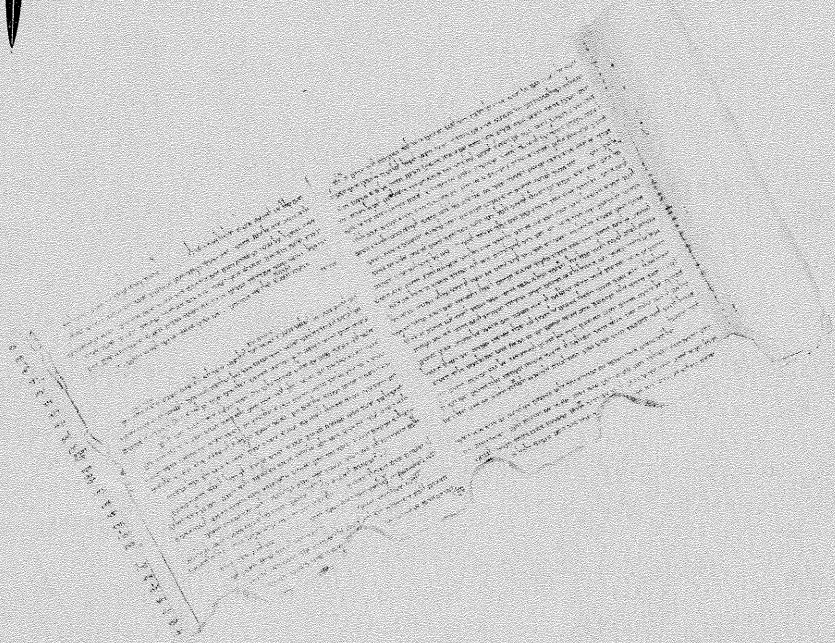




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CHURCH AND MINISTRY

Neil Hilton*

THE CHURCH

The Church, in the proper sense of the term, is the communion of saints, that is the sum total of all those who have been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel from out of the lost and condemned human race, who truly believe in Christ, and who have been sanctified by this faith and incorporated into Christ. Eph. 1:22,23; 5:23-27; Matt. 16:18. To this Church belongs no hypocrite, no one who has not been regenerated. Rom. 8:9. This Church is invisible. Luke 17: 20,21. To it Christ has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore it is the real and sole holder and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly blessings, rights, powers, offices, etc., which Christ has gained and which are available in His Church. Matt. 16: 15-19; John 20: 22,23. Although the true Church is invisible as to its essence, yet its presence is perceivable, its marks being the pure preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the holy Sacraments according to Christ's institution. Mark 4:26; Matt. 13:38; Is. 55:10,11. (Walther, Kirche und Amt Theses I-V.) Here there is agreement between the Missouri and Wisconsin positions.

THE CHURCHES

Although the Church in the proper sense is the sum total of all believers; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22,23;

Col. 1:9. Scripture also applies the name Church (ekkleesia) to groups of Christians in various places. 1 Cor. 16:1, "the churches of Asia," "the church that is in their house." 16:1, "the churches of Galatia." 1 Cor. 1:2, "the church of God which is at Corinth." Acts 8:1, "the church which was at Jerusalem." The name Church (ekkleesia) is also used in Scripture for the regular gatherings or meetings of such local groups, e.g., 1 Cor. 11:18, "when ye come together in the church;" 14:19, "in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding;" 14:28, "keep silence in the church;" 14:34, "let your women keep silence in the churches;" :35, "a shame for women to speak in the church;" Col. 4:16, "cause that it be read in the church of the Laodiceans."

Such local groups of Christians are described in Scripture as "the church of God which is at Corinth, to them which are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called (to be) saints," 1 Cor. 1:2, "The saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse," Col. 1:2, "The church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." Also Acts 2:47. These passages show us that also the local groups called churches in Scripture consist of the truly regenerate, that only true believers are the real members of the local church. Hypocrites are in the outward fellowship of the Church, share in the external signs and offices, are mixed in with the Church, but they are not true members of the Church, neither of the universal Church nor of the local church. God has not commanded nor ordained a mixed society of believers and hypocrites, but He has commanded and instituted the gathering of believers around the Word and Sacraments. That hypocrites are mixed in with the visible gathering of Christians is the work of the evil one. "An enemy hath done this," Matt. 13:28. When therefore the entire visible group of those who profess to be Christians and members of the church is called "church," this is by synecdoche a figure of speech in which the whole is named after

its principal part, or the part after the whole, as a prospector, finding gold in a piece of quartz, cries out "Gold! Gold!", not "Quartz." He does not mean to say the quartz is gold, but for him the gold is the main thing. So in calling the visible group a church,, we do not mean to say that hypocrites are the Church, but that the believers are the main thing, are what makes this group a church, are in fact the Church, the hypocrites being mixed with the Church but not really belonging to it. That such synecdochical use of the word "Church" is not a misuse is shown by the fact that it is found in Scripture itself, e.g., Gal. 1:2; "the churches of Galatia;" III John 10, "casteth them out of the church;" Rev. 1:4, "to the seven churches which are in Asia;" Rev. 3:1, "the church in Sardis.....thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead;" 3:4, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

It belongs to the definition of a local church that it is a group of believing Christians gathered about the Word and Sacraments. For although the means of grace do not belong to the essence of the Church, as some have erroneously contended, they are the marks of its presence. Is. 55:10,11. Only where the means of grace are in use do we have the promise that the Church (truly regenerate and believing souls) is there. Furthermore Scripture speaks of local churches as groups gathered about the Word and Sacraments, e.g., Acts 2:14ff; 2:41, 42,46; 6:2,4; 13:1; 18:11; 20:7,20,27,28,32; 1 Cor. 11: 18,20,33; 14:4,5,12,26,29,31.

The local church, then, is, according to its essence, a group of regenerate people, living at a certain place, and gathered together around the means of grace. When the local church is defined as a group of professing Christians, it is defined according to its appearance before men, and not according to its essence. This point receives justified emphasis in Walthers' Rechte Gestalt, in F. Pieper's essays (Delegat synode, 1893)

and his Christliche Dogmatik, in the Brief Statement of 1932, and in the essays on Church and Ministry found in the old Synodalberichten of the Missouri Synod.

That the local groups given the name Church in Scripture were not mere occasional or temporary gatherings, much less fortuitous gatherings, is evident from the passages in which ekkleesia is used of particular churches. The local ekkleesia is group with a definite constituency. Acts 1:15, "the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty!" The local churches come together regularly for the preaching and teaching of God's Word, for the breaking of bread, for a case of discipline or other business of the church, Acts 2:42; 13:1,3; 14:27 15:4; 1 Cor. 11:18, "when ye come together in the church;" 1 Cor. 14, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place;" 1 Cor. 5:4,5, "when ye are gathered together.....to deliver such an one to Satan;" 2 Cor. 2:5-8, ".....that ye would confirm your love toward him,"-(here we have a case of discipline over a longer period of time, in which one is excommunicated and later received back into Christian fellowship);-give or receive greetings, Acts 18:22; Col. 4:15; 1 Cor. 16:19; send and receive letters, Acts 15:23; and read them in public assembly, also have contact one with another, Col. 4:16; have a regular meeting place, Rom. 16:23; take a collection, 2 Cor. 8:1,2,4; 11:8; 9:1-15; receive instructions regarding an orderly manner of collection, 1 Cor. 16:1ff; have customs, 1 Cor. 11:16; are cared for, 2 Cor. 11:28; elected men to perform certain work on their behalf, 1 Cor. 8:19,23; have people in their employ, Rom. 16:1; and establish the public ministry in their midst, Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; Acts 1:15-26, and call to an auxilliary office which they have established, Acts 6.

