no controversy, and this therefore does not call for proof, at least among Protestants. The apostle himself says about the members of the Old Testament church: "They are entrusted with the oracles of God." (Rom. 3:2) How much more is this true of the New Testament church! She is the spiritual Jerusalem, in which all the treasures of the kingdom of heaven are contained; she is not a maid, a slave, but the free woman, the housemother or mistress, who has power over all storerooms, and over everything which is stored in them (Gal. 4:26; Ps. 68:13); the church is the house of God whose cornerstone is Christ, and who possesses all the treasures that Christ has won. (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5-6) God has by no means placed his church in such a position that it must live by the grace of one class, which alone possesses the means of grace and which could therefore either give or deny them to her. The church by no means receives God's Word and Sacrament first through her mediately called pastors, but these [pastors] rather receive them through the church. When therefore the pope forbids all common Christians to have and to read the Word of God,

and at times imposes the interdict on entire congregations (i.e., forbids them all divine worship services), then this is nothing but sacrilege, and a clear sign that the pope is the Antichrist, who according to the prophecy of Paul “opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship.” (2 Thess. 2:4)

However, God also did not found a mute church, which is condemned to permit only persons of a certain rank to preach the Word of God, while she herself has to keep silent. No, she is not only to have the Word herself; she herself is also to preach it. The church or the ordinary Christians can by no means say: “What business is it of ours, whether the Word of God is preached or not. Let the pastors take care of that; they, not we, are responsible for that!” No, the command of Christ “to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name among all nations,” Luke 24:47, is by no means given only to the apostles and to their successors in public office, but to his entire church on earth. If the voice of the saving Word is silent in the world, if the healing fount of Holy Baptism for regeneration and cleansing of souls is covered over, if the keys of the kingdom of heaven, be it the key which looses or the key which binds, or both, are hidden,—then the church cannot say: “What business is that of ours? That is a matter for the preachers; let these, when the time comes, answer for it before God!” No, the responsibility for this rests upon the entire church, on all Christians. When once upon a time a shameful deed had been committed in the congregation at Corinth, “immorality of a kind that is not found even among pagans,” and the criminal had nevertheless not been bound with the key that binds, the apostle rebukes not only the preachers there, but rather the whole congregation, and commands them: “Let him who has done this be removed from among you.” (1

Cor. 5:1-13) The Lord expressly gave the power of excommunication to the congregation when he says: "If he (the sinner) refuses to hear them (those who are admonishing and rebuking him in the second step), then tell it to the church. If he refuses to hear the church, let him be to you as a heathen man and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven," etc. (Matt. 18:17-18) Furthermore, when false doctrine had worked its way to the congregations, St. Paul turned above all things to the congregations and set their great fault before their eyes. By this the holy apostle showed sufficiently clearly that the Galatians could not say: "What can we lay people do, or what fault is it of ours, when our pastors preach falsely?" Therefore we even read that when the pastor of the congregation at Colossae, Archippus, apparently was in danger of being ensnared in the false doctrines that were forcing their way in, the apostle commanded the congregation: "Say to Archippus, 'see that you fulfill the ministry which you have received in the Lord.'" (Col 4:17)⁴⁷

Therefore the church dare by no means be unconcerned about the preaching of the Word, and keep silent; rather it is "to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called her out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2:9) It is said to the church when we read: "Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32-33) It is the church who has the earnest command: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Col. 3:16) "Admonish the idle, encourage the faint-

hearted.” (1 Thess. 5:14) “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” (Eph. 5:11) But where would we finally end if we wanted to quote all the passages of Scripture in which the practice and use of the Word is commanded to the church or the believers? — This however shows undeniably that the church or the Christians have not only the Word, but also the office of the Word or the duty and the right also to use or to preach the Word of God for themselves and for others. For would the apostle admonish the Christians to do this if they had neither the right nor the duty to do this, therefore did not have the office of the Word?

Here however someone may say: It is true, in all the quoted and similar passages of Holy Scripture, all Christians are awarded the duty and right not only to have the means of grace, but also to use them, namely to teach, to proclaim, to confess, to admonish, to comfort, to rebuke; but do all Christians for this reason have the office of the ministry; are they therefore all pastors?! — We answer: Far be it from us to maintain this. However we ask: Is that which is according to those Bible passages every Christian’s duty, and even more his right, by any means something different from that which a pastor *or* preacher or minister of the church has the duty and right to do? Must he by chance preach something different, preach, teach, and confess it, admonish, comfort, rebuke with something else than common Christians? Clearly not. The difference consists only in this, that the pastor does this publicly and before the entire congregation, the common Christian however does it privately, as his calling and circumstances call for. Therefore the office itself, which the pastor and which every true Christian has, is entirely the same, only the manner of exercising and using it is different. Luther already told this to the papists in his

Sendschreiben an die Gemein[d]e der Stadt Prag in the year 1523. Of course Luther does not there use the word pastor or *Pfarramt*, but there speaks of the “priesthood”; however, he does this only because the papists call that which we call the office of pastor priesthood [*Priestertum*]. He writes:

Now let us speak with the papist priests and ask them to show us whether their priesthood has other offices than these. If they are different, then their priesthood will not be a Christian priesthood. But if it has the same ones which we have listed, then it cannot be a special priesthood (or a special office of pastor). Therefore we conclude that, no matter which way they turn, they either have no other priesthood that is different from the one that is common to all Christians; but if they do have a different one then it must be Satan’s priesthood. For Christ has taught us that we should learn to recognize all trees by their fruits: we, however, have now seen the fruit of our common priesthood; therefore let them either show us a different fruit than this or confess that they are not (that they are no) “priests.”

(So we also say now: Let the papistic Lutherans show that a pastor has something different to do than every Christian is admonished in the Word of God to do, or let them confess that they themselves have no Christian church office. For the fact that pastors exercise the office publicly in behalf of the congregation and the common Christians only privately, proves, as already said, not a different office which pastors and Christians have, but only a different way and manner of exercising the office of the Word, a different use of the same. Therefore Luther then continues as follows:)

For the fact that these fruits are borne particularly and publicly does not prove a different priesthood, but another and a different use of the priesthood. If however, in order to prove their priesthood, they will only show us their shaved heads and smear (in connection with their consecration and ordination), and in addition their long robe; this we shall grant them, that they boast of that dirt; for we know that one could also easily shear and smear a sow or block and clothe it with a long robe. We hold fast to this, that there is no other Word of God save that only which all Christians are commanded to proclaim; that there is no other Baptism than the one which all Christians can give; that there is no other remembrance of the Supper of the Lord than that which every Christian may celebrate, which also Christ has instituted to be kept; also that there is no other sin than the one which every Christian can bind and loose; likewise we hold that there is no sacrifice except the body of every Christian; also that no one can or may pray, save only a Christian; in addition, that no one is to judge doctrine save only a Christian. These are however at all times the priestly and royal (therefore also the pastoral) offices. Therefore let the papists (and papistical Lutherans) either show us other offices of the priests (or pastors) or give up their priesthood and do without it (i.e., or let them confess that they have no priesthood or office). (Cf. *Luther's Works*, Walch Edition, X, pp. 1858, 1859)

It is of course otherwise said at times of the public preachers and ministers of the Word, that they alone have the office, and that it is precisely the office which makes the difference between a pastor and a common Christian.⁴⁸ Then

however the special public office is meant, by no means however the office on the whole. For by the term ministry in Holy Scripture there is understood not only the specific order of the office of bishop and pastor, but also in general the Word of God as it is exercised and in use; even as the Apostle Paul 2 Cor. 3:7, speaks of a "dispensation [German: *Amt*; Authorized Version: ministration] of death, carved in letters of stone," which he of course does not take to mean men, but the doctrine of the divine Law, which God once upon a time wrote with his own finger on stone tablets.⁴⁹

Although there is therefore of course a great difference between a pastor and a believing Christian, and a Christian never through his faith becomes a pastor or parish minister in the real sense of the word, it nevertheless by no means follows from this difference that the Christians do not possess this office originally, and that they are not to exercise it privately each according to his rank and calling which has been committed to ministers and parish pastors according to God's expressly made order for public administration on behalf of the congregation, as Luther generally expresses himself, i.e., in the name, at the command, and instead of the congregation, through whose call it has been committed to them. Quite rightly Luther rather writes in his article concerning the misuse of the mass:

All things are to be done decently and in order, 1 Cor. 14:40. By this however the office of preaching, which Christians have in common, is not abolished; yes, it is confirmed by it. For if not all could preach but one alone had power to speak, what need would there be to observe and command a certain order? And precisely because all have the power and authority to preach, it is necessary to observe a certain

order. (*Luther's Works*, Erlangen Edition, vol. 28, p. 47)

Many at this time have a totally wrong conception of what the office of the ministry really is. They think that when an ordained minister preaches the Word, baptizes, absolves, etc., then the office is being administered; but when a layman presents the Word of God, baptizes, absolves, etc., then that is no administration of the office, but something else, of which they are not certain what they should call it. They evidently think that the pastor makes the office.

According to the Word of God, however, it is the reverse: the office makes one a pastor. Even as a person by what he does—what a writer, a porter, a teacher, a song leader etc., must do—becomes a writer, a porter, a teacher, a song leader, etc., so also a person becomes a pastor by doing what a pastor must do; if he does it in a lawful manner, he is a lawful pastor; if he does it in an unlawful manner, he is an unlawful pastor, but in the last analysis he still becomes a pastor, for he administers his office, which is what makes a person a pastor. Therefore we read in the second appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*: “Just as in case of necessity even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another” [quoted according to *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 523]⁵⁰ as St. Augustine writes a story that two Christians were in a ship together, of whom one baptized the other, and then was absolved by him.” Here it is declared expressly that also if a layman baptizes or absolves another, he becomes at once the minister, the moment he does this, the servant of the church, the pastor of the other. Why? Because the office of a minister, or pastor, consists of baptizing, absolving, etc., the office he performs, however, makes one a minister, servant of the church, or pastor.

Whoever admits that a Christian layman can in a case of necessity baptize, absolve, or perform similar things, has thereby at the same time admitted that Christian lay people have the office, and therefore can, in a case of necessity, even exercise it publicly.

Therefore it reveals either a lack of ability to think correctly, or so great a passion of party spirit that, in a matter of their party, they do not perceive what otherwise they would very well perceive; when today many say that lay persons can, in a case of necessity, administer the office, baptize, teach, absolve, etc., this we readily admit; but that they should have the office itself, that they should have it originally, that we can never admit. What folly! If the Christians did not have the office already originally, they would not be permitted, and could not exercise it even in a case of necessity, as little as a heathen; since, however, they have it already originally, then of course in a case of necessity the order must give way, when it does not serve the welfare of Christians, since the order has not been made against, but for the welfare of Christians. It is, e.g., a good rule for the welfare of orphans who are not yet of age that they are given a guardian who looks after their property, gives them what they need while they are not permitted to control their fortune themselves, be it ever so great. But if there were no guardian, and those who are not yet of age would have to suffer cold and hunger unless they would themselves go to their treasury, it would be right, in such a case of necessity, if they would help themselves without waiting for the guardian. Why? Because the treasury is theirs, and the order was made only for their welfare. It would be a different thing if cold and hungry persons who are under age were to go to a treasury belonging to someone else, and would want to excuse themselves by appealing to

necessity. That would be stealing! So it would also be stealing if Christian lay persons would, in a case of necessity, want to baptize, teach absolve, etc., if they did not possess the office originally, and would not thereby be breaking only an order.

That therefore also our symbolic books grant the office to the entire church, i.e., to all believing Christians, is known to all who are acquainted with these precious confessions. This is stated with particular clarity in the already repeatedly quoted passage:

For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately⁵¹ to the entire church, so the keys belong immediately to the entire church, because the keys are nothing else than the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it. (*Smalcald Articles, First Appendix: Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope* [Quoted according to *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 511])

Here the symbolical books construct a beautiful chain. First they say that the entire church has the promise of the Gospel originally and immediately, therefore it also has, in the second place, the office to dispense this promise, therefore it must also, in the third place, have the keys. The central link in this chain, however, belongs here. In the second appendix of the *Smalcald Articles* this is expressed as follows: "Wherever the church is,⁵² there is always the command to preach the Gospel." The command to preach is, however, precisely the office of the ministry. In the *Apology* the exercise of the ministry of preaching is reckoned among the sacrifices of New Testament priests. We read in the third article, of the misuse of the mass:

Besides this one propitiatory sacrifice, namely the death of Christ, there are also other sacrifices; these are all only thankofferings, as for instance all the suffering, preaching, and good works of the saints; these are not the kind of offerings by which we are reconciled ... For they are done by those who are already reconciled by Christ. And such offerings are our offerings in the New Testament, as Peter the apostle says in 1 Pet. 2: "You are a holy priesthood, that you may offer spiritual sacrifices." [Translated from the German of *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 390]

In the next issue we intend, God willing, to furnish a number of additional testimonies of orthodox teachers from their private writings to the effect that the entire church has the command to preach, and therefore the office, and then show how also from this the right of the congregation to elect follows of necessity.