It has been claimed that any group of Christians, or

group in which there may be Christians may be called a Church. Over against this we observe that the two or three who admonish a sinning brother are certainly gathered together in the Lord's name to do what He has bidden, but they are distinguished from the church in Matt. 18:17. When the Apostle Paul forbids that women speak in the church, it is plain that he does not refer to any and every gathering of Christians no to every gathering of Christians for the purpose of learning the Word or contributing to the work of the Kingdom, but he has a definite gathering in mind: the public assembly of the local church, and he knows the Corinthians will understand what group or gathering is designated by "hee ekkleesia." That the church spoken of in passages that refer to a local group is a definite entity, is also shown by such expressions as "the whole church" Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 14:23, or "I have given order to the churches of Galatia:" "The churches of Asia salute you;" "Unto whom not only I give thanks, but all the churches of the Gentiles,:" 1 Cor. 16:1,19; Rom. 16:4. Paul traveled with men who assisted him in his work or performed errands for the churches. Note that he nowhere refers to such a group as a church, but does call them the "messengers of the churches;" 2 Cor. 8:23. The claim that ekkleesia means any group of Christians, or any group assembled in Christ's name, is a human deduction from the etymology and meaning of the word which lacks Scriptural support and is, in fact, contrary to Scriptural usage.

Sometimes the statement is made that we know not the form of these local churches, that they may have been different in form from our congregations, etc. Now, the picture we get of the local ekkleesia in the two epistles to the Corinthians, for example, is that of a local congregation as we know it, and we have found no evidence in Scripture of a local church having a different form. The churches of the New Testament were groups assembling in one body to hear the Word,

receive the Sacraments, worship, carry out the great commission, and conduct the business necessary to fulfill the tasks given them by the Lord. But, if it is argued that the ekkleesia in this or that city may have had the form of a Gesamtgemeinde like the Missouri Synod Church in St. Louis in early days, there is no reason that a Christian congregation may not, in Christian liberty, take this form. The essential thing is that Christians of a locality unite for the joint use and administration of the keys, and to that end establish the public ministry, use the Word and Sacraments, exercise church discipline, and carry out the great commission. (Note: a congregation which does not exercise church discipline does not cease to be a Christian congregation, since the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments are the marks of the Church. Nor does a congregation without a pastor cease to be a church. But a congregation which wilfully neglects church discipline or refuses to establish the public ministry, is failing to do what it should be doing as a Christian congregation according to the revealed will of God. These things are, therefore, rightly included in the functions of the local ekkleesia.)

THE DIVINE INSTITUTION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

What is the local church? It is nothing else than the Church at a particular place. Since, according to its essence, it consists of believers, it is not essentially different than the Universal Church. Every believer has the office of the keys with the right to use it. To every local congregation of believers belongs the name, rights, duties, and authority of the Church. If a mirror be broken in many pieces, each piece will reflect the same image which the whole reflected. So the local church is the Church at a certain place with all the treasures of the Church in its possession. It is, like

the Universal Church, the creation of God's Holy Spirit. And it is natural that the believers of a locality join with those who confess the same faith (since we must accept men's profession, not judging the hearts). The believers of a certain place are one body. "Ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." 1 Cor. 12:27.

The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has created the Church of this or that place by bestowing and preserving saving faith. The outward joining of Christians is a fruit of such faith. But it is not a matter of Christian liberty. For God in His Word has revealed that the local church is a divine institution. Let us see what Scripture says about this.

First, the Word of God tells us that the first Christian congregation at Jerusalem was established by God. In Acts 1:4, we have the command of the Lord to the disciples to remain in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2 we have the account of the fulfilling of the promise given them, when the Spirit came upon them and created the first congregation, Acts 2:41-47. Note the statement of verse 47, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." As the making of Eve by God and His bringing her to Adam in the first marriage establishes that marriage is a divine institution, so the founding of the first congregation by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, recorded in Scripture, shows that the local church is a divine institution.

In addition to this, there are the passages of Scripture which require Christians to unite for the joint use of the keys. God has bidden us teach and admonish one another, Col. 3:15,16; Heb. 10:24,25; Acts 2:42; 20:7; do mission work, Matt 28:19,20; perform works of Christian love, Gal. 6:9,10; establish the public ministry, Tit. 1:5; use the Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. 11:17,33; and exercise church discipline, Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13;

2 Cor. 2:5-11. Now some of these things can be done outside of the framework of the local congregation as well as in its framework. We might do mission work through a mission society, or charitable work through a home finding society, and so forth. But some of these things can be done only in the local congregation. When Christians unite in a joint confession of the Gospel, gather regularly around the means of grace, establish the public ministry in their midst by the calling of pastors, use the Lord's Supper, and practice church discipline according to the Word of God, they have organized what we call an Ortsgemeinde, a local congregation. The Lord's Supper is to be used within the framework of the congregation, 1 Cor. 10:17; 11:20,26, 33-34, and administered by the called servants of the Word, 1 Cor. 4:1. Even when, as is proper—in case of illness, it is administered at home, this is done by the minister as the servant of the congregation. The establishment of the ministry requires that the Christians who are to receive the services of this office be joined in congregation. For they must unite to issue the call. As the believers are the possessors of the keys which are to be administered in their behalf, they themselves must issue the call, which is the normal procedure and to be preferred, or else, delegate this authority to someone. 1 Pet. 2:9; John 20:21,22,23; Matt. 18:18; Acts 1:15-26; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5. The administration of the public office also requires a definite flock; Acts 20:28; "Take heed to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers to feed the church of God;" 1 Pet. 5:2; "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof;" 1 Thess. 5:12; "Know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;" Heb. 13:17; "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they which must give account." Finally, the carrying out of the third step in cases of discipline necessitates the organizing of congregations, since the two or three must "tell it to the church."

It may be objected that groups other than the congregation, such as synods, federations, national churches, etc., are also the creation of the Holy Spirit and therefore are divine institutions. Larger church bodies did not exist in the apostolic age. For the establishment of the first congregation through the work of the Holy Spirit we have the express teaching of Acts 2. For the divine establishment of any other body we have no word of Scripture. But it is not permissible to claim divine institution for anything without an express word of God.

Again, the objection is raised that bodies other than the local church also carry out the great commission and fulfill divinely commanded functions. This is true, but these functions can, and have been fulfilled without the establishment or existence of such larger groups. The first Christian did the work of the Kingdom with no church organizations larger than the local church. It is then, not necessary to have such bodies to carry out the directions of the Lord. But it is necessary to establish local congregations in order to set up the office of the public ministry, administer the Lord's Supper, and exercise proper church discipline.

This is not to say that congregations should not organize into larger groups. On the contrary, when they see that under prevailing conditions they can better perform the Lord's work by banding into larger organizations, they ought to do so. But this is done on the basis of their own wisdom and judgment, not in obedience to a divine command. It is a matter of Christian liberty. And such larger church bodies may not usurp the God given functions of the local church.

THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS GIVEN TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

"302. Warum heisst das Amt der Schluessel die „sonderbare" oder besondere Kirchengewalt? Weil es nicht eine weltliche, sondern eine geistliche Gewalt ist, die Christus seiner Kirche auf Erden, und zwar jeder christlichen Ortsgemeinde, verliehen hat." (Why is the office of the keys called a peculiar church power? Because it is not a temporal, but a spiritual power, which Christ has given to His Church on earth and, more particularly, to every local congregation.) The Schwan Catechism as copyrighted and published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1912, page 134, question 302.

"270. To whom, then, ~~has~~ Christ given this power? Christ has given this power to His Church on earth; especially, to every local congregation." Luther's Small Catechism, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1943, page 183, question 270.