[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 23 (June 25, 1861): 177-79]

Having already established, with passages from our public churchly confessions, the doctrine that the church, i.e., all believing Christians, have the command and therefore the right to preach, therefore also have the office originally, we now bring in addition a few testimonies from the private writings of our old orthodox teachers of the church.

First of all Luther writes in the Church Postille, in his second sermon for *Quasimodogeniti* Sunday on the words: "Receive the Holy Spirit; whosoever sins you remit," etc.:

All Christians are here given this power, although some have appropriated it to themselves alone, as the pope, bishops, priests and monks; these say publicly and brazenly that this power was given to them only, and not to the laity. However, Christ is here speaking of neither priests nor monks, but says: Receive the Holy Spirit; whoever has the Holy Spirit to him power is given, i.e., to him who is a Christian. But who is a Christian? He who believes. Whoever believes has the Holy Spirit. Therefore every Christian has the power which the pope, bishops, priests and monks have in this matter, to retain or to remit sins. So I hear, (you say): I may hear confession, baptize, preach, dispense the Sacrament? No! St. Paul says: Let everything be done decently and in order. If everyone wanted to hear confession, baptize, dispense the Sacrament, how would this be proper? Likewise, if everyone wanted to preach, who would listen? If we would all preach simultaneously, there would be a confused chatter, as now among frogs. Therefore it is to be done in this way that the congregation elects one who has the capability, who is to dispense the Sacraments, preach, hear confession, and baptize. We all of course have this power, but let no one take it onto himself to exercise it publicly except the one who has been elected for it by the congregation. ... Take an example: Where among the nobility there are many heirs, there they elect one with agreement of all the rest who is to exercise the rule alone in behalf of all the rest; for if every one wanted to rule over land and people, how would it go although all have equal power with the one who does the ruling?

Furthermore Luther writes:

Here we have (Matt. 18:19-20) the Lord himself over all angels and creatures: he says they are all to have equal power, keys, and office, also two ordinary Christians who are gathered in his name. The pope and all devils are not to make a fool, liar, and drunkard of this Lord for us, but we want to tread the pope under foot and say, he is a desperate liar, blasphemer, and idolatrous devil, who has arrogated the keys to himself alone under the name of St. Peter, although Christ gave them equally to all in common, and he wants to make the Lord, Matt. 16, a liar. (Writing: *Wider das Papstthum zu Rom, vom Teufel gestift*, in the year 1545, XVII, 1347)

When one hears Luther speak this way one must truly be shocked, when today teachers rise up, who call themselves Lutheran, yes, want to be exemplary Lutherans and martyrs for the Lutheran doctrine and church, and who nevertheless maintain that the keys or the office had by no means been given to the church or to the Christians immediately, but mediately! Thus for instance Pastor Grabau wrote in his *Informatorium*, vol. 2, p. 23: "The congregation does not have the keys immediately, but mediately⁵³ in the Word of God and in the holy ministry" (by which Pastor Gr[abau], as is well known, always understands the pastoral ministry). The same man [Grabau] writes further:

When it is said that this peculiar church power was given by Christ to his church on earth, then nothing else is said except that it has been instituted in the Gospel, and established in the church through orderly means through the power of the Gospel in the

form of the office of bishop or of the ministry. (Vol. 1, pp. 85-86)

Finally the same man [Grabau] wrote:

The Missourian master concludes further that the power to preach, etc., has been laid into every small group of believers ... This crass Missourian error rests on a false interpretation of Matt. 18:20, where the Lord says: For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Vol. 1, p. 74)

We repeat: We are alarmed when we read such a thing from the hand of a man who purports to be a champion of pure Lutheranism, and when we compare the above testimony of Luther with it, and in which he, with true Elias-zeal censures in the pope that which an alleged Lutheran teacher dispenses as genuinely Lutheran. For although Pastor Grabau does not ascribe the power of the ministerial office to the pope alone, he nevertheless, like the pope, denies it to believing Christians, and ascribes it solely to bishops or pastors, and therein goes even farther than the pope, in that instead of the one bishop of Rome he makes all pastors popes. O shame that such shameful antichristian, sacrilegious doctrine can be proclaimed in the midst of the Lutheran Church! O what a pity that even those who pretend to be Luther's most faithful sons now teach precisely those doctrines through the fight against which Luther above all things brought about the reformation of the church.

Finally Luther writes in his exposition of the first epistle of Peter:

In the New Testament priests should by right not have shaved heads—not that it is a bad thing in itself;

for one could very well have himself shorn—but in order that one might not make a difference between them and the common Christian man, which faith cannot tolerate, so that those who are now called priests would all be laymen like the rest, and only a few official persons would be elected by the congregation to preach. Therefore there is only an external difference, on account of the office, to which one is called by the congregation; but before God there is no difference; and a few are only drawn forth from the crowd, that they should hold and exercise the office, which all have, instead of the congregation, not in order that one should have more power than the other. Therefore also no one is to rise up of himself and preach in the congregation, but one must draw forth one from the crowd and set him up as pastor.

Luther wants to say that if the congregation did not have the office of preaching originally, if rather certain special persons alone had this office, then these could naturally also stand up and preach publicly without previous calling by the congregation; however since all Christians have the office originally, no individual dare presume to administer this office, but he must wait until he is drawn forth and called to it by those who have equal power with him. (Walch Edition, IX, 702-3)

Here belong therefore the constantly recurring passages in Luther's writings, in which it is said that pastors exercise their office "instead of the congregation," "for the sake of the congregation," "for the sake of all of us," "in the name of all."

Thus the famous Martin Chemnitz, formerly superintendent at Braunschweig, chief author of our *Formula of Concord* (died 1586):

Luther taught from the Word of God contrary to the tyrannical principles (of the Papists), that Christ delivered and committed the keys, i.e., the office of the Word and the Sacraments to the entire church ... so that the highest power of the Word and of the Sacraments might stand with God; thereafter the office with the church, through which God mediately calls, chooses, and sends ministers of the church; finally, in the third place, with those legitimately chosen and called by God through the church, as with servants, to whom the exercise and administration of the office of the Word and the Sacraments has been committed.⁵⁴

By means of this distinction, which is true and clear, Luther wanted to reject the pride of the mass-priests, who were filled with the proud delusion, as though they alone had the entire power over Word and the Sacraments, so that the Sacraments were efficacious on account of some kind of character of a certain rank impressed on them. And in order that the church itself might not dare to say with a silent sigh "What are you doing?" they pretended in their presumption that the rest of the church had no power at all over Word and the Sacraments. (Cf. Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, pp. 222-23) [Cf. Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II, translated by Fred Kramer, p. 97]

Tilemann Heshusius, this precious man who was compelled so often to live wretchedly because of his firm

adherence to the pure doctrine, one of whose writings also Pastor Grabau caused to be reprinted (died at Helmstedt 1588), writes:

Whoever is now an orthodox Christian and a living member of Christ has his portion and right to the holy ministry and to everything that belongs to the ministry of the church. Christ gives power to the entire church to forgive sins to the penitent according to God's Word and promise. ... When the pastors do not perform their office, as they are in duty bound, or if there are no pastors, then the office again reverts to the churches, whose right it is to bestow it. It is as when the holder of a feudal fief dies, or forfeits his fief, then the feudal fief again reverts to the lord of the fief. ... The estate of preacher and pastor was instituted and distinguished from common Christians in order that there might be certain persons who proclaim the Gospel and care for the ministry of the church and the dispensation of the Sacraments, because Christians must take care of their calling and sustenance like other people, and besides not everyone has the gift to teach others; and in addition also so that the teachers might have good knowledge of pure and sound doctrine, and of honorable conduct, in order that the Christians may not be driven about by every wind of doctrine. Otherwise there is no difference between a preacher and a common Christian; one has no more power in the kingdom of Christ than another; from which it also appears that in a case where no upright ministers of church are available, a common Christian can proclaim the Gospel, loose sin, baptize, and dispense

Christ's Supper. (Cf. Felix Bidenback's *Consilien*, p. 383 ff.)

Johann Gerhard (died 1637) writes in his *Loci*:

Christ has given to his church, as his bride, the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 16:18; 18:17) He has promised her that if she comes to an agreement with herself as to what it is for which she wants to pray, that it should be done for her by his Father in heaven. (Matt. 18:18) To her he has entrusted the Word and the Sacraments, as the apostle says of the Israelitic church (Rom. 3:2): they were entrusted with the oracles of God, and in Rom. 9:4, "to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the worship and the Sacraments." The church is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15) in which the ministers are placed as stewards. (1 Cor. 4:1) To her therefore belongs the office according to 1 Cor. 3:21: All things, are yours, whether it be Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. (*Loc. de. Min. par.* 85)

Conrad Dannhauer, the gifted Strassburg theologian (died 1666) writes in his *Hodosophie*:

The church is a holy congregation in the second place through the immediate possession of the churchly rights and offices, which are inseparable from her ... in which that power is rooted and can be uninterruptedly propagated, when the pastors die or become wolves and when the sons of Levi defile themselves. (p. 79)

However, if it were true that the pastors intrinsically had the office and that they first gave it to the church, the office

would be lost if all pastors were to die or if all were to become false teachers, whom the church is not supposed to hear. Then the church would also have to deal as gently as possible with the power-loving clergy, for otherwise these could say: If you lay people don't want to do what we want, then also you are to have no office, no preaching, no Absolution, no Sacrament. That would be a dangerous thing. But thank God! That is not how matters stand. And if all pastors were to die or become tyrants and heretics, the church would nevertheless not for this reason be without the ministry, for it has it immediately, and possesses it wholly and inseparably. Therefore when the papists were unwilling to ordain orthodox pastors in their territories for the Lutherans, Luther did not think: Whence shall we now take pastors for our poor brethren who are sitting in captivity, when those who are ordained do not want to ordain any for them and confer the office on them? Rather, he wrote:

We want to see how we get pastors and preachers out of Baptism and the Word of God without their chrism, ordained and confirmed by our electing and calling. ... If the corner-consecrators or bishops don't want to recognize our pastors who have been called in this way as consecrated, let them, may the devil ask it of them. ... For we have (praise God) the Word of God pure and certain, as the pope (and the papistical Lutherans) do not have it. But where the Word of God is pure and certain, there everything must be, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Baptism, Sacrament, parish ministry, ministry of preaching, faith, love, cross, life and salvation, and everything which the church is supposed to have, as Christ says in John 14:23: We will come to him and make our home with him; and

Matt. 28:20: Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. But if the pope-abomination (or a papistical Lutheran) does not want to consider our Word the right Word, this does not trouble us; they know differently in their conscience. We are nevertheless certain that we have the Word of God. (Cf. *Schrift von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe*, 1533. In Luther's *Volksbibliothek*, vol. V, pp. 76-77)

Here belong again all those passages from the writings of our pure theologians in which they say that the pastors administer their office "in the name," "according to the right," "under authority" of the church, "after the manner of a transmission" (*commissionis*), as her "authorized agents" and "representatives"; for all these and similar expressions show that not the preachers, but the church of believers has the office originally and immediately.

If now it cannot, according to what has already been said, be denied that according to the Word of God and Lutheran doctrine the church has the command and thereby also the right to preach the Word of God—therefore, in a word, has the office originally and immediately, then this also proves undeniably that the church, or the believing Christians, have the right to elect and to call their pastors (who are to exercise the right of the church in the public office). If a person has the right to do something, he also has without doubt the right to let it be done. A farmer has for instance without doubt the right to till his field and to harvest it; therefore he also has without doubt the right to choose and engage those who are to do this in his stead. If a large group of people were to emigrate to a newly discovered, uninhabited land, in which there would be as yet no jurisdiction, then the immigrant group would still have the power of

government in itself, and thus it would also have undeniably also the right to elect their rulers themselves.⁵⁵

A master and mistress of a house undeniably have the right to manage their household themselves, and to perform all the necessary work connected with it; likewise they also have the undoubted right to designate those who are to have the office of performing these labors for them. As surely, therefore, as the church has the command, and therewith also the right, to preach the Word of God herself, therefore the office, so surely also has she the duty and the right to elect, to call, to install those who are to do this in her name.

We find precisely the same reasoning also in the public confessional writings of our church. Thus we read, e.g., in the second appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*:

For wherever the church is, there is the authority [*Befehl*, command] to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. And this authority is a gift which in reality is given to the church, which no human power can wrest from the church. [*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 523]

Here belongs also the already repeatedly quoted passage from the first appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*:

For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs to the entire church, so the keys belong without a mediary to the whole church, because the keys are nothing else than the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it, just as it is actually manifest that the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church. [*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 511]

Here a conclusion is drawn. From the fact that, as everyone knows, the church has the right to elect, it is

concluded that she must also have the office itself, which she transfers through her election and call. For if she did not have it, she could not give it.⁵⁶

The same conclusion which our public churchly confession of faith draws from the original possession of the office to the right to elect to this office is also drawn by our orthodox theologians in their private writings.

Luther writes:

Wherever there is a holy Christian church, there all Sacraments must also be, Christ himself and his Holy Spirit. Is it possible that we should be a holy Christian church, possessing the greatest and most necessary things, such as God's Word, Christ, Spirit, faith, prayer, Baptism, Sacrament, office of the keys, etc., and should not have also the most insignificant thing, namely the power and right to call a few to the office, who would dispense to us the Word, Baptism, the Sacrament, forgiveness (which are there, ready) and serve us with them—what kind of church would that be? What would here become of Christ's word, Matt. 18:20, where he says: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?" (Article: *Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe*. Cf. Luther's *Volksbibliothek*, vol. V, p. 99)

Luther writes further:

Now that we have shown sufficiently that everyone has the right to serve in the Word ... how much more would an entire congregation also have the right and command to commit this office through common

election to one or several in her stead? (*Letter to the Bohemians*, X, 1861)

J. Gerhard writes:

Hers (the church's) is the office, according to 1 Cor. 3:21: All things are yours, whether it be Paul or Apollos or Cephas. To the church therefore belongs the delegated (transferred) right, as it is called, to appoint capable servants of the Word, and it is the will of God to use the service of the church in the mediate calling of pious teachers. (*Loc. de min. par.* 85)

Finally Joh. Conr. Dietrich, our dear catechism teacher (died 1639) writes:

The right and power to call ministers of the church belongs to the entire church, because first of all the entire office belongs to the church according to Eph. 4:12; Matt. 18:18: Tell it (not to the prelates as Bellarmine groundlessly wants, but) to the church. (*Institutiones catecheticae*, p. 479)

It will not be necessary to adduce more similar testimonies of our theologians, of whom we could quote a great multitude. Whoever knows their writings knows how the successor always walked in the footsteps of his predecessors and how all really "said the same thing in the same mind and the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10)

**[Der Lutheraner, Vol. 17, No. 25 (July 23, 1861):
193-96]**

4. A fourth teaching of Holy Scripture from which the right of the congregation to elect follows is this, that pastors are a gift, given by Christ to the church. For St. Paul writes, Eph. 4:8: "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." In the following verses, 11 and 12, the apostle mentions among these gifts particularly the preachers or ministers; he writes: "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." A parallel passage is 1 Cor. 3:21-22 where we read: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours." Therefore men whom God singled out, like Jeremiah, to be his prophets, before they were born by their mother (Jer. 1:5), whom he chose from eternity to be his instruments, to preach his name, like St. Paul (Acts 9:15), and whom the Holy Spirit equips and adorns with his gifts, to serve the church in the Word and makes them men who are eloquent and mighty in the Scripture, like Apollos (Acts 18:24), such men are not the property of the clergy or of the so-called ecclesiastics, who could govern and rule with them according to their own judgment, but they are a gift bestowed by God upon the church, a gift given to her, her property. This is also shown by experience. The ordination of those who are to take up an office is of course a most salutary apostolic custom, and there is no doubt that the fervent prayers which are therewith sent up to God for the equipment of the one who has been called for a right and blessed ministry are heard, if the newly

called person does not resist the workings of the Holy Spirit; however, if God has not already previously set apart a person to be an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, *Weissager*, etc., chosen him and equipped him to be such a person, then no vocation and ordination can make him such; vocation and ordination only give him the right and impose the duty on him to use in the right way the gift which is in him. The right order is really not this: first you choose a man as pastor, and then God makes him inwardly into such a person; but the reverse: First God makes a person a preacher inwardly, and then he is to be elected to it; even as the Holy Spirit once upon a time said: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2) This, precisely, is the disaster, that so many persons are chosen as pastors and placed into the public ministry whom God has not previously inwardly made pastors, that is to say, whom he has not equipped and gifted and thus as it were placed before the church and offered them to her. At any rate it remains true: persons who have the gifts to preach the Word of God and to feed the congregation are not fruits which grow on the tree of ordination or a so-called priestly consecration, but fruits on the tree of the church.

If, according to this, it is certain, as it cannot be denied, that pastors are a gift belonging to the church, given her by Christ, then it follows from this with necessity that the church has the right also to elect, call, and employ her pastors herself. For if something is really given to me as a gift, then at the same time its disposition is given to me.

Also in this conclusion we are following our Evangelical Lutheran Church in her confessions. We read in the second appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*:

This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the

church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says: "When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men." (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12) He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be. So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another. [Tappert, op. cit., p. 331]

These last words also show what the *Smalcald Articles* want understood by the "true church," namely, a community where there are truly believing Christians. A similar confession is contained in the first appendix of the *Smalcald Articles*. There we read:

The ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons, as the Levitical priesthood is, but is spread throughout the whole world and exists wherever God gives his gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers. Nor is this ministry valid because of any individual's authority but because of the Word given by Christ,⁵⁷ no matter who preaches it, where there are hearts that believe it and cling to it, to them it happens as they hear and believe it.

As far as the doctrine in their private writings are concerned, here belong all those in which they prove the right of the congregations to elect from the fact that the entire church has the office, which at the same time includes the teaching that the pastors themselves, to whom the office is to be transmitted, belong to the church, being a gift given to her

by Christ. To the question "What kind of means does God want to use, through which he ordinarily wants to call and send pastors?" the old Martin Chemnitz answers:

He does not want to do this through angels, but through his church or congregation, which is the royal priesthood. (1 Pet. 2) For to her, as his beloved bride, he has committed the keys (Matt. 18), entrusted Word and Sacrament to her (Rom. 3:9), and in sum: the office together with all ministers all belong to the church. (1 Cor. 3; Eph. 4) (*Thesaurus Dedekenni*, vol. 1, p. 2, fol. 418)

5. A fifth teaching of Holy Scripture on which the congregation's right to elect is based is that ministers are not lords but servants and stewards of the church.

No one denies that this is a clear teaching of Holy Scripture. The Scripture indeed says in countless passages that preachers of the Gospel are ministers and servants of God, but at the same time it testifies with equal clarity that they are ministers and servants of the church. When once upon a time one of the Corinthian Christians boasted of this famous and gifted teacher, another of another, the apostle rebukes them and says:

If one of you says: I am of Paul; the other however: I am of Apollos, are you not fleshly? Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? They are servants through whom you came to faith; and that as the Lord has given to each one. ... Therefore let no one glorify a human being. All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, etc. (1 Cor. 3:4-5, 21, 22).

Furthermore the same apostle writes to the same Christians at Corinth: "For what we preach is not ourselves,

but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor. 4:5) And finally to the Colossians: "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, of the church, of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the Word of God fully known." (Col. 1:24-25) This of course does not mean that pastors are miserable servants of men, whom the congregations could therefore also treat as their hired servants, and to whom they could prescribe what they are to preach and not to preach, how they should administer their office and not administer it, and whom they could put in office and depose as they please! There may of course be rough characters who, when they hear the teaching that pastors are servants of the congregation, understand this in a carnal manner, and therefore think that it is entirely in order if they deal with their pastors as with a hired stable-hand; there are also, precisely here in America, sad to say, some so-called preachers who, in order to please their godless congregations and in order not to lose their bread, as obedient servants do everything and leave everything undone which these congregations want done or not done by them, even though it is against the Word of God. But to be that kind of "servant" is not the mark of a humble, true teacher, but of a low minded false prophet, a hireling, a wretched belly servant. To such servants of men God says through the prophet Ezekiel:

Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in the hunt for souls. Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people, and keep other souls alive for your profit? You have profaned me

among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread. (Ezek. 13:18, 19)

Therefore the same Paul, who calls himself a servant of the congregation at Corinth, writes to the Galatians against the false teachers who were also “seeking the favor of men”: “If I were still pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ.” (Gal. 1:10) Therefore let unchristian minds misuse the teaching that pastors are not lords but servants of the church in order to usurp authority over them; that is a misuse and perversion of this teaching; nevertheless, this teaching remains true and is, as Johann Gerhard writes, rightly opposed to the pastors “who under the pretext of the ecclesiastical office assume lordship to themselves, and claim the power to make laws binding consciences and decide in matters of faith according to their caprice.”⁵⁸

The teaching that pastors are not masters but servants of the church needs no human testimonies. Only a few sentences from the confessions of our church shall find place here. We read in thee *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, in the third article:

Liturgia, in Greek, really denotes an office in which a person ministers to the congregation. This is well applied to our teaching, because with us the priest, as a common servant of those who wish to commune, ministers the Holy Sacrament to them. [*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 413]

Furthermore, we read in the first appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*: “In 1 Cor. 3:4-8 Paul places ministers on an equality and teaches that the church is above the ministers.” (Tappert, op. cit., p. 321)⁵⁹

It is clear that the right of the congregation to elect follows also from this teaching. To engage a servant is evidently the exclusive right of the person whose servant he is to be; now, however, pastors are, according to the Word of God, servants of the church; therefore also the church has the exclusive right to engage, to elect, to call and to install them in their ministry in the church.

This is so self-evident that in the symbolical books the matter is reversed, and the proof of the fact that the church is above the pastors and that these are the servants of the church is derived from the admitted fact that the church has the right to elect. For we read in the first appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*: "Finally, how can the pope be over the whole church by divine right when the church elects him ...!" [Tappert, op. cit., p. 323]

On this Luther writes: "Those whom we call priests (or pastors) are servants, elected by us, who also are to perform everything in our name." (Essay: *Von der babylonischen Gefängnis der Kirche, 1521*. Walch Edition, XIX, 135)

The same [Luther]:

Whoever holds this office is not, because of the office, a priest (as all the others are), but a servant of all the rest ... For this office is nothing more than a public service which is ordered upon one [person] by the entire congregation, all of whom are priests. (*Exposition of Ps. 110, 1539, V, 1505f.*)

The same [Luther]:

Could we be a holy Christian church, and have the greatest and most necessary things, as the Word of God, Christ, Spirit, faith, prayer, Baptism, Sacrament, keys, office, etc., and not also have the

smallest thing, namely the power and right to call a few to the office, who are to dispense to us the Word, Baptism, Sacrament, forgiveness (things which are already there) and serve us in them? (Essay: *Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe*, 1533. Luther's *Volksbibliothek*, V, p. [not cited])

The same conclusion is made also by all subsequent pure teachers of our church. Johann Gerhard writes:

Those whose servants the pastors are and are called, to them belongs also the right to call the pastors. They are and are called, however, servants of the church. Therefore the right and power to call the pastors belongs to the church. The middle sentence of this conclusion is corroborated from 1 Cor. 3:22-23: "All things are yours, whether it be Paul or Cephas ... all are yours." Furthermore from 2 Cor. 1:24: "Not that we lord it over your faith," and from 1 Pet. 5:2: "Tend the flock of God that is your charge; ... not as domineering over those in your charge." Bellarmine (the Jesuit) says by way of objection, that bishops are servants of the church because they work for it, not because they obey her, but because they rule it and are over it. For there are two kinds of servants; some serve by obedience, as slaves; others by ruling, as disciplinarians and every government. I answer: (1) The legitimate call of the hearers through their vote and the owed respect and obedience of the hearers to the (already) legitimately called minister must not be placed in opposition to each other. The people are indeed to obey⁶⁰ the legitimately called ministers, but from this one dare not draw the conclusion that the vote of the people

should be excluded from the legitimate calling of ministers. (2) Everything that the ministers who are legitimately called and administer their office rightly do, they do, not in their own name, but in the name of God and of the church. God is the Lord of the harvest, and master of the house; the church is his honored spouse and housemother; the ministers of the church are stewards. (3) These must therefore by no means arrogate to themselves a political rule over the hearers, nor the power to act arbitrarily on their own authority and to ascribe to themselves the power to rule; rather they are to give heed to the words of Christ: "But not so with you!" (Luke 22:25-26) and to the word of Peter: "Not as domineering over those in your charge." (1 Pet. 5:3) (4) A free republic is not even deprived, by [as a result of] the election of the government, of the power to depose those whom it has elected from office when this is limited by certain conditions and agreements; how much less is it to be believed that the church through election of the church's ministers is deprived of the power to depose from office ministers who are faulty either in doctrine or conduct! However we remind repeatedly, that in this matter nothing is to be undertaken thoughtlessly or in a disorderly manner. (5) We repeat what was said above, that governments are of course called servants of God (Rom 13:4), nowhere, however, servants of their subjects; therefore the serving of the government in respect to God does not exclude its unlimited rule with respect to its subjects; however, pastors are not only called God's servants, but also servants of the church (2 Cor. 4:5; Col.