"The local church is a divine institution. God has entrusted to it the office of the keys, which functions through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments." The Doctrinal Position of the Norwegian Synod, 1927, page 12. "God has instituted the local congregation. He has entrusted to it the Office of the Keys. No individual, or any group of individuals, has the right to exercise authority over the local congregation. God has not instituted synods as such. We find in the Scriptures no trace of such an organization. Synods have come into existence because congregations have voluntarily agreed to enter into such mutual relation. The congregations are thereby enabled more easily to work together for the training of partors and teachers, for carrying on mission activity at home and abroad, for Christian benevolences, etc. The synod thereby

becomes only a medium which makes it possible for congregations of the same faith to function more energetically and efficiently in matters of common interest." The Doctrinal Position of the Norwegian Synod, 1927.

Is this claim that the Keys of the Kingdom are committed to the local congregation,--which has been made so often, not only in the writings here cited, but in many essays on this doctrine presented over the years in the circles of the old Synodical Conference,-- a claim which is justified by the clear teaching of Scripture? It is.

The office of the keys has been committed by Christ, our Lord, to His Church on earth, that is, to each and every truly believing Christian. This is the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture. John 20: 22,23; Matt. 16:19; 1 Pet. 2:5-9. Every Christian has this power and the right to use it wherever he is. He may and should use it within and without the framework of the congregation. But if believers have the keys, then the local congregation of believers has them. And Christ in His Word has specifically committed and entrusted to the local church the public, joint exercise of the keys.

For instance--

Though the individual Christian possesses the keys in their full power and use, when he finds himself where there are brethren who have the same power, he may not usurp for himself the right to arise and preach the Word in their gatherings without a call from them all. Nor may he take it upon himself to call another man as the public servant of the Word. But he is to join together with the rest of the congregation in calling a pastor. That the congregation has this right and power is plain, since the believers are the possessors

of the keys to be administered in public office. Furthermore, all examples of the mediate call in Scripture present the local church as doing the calling. Acts 1:15-26; Acts 6:1-6; Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-37; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5.

In Matt. 18:15-20 we have the Lord's directions for dealing with a brother who has fallen into some sin and is in danger of everlasting condemnation. The Christian who knows of his brother's sin is to admonish him. He has the authority of the keys and he is to use it. If however, he is not able to win the sinning brother, he is to take one or two more. They are to admonish, but if the sinning one still will not repent, they are to be witnesses to his refusal. Each of these who deal with the sinner has the office of the keys and the right and duty to exercise them. When the manifest and impenitent sinner remains adamant, they shall proclaim the Law, warn him, yes, declare to him that his sins are retained as long as he does not repent. But the case is not closed until it has been brought before the church and he has refused to hear the church and the church has acted. For the text reads: "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Jesus says to the Christian who knew of his brother's sin and first admonished him, (for it is to him that the "thee" is addressed), "you have not done all you should for your brother until you have brought the matter before the church and he has refused its admonition. Only then is the case closed. Only then is the sinner to be publicly declared to be, and regarded as a heathen man and a publican. That the congregation as a whole is to declare him to be such is evident, for in verse 18 there is a change from "thou" to "ye," from the singular to the plural: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye

shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." That the church must act is also shown by 1 Cor. 5: 4-5, 13.

Walther and Hoenecke state that "it requires no proof," "is self-evident" that the church referred to in Matthew 18 is the local visible congregation. Is this right? The church of Matthew 18 is a definite group distinct from the two or three who have previously admonished, a group which can be addressed, "tell it unto the church," and can be heard, "if he hear not the church," a group that can be found and recognized. Furthermore, the individual who has carried on the admonition is expected to know what "the church" is. Now it cannot be the Universal Church. But in Scripture ekkleesia means either the Una Sancta or the local group of believers gathered about the Word and Sacraments or the regular assembly of such a group. If it is not the Una Sancta that is referred to in Matt. 18, it must be the local congregation. Whoever would dispute this is obliged to show where Scripture uses the word ekkleesia in another sense. One might, of course, argue that the word here has a meaning not found elsewhere in Scripture. We have such a case in Acts 19:41 (verse 40 in Westcott and Hort, and Nestle), where ekkleesia is used for an assembly of citizens, an usage unique in the New Testament. But one who would take ekkleesia in Matt. 18:17 to mean something different than it does elsewhere in the New Testament should show from the text or context that it cannot mean what it otherwise does mean in the New Testament, and there is nothing in the text to preclude the ordinary meaning of a group of Christians in a certain place regularly gathered about the Word and Sacraments. We are compelled therefore to understand "church" to mean the local Christian congregation. Walther and Hoenecke are right in saying this is self-evident, requires no proof.

Furthermore, only the congregation to which the sinner belongs is in a position to deal with him over a period of time as required by Christian love and the directions of Matt. 18:15-17. Only his own congregation is in the position to investigate the matter properly and pass judgment on it. Only his own congregation has the right to excommunicate him and can carry out such a verdict.

In addition to these considerations we are confronted with the fact that Scripture gives us only one example of the carrying out of Matthew 18. It is the case of the incestuous man in Corinth. Here Paul the Apostle does not presume to excommunicate, though he certainly possessed the keys, but he calls upon the congregation to excommunicate the man, and later to restore him. 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11.

It is then the plain teaching of Scripture that the public exercise of the keys is given to the local congregation by the Lord. 1 Cor. 3: 21-23; Matt. 18: 18; Acts 14:23; 6:1ff.

What the congregations may do individually, they may do together, and should when this enables them to function more effectively. 2 Cor. 8 :19,23 gives us an example of such cooperation. It also shows us that congregations may chose people to carry out their directives and delegate authority to them. Thus, the messengers of the churches were chosen by them to gather the collection for the saints in Jerusalem and take it to them. In verse 19 reference is made to one man who was elected by a number of churches to travel with Paul with the collection. The congregation may even establish auxilliary offices which assist the office of the public ministry and are parts of it, as we see from Acts 6.

It is within the sphere of Christian liberty

when congregations band together into larger bodies and delegate certain functions to such bodies, when they establish new offices as branches of the public ministerial office which assist in its work, when they do this either separately or jointly with sister congregations, when they delegate authority to board and committees elected by them or their representatives. When a mission board, for instance, issues a call, it does so by virtue of the authority vested in it, delegated to it by the congregations through their delegates. Although the members of the board are, we trust, true Christians, they do not call by virtue of their own spiritual priesthood, but because they have been elected to act on behalf of the congregations who have banded together into a larger church body. If the call were issued by virtue of the individual priesthood of the board members, consistency would require that anyone else whom we must acknowledge as a Christian brother should be allowed to join in issuing the call even if he has not been elected to the board. But of course no synod or synodical board would allow such a procedure.

If the office of the keys is committed to the congregation of believers, what shall we say of hypocrites who outwardly and before men are members of the local church (though not really and before God) and who may even publicly administer the means of grace on behalf of the congregation? The keys do not belong to hypocrites. When they join in their exercise outwardly, or even administer them in public office, the keys remain valid and efficacious because they are being administered on behalf of those to whom they belong, the true members of the congregation, the true members Christ. Hypocrites in the visible church are like mud on a wagon wheel. The mud is not part of the wheel, but it does not stop the wheel from functioning.

To sum up what has been presented. The local congregation according to its essence is a group of Christians who regularly gather about the means of grace. Hypocrites are mixed in with this group but do not really belong to it. To it belong the name, titles, rights, duties, and treasures of the Church. God has instituted the local church and committed to it the public exercise of the office of the keys. Christian congregations are to acknowledge their brethren in faith elsewhere and labor with them for the advancement of the Kingdom, but they are not obliged to join in larger groups, although they may do so in Christian liberty. For synods and other church bodies are of human, not of divine institution.

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

God has instituted the ministry in abstracto and committed it to all Christians. The ministry in abstracto is the means of grace. Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 26:15; John 20:21-23.

God has also instituted the ministry in concreto, that is, the ministry of the public administration of the means of grace on behalf of the church was established by the Son of God who called the apostles to the office of the preaching the Gospel, the ministry of the care of souls. Matt. 10; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; John 21:15-17; and who similarly called the seventy, Luke 10:1-22. That the Lord was hereby instituting a real ministry, an office and not merely certain functions, is shown by the fact that this office is distinct from the spiritual priesthood, although based upon and rooted in it. For a Christian must have a call to this office Rom. 10:15; 1 Cor. 12:29; 2 Cor. 5:20; other than the general calling and the priestly office which belongs to all Christians. It is spoken of in Scripture as an office into which one may be placed. Acts 1:20: "His bishopric

(episkopees) let another take." 1 Tim. 3:1, "If a man desire the office of a bishop (episkopees) he desireth a good work." Rom. 1:5, "we have received grace and apostleship (apostolees)."
 Eph. 3:6,7, "the Gospel whereof I was made a minister (diakonos)."
 Col. 1:24, 25, "the church, whereof I was made a minister (diakonos) according to the stewardship, dispensation (oikonomian) of God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God." Luther: „die Gemeinde, welcher ich ein Diener worden bin nach dem goettlichen Predigtamt, das mir gegeben ist unter euch, dass ich das Wort Gottes reichlich predigen soll." RSV: "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." 1 Tim. 1:12, "putting me into the ministry (themenos eis diakonian)."
 1 Cor. 4:1, "Let a man so account of us as ministers (hypeeretes) of Christ and stewards (oikonomos) of the mysteries of God." These terms-- episkopees, apostolees, oikonomia, office of a oikonomos, stewardship, administration, dispensation,--oikonomos: manager of a household or estate, an administrator, steward,--hypeereetes: a servant, attendant, minister, used of a magistrate, of officers of the synagogue or sanhedrin, of attendants of kings, of Christian ministers, Luke 1:2; Acts 13:5; 26:16;--diakonia: the office and work of a diakonos, service, ministry;--diakonos: servant, attendant, minister, -also, leitourgos, Rom. 15:16; a public servant, minister, servant, "that I should be the leitourgos of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God," -show that the Lord has not only committed the means of grace to the Church (ministry in abstracto) but also established a public ministry, a concrete office of service, into which men are to be called to administer the mysteries of God on behalf of those to whom the Lord originally gave them.

We must distinguish between the distinctive features

of the apostolate-the immediate call universal in scope and the special gifts of inspiration, as well as the gift of miracles as sign and confirmation of the immediate call, and the ministry of preaching given to the apostles. The former were peculiar to the apostles and have passed away. The ministry established by the calling of the Apostles is to continue to the end of time. Therefore we see that the Apostles coordinate those who have been mediately (through men) called with themselves, 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 5:1; Col. 4:7; Phil. 2:25, and the functions, duties, qualifications, authority, responsibility, and honor of the ministry of the apostles and the mediately called servants of the Word are the same. 2 Cor. 5:20; Col. 1:25; Acts 6:2,4; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 3:5; 9:9-14; Gal. 6:6; 2 Cor. 4:5; John 21:15-17; Acts 20:17-35; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Thess. 5:12,13. (In regard to the authority being the same: while the apostles speaking the Word of God by inspiration spoke with divine authority, other ministers of the Word speak with the same authority when proclaiming the Word which they find in the Scriptures of the apostles and prophets.)

The ministry of preaching committed to the apostles is to continue to the end of time. Matt. 28:20, "Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world." As the Church is to proclaim the Gospel till the end of time, the public office established to proclaim the Gospel is to continue and the Church is ordinarily bound to it until the end. Therefore the apostles serve the early congregations themselves while they were among them, but when they left they had men called to the ministry of preaching in their midst, Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; Col 4:17; 1 Thess. 5:12,13, and taught that these were divinely called incumbents of the public ministry, Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:28; Tit. 1:7. They also gave instructions for the continuation of this office, 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9.

This ministry is the authority to administer in public office the common rights of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of All, 1 Cor. 4:1; John 21:15,16; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:10. Since the office established by Christ is the ministry of preaching the Word and since it is the public administration of the keys, it embraces all offices of the Church, all offices which the Word sets up in the Church, inasmuch as the keys embrace the entire authority of the Church. Accordingly the incumbents of this office are in the Holy Scriptures called elders, bishops, rulers, stewards, whether they are apostles or not, while the incumbents of another office are called deacons, that is servants, not only of God, but also of the congregation and the bishop; and it is stated regarding the latter in particular that they must care for the congregation and watch over all souls, as they who must give an account, 1 Tim. 3:1,5,7; 5:17; 1 Cor. 4:1; Tit. 1:7; Heb. 13:17. "For with the apostolate the Lord has established in the Church only one office, which embraces all offices of the church, and by which the congregation of God is to be provided for in every respect. The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other office in the Church is merely a part of the ministry, or an auxiliary office..." (Walther's elaboration of his 8th thesis on the ministry in Kirche und Amt, 3rd Edition, 1875, pages 342-3. Cf. Luther, St. Louis Edition, XVI, 2281, Par. 265; X, 1547-9, Par. 23, 24; X, 1592, Par.75.) As the ministry of preaching was committed to Paul, 1 Cor. 1:17, baptism and all other offices of the Church were committed to him, so that he could either perform them himself or leave them to others, as we see from 1 Cor. 1:14-16. The apostles at first performed the function of almoners in Jerusalem, but when their labors grew too heavy, the congregation established an auxiliary office that they might give attention to their principal work, the ministry of the Word. But they did not cease to be involved

in the work of distribution of the food to the poor. "Whom we may appoint over this business." Acts 6:3. Today we have the office of parochial school teachers. This is an auxilliary office branched off from the ministry of the Word. The teacher is serving in the ministry of the Church. His is a divine office requiring a divine call. He is entitled to the honor attached to the work of the ministry as one who is called to teach the Word of God to the children. But this office was not directly instituted by the Lord. It is a divine office because it is part of the ministry of preaching established by Christ. And the incumbent of that public office instituted by Christ does not relinquish part of his office when a teacher is called. For he is still responsible for the spiritual welfare of the children. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock," Acts 20:28. "Feed my lambs...feed my sheep," John 21:15,16. The establishment of new offices to aid the ministry of preaching does not abolish or mutilate the one office instituted by Christ in the calling of the apostles. To the end of time the Church is ordinarily bound to set up the ministry of preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments, the office of the care of souls, "all the flock," Heb. 13:17. This is the same office which the apostles had with this difference, that they had an immediate universal call, while all later incumbents of the office are called mediately by and to a particular flock, Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2. That the same public office founded through the calling of the apostles is to continue is shown by the directions given in the Pastoral Epistles for the work of the ministry and care of the church, especially by the directions for the setting up of the office given in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 (v. 5: "Take care of the church of God," v.2: "apt to teach") and Tit. 1:5-9 (v.7: "as the steward of God," v.9: "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught").