1:25; 1 Cor. 3:21) Therefore the service of pastors excludes unlimited rule. (*Loc. th. de min. par.* 89)

Passing over all teachers of the pure doctrine who followed Johann Gerhard, who together with him follow their beloved Luther also on this point and speak precisely as he does, we shall quote only the brief testimony of the last particularly illustrious Lutheran dogmatician.⁶¹ He is David Hollaz, formerly provost at Jacobshagen in Pomerania, died 1713. He writes:

All who are teachers of the church must be called by the entire church. Now, however, preachers of the divine Word are servants of the church. (1 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 4:5; Col. 1:25) Therefore they are to be called by the entire church. The first sentence is certain, because the church, as mistress of the house, cannot be deprived of her right to appoint her servants. (*Exam. theol.* IV, 2. 7)

6. A sixth clear teaching of the Bible, from which the congregation's right to elect follows, is finally: that the church or the believing Christians have the right and duty to judge doctrine, to distinguish the true teachers from the false, and to accept the former, however, to avoid and flee the latter.

That this is a teaching of the Word of God is denied only by the papists. Therefore Luther already vigorously proved and defended this teaching from the Word of God. Already in the year 1523 he wrote an entire treatise which treats this teaching in particular and bears the following title: "Ground and reason from Scripture that a Christian assembly or congregation has the power and right to judge all doctrine, and to call, install, and depose teachers." [*Grund und*

Ursache aus der Schrift, dass eine christliche Versammlung oder Gemeinde Macht und Recht habe, alle Lehre zu urteilen und Lehrer zu berufen, ein- und abzusetzen.] In this essay Luther proves the right of Christians to judge doctrine, in which he writes the following:

In this business, namely judging doctrine, appointing and deposing teachers or pastors, one must not regard human law, right, ancient tradition, custom, habit, etc., whether it be established by the pope, or emperor, by rulers or bishops, whether it is observed by half the world or the whole world, whether it has endured for one year or for a thousand. For the soul of man is something eternal, above everything that is temporal; therefore it must be ruled and controlled only by an eternal word. For it is disgraceful to rule consciences before God with human law and long-standing custom. Therefore one must in this matter act according to Scripture and the Word of God. For it cannot fail; the Word of God and human doctrine will fight against each other when the latter wants to rule the soul. This we shall clearly prove in the present dispute, namely thus: human word and doctrine have decreed and ordered that judging doctrine should be left only to the bishops, scholars, and councils; what these decide should be considered right and [considered] of faith by all the world, as their daily boasting of the pope's spiritual right sufficiently proves. For one hears almost nothing from them but boasting, that they have the right and power to judge what is Christian and what is heretical, and the common Christian should await their judgment and hold to it. Behold this boast, with which they have cornered the whole world, and

which is their highest refuge and defiance, how shamelessly and foolishly it storms against the Law and Word of God! For Christ decrees the opposite, takes away from bishops, scholars, and councils both the right and power to judge doctrine, and gives them to everyone and Christians in general when he says, John 10:4: My sheep know my voice. Likewise, v. 5: My sheep will not follow strangers, but flee from them; for they do not know the voice of strangers. Likewise, v. 8: All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. Here you see clearly what the right to judge doctrine is. Bishops, the pope, the scholars, and everyone has the power to teach, but the sheep are to judge whether they are hearing the voice of Christ or that of strangers. Tell me, what can the water bubbles [*Wasserblasen*—“blowhards”] say against this who cry [*scharren*—noisefully scratch, as horses with their hoofs]: “Councils! Councils! Oh, one must listen to the scholars, the bishops, the multitude; one must look at ancient usage and custom!” Do you think that the Word of God should give way for me before your ancient usage, custom, and bishops? Never! Therefore we let bishops and councils resolve and decree whatever they want, but where we have God’s Word before us, it shall be for us to decide, and not for them, whether it is right or wrong, and they are to yield to us and obey our word. Here you see clearly enough, I think, whether those are to be trusted who would rule over souls with the word of men. Who does not see now, how bishops, religious establishments, cloisters, universities are raging with all their powers against this clear word of Christ,

when they shamelessly take away the judgment of doctrine from the sheep, and appropriate it to themselves through their own decree and wickedness? Therefore they are surely to be considered murderers and thieves, wolves and disloyal Christians, seeing they have been publicly convicted of not only denying the Word of God, but also of resisting and acting against it; of course, it is fitting for the antichrist and his kingdom to do this, according to the prophecy of St. Paul in 2 Thess. 2:3-4. Again Christ says in Matt. 7: Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Behold! Here Christ gives the judgment, not to the prophets and teachers, but to the pupils and sheep. For how could one beware of false prophets if one could not ponder over, correct, and judge their doctrine? Therefore there can be no false prophet among the hearers, but only among the teachers. Therefore all teachers together with their doctrine shall and must be subject to the judgment of the hearers. Likewise the third passage is by St. Paul (1 Thess. 5:21): "Test everything; hold fast what is good." See, he does not want any doctrine or sentence to be held unless it is tested by the congregation which hears it, and found to be good. For this testing is not the business of the teachers; but the teachers must first pronounce what is to be tested. Thus also here the judgment is taken away from the teachers and given to the pupils among the Christians; thus things are far different among Christians than they are in the world. In the world the masters command what they want, and the subjects accept it; however, among you (says Christ)

it is not to be thus, but among Christians every one is the judge of the other, and on the other hand also subject to the others. However, the spiritual tyrants have made a secular government of Christendom. The fourth passage is again by Christ, Matt. 24:4-5: "Take heed that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray." In sum, what need is there to quote more passages? All warnings which St. Paul issues, Rom. 16:13, 18; 1 Cor. 10:14; Gal. 3:4-5; Col. 2:8; and in many other places; likewise the pronouncements of all prophets, where they teach to avoid the doctrines of men, do nothing but take the right and power to judge all doctrine away from the teachers and place it upon the hearers with an earnest command, threatening the loss of their souls: so that they not only have the right and the power to judge everything that is preached, but are in duty bound to judge or risk divine disfavor.⁶² Cf. *Luther's Works*, Walch Edition, X, 1796-1800)

We would gladly present a number of other splendid testimonies to our readers, which Luther has set down everywhere in his doctrinal and polemical writings about the right of Christians to judge the teachings and teachers, to accept and to reject them. However, the small space of a periodical does not permit it. Add to this, that with the approaching close of this volume we must hasten to reach the end of our essay. I shall call to mind only the important dictum of our symbolical books: "The pope will not allow anyone to judge him ... This does more harm than all violence; for the moment the church is deprived of right judgment and knowledge, it is impossible for one to resist

false doctrine or false worship, and for this reason many souls are lost.” (First appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*)

That the right of the congregation to elect follows also from this teaching our old orthodox teachers have shown already so convincingly, and in such simple words which everyone can understand, that we prefer to let them themselves speak rather than to furnish our own demonstration.

Johann Gerhard writes:

Whoever has the duty to distinguish the teachers from the deceivers, to test sound doctrine, to distinguish the voice of Christ, the supreme Shepherd, from the voice of the false shepherds, not to follow a stranger, but to flee from him, to curse those who preach another Gospel, different from the one preached by the apostles has also the duty, in his way and order, to call the ministers of the church. But all this is the duty of the sheep of Christ, or the hearers, by virtue of a divine command. For we read in Matt. 7:15: Beware of false prophets, etc. John 5:39: Search the Scripture, etc., and 10:27: My sheep hear my voice; a stranger they will not follow. In Gal. 1:9: If any one is preaching to you a Gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. 1 Thess: 5:19-21: Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good. 1 John 4:1: Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God. 2 John 10-11: If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares his wicked work. Therefore also this (to call ministers of the church)

cannot be denied or refused them. The conclusion is clear. For if the hearers are to beware of false prophets they must also positively take care in the proper order and manner that no false teachers are placed into the ministerial office, and consequently they must strive in every way that true and godly teachers are called to this office. (*Loc. th. de min. par. 88*)

The argument, that Christians must judge the doctrine and their teachers and distinguish the true prophets from the false is represented by our old teachers as the most important argument for the right of the congregation to elect, [is represented] as so important, that for this reason Christians simply cannot give up this right. The old Leipzig theologian Hieronymus Kromayer (died [no date given—1643?]) therefore writes:

Neither one of these estates can give up this right (to call its pastor). For all those who cannot surrender the duty to judge the doctrine in general to the pastor or to a civil authority are far less able to surrender the final judgment on the one who is to become their pastor. However, the lay people in general cannot surrender the judging of doctrine to the pastor or to a civil authority (Matt. 7:15; 1 John 4:1) Therefore they are much less able to turn over to them the decisive judgment concerning him who is to become their pastor. (*Theol. Dos.-pol. II, 531*)

To the objection: “The people are too coarse and uneducated to judge correctly about the teachers of the church,” the old Strassburg theologian Dannhauer answers:

Not all (people); for also here the guests often judge better than the cook. ... and even as the people may appear to be too uneducated to judge, so the mere presbyterium (the so-called clergy) may be too unjust in judging the divine gifts. Original sin is at home everywhere. (*Liber conscientiae* I, 923)

**[*Der Lutheraner*, Vol. 17, No. 26 (August 6, 1861):
201-02]**

When our old orthodox theologians have proved from clear doctrines of Holy Scripture the right of congregations to elect, they as a rule prove it also by way of an appendix from the fact that fairness and justice as well as the welfare and good of the church demand that no pastors be forced upon the congregations, but that they elect them for themselves. By this they simply want to say that even natural reason teaches this. And certainly everyone who considers the matter only a little must agree with them in this. What can first of all be more unfair, unjust, and tyrannical than when the one who is to serve all in a fellowship, and to whom the watch and care for soul and salvation of all is to be entrusted, is chosen and placed in office, not by all, but only by a part? Already the old Roman bishop Leo, called the Great, died 461, established the oft-quoted principle: "Whoever is to preside over all, must be elected by all."⁶³

And secondly, what can be more disadvantageous, hurtful, destructive than when men are foisted on Christians whom they do not trust, in whom they are nevertheless among all men to place the highest trust, whom they are to accept as their counselors in their most important affairs, in

matters of conscience and of their eternal salvation, from whose mouth they are to hear the counsel of God for their salvation, from whose hands they are to receive the body and blood of their savior, and under whose consolation they are finally to die and to go into eternity?

Therefore Johann Gerhard writes:

That the choice of a pastor belongs also to the hearers we prove ... from the benefit of the hearers: What concerns all, must also be done with the agreement and vote of all. Now, however, all classes in the church are concerned that capable and orthodox ministers are installed. Therefore this must be done with the agreement and vote of all. This is without doubt what the apostle refers to when he demands that one who is to be elected bishop must have a good report of them that are without. (1 Tim. 3:7) For if he must have a good report from those who are without, how much more from the congregation over whom he is to preside! To this we add ...: The law of justice does not allow that the right of the whole multitude should be given to one class with exclusion of the rest. Now, however, the right to call ministers of the church belongs to the entire church, as is clear from the foregoing. Therefore the law of justice does not allow that this right should be transferred to one class to the exclusion of the rest. And finally ... everything which nourishes the highly necessary mutual harmony between the hearers and the pastors, and prevents discord, which is to be feared if this is neglected, is properly observed most conscientiously. However, when the ministers of the church are called with agreement and vote of the congregation over which they are to preside, this will

nourish the greatest necessary mutual harmony between hearers and pastors, and prevents discord, which is to be feared when this procedure is neglected. Therefore we rightfully see to it most conscientiously that ministers of the church are called with the agreement of the congregation. (*Loc. de min. par.* 90)

Similarly the great theologian Abraham Calov, formerly professor and general superintendent at Wittenberg (died 1686) writes:

The Holy Spirit, who is not a God of confusion but of order and peace (1 Cor. 14:33) appoints the bishops (Acts 20:28), in order that one class may not appropriate to itself what belongs to and is given to all; and the calling to the ministry is indeed a possession of the entire church, not of a few in the church, except it be by voluntary permission and the congregation's own dispensation. It is an accepted rule: What concerns all is to be taken care of by all. But who will deny that the calling and the preaching of the ministers of the Word concerns all, since the salvation of all depends on it that the Word is rightly preached, and the Sacraments are administered legitimately? ... Leo also adds a reason for this matter: namely, that no one should be given to those who don't want him and desire him, lest the people hate and despise the bishop, whom it did not want and desire. (*System. loc. th. Tom. VIII*, pp. 334-37)

Furthermore the famous Danish theologian Casper Erasmus Brochmand, formerly bishop of Seeland (died 1652) writes:

In the fourth place we appeal to natural fairness. For it is much fairer and surer that the ministers of the Word are elected by all, however, with observation of propriety and good order, rather than by one individual bishop; both because it is fair that the one who serves the entire church and eats the bread of the entire church should be elected and confirmed by the entire church, and also because one individual bishop can be more easily bribed than an entire congregation; but also because the administration of the sacred office will proceed badly if men are imposed on congregations who are either hated, or suspect, or unknown. (*Theol. syst. Tom. II, fol. 349*)