Titus 1:5 in particular teaches that "the churches are duty bound before God, according to divine law, to ordain for themselves pastors and ministers," as the Appendix to the Smalcauld Articles declares. "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Tit. 1:5. It has been asserted that the directions here given Titus concerning the setting up of the public ministry were meant only for the churches of Crete at that time because of circumstances peculiar to them. But nothing in the text or context warrants such an assumption. We have no right to limit the statements of Scripture by applying them only to one time or place, unless Scripture itself makes such a limitation. These things were written in Holy Scripture by inspiration for the instruction of the Church of all times, Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6,11. Paul here gives instructions to Titus concerning the setting up of the public ministry in the congregations which had been organized in the various localities in Crete (kata polin, the distributive kata, city by city; Cf. Acts 14:23, kata ekkleesian, church by church). He states that something is lacking when the churches are not supplied with ministers of the Word, "set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city, in ta leiponta epidiorthoosee, kai katas-teeteseeis kata polin presbuteros." Furthermore, Paul had appointed, charged Titus to do this (hoos egoo soi dietaksameen). Diatassoo means to charge, to give orders to. Related nouns are diatgee: ordinance, Rom. 13:2, and diatagma: an edict, mandate, Hebrews 11:23, where it is used of Pharaoh's command to slay the Hebrew male infants. When we remember that Paul does not command in matters of Christian liberty, it is apparent that the use of the strong verb dietaksameen, I charge, I command, places the subject here presented outside the sphere of Christian liberty. Titus 1:5 cannot be brushed aside as

applying only to local and temporary conditions. Luther says rightly: "whoever believes that the Spirit of Christ here speaks and ordains in Paul, he knows indeed, that this is a divine institution and ordinance, that in every city there be many bishops or at least one." St. Louis Ed. XIX, 1093, par.53.

In 1 Cor. 12:28,29 various offices and gifts present in the apostolic congregations are mentioned. Also in Eph. 4:11 and elsewhere there is mention of different gifts and offices. Some have argued from these passages against the teaching that Christ has instituted only one office in the Church by which the Church of God is to be cared for in every respect and which embraces all offices in the Church. So the Romanists and the old Breslau Synod. But these passages by no means deny that Christ has established only one office in the Church. They speak of offices which had been set up by the early Christians to assist the apostles and other incumbents of the ministry of preaching in their work. That such offices may be established is plain from Acts 6. When the burden of the work on the episkopoi and the gifts given to others in the Church indicate the advisability of new offices, the Church has established them. Their incumbents are in the ministry of the Church, doing a part of the work of the one public office, assisting the incumbents of the one office. It should be remembered, however, as Chemnitz points out, that the establishment and maintenance of such offices is a matter of Christian liberty, that not all apostolic congregations had the same number or forms of auxilliary offices, and that these grades or variations of the ministry are of human origin. While the Church is ordinarily bound to the public office of preaching to the end of time, it may set, keep, or do away with these auxilliary offices as circumstances require. But the office of the public administration of the keys in behalf of the Christian congregation is a direct divine

institution, established in the Church by God for all times and places.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DOCTRINE

Is the doctrine of Church and Ministry important? Is error in these doctrines divisive? The answer is that the doctrines of the Church and the Ministry are clear doctrines of Holy Scripture. Consequently they, like all teachings of God's Word are important. An error in regard to these doctrines, persistently held to, is divisive of Church fellowship.

A church body which would regard differences of doctrine in this area as non-divisive would thereby adopt the principle that some doctrines of the Bible are open questions. Whether one regards one doctrine of Scripture as being non-divisive, or two, or twenty, the principle is the same. But where the principle is once admitted, the number of open questions will grow, as history shows.

The difference between the Missouri and Wisconsin position involves a difference with regard to the Schriftprinzip, the sola Scriptura. For there is a difference of approach. The Wisconsin position is arrived at by means of a deduction from the etymology and meaning of ekklesia, not by clear passages of Scripture. Thus it is asserted, contrary to the usage of Scripture, that any group of Christians (or at least any group gathered in the Lord's name) is an ekklesia. A clear passage of Scripture, such as Titus 1:5, is brushed aside with the unsubstantiated claim that it applied only to local, temporary conditions.

Confusion must result in the practical work of the Church when the Scriptural teaching concerning con-

gregation and synod and the third step in church discipline is not held. That we have had a sound practice is due to the fact all synods of the Synodical Conference, including Wisconsin were organized in accord with Scriptural doctrine which all held originally. Where the divine institution of the local congregation over against synods and all human ecclesiastical institutions is denied hierarchy will follow. It is hard enough to keep it out even where the doctrine is correct, human nature being what it is.

Finally, a most serious charge which cannot be raised against all who hold the Wisconsin position, for many of them would repudiate the position involved, but a charge which is justly leveled against some who held the Wisconsin doctrine,--it is that they teach an incipient antinomianism. They object to the claim of a mandatum Dei (command of God) for the local congregation and the pastoral office on the ground that this would introduce a legalistic element into the New Testament, as if God gave no commands to Christians. But even the Christian, as far as he has the Old Adam, needs the Law. However the divine commands to establish the ministry, administer the Sacraments, etc., are not legalistic demands setting forth conditions of obedience, but gracious provision for our salvation. Their value is not in our acts of obedience to God, but in what He thereby offers and gives us, namely His grace conveyed by Word and Sacrament. But this does not make them matters of Christian liberty.

The Scriptural teaching of Church and Ministry must be maintained and every contrary teaching rejected, just as with any other clear doctrine of the Bible. Matthew 28:19,20; 1 Peter 4:11.

*NOTE: The above article was prepared for the Iowa-Southern Minnesota Pastoral Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, but was not

read before the same until after the writer's death. This conference has requested that this essay be given wider dissemination, which request is herewith being honored. --Ed.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

A paper presented at the Lutheran Forum sponsored by First Trinity Lutheran Church, Marinette, Wisconsin

At this Lutheran Forum it is our intention to give a public testimony of our faith and doctrine. Our Savior has said: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven," (Matthew 10:32). The Apostle Peter also exhorts us to do the same in these words: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). It is our hope and prayer that this defense of the truth be made with modesty and with respect, and also with humility.

In particular, our testimony would be with regard to this most critical doctrine which is under attack today also within the Lutheran Church: THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

The topic under discussion today, the Authority of Scripture, does not place before us the problem of whether we are to make a choice of accepting as our final authority Christ or the Holy Scripture. When we insist on the authority of Scripture we are often charged with overthrowing the authority of Christ and

"substituting a paper pope for the Roman pope." (Prof. Warren Quanbeck, as quoted by Prof. Robert Preus, To Join Or Not To Join, p. 22)

And so the question naturally arises: Is Christ the sole authority in our Christian religion or is it the Holy Scripture? Now we, indeed, confess that Jesus Christ is our sole authority. Only His Word is life. Only His Word counts with Christians. We listen to our God when He says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matthew 17:5) With all our heart we believe that "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:17,18)

But just as strongly we also confess that Scripture is the sole authority in the establishment of our religious belief. We accept the verdict of our Savior: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." (Luke 16:29) We agree with our Lutheran Confession when they state: "We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas, together with all teacher, should be estimated and judged by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone." (Trig., p. 777)

There really is no problem here, and it is only in recent years that a problem has been said to exist. In recent years, many who claim to be Christian and Lutheran have attacked the authority of Scripture and have set up this false strawman, that we are following Scriptures but not Christ. There is, of course, a relationship between the Scriptures and Christ. Whatever Christ would say to us He says through the Scripture: "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that be-

lieving ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31)

The authority of Jesus in the realm of grace is lodged exclusively in Scripture: Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (John 17:20) Please note these important words of our Savior. Through the word of the apostles, written down in Scripture, men came to faith and are kept in the faith.

As a matter of fact, Christ speaks to us everywhere in the Bible, as St. Peter says, every word was written by the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11) The Apostle Paul tells us that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

Indeed we must not say: "I'll listen to Christ, but not to Scripture, the paper pope." Years ago Dr. Theodore Engelder of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, called this distinction a "fatal distinction." (CTM, July 1939, p. 495). We certainly say that Christ is the object of saving faith. We preach to ourselves and to others: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:31). But when we want to know WHAT we should believe concerning Christ, we learn that we are to believe the Gospel (Mark 1:15). Again our Savior said: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39) And the Apostle Paul tells us not to try to descend into the deep or to ascend into heaven to find our Savior, but that faith comes by hearing of the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Christ speaks to us everywhere in the Bible. Everything written in Scripture is of importance to our

spiritual well-being; it is not all necessarily of the same importance, but it is important. Luther says: "nothing is presented to us in Scripture that is useless."

But, of course, the central doctrine of Scripture is the grace of God in Christ Jesus which has appeared to all men. This is our comfort, that we know that we are justified freely by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for us. This is what makes the Scripture, all of the Scripture, precious to us. Dr. Theodore Engelder in his great essay on "Dr. Walther, A Christian Theologian" says: "The church possesses two great treasures, the Gospel of saving grace and the inspired Word of God. Let us safely guard them! Which is the greater? They go together. The church needs both of them. And we prize the one because of the value of the other. We love the Bible because it brings the Gospel of grace to us, the one thing needful. But we lose the assurance of the truth of the Gospel if the certainty of Scripture is gone." (Walther and the Church, p. 40)

Let us now look somewhat more closely at what is meant by the authority of Scripture. In what I have already said and in some of the Bible passages which I have quoted we have pointed towards a definition. Prof. E. Hove, an older teacher in the ALC, defines the authority of Scripture in these words: "Scripture must have all the authority which belongs to God Himself. What the Lord has spoken must be believed and submitted to unconditionally." (E. Hove, Christian Doctrine, Minneapolis, APH, 1930, p. 23) The Brief Statement, which the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod first accepted in 1932, says: "The Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrine proclaimed in the Christian church must be taken and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by

which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged." These two definitions are virtually the same in their summarization of the Scripture claims to such authority.

Let me quote two other respected ALC theologians of the preceding generation who have spoken clearly and Scripturally on the authority of Scripture. E. Fendt states: "No one can doubt that man should stand in awe and attention were almighty God to address men in vocal sounds. Yet such an attitude should also characterize men when the Word of God is read or preached to them. Men owe the same attention and obedience to the Word of God as to God Himself, for God really speaks to them in and through the Holy Scriptures." (E. Fendt, Mimeographed Dogmatics Notes, Ev. Lutheran Seminary Edition, 1960, p. 3; quoted by Pastor J. A. O. Lang in This Steadfast Word, p. 89). Lenski, another respected teacher in the ALC, ties together inseparably the doctrines of the inspiration and the authority of Scripture. He puts it simply: "Authority rests upon inspiration." (R.C.H. Lenski, Mimeographed Dogmatics Notes, p. 20; quoted by Pastor J. A. O. Lang, This Steadfast Word, p. 91).

Jesus testified to the divine authority of the Old Testament: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Again: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). The Apostles claimed authority for both the Old Testament and for their own writings. They assert that it is not the authority of man, of Moses, of Paul, or of Peter, but the authority of the sovereign God Himself that stands behind every statement in the Scriptures: "God . . . spake . . . by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). Again: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." (II Thessalonians 2:15). Again:

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (I Thessalonians 2:13). The authority of Scripture cannot give way to any other authority: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8,9).

It is very clear that a special quality of the whole Bible is this, that as the true Word of God it demands faith and obedience of all men, and that it is the only source of faith and life. It possesses this quality apart from men, and apart from the church. The authority of the Bible rests upon its divine origin, upon its divine inspiration. God caused men to utter certain words as His own, to make known His will to man. "The Scriptures of the prophets" are named as the means by which God "made known to all nations the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25,26). Hence the Scriptures alone are authoritative for us to learn to know the will of our God.

Nothing else can take the place of this authority; certainly it is not the authority of the visible church that makes the Bible authoritative. The visible church can and often has erred. Luther was right. He learned by experience that church councils can err. Further, it is not the teachers of the church nor is it the so-called "scientific theologians" who decide on what is to be believed or rejected.

Let us examine a little more closely this matter of the sources of authority for accepting something that

is true and trusting in it.

There have always been those who refuse to accept the authority of God. For example, the devil rebelled against God, and refused to accept his authority. Naturally, all those who by open confession remain outside the Lord's church do so because they refuse to accept the authority of God.

In the visible Christian church, however, where one at least theoretically accepts the authority of God, there are three rival answers as to which authority should be the final appeal in the church: Holy Scripture, church tradition, or Christian reason as a final source of knowledge.

1) The position we outlined in the first part of this essay, namely the sole authority of Scripture, is not merely the position of Luther and his fellow reformers and of the orthodox Lutheran churches in this country in the 19th and 20th century, but it is the original Christian position. The position is simply this, that the teaching of the written Scripture is the Word which God spoke and still speaks to us. What Scripture says God says. It contains all that the church need to know in this world for its salvation. The final appeal is Scripture as interpreted by Scripture: "Scripture interprets Scripture" is the fundamental principle of interpretation. The Bible does not need to be interpreted by tradition; it does not need to be corrected by human reason, but it rather sits in judgment on both tradition and human reason. The part of reason is only to act as the servant of the written Word. We use the gift of reason; we use the laws of logic and grammar to read and understand Scripture. But we can never regard the minds of man as a higher or better source for solving whatever problems may arise for us.

I can never propose to approach Scripture and to measure its authority by what I have learned from other sources, whether they are historical, philosophical, religious, or scientific.

2) The second view that tradition, the church, or its leaders and scholars, is the final authority for faith and life has also found its place in the organized church. This is what Luther ran up against when the Holy Spirit, through the Gospel, led him back to Scripture as the final authority and to the doctrine of justification as revealed in Scripture. This position is the one to which the Roman Catholic Church holds today, and some other bodies to a greater or lesser degree. Rome historically did not deny that the Bible is God-given but insisted that Scripture was not sufficient, nor clear. Something had to be added--the Apocrypha, traditions such as papal infallibility, the promulgation of Mary-cult, etc.--and there had to be explanations given, such as the usual encyclical or announcement of the Roman church. Faith then becomes primarily a matter of believing what the church lays down. Luther, you remember, spoke quite strongly against what he called the Koehler Glaube, that is the confession of the coal miners which he knew, who simply said "I believe what the church believes and teaches." You probably know from personal experience that there is even today a great deal of this type of thing even in the Lutheran church. Leave it to the theologians!!

3) The third position, that Christian reason is the final authority for accepting a truth, is sometimes called "the subjectivist position." Here truth depends on the individual. Sometimes this appears as mysticism (Quakers), sometimes

as rationalism (the Deists), sometimes as a combination (Schleiermacher). The basic idea is that the final authority for my faith and life is what my reason, conscience, or religious feeling tells me. Today this position usually manifests itself in the so-called neo-orthodoxist position, that God has revealed Himself in His mighty acts, but Scripture is not the infallible, sacred record of what God has done in history, together with an inspired interpretation of what these acts and events mean. The individual must use other sources, historical, philosophical, scientific, to determine what these acts were and what they really mean. At best, this modern position holds that the Gospels, for example, are not a straight inspired account of what God has done for us in history and what it means, but rather that the Gospels are filled with theological claims and confessions, or interpretations, that were made by Christians at a much later date. Here the professional and theological scholar, then, must sift the wheat from the chaff through what he calls the scientific method. The individual must decide for himself what is God's Word and what is man's word. The Scriptures are relevant, they say, "only as the Bible speaks to man," but the scholars have to decide what is relevant, and where God speaks to man. Hence this position is so very subjective and there is no certainty in it except the certainty of fallible man.