This testimony is certainly very precious. When one considers that the beloved Brochmand was himself a bishop, one must be heartily glad that he was so faithful in the doctrine and so humble that he candidly says that it is always surer when the right to elect is given to the entire congregation than when it is given to only one individual bishop. How the times have changed! How differently people are speaking today! Now people talk as though the church would be safe only if the pastors, the superintendents, the learned theologians, or even the secular government, kings and rulers, had everything in their hands which concerns the government of the church; and as though on the other hand the church would certainly be done for if the people also had something to say in the election of pastors, in discussions of questions of doctrine and church constitutions.⁶⁴

As little as Brochmand abandoned the doctrine about the right of congregations to elect because it could appear to be a dangerous matter to place so important a business into the hands of the people, so little did also the other faithful

Lutheran theologians. To quote only one more! Andreas Quenstedt (died 1685), formerly professor at Wittenberg and the nephew of Johann Gerhard, writes:

People object that there are there (at election through the people) certain nuisances such as: first, that the people are ignorant and unfit to judge; that in a city there are always more who outvote the good people and therefore choose people like themselves; third, that election by the people is connected with danger of unrest and tumult. Answer: First of all, if the proof is to be adduced from possible nuisances, then one will be far less able to leave the election to one bishop alone or to the clergy alone. (*Theol. did.-pol.* p. IV, fol. 1509)

Proof of how dangerous it is when the people are excluded from the election of its pastors is furnished among others by the already repeatedly mentioned Strassburg theologian Conrad Dannhauer in his writing about difficult cases of conscience:

When the secular government takes this right to itself alone, then that constitutes *Caesaropapie* (i.e., the secular government constitutes itself a pope); when the pastors want to have it for themselves alone, then this constitutes *Papocaesarie* (i.e., the preachers act there in the church like rulers and lords), both of which are unbearable; of course, such a thing, once it has been done, is valid, but [should] not [be] permitted. The same judgment applies when the right of one class is taken from it by trickery or force. So it happened in the city of Colmar about the year 1575; for one by the name of Johann Cellarius, a

pious man who adhered to the *Augsburg Confession*, was there, as it were, the first apostle. However, it happened, that two others were called from the county by one or several members of the city council, who were considered orthodox, Christian Serihus and Betulejus, who were however secret Philippists, as they were then called, because they had been trained and instructed at the academy at Basel. Through these Calvinism secretly sneaked into Colmar. These first of all got rid of the hymn "Jesus Christ, our Blessed Savior" [*Jesus Christus, unser Heiland*], on account of the words: concealed in bread so small [*Verborgen im Brod so klein*]. The city council, which held with the Calvinists, before whom the pastors had to swear that they would teach according to the *Augsburg Confession* and would pronounce no condemnations against Calvin in the pulpit, soon followed. There was, however, a pastor by the name of Magnus. This man, because he had preached the omnipresence of Christ, was called *Ubiquitarius*⁶⁵ and was deposed without the knowledge and consent of the people, who (like the people of Basel only 20 years ago) were very dissatisfied when Calvinists were called. From this it is clear what evil can be introduced into the church through unjust calling. (*Theol. CAS.* pp. 232, 233)

Let this suffice to show which doctrines of Holy Scripture prove the right of congregations to elect. We intend, God willing, to treat the apostolic and later churchly practice in the next volume of this periodical in a special article.

ENDNOTES

¹ We shall show later that in that passage a word is used in the original Greek text which indeed shows that the congregations performed the election.

² This sounds very nice. But since Loehe teaches that also at the synod really only the pastors do the deciding and that their resolutions have legal power (118-120), the congregations, as far as the election of a pastor is concerned, still remain entirely in the hands and in the arbitrary power of the pastors. (*Der Lutheraner*)

³ It is totally false when Loehe maintains that the holy apostles instituted the good churchly ordinance of the office of almoner in the stead of Christ by way of a command. If this were so, then the office of almoner would be an office commanded by God, which the Christian congregation would have to institute if it did not want to be disobedient to God. (*Der Lutheraner*)

⁴ The same subterfuge was formerly used also by the Jesuit Lorinus (died 1634). Of him Gerhard writes in his exposition of the Book of Acts: "Moreover the Jesuit Lorinus seems to be angered by the fact that here (Acts 6) the choice of the deacons is given to the whole multitude. In order that no one should notice from the example of the first church how wrongly the clergy of the papists have appropriated the choice of the servants of the church to themselves alone, the Jesuit remarks: 'By the term choosing there was understood in this passage, Acts 6, only the designation, not the highest right of electing!'" From this one sees again what we demonstrated at length already earlier, that the Buffalo people regularly agree with the Jesuits on the points in which they depart from the Lutheran doctrine.

⁵ That precisely according to the Word of God the whole congregation without a proposal of the apostles freely elected its deacons, that, the Buffalo Synod hopes, in any case no layman would check Acts 6: 1-5, or if by chance a layman were to read it, he would take his reason captive under obedience to the pastors.

⁶ That the Buffalo Synod again and again repeats the curse and ban against us, which it has already expressed so often, shows that the synod is aware that its earlier excommunication was not potent enough. It is probable that from now on we with all other Lutherans will be cursed in Buffalo even as we are in Rome.

⁷ At the Council of Trent, which closed only after the death of Luther, the papists resolved "that to the consecration of bishops, priests, and the other degrees, the agreement, or call, or consideration of neither the people, nor of any other secular authority and government is necessary, that without the consecration it is null and void; yes, rather it [the Council] decrees, that those who have only been called and installed by the people or by a secular power or government, and rise to exercise these offices, are all to be considered, not as servants of the church, but as thieves and robbers, who have not entered in through the door." In what follows those who teach otherwise are anathematized by the Council. (*Trid. Conc. Sess. 23*)

⁸ "Therefore," writes Luther on this passage, "we are all among ourselves one the other's father and son; since one is born or begotten of the other." For it is completely false when one, as many do, understands by "Jerusalem that is above" the church triumphant. Luther writes, "Now the heavenly Jerusalem, which is above, is nothing else than the dear church or Christendom, that is, it is the believers, who are scattered here and there throughout the world, who all have one Gospel, one faith in Christ, one holy Spirit and one sacrament. Therefore you are to understand the word 'above' as though it were spoken outside of this life, up in heaven, which a number of teachers call *ecclesiam triumphantem, die triumphierende Kirche*, that is, the Christendom or church which is no longer in the fight but has already overcome everything and gained the victory, but of the church or Christendom

which they call *ecclesiam militantem*, that is, which must still be on the battlefield and fight with the enemies, sin, death, the devil, etc.; you should understand it. And don't consider this strange, nor be surprised, since it is said of believers that their citizenship is in heaven, as St. Paul says to the Philippians, ch. 3:20, 'Our commonwealth is in heaven,' not spatially, or on account of place, but insofar as a Christian believes." (*Opp. Tom. VIII, 2532*)

⁹ Rightly already the old church father Ambrose says, "That person has not the inheritance of Peter, who does not have the faith of Peter." (*De poenit. 1. I. c. 6*)

¹⁰ In this important point which had already at the time of the Reformation been treated most thoroughly in the private writings of Luther and of his co-workers, the *Smalcald Articles* refer and appeal to these private writings. It happens a number of times in our confessional writings that the Lutherans confess themselves in agreement with any private writings, especially of Luther. It is therefore a dishonest excision when some now say that they could not accept this or that doctrine because it is merely Luther's private teaching! Luther's private teaching has become the public teaching of our church, which it acknowledges in its public symbolical books. (*Der Lutheraner*)

¹¹ [Quoted here according to the translation of Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 323f.]

¹² [Quoted here according to Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, p. 324.]

¹³ The Latin text reads as follows: *Christus, de clavibus dicens, Matt. 18, 19, addit: Ubicunque duo vel tres consenserint super terram etc. Tribuit igitur principaliter claves ecclesiae et immediate.*

¹⁴ Of course, when the Buffalo Synod speaks of the holy ministry, it does not understand the office as such, or the communicated Gospel, but always the parish ministry, or the ministry insofar as pastors occupy it. And when the Buffalo people say also this—"The congre-

gation does not have the keys immediately, but mediately—in the Word of God”—this antithesis is clear nonsense. It is the same as if one were to say, “I have the power to dispense my money, not immediately, but mediately—in my money.” The symbolical books of our church, on the contrary, set up the exact opposite of that Buffalo antithesis, and say, “Even as the promise of the Gospel is certain, and without means, that is, immediately belongs to the entire church, so also the keys belong without means to the entire church, because the keys are nothing else than the ministry, through which this promise is communicated.”

15 *Nequaquam rectae veritatis fundamentum ponitur, nisi prius erroris fabricate destruat. Moral. 1. 18. C. 8. 7 Melius est, ut scandalum oriatur, quam veritas relinquatur. (Ep. 34 ad Drogon.)*

16 *Melius est, ut scandalum oriatur, quam veritas relinquatur. (Ep. 34 ad Drogon.)*

17 This one bishop stood up against the entire great council when it wanted to pass a law that the clergy should not marry; and he won out; for at that time (in the year 325) people were still willing to submit to the truth. Moreover Paphnutius himself was celibate, but he realized that it was wicked to forbid any person the divinely instituted state of matrimony.

18 It has already been mentioned once that when the Buffaloes speak of the holy ministry, they always mean the pastors, by no means only the Word of God, which is in use! They rather consider this Word of God so powerless without a pastor, that they, for example, write in the second *Synodalbrief*: “They (the Missourians) erroneously assert on the basis of Heb. 4:12, that the Word of God in the Lord’s Supper has the power, also without the ministry, to make the sacrament.” (p. 15) To declare this to be an error is surely quite dreadful!

19 Just as according to this the Jesuits ridiculed the doctrine that all believers have the keys originally, so now this Lutheran doctrine is ridiculed by those who want to be the strictest Lutherans!

20 "Originally" here, of course, does not mean that the church itself generates the keys or has made and created them, for the keys are "nothing else than the office through which the promise of the Gospel is communicated to everyone who desires it." Of the church it is said that it has the keys originally and that they grow out of her as of the root in this sense, that the church does not have them at second hand through the pastors, but at first hand, from God together with the Gospel.

21 *Tribuit igitur principaliter claves ecclesiae et immediate; sicut et ob eam causam ecclesia principaliter habet jus vocationis.*

22 The Baron von Seckendorf proposes such a case in his Christian state. He writes, "If now today for instance in India or on a now unknown island a congregation were by chance converted by a Christian who came there by ship, it follows from what has until now been quoted and which the theologians know how to maintain further, that such a commune could, according to the Word of God, itself set up the office of the ministry, and although it would thereby become a member of the universal orthodox Christian church, it would not be precisely bound to send her priests to a bishop, or a consistory and ministerium for ordination or consecration, particularly if it could not be done on account of distance or danger." (III, II, *par.* 3, 5, and 6) Thus it says also in the second appendix of the *Smalcald Articles*, "Hence, wherever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists. Just as in a case of necessity even a layman absolves, and becomes the minister and pastor of another; as Augustine narrates the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after baptism then absolved the baptizer." Such a layman who in a case of emergency baptizes and absolves is here called a pastor, which shows that those who perform an official act thereby use and exercise the office. [Quoted according to *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 522.]

23 It is assumed that the confirming does not merely concern the relationship of the preacher to the state. For in that case the confirmation of the called preachers is no churchly action at all but a political

one, which the government performs, not as a member of the church, but as a secular power.

24 A consistory is a church government chosen from among persons of different professions, which exercises certain rights of the church in the name of the entire church. A patronage is the enduring right of one or a number of persons to name a pastor in the name of the congregation.

25 One must by no means think that the pastors therefore do not stand in the place of God, preach, baptize, etc. In particular the one who acts in the stead and at the behest of the church is then rightly acting at the behest of God, for the church has God's command to elect and to send pastors. Therefore we read in the seventh Article of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, "When the sacraments are administered by unworthy men, this does not rob them of their efficacy. For they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you, hears me.' "

26 From this one sees that the difference between a priest and a prophet in the narrower sense does not consist in this, that a priest was perhaps permitted only to sacrifice, pray, bless, [and that] the prophet however was permitted to teach. But [the difference consists] in this, that the priest was only to preach what was contained in the written Word of God, while the prophet could also teach from immediate enlightenment. Therefore Johann Gerhard writes, "Ordinarily the office of preaching from Moses to Christ was committed to the Levitical priesthood, but because these were at times negligent in guarding and transmitting the purity of the heavenly doctrine, yes, defiled it by Baalitic and other idolatrous services, therefore God in an extraordinary manner called the prophets." (*Loc. de Min.*, par. 212)

27 Without doubt Luther explains this mark of the beast on the forehead and on the hand most correctly and surely as the obedience to the pope and his laws, which we render with the hand and public conduct. "For," Luther continues, "whoever did not do this, did not publicly live and speak thus, as the pope wanted and commanded, has

been a child of death. Although in his heart he was minded differently, nevertheless, outwardly he had to accept and show the mark of the beast." (*Luther's Works*, Hall. Edition, vol. XXI, p. 804)

28 [Editor's note: The statement translated as it appears in *Der Lutheraner* in the German should read: "The prophet here is not speaking of ... but of the entire church *through* which the apostolic message is gathered from among the Jews ..." It seems the typesetter may have reversed the proper sequence: *welche durch*. Evidently the Brenz commentary was written in Latin.]

29 The sacrifices of King David (2 Sam. 24:18-25) and of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:19 ff.), both of whom were not of the tribe of Levi, were extraordinary sacrifices, performed as a result of a special impulse from God.

30 It is self-understood that by this we do not intend to criticize our old teachers, or even accuse them of false doctrine, because they, in line with old linguistic usage, call the pastors priests. This precisely belongs to the Lutheran character, that one does not, according to the admonition of the apostle in 2 Tim. 2:14, "dispute about words" but follows the principle *In verbis simus faciles, in rebus ipsis conveniamus*, that is, "in words let us be yielding, as long as we agree in the matters themselves." It would be foolish therefore to take offense, when those who designate pastors as "priests" but who otherwise fight with all their might against the error—that those pastors would form a special priestly class and only [first] become priests through their office.

31 If a reader wants to test himself according to this, he can soon see whether he is a true Christian, for whoever is not a spiritual king is also not a believing Christian.

32 Nicolausbishops or Niclasbishops were persons who only dressed as bishops for sport and play bishop.

33 Chrism [Luther: *Chresem*] is a salve made by a papist bishop of oil and balsam with certain formulas of consecration, with which

ordination into the papacy is performed and putative priests are consecrated.

³⁴ From this one can see how far those pastors are removed from Luther's understanding and doctrine, who either pass over the spiritual priesthood of Christians with silence as a dangerous doctrine, or cut it down and limit it as much as possible, yes, ridicule it, as though no special glory of Christians lay in it, or as though this glory of Christians dared not be emphasized, proclaimed, and praised.

³⁵ *Genus sacerdotale et regale sumus omnes baptizati in Christo.*

³⁶ When Otho here calls the ministry a special estate, the case is the same as when the old teachers at times call the preachers priests. Both are then taken in a wider sense. However, as it is an error to declare preachers to be real priests, so it is also false to make a real special estate of the ministry. That is what those are making of the ministry who teach that the preachers are able, namely through ordination, to propagate themselves, and that only ordained pastors can administer the means of grace validly. For thereby one maintains that the preachers really constitute a kind of priestly estate, like the Levitical, and that they are not merely Christians like others, who are distinguished from others only by the fact that they have to perform an office or a service among Christians. However, according to the Word of God the preachers are not a special, priestly, spiritual holy estate of nobles who by virtue of a consecration which they have received can accomplish something which common Christians cannot do, but they are only the servants of Christians, wherefore they are also called *ministri*, that is, servants, and the office *ministerium*, that is, service.

³⁷ What priceless things Otho writes further, about the right way to rebuke, we can unfortunately not share with you now, in order not to draw out this article unduly; we save it for another opportunity.

³⁸ In the ancient church they called a person a catechumen who was turning to the Christian religion and asked the church for acceptance and was instructed and prepared for this, but had not yet been baptized.

39 *S. Theol. Cas. Past.* II, p. 1624.

40 Making the power and validity of the divine means of grace itself dependent on the right ordination is doubly abominable, since ordination is only a human, namely a churchly, not however a divine ordinance. By making God's business dependent on human institutions one nullifies God's commandment through man's commandment, therefore places the latter above the former. This is the ancient godlessness of the Pharisees and the new abomination of the Antichrist. Cf. Matt. 15:1-4; 2 Thess. 2:4. That ordination, which the Buffalo Synod declares to be a divine ordinance, is a human ordinance as, God willing, we shall, later demonstrate in detail.

41 From this a person sees among other things also how dangerous to souls is the false doctrine about the ministry not only of the papists but also of the Episcopalians, who acknowledge no pastor save one who has been ordained by a rightful bishop.

42 Particularly Luther, who speaks so strongly against the idea that there can be a case of necessity in which it must be permitted a layman also to administer the Lord's Supper, nevertheless numbers this quite decidedly among the works of the spiritual priesthood. He writes, "The third duty is to bless or dispense the sacred bread and wine. Here they (the papists) boast of a special triumph, the shorn ones; here they gloriously bid defiance and say that no one else has this power, neither an angel nor the Virgin, the mother of God. But we pass over their nonsense and say that this office also is common to all Christians, even as the priesthood." (*Sendschreiben an den Rath und Gemeinde der Stadt Prag*. X, 1841.2) But lest anyone think that Luther wishes that laymen should also make use of this right contrary to the ordinance of God, he adds, "We have, however, said all this only of the common right and power of all Christians. For because all things are to be common to all Christians, as we have said until now, and which we have also verified and proved, it is not proper for an individual to exalt himself and appropriate to himself what belongs to all of us. Employ this right and use it if there is no one else who has received this right. However, the right of the community demands that one, or as many as please the

congregation, be elected and accepted, who in the stead and in the name of all those, who have the same right, may perform these duties publicly. [This is] in order that there may not develop a horrible disorder among the people of God and the church, in which everything should be done decently and in order, become a Babylon, as the apostle teaches, I Cor. 14:40." (Ibid., 1857-8) Thus Luther wrote in 1523, and he held fast to this doctrine until his death. He writes, for example, ten years later, in the year 1533, "I will not say, as the papists do, that no angel nor even Mary could transubstantiate (consecrate the Lord's Supper) etc., but I say this: If even the devil himself were there (if he were so godly that he wanted to do it or could do it), and let us assume that I would find out later that the devil had sneaked into the office or assumed human form had caused himself to be called into the ministry, and had publicly preached the Gospel in the church, had baptized, conducted mass (the Lord's Supper), absolved, and had exercised such an office and sacrament as a pastor exercises, and had dispensed it according to the command and ordinance of Christ—we would nevertheless have to confess that the sacraments were true, that we had received a true Baptism, had heard the Gospel rightly, had received a true absolution, and had taken a true sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. For our faith and sacrament must not depend on the person, whether he is pious or wicked, consecrated or unconsecrated, called or sneaked in, not on the devil or his mother, but on Christ, on his Word, on his office, on his command and ordinance." (*Von der Winkelmesse und Pfaffenweihe*, XIX, 1551) According to this also the Lord's Supper, for those who have sneaked in, of the unconsecrated and uncalled, is a true Lord's Supper if they use the Word of Christ in connection with it and observe the instituted order, for thereby they administer the office, even though for their own person illegitimately, and not in a God-pleasing manner; for there is a great difference between invalidly and illegitimately; something can be valid without being legitimate. Moreover there are even pure teachers, who are not suspect, who maintain that there is a case of necessity in which also lay persons should administer holy communion. Among these teachers is Heshusius (one of whose writings Pastor Grabau himself has reissued) in his writing "*Vom Amt und Gewalt der Pfarrerherren*" (published by Dr. Schuetz [Leipzig, 1854], p. 30) — furthermore the famous Danish theologian Brochmand in his *Glaubenslehre*. (*Syst. th.* II, 371-2) The Rostock theologian, Zach.

Grapius, indeed speaks against it, but declares, "Lay people are priests, but only by virtue of an inner capability fit for all churchly offices, and thus also for the administration of holy communion, lest we think that it would be a less genuine sacrament if a lay person were to dispense it, perhaps through necessity, or moved to do it through error. Cf. blessed Schomerus, where also those words of Luther are quoted: Our faith must not look at the person, whether it is pious or evil, consecrated or unconsecrated, called or sneaked in." (*Syst. nov. controv.* IV, 89)

⁴³ This addition at the same time explains what Luther wants to say with the previous testimony, where he writes: "through permission of the congregation or call of those in authority." For when those in authority have "the command and will of the multitude" to execute the call, then their call is also a call of the congregation in whose stead they are executing it; even as this is always the case in churches which have a representative constitution, that is, which are governed through representatives of the congregations, for example, in Germany through consistories.

⁴⁴ Our opponents dare by no means say that Luther's fight against the papistic consecration does not concern them and hit them. Because they declare ordination to be something which, for example, first makes the Lord's Supper valid and efficacious, therefore their ordination is nothing else than the papistic consecration, by which the papists also believe that they first make their priests into such priests who alone can perform the sacrament validly and efficaciously. A proof of our accusation we have already quoted in our last number from the *Hirtenbrief* of Pastor Grabau. After we had refuted it, Pastor Grabau sent us a so-called "anti-critique." Instead of offering a better explanation, he only made it more crass and wrote among other things, "These *us and we* (*hemeis in eulogoumen*, 1 Cor. 10:16; 4:1) are no others than the rightly called servants of Jesus Christ, who according to God's command within the true church, where the forgiveness of sins is, administer the holy sacrament. Whoever is outside of this serving office and economy and wants to undertake this administration or a part of it from his own or alien power, amounts to no more than a play actor on the stage, who, if he undertook and celebrated the Lord's Supper, would nevertheless only be a play actor. Though he were to speak the words of

consecration a hundred times over bread and wine, it would still be only bread and wine, and not at all Christ's body and blood, as little as in the still masses of the sacrificing priests under the papacy. That therefore the sacrament-words of Christ are in themselves without any addition by men efficacious, does not prove that they are efficacious outside the ministering order of the churchly economy." In the following Pastor Grabau therefore maintains that the Lord's Supper in the Prussian united church is nothing, because they do not stand in the right office and in Christ's stead, but "are official persons of a secular ruler"! (Cf. *Hirtenbrief*, etc., pp. 45, 46) That is truly spoken blasphemously, to call the administration of the Lord's Supper with Christ's words of institution a comedy play, if it is not done by "rightly called servants of Jesus Christ," who are "outside the serving order of office and economy" and not "within the (true) orthodox church"! May God preserve all pious Christians from such an error for this error binds the power of the Word to the right quality of those who administer it and thus denies to it its divine power and makes Christians always uncertain whether they are receiving only bread and wine or with it also Christ's body and blood.

⁴⁵ It is really as though one here heard our opponents speaking. For that is precisely how the present Romanizing Lutherans also speak about us because we teach Luther's doctrine. That is certainly a great comfort. For our opponents, however, it is a clear sign that in this point they are enemies of the Lutheran doctrine.

⁴⁶ If after a longer interruption, we again continue our article about the right of the congregation to elect, we do not do it because further arguments are needed to prove this right. The reasons already presented suffice so fully, that even our opponents now admit our doctrine, yes, pretend that they never denied it! We continue our substantiation, however, because precisely in the explanation of the right of the congregation to elect, many important doctrines of Holy Scripture are placed in a clear light, which some even in the midst of the Lutheran Church seek to hide, yes, even brand as heresies. The Editor [Walther]

⁴⁷ On this passage the old Strassburg theologian Sebastian Schmidt remarks, "Therefore the teachers of the congregation can be

admonished by the congregation to do their duty, and therefore also installed and deposed by the congregation." We know very well that some pastors here and in Germany think it is dangerous to write such doctrines out into the world, since there are always people in the congregations who will misuse this doctrine in order to lord it over their pastors, and to demand that they should do what they want of them. We think, however, that the truth may not be concealed and kept from pious Christians because of those who have a fleshly understanding of and misuse the doctrine of the liberty, power, and dignity of a true Christian, which Christians use in humility for their welfare. A pastor who fearlessly speaks the truth will of course always have secret or open enemies in his congregation; but in the end it makes no difference whether these hide their hostility under the hypocritical cap of their alleged Christian liberty and power, or practice them without these. Luther also did not fare any better. Through his teaching he freed Christian consciences from priest-rule under which they were groaning before; his reward for this from the hypocrites was that they called him a twofold pope. Nevertheless, for the sake of the captive consciences of upright Christians, he did not cease to bear witness to the honor, glory, liberty, and power of true Christians. But at the same time Luther testifies, "Our doctrine is aimed at all times at the captive, confused, sorrowing consciences, that they may become partakers of this Christian teaching and liberty. With this we yield nothing to the coarse rabble but boldly throw them under the very sternest laws and let them remain under them and command them not to make a right out of our comfort and liberty." (Walch Edition, XVI, 2181)

⁴⁸ Thus Luther, for example, writes in his exposition of Ps. 110, "So things also go within Christendom; every one must first be a Christian and a born priest before he becomes a preacher or bishop, and neither the pope nor any man can make him a priest. But after he has been born a priest through baptism, the office comes afterward and makes a difference between him and other Christians." (*Luther's Works*, Walch edition, V, 1505)

⁴⁹ In the *Formula of Concord* the ministry of the church or the pastoral office is simply called "the preached and heard word":

Ministerium ecclesiasticum, hoc est, verbum Dei praedicatum et auditum," p. 828. The learned therefore distinguish the ministry *in abstracto*, that is, the ministry without regard for the persons who occupy it, and *in concreto*, that is, insofar as it is committed to designated persons and is administered by them according to a designated order. Cf. Johann Gerhard, *1. th. loc. de minist. par.* 248. Therefore it indicates great ignorance if at present many, wherever they find the word "ministry," always understand the pastoral office by it. An examination of the old dogmatists shows what a bad misunderstanding that is. This can be seen among other things already from the fact that all those who deny conversion through the bodily Word are listed as opponents in the doctrine of the ministry.

⁵⁰ From the Latin it reads "Just in case of necessity a layman absolves and becomes the servant and pastor of the other."

⁵¹ The Latin reads "*principaliter et immediate,*" that is, "originally and immediately" [without an intermediary].

⁵² In the Latin it reads "*ubicunque est ecclesia,*" that is, "everywhere or wherever [nur immer] the church is."

⁵³ Observe how Pastor Grabau here in naked words declares to be false that which the confession of our church before all the world confesses as divine truth in the *Smalcald Articles!*

⁵⁴ The present papistical Lutherans reverse this order. They say: first God has the office, then secondly the pastors, and finally, thirdly, the church or the congregation through the pastors. Therefore they say that when it is said in the 28th Article of the *Augsburg Confession*, "the power of the church or bishops," this indicates that the power of the keys is called a church power because the bishops, that is, the pastors, have it, through whom then of course also the church has it. However the opposite is true: the church power is also called the power of the bishops, because these have it through the church. Nevertheless such papistical Lutherans pretend to be the only confessional Lutherans. However they are Lutherans as a porcupine is a handkerchief.

⁵⁵ Johann Gerhard therefore writes, "As far as the way and manner of securing the power of government is concerned, this question arises: Who has the right to elect the government? I answer: A distinction must be made between a power of government which is first to be established, and one that is already established. In the establishment of the power of government the right and power to establish a government for themselves belongs, according to natural and international law, to the people. For since the people experience the advantages of government, and are compelled to bear its burdens, it is fair that they should have the power to elect the one whom they want to obey. This does not militate against the divine law, but is rather confirmed by it, for the Lord says to the people of Israel (Deut. 17:15): You may indeed set as king over you him whom the Lord your God will choose. 1 Sam 8:19, the people say to Samuel: 'We will have a king over us.' Herodotus writes in his first book: 'Kings were originally elected by the peoples.' According to nature and time, subjects are before rulers, for rulers did not choose subjects (we are however speaking of rulers who were elected by the vote of the people, not about tyrants, violent conquerors of kingdoms), but the subjects have appointed rulers for themselves; therefore rulers exist for the sake of their subjects, and are to serve the welfare of their subjects; subjects do not, however, exist for the sake of rulers, as though they were abandoned to their caprice." (*Loc. de magistratu polit.* par. 89)

⁵⁶ From this one can see that, when the Buffalo Synod, compelled by necessity, wants to admit the right of the congregation to elect to some extent, it is nevertheless a long way from teaching the Lutheran doctrine. For she maintains, quite irrationally, that the church has of course the right to elect to the office, but that she by no means has the keys originally and immediately, and only transfers the office! That is what happens to all false teachers when they want to be regarded as pure teachers. From necessity they admit some things, which, if they were consistent, they could not admit. They have to accept the most contradictory things. The truth agrees only with itself. If you combine error with truth, the worst contradictions ensue. But of such contradictions the entire theology of the Buffalo Synod (if one can at all speak of such a thing) is put together.

57 The Latin has *Nec valet illud ministerium propter ullius personae auctoritatem*, that is, “and that office is not valid on account of the authority of any one person.”

58 Cf. *Loc. th. de Min. eccl. par. 7.*

59 The Latin text reads *Et docet, ecclesiam esse supra ministros*; this means “and teaches that the church is above the ministers.”

60 Namely, when the pastors command on the basis of the Word of God, and do not demand obedience to their own wisdom and self-made laws.

61 A dogmatician is the term for a theologian who sets down the entire Christian doctrine at length from the Word of God and defends it against the enemies.

62 It is selfunderstood that a person who wants to judge everything that is preached must, of course, first himself know the doctrine from the Word of God and not, although he himself is ignorant, be privileged to criticize what is preached according to his own head. And [it is self-understood] in the second place, that if an otherwise pure teacher should at some time bring up something erroneous from weakness, he is not in pride and lovelessness at once to decry this as a heresy, but is to discuss this first of all with modesty and love. Therefore also Luther writes, “A pious Christian does not act this way, but although he hears something incorrect preached, he proceeds with humility and admonishes the pastor in a friendly and brotherly fashion, and does not act defiantly or make a to-do.” (on 1 Cor. 15:10) We repeat once again, that the teaching of the liberties, the power, authority, and dignity of true Christians is rightly understood and applied only by true Christians. The case of this doctrine is like the case of the doctrine of justification and salvation solely by grace, without works, through faith. This doctrine is for those who allow themselves to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, a power of God to salvation, a savor of life to life; to carnal unbroken hearts, on the contrary, it is set for a fall, a savor of

death to death. Therefore after Luther also had described the power and dignity of Christians, he writes in his *Sendschreiben an die Gemeinde der Stadt Prag*, "We write these things to no one except to those who are believers; also they cannot be understood except only by those who are believers. Those, however, who are unbelieving do not understand it at all." (X, 1865)

⁶³ *Qui praefuturus est omnibus, ab omnibus eligatur.* (*Epist.* 10, c. 3)

⁶⁴ Of course, we gladly grant that if, for example, the state churches [*die Landeskirchen*] in Germany are to remain united, then it would indeed be dangerous to leave the performance of all rights of Christians to the congregations as they are today. It is only too evident that in that case, precisely the most wretched deceivers of the people would in large part be placed in the pulpits. But is it right to falsify the doctrine and to deny the rights of Christians because now there are so many in the congregations who do not want to be believing Christians and do not want to be guided by God's Word and the confessions of the church? Surely not. The first thing necessary, if there is to be improvement, is precisely the free preaching of the pure truth. When one preaches to unbelieving hearers what rights Christians and Christian congregations have, one must witness to them at the same time that they are not such Christians and Christian congregations. It can probably also not be doubted that if the congregations had in earlier times possessed and exercised the right of election, they would hardly have saddled themselves with the wretched, rationalistic, belly-serving priests that were forced onto them, and under whose pastoral care—or rather neglect of souls—they have now sunk so deeply so that one cannot leave the exercise of the common rights of Christians to them without the greatest danger.

⁶⁵ At that time when the Lutherans were called Ubiquitarians or Ubiquitists, people wanted to say by this that the Lutherans believed Christ has so large a body that it was stretched out through the entire world.

THE CONGREGATION'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE ITS PASTOR

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions are intended to be a basis for *discussion*. In some cases no single answer is “correct.” In others the conclusion is clear and undebatable. Background information will be helpful. Resource materials include the following, to name a few: *Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, reissued after each synodical convention; *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*, a 1991 report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations; the *Lutheran Cyclopedia* from Concordia Publishing House; and a basic history of the Missouri Synod, such as Walter Baepler, *A Century of Grace* (CPH, 1947, but now out of print).

Walther did not intend his essay, *Das Gemeindewahlrecht*, to be exhaustive on the subject of the relationship between the church and the ministry. Additional questions were already raised in his day. Times have changed, and the church's response today to the biblical guidelines is currently the subject for much discussion. For example, questions have arisen in the classification of the various kinds and levels of professional workers in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, especially for purposes of the federal government.

For pages 19-27 (September 18, 1860):

1. Who was Pastor Grabau? Why does Dr. Walther single him out in his introduction to the essay?
2. Who was Pastor Loehe? What role did he play in the history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?
3. What is Loehe's argument for denying the congregation the right to call its pastor? What is the Scriptural basis for his argument?
4. Walther states that Loehe believed the clergy constituted a special class or "estate." What was the European background out of which this concept grew?
5. According to Loehe who elects or appoints the officers of the congregation other than the pastor? What is Walther's opinion of this?
6. What practices prompted Walther to charge (p. 23) that some pastors have not preached "the Word of God"? What, if any, present day examples of this could be cited?
7. Specifically what does Grabau envision the role of the congregation and individual members to be in the election of pastors?
8. Why did Grabau excommunicate the Missouri Synod and by what right?

For pages 28-35 (October 2, 1860):

1. In what respect are Grabau's and Loehe's views similar to the Roman Catholic view? In your opinion did the Roman Catholic position, the European setting, or Scripture determine Loehe's and Grabau's views?
2. What is the threefold defense of Lutherans who support the right of congregations to call their pastors? Why are these valid bases for their defense?
3. What is meant by "the bride of Christ"? Who is included, and what is/are the point(s) of comparison? Which Scripture passages would you quote as most convincing?
4. Walther quotes Luther on "the bride of Christ." Lutherans have emphasized Scripture and have tended to criticize Roman Catholics for leaning on tradition. What gives authority to Luther's statements?
5. Who was Chemnitz? Johann Gerhard? Note the time period in which all of these names fall. What is characteristic of this period of church history?
6. Read Matt. 16:15-19. Do you agree that the "keys of the church" are given to believers both indirectly and "immediately"? What is meant by "indirectly"? by "immediately"?
7. Is the pope the heir of the chair of Peter? Referring to the Matthew 16 passage, what is the line of reasoning of those who support and of those who object to special status for Peter?

For pages 36-38 (October 16, 1860):

1. What is the significance of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, for the history of the church? Would you consider his views more or less authoritative than Luther's? Chemnitz? Johann Gerhard's? Why or why not?
2. Walther quotes Gerhard who in turn quotes a passage of a Roman Catholic that would seem to be different from the traditional Roman Catholic position on the power and authority of the pope. This statement must be checked before using it. How would you go about verifying the statement (p. 38)?
3. Is the line of papal succession from Peter to the present day unbroken? Where would you go for information?

For pages 39-48 (November 13, 1860):

1. What is meant by "the power of the keys"? The term "spiritual priesthood of believers" is often used by Lutherans. What does this mean?
2. What are the *Smalcald Articles*? Where would you find them stated in full?
3. What is the significance of Matt. 18:19 for Walther's argument?
4. What are the three steps in the argument of the *Smalcald Articles* that all Christians have the power of the keys? What is Walther's assessment of the argu-

mentation and his prediction concerning non-adherence to that position (p. 43)?

5. How would you support the claim that Loehe and Grabau did not hold to the traditional Lutheran position? Grabau labeled Walther's view *Schwärmerei*. What does that mean? How does Grabau come to that conclusion?
6. Loehe seems to have held that the symbolical books (What does that term mean?) could no longer be subscribed to completely. What was and is the Missouri Synod's position on that? Why does Walther reject and decry Buffalo's approach? What is the present day view on this topic among Lutheran church bodies?
7. Walther warns that one cannot just express the scriptural position on the power of the keys, the ministry, and the role of the congregation, but that one must contend against "false doctrine" concerning them. Why? What is a doctrine? How has the Missouri Synod defined "doctrine"?

For pages 49-65 (November 27, 1860):

1. This section contains lengthy quotations. Walther is often criticized for being a "citation theologian," quoting others rather than relying on exegesis (interpretation) of Scripture. What might be said for *or* against Walther on this issue?

2. Summarize the argument from the “famous evangelical Harmony” beginning on pages 49-50. How convincing is it? How authoritative?
3. Walther uses ridicule or sarcasm in comparing Luther with Grabau (beginning on p. 54). How effective is that? Is it acceptable procedure? theologically justifiable? Walther calls it “joking” (p. 56). Can you cite instances where Grabau used this method of refutation?
4. Did Luther arrive at his understanding of the doctrine of the ministry (p. 56) on the basis of Scripture? only on the basis of Scripture? How might hatred of the papacy and Luther’s excommunication by the pope enter in? Could you suggest other factors that might have determined Luther’s position?
5. What are some illustrations that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century theologians used to clarify their point? What was the political and ecclesiastical situation at that time? How applicable are their illustrations today? How could they be modified for the present, or what other present day comparisons might be made?
6. How do Loehe and Conrad Dannhauer differ on the application of the root-and-tree metaphor (p. 60)? How do you explain the statement made on page 61 that “the church can never lose the keys, even though all pastors were to die”?

7. Who was Bellarmine? According to Bellarmine (p. 62) why were the keys given to Peter? What was Johann Gerhard's response? Who was Johann Gerhard?

For pages 65-78 (December 11, 1860):

1. How does Grabau interpret "two or three" in Matt. 18:20? Read the passage in context. What would be the logical interpretation? It is often said that individual interpretations of a specific Scripture passage may differ so long as there is agreement on doctrine. Is this the case here? How would you resolve a problem if different interpretations yielded a different overall understanding of doctrine?
2. What are the specific points Luther and Gerhard make (pp. 67-68) in keeping with the symbolical books? Which are the passages Calov quotes (p. 68)? How do these passages compare with the position that Walther and others held?
3. What examples might we find today of "pastors and persons in government" referred to in the middle of page 69?
4. If the congregation elects and calls the pastor, why are pastors involved in elections (p. 70)? What are the calling procedures in the Missouri Synod? Are they mandated by Scripture? Are they in harmony with Scripture?
5. What part does Walther find for government participation in selecting personnel for a parish (pp. 71-72)? What was the European context out of which Walther

was writing? How does Walther's point here relate to the United States? Under what present day circumstances might Walther's idea be applicable?

6. What was Gerhard's explanation of the bishop's role in ordination? Check the passages cited from Acts on page 74. Which synodical officials might be involved today and how?
7. What does Grabau claim Walther's source to be for his views concerning congregational election of pastors? What evidence is there for or against Grabau's contention?
8. Read pages 76-78 carefully. Describe clearly the position of Grabau and the Buffalo Synod. What do the *Smalcald Articles* state concerning ordination? What is meant by the phrase in the *Smalcald Articles* "the chosen bishop"? What is the current practice in the Missouri Synod with regard to ordination, and how does it compare with the statement in the *Smalcald Articles*?

For pages 79-90 (January 8, 1861):

1. What is the second doctrine that Walther cites as proving the right of congregations to elect their pastors? Which was the first? (See p. 29.)
2. Who is a priest? List the characteristics and check the Bible passages that are used in section A (p. 80).
3. What is meant by two kinds of priests (lay and clerical)? Today the term "minister" is used by Protestants

instead of “priest.” To whom might we be referring if we speak of two kinds of *ministers* today? Check the Bible passages on pages 82-83 to confirm whether or not those in the public ministry in biblical times are called priests. If Walther is correct, what implications might there be for the use of the term minister today? How could possible confusion be eliminated?

4. However, when all is said and done, would you agree that it is just a way of speaking to consider every Christian a priest? Why or why not? (Keep in mind question 2 above.)
5. Who were the priests in Old Testament times? According to Walther, what difference was there between priests in the Old Testament and in New Testament times? How does this relate to the concept of the universal priesthood?
6. What does Walther mean when he says, “The Old Testament was of course a different economy or house-keeping of God”?
7. Summarize in your own words Walther’s conclusion in the paragraph spanning pages 88-89. How would you defend Walther against those who would say he is overstating the case?
8. What is the point that Walther is making in his discussion of priests and kings on pages 89-90? How would you respond to those who might say that Walther is overstating the case, even “whistling in the dark” when he credits Christians, spiritual priests, with so much power?

For pages 90-111 (January 22, 1861):

1. Read carefully the first quotation from Luther on pages 91-94. Explain the concepts and how these are inter-related—kings, temporal and spiritual, the relationship between faith and the Law, priests and faith.
2. Read 1 Peter 2:5 and note the context. What was Luther's commentary on this? Who are "bishops" today? By what other name(s) are they known? To what extent or under what circumstances might it be said today (p. 96), "our bishops are nothing but Nicolausbishops" (see also endnote 32), people playing bishop?
3. Summarize Luther's statements in the quotation that bridges pages 98-99. How serious is it if one takes a different position?
4. What is meant by chrisom? Summarize Luther's discussion of chrisom and Baptism. Isn't he using unnecessarily harsh language? How might Luther's break with monasticism and the papacy have entered into his comments here?
5. At various places (for example, middle of p. 105) Walther and Luther emphasize the responsibility of priests (individual Christians). What connection is there between this and Luther's interest in preparing a catechism? (Note his phrase, "How the head of the household ...")

6. Pastors often become discouraged when parishioners show little concern for one another or for evangelism outreach. How do pages 105-9 relate to this concern?
7. How and to what extent does forgiveness and absolution enter into everyday relations between fellow Christians? What makes confessing, forgiving, and absolving difficult? What could be done to encourage ourselves and others to practice forgiveness and absolution? What are some specific “practical” phrases that could be part of our everyday communication?
8. For whom is forgiveness more important, for the offender or for the person(s) who has/have been hurt?

For pages 111-24 (February 19, 1861):

1. Read 1 Cor. 12:29 in context. How does Walther distinguish a spiritual priest from a *public* minister? According to Walther what reasoning do opponents of the Lutheran position on this point use when they claim that Lutherans must make spiritual priests and public ministers identical? How does Walther refute them?
2. In what sense can it be said that the public ministry is *divinely* ordained? Check 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11.
3. If God appointed apostles, prophets, and evangelists (as public ministers? — 1 Cor. 12:28, see p. 128), how was this done? How do we become aware of this? Are the Missouri Synod’s system and

procedures in harmony with this? Check the *Handbook of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, 1995 edition, section 2.07-2.13. Consider also our understanding of God's providence and how it is operative in our lives.

4. Recently this statement was made to a congregation: "The electorate in the Church has, by common consent, the privilege and responsibility of filling the pastoral office, but it fills this office by virtue of a responsibility from our Lord, not by virtue of ownership." Would Walther agree? Why or why not?
5. Since every believer is a spiritual priest, under what circumstances can he claim to be a public minister? What qualifications must he have?
6. Evaluate this statement: "The grace of God in Christ calls generation after generation of the 'chiefs of sinners' to wear the stole of His office and to manifest His presence through its means. The presence of the pastor in the midst of his gathered people is God's precious gift, both to pastor and people." How does the "grace of God" operate in practical church life?
7. The case of Saul (bottom p. 113 and p. 114) shows that it is a serious matter to assume the role of a public minister if not authorized to do so.

Are there any modern day examples of unauthorized leaders serving as public ministers? Who should determine the specific preparation required for authorization? Who gives the authority to those who endorse public ministers?

8. Outline clearly the relation and the difference between the spiritual priesthood and the ministry of preaching, especially to answer those who imply that being a spiritual priest is not of much importance (see pp. 115-16).
9. Walther was concerned about those such as the Ohio pastor (p. 118) who disparaged preaching by an unordained person and may even have labeled such preaching “without power and without blessing.” The Missouri Synod has specific restrictions as to who may or may not preach and who may or may not administer the sacraments. Isn’t that essentially the same position taken by the Ohio pastor? If not, why not? Note the quotation from Grabau (middle of p. 119).
10. What is the danger if one holds that absolution and the sacraments are valid only if administered by a properly ordained pastor? If, on the other hand, it is claimed that the Sacrament of the Altar is valid when the ministrant is not properly ordained, could one claim that anyone, any Christian, could or should be permitted to administer the Sacrament? How does Walther’s (really Luther’s) comment much later (p. 131) about emergency Baptism and the Lord’s Supper apply?
11. How important is proper ordination and uninterrupted succession back to the Apostles? Which denominations are most concerned about this? Why? What is their view of ordination and the ministry as compared with Walther’s?

12. Why is Walther so insistent that the clergy does not constitute a special rank, while at the same time he highlights the difference between spiritual priests and public ministers?

For pages 124-36 (March 5, 1861):

1. Obviously, one of Walther's major points in this lengthy essay is that the congregation has the right to choose its pastor. What was the actual practice in Walther's day? Why is he so concerned?
2. What is the practice that prevails in the Missouri Synod with regard to calling a pastor? Is Walther's concern also ours today? What is the practice in other Christian denominations?
3. Why would you expect a different practice to be followed in Roman Catholicism? What would the result be if election or elevation to the priesthood were dependent upon election by the parish?
4. What is Luther's opinion in 1523 about the garb and the distinction between ordained clergymen (those who were called "priests") and ordinary Christian laymen (p. 131-32)? Do you agree? In the light of this comment of Luther, explain his somewhat different statement on pages 133-34.

For pages 136-47 (June 11, 1861):

1. Walther in the first paragraph (pp. 136-37) says “believing Christians have the command and right to preach the Word of God.” In view of what was said on pages 111-24 (February 19, 1861), what modifying adverb should follow the word “preach” above? Why, practically speaking, is it important to be clear and precise on this point?
2. The structure of some congregations, certainly the actual practice, is such that authority rests more and more with the pastor or with the church council as a kind of board of directors. What do you think Walther’s reaction would be to that? How would you respond to those who would say that conditions today are different and Walther’s directives no longer apply? Can congregation members justifiably withdraw from participation and delegate their power and authority? If you agree with Walther and if reminding Christians of their responsibility does not produce the desired results, what can be done about it? The privileges of Christians as priests should not be held up as Law. What will provide the motivation?
3. Summarize again how Walther distinguishes the duty and right of all Christians to teach, proclaim, confess, and admonish from the duty and right of the called pastor. (p. 140) Wherein does the difference really lie?

For pages 147-59 (June 25, 1861):

1. Do Christians (Lutherans) today have the office of the keys? What evidence can you give that suggests Christians do not believe or act as though they have it? If they feel they have the power of the keys, do you think they believe they have it *originally*, as Walther contended, rather than *mediately*? Is there evidence today of the kind of shock that Walther expressed on page 149?
2. Who is the “Missouri master” to whom Grabau refers (p. 149)? Grabau says that the Missouri master misinterprets Matt. 18:20. How do we determine who is right? What other Bible passage(s) does Walther cite for his position? A list of the significant passages and their key words would be helpful to get a good grasp of this topic.
3. Read the first full paragraph on the middle of page 150. How much would you expect Walther’s comments to contribute toward a resolution of the difference with Grabau? It is often said that Lutherans do not know how to fight in the church. Should they fight? If so, how? Was Luther more persuasive in this respect? Give examples to support your view.
4. React to Luther’s statement quoted by Walther on page 155: “they know differently in their conscience.” Is the interpretation of every Scripture passage clear? Why may we never conclude that orthodoxy (that term itself may require definition!) is self-evident and that anyone who is not orthodox is malicious? His-

torically, does the Lutheran church have a clean record in this regard? If not, name some exceptions.

5. Beginning at the bottom of page 156, Walther is making a defense for what has been called the transfer theory (*Übertragungslehre*), the concept that he has been explaining. What analogies does he use? Are they valid? Whether or not the analogies are valid and whether or not the quotations from Luther, the *Smalcald Articles*, and from church fathers are in agreement with Walther, ultimately justification for the transfer view must be found in Scripture. Which passages can be or have been cited in support? See question 2 above.

For pages 160-76 (July 23, 1861):

1. Which is the fourth teaching Walther develops as flowing from the right of congregations to elect their pastors? Which are the first three points? (See pp. 39, 79, 136.) What illustrations can you give to show that congregations look upon their pastor as a gift of God? What are some examples of the opposite?
2. What modern parallels illustrate Walther's comment concerning those who are not inwardly pastors (p. 161)?
3. Chemnitz (p. 163) says congregations are the means God uses to call and send pastors. The Missouri Synod seems to have a different system of calling and sending pastors today. (See the *Synodical Hand-*

book). How would you justify it and how would you harmonize it with the Chemnitz statement?

4. Walther's fifth point is that ministers are not lords but servants and stewards of the church. In your opinion is that generally descriptive of the clergy today? Give concrete examples to confirm Walther's point, and give some that contradict it. Read the Bible passages on pages 163-64 in context and determine whether they have been properly interpreted and applied.
5. What is meant by being a servant for Christ's sake? What mistake(s) might the pastor make (pp. 165-66) in carrying out that role? What mistake(s) might the congregation make in interpreting the pastor's servant role? In your experience, is there a wrong emphasis in one direction or the other today? Give examples to support your opinion.
6. In relation to question 5 above, discuss the specific points that Johann Gerhard makes beginning on page 167. What is wrong and what is the remedy when congregations treat pastors as "miserable servants of men"? What is wrong and what is the remedy when ministers become "lords" in the church? In the final analysis what is the cause of such problems (stated theologically)?
7. In recent years some have said that questions of doctrine should be left to the "experts." What was Luther's view on that (pp. 169-73)? Without considering what Scripture says, from a very practical standpoint, why would it be unwise to remove the congregation from theological discussion?

For pages 176-81 (August 6, 1861):

1. Name the “practical” reasons that Johann Gerhard gives for congregations to call a pastor. Note that these comments were written about two hundred years before modern political democracy emerged (1787 in the United States). Is Gerhard’s advice suited to American democracy?
2. Why would Conrad Dannhauer of Strassburg be especially concerned about control of the secular government over the church? What was Calvin’s view of the ministry?
3. Walther concludes without summarizing. Therefore at this point it is necessary to review the main ideas which Walther has expressed and the pertinent Bible passages.
4. Which of those main ideas in Walther’s essay are unclear or need further discussion? Walther could not have anticipated all of our concerns in the United States today. What additional questions related to the topics of church and ministry are of special interest today?

Wilbert Rosin
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