It is of the greatest importance that Lutheranism cling to the Lutheran orthodox view of the authority of Scripture. One must finally give a reason for everything he accepts, and everyone must be able to answer the question, "on what authority do I accept it?" Do I really accept the authority of Scripture, or do I hold that the "criterion (judge) lies within ourselves?" (C. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible, p. 296). That

is to say, do I depend upon something within myself, my own judgment, whether to believe that this or that part of Scripture is to be identified with the Word of God? You see, so many say that only a part of Scripture is God's Word, or that Scripture contains the Word of God.

Luther has again given us the right way to follow by his confession of what Scripture teaches. Luther directly identifies the Scripture with the Word of God. Luther insisted that the church's Word is not the highest court of appeal, but it must be tested by Scripture alone. For Luther, Scripture alone was the basis which judged all other doctrine; not his spiritual experiences, not any kind of spiritual feeling, not reason, but Scripture alone. (Cf. E. Thestrup Peddersen, p. 45).

When we are tempted to trust something else than God's Word, we can turn to Luther who gave us a little sentence by which we can be guided: "Deus Solus verax, omnis homo mendax"; "God alone is true, every man a liar."

WHERE THIS AUTHORITY IS DISREGARDED IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Within the Lutheran church the denial of the authority of Scripture goes back a long way. The center of this denial is to be found in the European universities, beginning a century and a half ago, and particularly within the German universities. By the beginning of the 19th century religious orthodoxy had pretty well given way to Deism, which was the confident belief in the power of human reason to discover the truth of "natural religion" or of faith in some kind of universal God without special revelation, miracles, and certainly not within the narrow, historical religion of Christianity. Deism was a movement or system of

thought, arising originally in England and France, advocating natural religion based on human reason rather than revelation, emphasizing morality, and in the 18th century, denying the interference of the creator with the laws of the universe (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary). This belief finally turned into a conviction that all one needed here for the good life was scientific training and technical know-how. Deism by the middle of the 19th century had turned into what is called naturalism, a theory denying that an event or object has a supernatural significance; specif.: the doctrine that scientific laws are adequate to account for phenomena (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary). Out of these convictions came what is called secular humanism, a belief that has a fundamental assumption that God was really invented by religion; that religion belonged to the childhood of the human race; that man today didn't need the idea of God any longer. These beliefs then won the battle for men's lives in the 19th and 20th centuries. This finally led to the mid-twentieth century idea of the death of God theme. Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran, who died at the hands of the Nazi's in 1945, finally concluded that religion belonged to the childhood of humanity. Man "had come of age" and no longer needed a religious system.

Bultmann, technically a Lutheran, a former professor at the University of Marburg, and who is still alive although a very old man, treats the whole New Testament witness to the person and the work of Christ -- His pre-existence, virgin birth, deity, sinlessness, atoning death, resurrection, and future return to judgment -- as a myth. Scripture doesn't mean that these things really happened but that these writings point out to the individual a new possibility of existence that can give him inner relief from his tension. The inerrancy and authority of Scripture were just myths that weak people needed to lean on. The professional theologian must "demythologize", that is, he must strip away all these myths and find some kind of kernel of truth lying behind these myths.

These ideas have also been transported into our country, and especially after the end of the second World War they have become particularly wide-spread, especially through new, young professors in the Lutheran seminaries.

The inspiration and inerrancy and the authority of Scripture are widely denied today by many leaders in the ALC. It was not always that way. Thirty or forty years ago the ALC was basically a conservative church, with just an occasional professor indicating in rather guarded language that he did no longer accept the whole Bible as the Word of God but rather accepted the principles of the rational higher critics into his theology. Nearly all the statements on the inspiration, inerrancy, and the authority of Scripture made in the ALC were soundly orthodox. To give but one example, the Minneapolis Theses (1925 Agreement of the Iowa, Ohio, Buffalo Synods, and the NLCA) has this fine statement: "I. The Scriptures: The Synods signatory to these articles of agreement accept without exception all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God and submit to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life."

This was not true of the old ULCA (Today a part of the LCA). It would not have been possible to have achieved agreement of such a Scriptural and Lutheran statement as the Minneapolis Theses in 1925. At any rate, in 1938 the ULCA adopted in its Baltimore Resolution this statement of Scripture: "We therefore accept the Scriptures as the infallible truth of God in all matters that pertain to His revelation and our salvation." This statement, as all can readily see, opens up the whole issue of the authority of Scripture because it implies that there are parts of the Bible which do not pertain to revelation and our salvation, and that these might not be the infallible truth of God. It makes man the one who finally judges what might and what might not

be the infallible truth of God, and what things are pertinent to our salvation.

Today as we look at what is taught in the colleges and seminaries, not only of the LCA schools but of the ALC schools, we shall find a very serious state of affairs with regard to the doctrine of Scripture (See Robert Preus, To Join Or Not To Join, p. 19) These schools produce the pastors and laymen of today and tomorrow. WE should always remember, as the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod reminds us, that what is actually taught in a church's pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications is what establishes the orthodox character of a church.

Let us look, first, at a very important book but probably not too widely read by laymen: Theology in the Life of the Church (Fortress Press, 1963). This book is sponsored by "the Conference of Lutheran Professors of Theology" (Preface, p. iii). The contributors are professors from the LCA, the ALC, and LC-MS. As a matter of fact, it was edited by a prominent theologian of the Missouri Synod, Prof. Robert W. Bertram. The chapter on "The Bible" (pp. 22-39) is written by Prof. Warren A. Quanbeck, professor of systematic theology at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, the largest ALC seminary and the second largest Lutheran seminary in the United States. The reading of these 17 pages gives you a pretty clear idea of how far this ALC theologian has moved away from the old Minneapolis Theeses. He insists that the doctrine of inspiration, as once formulated in the Lutheran Church, can no longer be accepted because studies in science and history today have destroyed the Bible's inerrancy and authority (p. 23). He holds that the old Lutheran "theologians read the Bible as a collection of revealed propositions unfolding the truth about God, the world, and man", and this is no longer acceptable. He says that the words of the Bible must not be absolutized (p. 31) because there "can be no absolute expression of the

truth, even in the language of theology" (p. 25). If you read these words carefully, and also the whole chapter, you will notice quite quickly that we are not to accept any proposition from the Bible because they are the authority "thus saith the Lord"; but we are to accept propositions like the one from Quanbeck and other so-called Biblical scholars instead of the authority of Scripture.

As I have already suggested, there is a sort of interlocking directorate among the professors of the colleges and seminaries of the LCA, the ALC, and the LC-MS. In general, as a group they travel in the same company and have, more or less, the same view, which is the neo-orthodox existential representation of what they call Lutheranism. To get a public forum for their theology, they launched their own paper in the winter of 1962 and called it Dialogue. The editorial staff consists of theologians from all the three synods; and here you can find quite a variety of opinions, all of which laboriously reject the Lutheran doctrine of inspiration as you know it. For example, Prof. Robert Jensen of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, declares that "whether there turn out to be any errors in Scripture is unimportant." (Vol. I, No. 4, Autumn 1962, p. 58). He holds that the authority of Scripture as defined by the Lutheran theologians in the past on the basis of Scripture is only "a dream authority".

These ideas filter down to the laity also. In 1964, the ALC, through its Board of Parish Education, caused to be published, The Bible: Book of Faith (APH, 1964). This book of essays, written by ALC seminary professors, was "intended primarily for use as a course of study by the church school teachers and adult leaders in the congregation." (Introduction, p. 5). It is, therefore, an important book in the future development of the ALC. the approach is that of the rationalistic higher critics who attack the doctrine of verbal inspiration and thereby undermine the authority and re-

liability of the Holy Scriptures. Very clearly, Prof. Weiblen says: "The infallibility of the Scriptures is the infallibility of Jesus Christ and not the infallibility of the written text." (p. 148)

One of the most famous expositions of this liberal type of theology in the ALC is the little book put out by the members of the department of religion at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, Theological Perspectives --- A Discussion of Contemporary Issues in Lutheran Theology. The essayists in general agree in their rejection of the inerrancy and authority of the Bible as it has always been accepted and taught by the Lutherans also in the ALC until recent years.

Let me give you just a few examples of this new teaching in the ALC by quoting from Prof. Wilfred F. Bunge's essay, "The Historical-Critical Method and the New Testament", (pp. 34-39). Concerning the Gospels Prof. Bunge says that they are not the objective chronicles of Jesus of Nazareth, they are filled with theological claims and confessions or interpretations which go far beyond the objective events of the history of Jesus (p. 42). "The title, Son of God, does not claim that Jesus was divine. . . When this title was applied to Jesus, it was a theological claim, not an objective historical fact" (p. 43).

"The opening of the heavens, the descent of the Spirit, and the voice from heaven are not objective events accessible to the eyes and ears of the observer. They are the theological interpretation of the meaning of Jesus' baptism by John. Those present saw Jesus baptized by John in the same way that many others were baptized by John. But the church, as it looked back on this event after the death and resurrection of Jesus, interpreted the events theologically."(pp. 43f)

This is just a little sample to show how these teachers set their views above those of the Holy Scripture.

Without any proof they assume that Scripture is like any merely human historical document, possibly partly true, but also partly false. And these trained theologians must decide what might be true and what must be false. The supernatural events connected with the life of Jesus go by the board, and the Biblical faith must be brought into line with secular ideas. It is evident that Scripture is no longer the sole authority but rather the human mind, working by its own light, is the final authority even in the things which are God's.

And then, finally, one cannot overlook the recent remarks of the president of the ALC, Dr. Schiotz, who has recently committed the ALC to the position that inerrancy does not pertain to the text of Scripture but only "to the truths revealed for our faith, doctrine, and life." (Lutheran Standard, June 28, 1966).

Now all this is not to say that the rank and file of the ALC accept these unLutheran doctrines. We do not doubt that there are many sad, faithful Lutherans in that group who disavow these doctrines, but their voice of protest is barely heard and they exert little or no influence at their colleges and seminaries.

Any knowledgeable and fair-minded observer must agree with Prof. Robert Preus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in his judgment of the ALC: "Twenty-five years ago such things could not have been taught in the church bodies now constituting the American Lutheran Church. Today doctrinal discipline has broken down." (To Join Or Not To Join. p. 24)

Conclusion

We must cling to the authority of Scripture for our soul's salvation. It is a life and death matter with us. We must say, as Martin Luther said on a very famous occasion: "My conscience is subject to the Word

of God." It is a life and death matter with us for our personal salvation. For example, the first thing to go as myth and legend are the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis. But the authority of Genesis 3, which tells us that by one man's disobedience, namely Adam, many were made sinners, must be upheld as a true history of what actually happened in Paradise if we are to apply to ourselves the comfort of Romans 5, namely, that in the second Adam we are made righteous.

In the early seventeenth century there was an English poet and preacher named John Donne, who being very sick, sick almost unto death, wrote a poem which he called: "Hymn to God, My God in my Sickness." Being at death's door, he had to turn to something solid on which to base his hope, and he turned to the third chapter of Genesis and the fifth chapter of Romans and wrote the following words:

We think that Paradise and Calvary,
Christ's cross and Adam's tree,
Stood in one place;
Look, Lord, and find
Both Adams met in me:
As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face
May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace.

-- B. W. Teigen

B O O K R E V I E W S

The Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America Together with the Psalter. New York: The Board of Education of The Reformed Church in America, 518 pp., \$6.95

Students of the liturgy will be interested in this Reformed liturgical book, containing a variety of worship

services. Reformed theology is evident, as in the service for communion, where the bread and wine are referred to as "outward signs", p. 64, as in other places.

R. Paul Firnhaber. Say Yes. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968, pages not numbered, \$1.25

The copyright to this book is held by the Walther League. One cannot help thinking what the original C.F.W. Walther would say about this book, or the sainted Dr. Walter A. Maier, who had worked to make the Walther League a theologically conservative body. The back cover of this book tells the reader that it is a "collage" of "verbal sense images." Sentences such as "ONE SUCH BUNCH NEVER SEEMED TO DIE IN ANCIENT ISRAEL mideast mediterranean seacoast HEBREWS THEY WERE CALLED jews"(sic!) gouge the eyes of a literate reader. Granted that this may be a kind of communication used by some, the reviewer could not help thinking of another bit of modern English in the TEV: "Use only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you." Ephesians 4: 29.

Carl McIntire. The Death of a Church. Collingswood, New Jersey: Christian Beacon Press, 1967, 215 pp, \$1.00

Cornelius Van Til. The Confession of 1967: Its Theological Background and Ecumenical Significance. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1967, 128 pp., \$2.50

The names of the two authors of the above books are familiar to our readers. Both books deal with the new confession proposed and now adopted by the United Pres-

byterian Church. McIntire's book is more a history of the doctrinal development within the United Presbyterian Church which ultimately made possible the adoption of the confession, together with a critique of the confession. Van Til's book is also a critique of the confession, but more of the philosophical premises which caused the writers of the confession to depart from conservative Presbyterian doctrine. Some Lutherans do not come out too well in his evaluation, e.g. Martin Marty, who complained about the Presbyterian obsession with confessions. Van Til's book, aside from being a thorough critique of the confession, is of value to anyone trying to see how philosophy will influence theology, as is evidently the case with theological liberals.

Paola Sarpi. History of Benefices and Selections from the History of the Council of Trent. Translated and edited by Peter Burke. New York: Washington Square Press, 1967, 322 pp. \$1.45

Paola Sarpi was a bitter critic of the Roman Catholic Church. This paperback makes available at a low cost two of his works. The first of these is his history of the development of the Roman Catholic Church into a powerful organization. The second, and the one of special interest to Lutherans, contains his observations on the Council of Trent. Sarpi lived from 1552 to 1623, so he was close to the theological decisions of the Council and the reasons for the decisions made.

Gerhard Kittle, ed. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, Edited by Gerhard Friedrich; translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967, 1031 pp., \$22.50

The fifth volume of Kittel's Theologisches Woerterbuch is now in print, covering from Ξ to τω . As was said when the first volume of this translated series appeared, this work is not a commentary, but rather a series of word studies. But the word studies are theological presentations of New Testament word concepts against the background of Greek secular literature, the Old Testament, and the Septuagint, together with any other possible sources which might help shed light on the meaning of words. Thus this series draws together a vast amount of material which cannot be ignored in studying the New Testament. One may not agree with and will not agree with everything presented, but one cannot ignore what is presented. In this volume, for example, one has word studies on such important words as $\acute{\alpha}\delta\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, $\mu\alpha\iota\varsigma$ $\delta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ $\mu\alpha\iota\alpha$ $\kappa\lambda\eta-$
 $\tau\omicron\varsigma$ and many other important words ranging from Ξ to τω .

J. H. Kertenberger. Asleep in Jesus. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967, 120 pp., \$1.50

This paperback is a reprint of 23 sermons by a Missouri Synod preacher of an earlier generation. These sermons were first printed in 1937. The sermons are pointed toward special occasions, as the death of a child, a woman teacher, a suicide, etc. The sermons were edited by the author's son, who included several of his own sermons. It would be a helpful book to have on the shelf.

-- Glenn E. Reichwald

STILL AVAILABLE, at \$2 per set, Reformation Lectures by Pastor Kurt Marquart. Order from LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY.