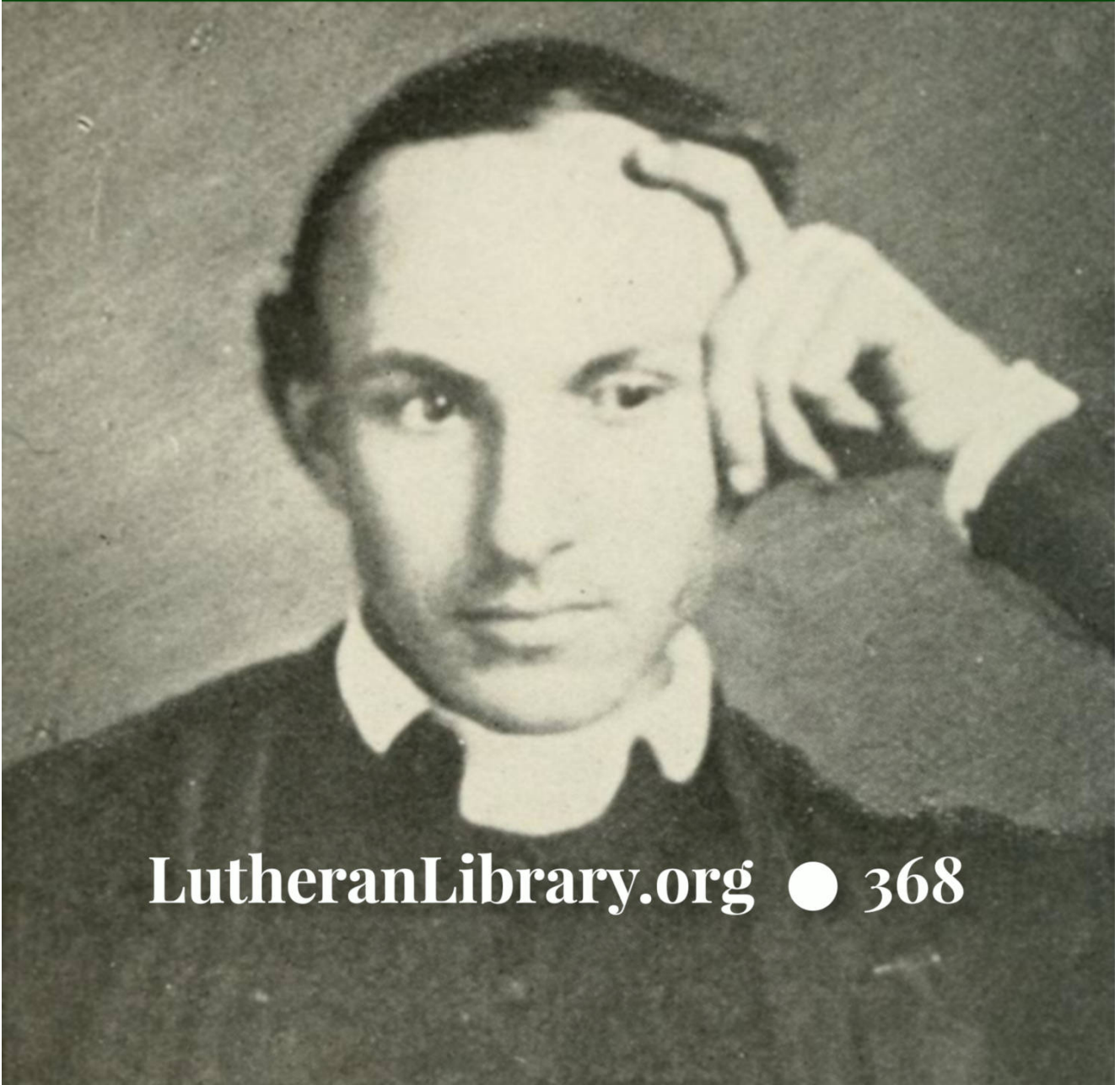


Matthias Loy

The Ministerial Office *An Exposition of the Scriptural Doctrine*



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The Ministerial Office

An Exposition of the Scriptural Doctrine As Taught In The Evangelical Lutheran Church

By Rev. Matthias Loy, M.A.
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Columbus, Ohio
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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

MATTHIAS LOY (1828-1915) is a theological giant of American Lutheranism. He served as president of the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Columbus Seminary and Capital University, and edited the *Lutheran Standard* and the *Columbus Theological Magazine*. In 1881 he withdrew the Joint Synod from the Synodical Conference as a result of Walther's teaching about predestination. Many of Matthias Loy's books are available in Lutheran Library editions.

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Preface

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY has been a subject of dispute from the earliest period of the Church's history. The false views which were entertained respecting the powers of pastors, in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, furnished a support for other errors which were subsequently incorporated in the papal system; and the Reformation, which was designed, in the providence of God, to restore to the Church the pure truth of His blessed word, was instrumental also in banishing the human traditions which had gathered around this doctrine. With great clearness and force the scriptural truth concerning the Christian priesthood was again set forth; and believers' hearts, long kept in bondage by the usurpations of an arrogant clergy, were gladdened by the exhibition and apprehension of their glorious rights and privileges as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Christian people were rendered conscious of their rich inheritance, and in the light of this the doctrine of the Christian Ministry became dear and precious. As intimately connected with the central article of the Christian system, justification by faith, it was set forth fully and perspicuously.

Notwithstanding this, it has been a subject of warm debate also in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and this especially within the last quarter of a century. Not only in Europe, but also in this country, the conflict has sometimes waxed hot, all parties claiming to represent the evangelical doctrine as it was taught by Luther and his coadjutors. Until a comparatively recent period, indeed, the English portion of the Church has taken less part in the controversy, and has been less agitated by the diversity of views so strenuously advocated.

But it has not been unmoved by that which so powerfully moves the brethren of other languages. It could not be so without losing its distinctive Lutheran life. "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." The interest in the subject is increasing, and it must eventually press for a decision among the English churches as it has done among the German. Many who were

formerly silent and seemingly unconcerned spectators, while others earnestly strove for the truth, now acknowledge the great practical import of the subject, and maintain their convictions with a zeal corresponding to their recognition of its importance.

This volume, which is, in the main, a reprint of articles published in the *Evangelical Quarterly Review* in the years 1861, 1864 and 1865, is designed to render some assistance, however slight it may be, to those who are searching for the truth on the subject, and to awaken a consciousness of the rich possessions which are the heritage of believers in the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Its aim is not to fan the flame of controversy, although the tone may, in some passages, seem warmly controversial; but rather to inculcate the truth and thus lead to peace that shall be abiding.

The subject treated is not one upon which God has not been pleased to give us light in His word; nor is it one upon which the Ev. Lutheran Church has failed to walk in the light. The question of the Ministry is not one of indifference, which each individual, under the presumption that God has given no decision, may decide according to his own judgment and pleasure. The Lord has decided it in the Holy Scriptures, and to this decision we should meekly submit. It is hoped that those who will carefully consider the argument which is here offered, will not only be convinced that God has spoken on the subject in His word, and that the Church has believed and understood what He has revealed, and expressed her faith in her Confession, but also that they will not be in doubt as to what is the truth which is thus revealed and confessed.

The author's ardent desire is to set forth this truth. He has wished to wrong no man or body of men, and has aimed at no party triumph. He has had no disposition to deal unkindly with persons or unfairly with the statements of those who advocate theories which seem to him at variance with the Gospel. But he has been able to find neither obscurity nor inconsistency in the Scriptures or in the Confessions of the Ev. Lutheran Church respecting the question discussed, and he may reasonably trust that it will not be deemed presumptuous or unkind in him to speak positively when his convictions are positive.

Writing under the influence of such convictions, he may sometimes have expressed himself with more vehemence than some would think meet; but he asks the reader calmly to weigh the reasons offered for the propositions

laid down, and would persuade no man to accept what does not commend itself as truth.

The frequent references in the book to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and to celebrated writers of acknowledged ability and correctness in setting forth the doctrines of that Church, will be readily excused when the twofold design of the author is kept in view, namely, to exhibit the scriptural doctrine of the Ministerial Office, and at the same time to show that this scriptural doctrine is maintained in its purity in the Church of the Augsburg Confession.

The author would not pretend indifference to the success of the volume here offered to the Christian public. The truth which it sets forth, whatever may be the imperfections of the manner in which it is exhibited, he regards as of first importance in the development of a true Church life and of a proper activity in the Christian work; and he commits the book to the public with the earnest desire that it may contribute something towards elucidating that truth and rendering it a power in human hearts. May the Lord Jesus, without whose blessing nothing can prosper, bless it to the glory of His great name and to the welfare of His beloved Church.

COLUMBUS, Sept. 21., 1870.

Part 1. The Nature Of The Ministry

THIS IS A TRUE SAYING, If a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work. The Christian Minister is God's ambassador to man, and the message which he brings is of infinite moment. A nobler office than this exists not on earth—nay, all other offices are insignificant in comparison. But the glory of the Ministry arises from the work which is performed, not from any peculiar gifts and superior privileges possessed by those who publicly perform it. The glorious work of the Ministry is given to all Christian people, and upon them are conferred the means by which it is to be accomplished. The Bishop or Pastor has no rights which are not involved in the rights of God's people, and held in common by them all. Not all believers have the public office, but none are exempted from the duty of helping in the great work, for God's glory and man's salvation, which is carried forward by administering the means of grace. The nature of the Christian Ministry will never be clearly apprehended while we confine our attention to the persons who bear public office in the Church, and to their prerogatives, real or supposed. This leaves out of view elements which are essential to the subject. We shall endeavor to elucidate it by exhibiting 1. The Ministerial Work, 2. The Ministerial Workmen, and 3. The Ministerial Calling.

1. The Ministerial Work

Salvation Ordinarily Dependent Upon Means of Grace

THERE WILL, it is believed, be but few who would dispute the proposition that *the salvation of souls is ordinarily dependent upon the divinely appointed means of grace, which require administration.*

All men are children of wrath by nature, and dead in trespasses and sins. But God, who is rich in mercy, pitied His fallen creatures, and, in His infinite love, determined to save them. To this end He sent His only Son into the world to bear our sin and suffer its dreadful penalty.

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4—5.

By the active and passive obedience of Jesus, this redemption was accomplished; it is finished.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” Gal. 3:13.

No one is excluded from its benefits: it embraces the whole human race.

“God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” 1 Tim. 2:4—6.

But the salvation, which has been acquired for all, must be brought to men before they can have it in their possession. The merits of Christ are of no avail where they are not appropriated, and where they are not offered there can be no appropriation. Jesus died for the damned as well as for the saved; the mere fact of His death, apart from the application of its saving power, does not restore the fallen. We remain dead in trespasses and sins until the Holy Spirit quickens us. Luther, commenting on John 3:14, illustrates this,

with his usual clearness, by referring to the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness, and the necessity of looking upon it to live, remarking that “it would avail us nothing if Christ had died a thousand times upon the cross, if the word ‘whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish’ were not given, just as it would have availed the children of Israel nothing if they had, of their own accord, lifted up a thousand serpents.” Salvation is by faith; but “how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” Rom. 10:14.

To convey the purchased salvation to men, God has, therefore, appointed certain means, by which it is uniformly offered for man’s appropriation by faith. Chief of these is His blessed Word. “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who hath redeemed, purchased and delivered me, a poor, forlorn, condemned person, from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.” But “I also believe that I cannot, by my own reason, or other natural power, believe in or come to Jesus Christ my Lord, but that the Holy Spirit hath called me by the Gospel.” This faith is founded upon plain and direct words of the Holy Ghost.

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Rom. 1:16.

Or, as the same apostle expresses it again in another place:

“So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Rom. 10:17.

There is no salvation without faith, and no faith without the divine word.

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 3:26.

But the Lord commanded His word to be proclaimed, that sinful men, receiving it in faith, might become children and heirs.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” John 17:20.

Therefore St. James says:

“Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” 1:18.

And as this word, which is quick and powerful, appoints the two sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Supper, and is connected with them in the form of a promise which cannot be broken, the same efficacy is ascribed to them as to the word itself. They are means for the bestowal of grace unto salvation. For “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5. And St. Paul testifies that

“...after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Tit. 3:5.

In complete harmony with this is the declaration of St. Peter that

“Baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” 1 Pet. 3:21.

Indeed, wherever the efficacy of this sacrament is spoken of in the Scriptures, it is declared to be a means of salvation. So the Holy Communion is

instituted for the imparting of Christ's body and blood, which is given and shed for the remission of sins, Matt. 26:26—8, and those who believe cannot fail to enjoy the blessing which it is designed to bestow, and which the word promises. Where these means are used, the kingdom of God is established and souls enter into it; where they do not exist, there can be no salvation offered. Therefore God sent forth ministers to bear the glad tidings of the redemption to all nations, and promised that he that believeth the word shall be saved; and therefore our Confession declares "that for the purpose of obtaining this faith, God has instituted the ministry, giving the Gospel and the Sacraments, through which, as means, He imparts the Holy Spirit, who, in His own time and place, works faith in those that hear the Gospel;" Augsb. Conf. Art. W.; and again, Art. XXVIII: "This power is to be exercised only by teaching or preaching the word, and by administering the sacraments, either to many or few, as the case may be; for here are granted, not corporeal, but eternal things, as eternal righteousness, the Holy Ghost, everlasting life. These things cannot come but by the ministration of the word and Sacraments."

These means of God's appointment always contain and offer the salvation which Christ has purchased for all men, and offer it alike to all who hear. They are channels of grace, whether men believe or disbelieve. God's offer of gracious treasures is entirely independent of man's reception or rejection. It is made that men may receive it: if it is rejected, no less a treasure than everlasting life is rejected. If the means contained nothing, it would be a gross abuse of language, and an impious trifling with sacred things, to speak of embracing or refusing the gracious offer.

"What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid! yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Rom. 3:3—4.

"We must teach that when God teaches or commands anything, or baptizes, it is the truth, whether the recipient be a worthy or unworthy person. When the sun shines, it is and remains the sun, whether one dies or sleeps, whether he sees it or not... Baptism and the Gospel are right, and remain unchanged even if I do not believe." Luther 44, 164.¹ Not as though the

means of grace necessarily made heirs of heaven of all, to whom they are brought. Far from it: only he that believeth shall be saved.

“Unto us was the Gospel preached as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Heb. 4:2.

And, as the word never saves without faith, neither can the sacraments, which derive their whole efficacy from the word. Therefore our Church declares, in reference to the great benefit of the sacraments: “It is not the water which produces them, but the word of God which is connected with the water, and our faith confiding in the word of God in the use of baptismal water,” and: “It is not the eating and drinking which produces them, but that solemn declaration, ‘which is given and shed for you for the remission of sins;’ which words, besides the literal eating and drinking, are the chief thing in the sacrament; wherefore, whoever truly believes these words, has what they promise, even the forgiveness of sins.” Sm. Catechism, IV, V. But to infer from this that the divine means contain saving power only in some select cases, or that the grace is imparted through some other channel, would be simply absurd. “Although not all believe, yet there are many who do. Christ does not say that all will believe; but it does not follow from this that nobody will. What manner of inference is this which they make, when they conclude that because not all believe, therefore faith does not come by the word? Then I could also juggle, and conclude that because all do not obey the civil government nor their parents, therefore there is no need for governments or parents, and God’s command is null. Hence we reverse it and say thus: We know and can prove, by many passages and examples of Scripture, that some who hear the word believe it, and, therefore, conclude that the word is necessary and profitable, not for the ears alone, but also for the heart and the inward man. That some do not believe, though they hear the word, does not detract anything from it; it remains true, notwithstanding, that it is the means by which faith is wrought in the heart, and that no one can obtain faith without it.” Luther 50, 251.

Administration Of These The Necessary Work Of The Ministry

These means of grace, in the very nature of the case, require administrators. “How shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” Rom. 10:14. God has indeed given us the Scriptures in a written form, and commanded us all to search them, that our faith may stand upon the word of God alone; and the Scriptures are so perspicuous that, in case of necessity, men can find the truth unto salvation without a teacher. But ordinarily “faith comes by hearing” still, and those who have no teachers manifestly labor under great disadvantages. This is plain from the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, recorded in Acts 8:30—31:

“Philip ran thither to him and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said: Understandest thou what thou readest? and he said, How can I, except some man should guide me.”

Our natural disinclination to give attention to divine things, and our proneness to forget them and slight them, render the aids afforded by competent and faithful teachers requisite. Luther, whose profound reverence and ardent love for the written word will not be questioned, therefore says: “There are now many who declare: O, I have already learned the Gospel quite well, there is no danger about me. Some even come out boldly and say: What further need have we of a pastor or preacher? Can we not read for ourselves at home? Then they go on in their security, and do not read it at home either; or, if they even do read it at home, it is not so productive and powerful as it is in the public sermon from the lips of the preacher, whom God hath called and appointed to proclaim it to thee.” 4, 401. God’s method of bringing the truth to men has ever been chiefly, and must ever so remain, that of preaching the word, that man may hear it and believe. That the holy sacraments must be administered to accomplish their design is self-evident. The mandate still remains in force, that messengers should go into all the world to preach the Gospel, to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity, and to admin-

ister the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, to the end that souls may thus be saved through the blood of Jesus. This is the work of the Gospel ministry.

1. The references to volume and page of Luther's Works always have in view the Erlangen Edition, unless marked W. (Walch.)↩

2. The Ministerial Workmen

All Christians Called To Engage In The Work

The work to be done requires workmen to perform it. The means which God has appointed to accomplish His saving will must be administered. It is certain from the word of God, and is so confessed by the Ev. Lutheran Church, that *the administration of these means belongs originally to all believers, or to the whole Christian Church.*

Before, through the word which our Saviour proclaimed, Christian congregations were formed, every believer had the right, and must have felt it to be a duty, to spread the glad tidings as much as lay in his power. For faith ever seeks utterance for the glory of God, and love ever prompts to share with others our joys and hopes. We accordingly read that the first believers, whose faith came by hearing the preaching of Jesus, spake the truth to others whom they found, and urged them to come to Jesus. Every reader of the Gospel is aware of this; we need but instance Andrew's finding Simon and telling him about the Messiah's advent, and Philip's finding Nathanael and urging him to come and see the promised Christ. John 1. That this proclamation of the truth was made, in the first place, by persons who were subsequently called to be apostles, is true; but no one will be likely to presume that they first told their friends and neighbors about Jesus in any official capacity: they did so simply as believers, and were the first to do so because they were the first believers. The duty of confessing Christ could not be performed otherwise: its very object is the glory of God by the promulgation of saving truth. Thus the consoling truth of the Saviour's resurrection was first proclaimed, not by persons holding an office in the Church, but by believing women, to whom it had been made known by angels at the sepulchre.

“It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.” Luke 24:10.

The truth thus declared was, and is, the power of God unto salvation, just as fully as when it is publicly preached in the congregation by men holding an ecclesiastical office. “The Sacraments and the word are efficacious,” says the Augsburg Confession, Art. VIII., “on account of the appointment and command of Christ,” not at all on account of the character or office of the persons by whom they are administered.

Although God has established a particular order, according to which the means of grace are dispensed publicly in the Church, the violation of which divine order is, of course, sinful, yet it is plain that the means themselves are the property of every believer, to be used in subjection to God’s will, which is the salvation of souls by their application. All this seems very evident; to prove it would appear, at first sight, almost a work of supererogation. But these high prerogatives of Christians are often denied, sometimes by implication, sometimes even explicitly. Men will not cease dreaming of a state, in the kingdom of God, which is higher than that of faith and of sonship with God through faith—of a state with higher rights and nobler titles than those of the believer, to which the means of grace and the prerogative of saving souls are supposed exclusively to belong.

Against this we would array the evidences of Scripture, in defense of what we conceive to be the Christian’s inalienable rights. We would not, in any way, or in any sense, disparage the holy office which we feel it a privilege to hold. “I magnify mine office;” for it is degraded by arrogating rights which God has not conferred, and it is magnified by holding and executing it as God was pleased to give it. The highest dignity is that of the Christian; the most glorious rights and privileges are those of the believer. Our chief joy and glory is not that we hold an honorable office in the Church on earth, but that we are sons of God and heirs of heaven, through God’s abounding grace in Christ. The office would lose its brightest beams of glory, if the Christian royalty which underlies it were abandoned. We are jealous for the rights of our office; we are more jealous still for the far more glorious rights of our state as believers in Jesus. The saving of souls is the work of the Church, of the believers in Jesus Christ the Saviour, not of an exclusive

class in the Church; the means of grace belong primarily to the Church, to believers, not exclusively to a class among them. To establish this from the word of God, and show that our Church in her doctrine upon the subject has been faithful to that word, in opposition to the proud pretensions of Romanism and Romanizing hierarchism, is the object of this chapter.

I. All Believers Are Priests

According To The Word Of God, All Believers Are Priests and called to perform priestly functions: the priesthood in the Church is not a select class within her pale, but is composed of all true Christians, and whatever rights and powers belong to the Christian priesthood, belong equally to all believers. In order to present the matter as clearly as we can, we shall inquire

What is a priest? He is a person who, according to the divine will, sustains a twofold relation in the sphere of religion, acting towards God in the name of man, and towards man in the name of God. He represents man before his Maker, bringing sacrifices to Him on behalf of His fallen creature. "Let the priests also which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves." Ex. 19:22. They are permitted to enter into the presence of the Holy One, to lay their offerings at His feet. "Even him whom He hath chosen will He cause to come near unto Him." This privilege and duty of priests to approach the Lord, and present sacrifices, is universally acknowledged. But it by no means embraces the whole of the sacerdotal office. The priest is just as clearly appointed to represent God before men. He is a teacher of truth; a bearer of messages from God to His fallen creature.

"The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." Mal. 2:7.

He is the ordinary teacher under the old dispensation; the prophetic was an extraordinary office instituted to supply the deficiencies of an unfaithful priesthood. "Ordinarily the ecclesiastical ministry, from Moses until the time of Christ, was committed to the Levitical priests, but because they were sometimes negligent in the preservation and propagation of the purity

of the heavenly doctrine, nay, even contaminated it with Baalitic and other idolatrous worship, God extraordinarily called prophets, by whose ministry the corruptions should be removed, the promises concerning the Messiah repeated and illustrated, and men invited to repentance by the menace of special punishments.” Gerhard Loc. 24, §212. The Lord’s command to Aaron and his sons was, that they should “teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.” Lev. 10:11. “What is a priest then? One in whose mouth God has put His word, as Malachi says: ‘The priest’s lips should keep knowledge,’ and who makes sacrifices and prays for others. Such a priest by faith may come before God, pray for the people, speak their word, and intercede with God for them; then come forth again to the people and present to them God’s answer and command.” Luther 36, 14.

Such a priest is every believer. It is an important fact, which cannot be gainsaid, that incumbents of the ministerial office are never, in the New Testament, called priests. They are designated by various names, but never once by this. It is equally certain also that believers are so denominated, and only they. In all the passages of the New Testament, in which priests are spoken of under the new dispensation, the reference is to believers only. To be certified of this the reader need but refer to the passages, which are not numerous. Of the five to be found, there are two in 1 Pet. 2, and three in the book of Revelation. When it is said, in the first two passages, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,” and “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light,” no one, who pays the least attention to the words and their context, will presume that the address is merely to a select few, not to all the members of the Lord’s body. They who form the spiritual house form the holy and royal priesthood also. The persons addressed are not bishops and deacons, but “strangers scattered” through various countries, who are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus,” “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.”

The children of God by faith are priests, whether they hold an office or not. The same is manifest from the passages in Revelation. They who are

introduced as saying that Christ “hath made us kings and priests unto God,” are the same who assert: “He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” When the Lamb is addressed, further, in the words: “Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto God kings and priests,” it would be the most arbitrary procedure to apply the predicate “priests” to any other subjects than those, to whom the predicate “redeemed” belongs. The subjects are in both cases the same. When, in the last passage, it is declared that “they shall be priests of God and of Christ,” there is surely not much difficulty in finding to whom this refers. It is said of those who have “part in the first resurrection,” and on whom “the second death hath no power.” From this it is incontrovertibly certain that there is, under the new dispensation, no continuation of the Levitical priesthood, as confined to a certain class within the holy nation, but that now the whole nation is a nation of priests. So far as the Old Testament priesthood is a type of anything in the New, it has for its antitype not the ministerial office, but the congregation of believers. We are all “made nigh by the blood of Christ,” and can appear before God without the mediation of any other priest than Christ, having “access by one Spirit unto the Father,” that we may offer acceptable sacrifices by Christ Jesus, and show forth His praises in word and work.

That believers, as such priests, have the right to teach as well as to pray, is involved in the very nature of the priesthood as the Bible describes it. We have seen that the priests were the appointed teachers of the people, as well as their representatives in the offering of sacrifices. Before persons presume to deny the New Testament priests any of those rights which God has manifestly conferred upon the priesthood from its first institution, they should look well to their warrant for it, remembering the dreadful consequences of an interference with God’s prerogatives. That the priesthood now is not the same as it was from the beginning, we not only admit, but earnestly maintain, because the word of God authorizes and requires us to maintain it. But that the change lies in the cessation of its most important functions, which are as needful now as ever, we could believe, in opposition to all the dictates of reason, only upon the authority of God.

Where is the Scripture proof for such an assumption? What is there in the divine economy as revealed in the New Testament, that renders it necessary? Whatever changes may have been introduced respecting the qualifica-

tions requisite for the priesthood, and respecting the character of its teachings and sacrifices, the priesthood itself, with its rights and duties of teaching and offering sacrifice, remains intact.

There is no evidence whatever that the priesthood, under the new dispensation, has been deprived of one of its most important duties and privileges, viz. that of teaching. This fact alone would be sufficient to render the maintenance and exercise of this function obligatory upon us. But there are at least indications, sufficiently cogent in themselves, if not positive proofs, to the contrary. Believers are a “royal priesthood,” that they may “show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” No considerate person would maintain that this is fully accomplished by offering to God the spiritual sacrifices of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. For the purpose is not so much, according to the language of the Scriptures, to offer praises to God, as it is to proclaim His excellencies to men, that His praise may be made glorious in the earth—to show forth His perfections for the hallowing of His name. To know how this is done requires no very extensive erudition or profound thought. Children are taught it in the Catechism. God’s praises are shown forth, His name is hallowed, “when the word of God is taught pure and unadulterated, and we, as the children of God, lead holy lives conformably to its precepts.” Never can the design of the priesthood, to show forth God’s praises, be accomplished without using His word, in which His perfections are displayed. He is glorified by the truth, because this shows Him to be worthy of all praise, and teaches and enables men to give it.

So the Church has always taught. Our symbols not only leave room for the presumption that the priesthood of believers authorizes these to be active in the salvation of souls by the use of God’s means, but they positively affirm that it involves such authority. “Besides this one propitiatory sacrifice,” says the Apology,¹ 253, 25, “there are others, also, which are thank-offerings, as the preaching of the Gospel, affliction, and the good works of saints... These are sacrifices of the New Testament, as St. Peter says 1 Pet. 2:5.”

The reference here to the passage which speaks of the “holy priesthood,” and the enumeration of preaching among the “spiritual sacrifices” which these priests are to offer up, undeniably evinces that our Church claims for all the “holy nation” the right to preach. If anyone should still feel inclined to doubt this, we would refer him, in order that he may be fully satisfied, to

what is said on page 341, 69. It is there maintained, in proof of the position that the Church has the right to elect her own ministry, that “this is also confirmed by St. Peter, when he says: ’Ye are a royal priesthood: these words pertain properly to the true Church, which must have the power to elect and ordain ministers, because it alone has the priesthood.” If this argument is not utterly devoid of all point and power, it presupposes that the congregation of believers, being a congregation of priests, must have the right of administering the means of grace. For if the priesthood involves no such right, how could the fact of its possession be used to prove that a congregation has the right to call a minister to exercise it? What relevancy would there be in the reference to the priesthood of believers at all? If the original right to apply the means of grace is vested, not in the royal priesthood of believers, but in a privileged order, which is in no way dependent for its privileges upon such priesthood, our fathers might as well have referred to their nationality as to their faith, to prove their right of ordaining ministers. Before persons charge logic so miserably lame upon those men of marvelous strength, they should look again, lest the fathers be innocently made to bear the ignominy of the children’s absurdities. The priesthood involves the authority to use the means appointed to rescue souls from ruin; the congregation of believers, according to St. Peter, possesses such priesthood; therefore the congregation can appoint its own ministers, being in possession of all needful authority, and, therefore, able to confer it upon the persons chosen. This is the argument of the passage in question, and it is as cogent as it is clear.

What is thus taught in our Confessions, the principal writers of the Church firmly maintain. We shall have occasion, in a subsequent chapter, to refer to a number of them, and to present extracts from their writings; for the present it may suffice to let Luther speak for them all. After showing the necessity of ministers to discharge the functions of the royal priesthood, in the name of all believers, that there may be no confusion and disorder in the exercise of rights which all equally possess, he says: “Now let us speak to the papistic priests and ask them to tell us whether their priesthood has other functions than these? If it has, it is no Christian priesthood; if it has not, it is no special priesthood. Thus we hem them in on all sides: either they have no priesthood but that which was common to all Christians, or if they have, it is Satan’s priesthood.” W. 10, 1858. Again, in his commentary upon St. Peter, he remarks upon 2:9: “This belongs to a priest, that he is

God's messenger and has a divine command to proclaim His word. St. Peter says that ye shall declare the praises of God, that is, the wonderful work which God has wrought in bringing you from darkness to light: to do this is the chief work of a priest. When one brother declares to another the powerful work of God, he preaches thus: as ye are redeemed from sin, hell, and death, and all evil, and called to eternal life, so ye shall teach others, also, how they may come to the light." 51, 400.

It will not be deemed necessary to multiply passages upon one of the great Reformer's favorite themes. He is not in the habit of saying things feebly or ambiguously, and what we have presented states his conviction with such emphasis, that a score of other extracts of similar import, which might easily be collected from his works, would probably avail nothing where these fail to convince.

As, according to the Scriptures and the Church, the application of the means of grace for the saving of souls is a priestly function, and as, according to the same authority, all believers are priests, it follows, incontrovertibly, that the administration of these means belongs originally to all Christians.

But conclusive as the argument is, opponents have not failed to make strenuous efforts to evade its force. It is due to those who sincerely differ from us to hear their objections. Opponents say, that while they admit all Christians to be priests, they believe this priesthood to be spiritual, because the sacrifices which they offer are spiritual sacrifices, on which account this priesthood has nothing to do with the ministerial office; secondly, that if all are literal priests, all must be kings in the literal sense also, because all believers are kings and priests unto God; finally, if this priesthood conferred the right of teaching, then women must have the same right, because they are believers also. We shall consider these objections in the order in which they are stated.

One. We do not contend that every priest is a public minister of the Church: to confound the Christian priesthood with the pastoral office, is to conceal the truth. When we say that, according to the principles of our National Government, the sovereignty lies in the people, we are far from asserting that every man is an officer in that government. The Christian Ministry is an ecclesiastical office, exercising powers originally vested in the general priesthood. Therefore the objection...

[2 pages missing from the book.]

...but counters and painted kings, for they rule merely temporally and externally. But believers are real kings; not that they wear a golden crown, or bear a golden scepter, or deck themselves with silk and velvet and purple and gold; but they are that which is far more glorious, lords over death and the devil, hell and evil. Earthly kings can deal only with gold and silver, money and property, can possess riches and power, can destroy and harass people, can tax and oppress and flay their subjects; but they cannot help themselves, cannot prevent the smallest boil on their fingers or pain in their heads and limbs. Much less can they resist sin, death, the devil, hell, disease, calamities, etc. Therefore they are kings as counterfeits are dollars, or kings painted on cards are kings." Luther 36, 13.

Strange that a Christian should think of denying the royalty of God's children! They have no earthly realm, indeed; a golden crown, purple robes and costly jewels belong to secular kings; they are much too poor for the sons of God; but these inherit a glorious and eternal kingdom notwithstanding. They are kings in the same sphere in which they are priests—kings and priests unto God. If it be said that just as spiritual kings have nothing to do with temporal kingdoms, so spiritual priests have nothing to do with temporal churches, which seems to be the drift of the objection, we would beg the reader to observe, in the first place, that the Church of Jesus Christ is one, and is not temporal, but eternal: in this all are priests, who have indeed nothing to do with religious services in associations of the world, outside of this; and, secondly, that when local organizations of Christians are formed, which, so far as they are separate congregations, are intended for the present world only, and which, in virtue of the authority vested in the priesthood of believers, choose their officers, we do not claim that priests have any more right to interfere with such temporal ecclesiastical offices than spiritual kings have the right to usurp the prerogatives of temporal authorities in the State. The objection, therefore, utterly fails to meet the case; so far as it has any bearing on our argument, it rather serves to confirm it; for as, in the kingdom of God, we are all undeniably kings, so, in the same realm, we are all undeniably priests. Outside of this kingdom we claim no priestly prerogatives for believers, whilst in it we assert their exercise to be regulated by a divine law of order, which we are bound to observe, and which, as it requires a public ministerial office, guards against confusion in the congregation by limiting their public exercise, except in cases of necessity, to the minister.

[3.] “But if the Papists oppose us with the words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 14:34: ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak: but they are commanded to be under obedience,’ affirming that the right to preach cannot be common to all Christians because it is forbidden to women; I reply: We do not permit the dumb, or those who are otherwise unable or unqualified, to preach either. For although every one has power to preach, yet we should not choose anyone for this purpose, nor should any presume to do it, unless he has special qualifications... Paul forbids women to speak in the Church, where there are men who are capable of doing it, in order that all may be done decently and orderly, as it is much more proper and becoming for men, and they are better qualified also.” Luther 28, 50.

The impropriety of women’s preaching and praying in public we fully admit; we deem it both immodest and sinful. But to conclude from this that not all believers are priests, is simply to abuse our reason by argumentation against plain Scripture proofs; and to say that, on this account, teaching cannot belong to the common priesthood, has just as much warrant as to say that praying does not; for the command to women to keep silence in the Church, forbids public praying just as much as public preaching. Not every man has the qualifications for this, and women are not naturally as well adapted for it as men. But women are priests notwithstanding; and when in their closets they bring their offerings to the Holy One, or in their homes bring God’s precepts and promises to their children, they are exercising priestly functions as fully and as effectually as any public minister. When a case of necessity occurs, woman may bear the tidings of salvation to benighted souls, and disciple them by baptism, as validly and efficaciously as any ordained pastor; for in Christ “there is neither male nor female; ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal. 8:28. This the Church has always admitted. While priests who have not the office are not publicly to administer the means of grace, when there is a minister to be had, and while, in case there is none to be had, the duty falls upon women only when there are no men whose services can be secured, yet all have the right, though thus regulated by divine order, and have it in virtue of their Christian priesthood. There is nothing, in all these objections, to weaken our arguments in the least: they contain, on the other hand, much that serves to confirm them. It remains an unshaken truth that all believers are priests, and to the priesthood belongs

the offering of God's grace to men, by His appointed means, as well as the offering of man's gifts to God.

II. All Believers Have The Keys

The keys of the kingdom of heaven belong equally to all believers, not to a select few among them; therefore all believers have originally an equal right to exercise them for the saving of souls.

What is meant by the keys? In the celebrated Harmony of the Gospels, by three of our most distinguished theologians, Chemnitz, Leyser and Gerhard, the question is answered thus: "We must inquire, first of all, what is to be understood by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ here promises. The reader is reminded that our Saviour, in this conversation with the apostles, compares the Church to a city or house which He Himself builds. And the Church of Christ is truly His city, in which He gathers the citizens and subjects of His kingdom, and His house, in which He has deposited all His goods and treasures, such as the grace of God, remission of sins, righteousness, salvation, eternal life, etc... The delivery of the keys is an ancient symbol of a certain power committed and entrusted; for he who has the keys has access to everything. Thus when a man commits the keys to his wife, he acknowledges her as his consort, and entrusts to her the charge of the house. In the same way the keys are committed to house-keepers and stewards by their masters, and authority is thus given them over the chambers, cellars, chests, and all their contents. Thus, too, when princes are admitted into a city the keys are delivered to them by the citizens, which is a token that they submit themselves to their power, and acknowledge their authority to admit into, or exclude from the city. This figure our Lord here applies to the Church, the keys of which He promises to Peter and his colleagues, and thus teaches that He will appoint them. His house-keepers and stewards, that they may open the treasures to the worthy and admit them to their possession and use, and close them to the unworthy and profane, and banish them from the kingdom of God. Hence Paul says: 'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.' 1 Cor. 4:1. The words, "keys of the kingdom of God, therefore embrace all those functions, powers and authority, by which everything requisite for the kingdom of Christ and the government of the Church is performed, which cannot be better expressed than by this comparison of the

keys." Harm. I, 1616, (Ed. 1622.) We are not aware that the correctness of this exposition has ever been disputed; certain we are that it cannot be disputed on biblical principles. It is, moreover, the uniform interpretation of our Confessions, as is manifest both from the identification of the power of the keys with the power of bishops, and from the specification of functions involved in such power. A single passage will suffice to place this beyond controversy: "Accordingly they teach that the power of the keys or of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is a power or commission from God to preach the Gospel, to remit and to retain sins, and to attend to and administer the sacraments." The power of the keys is thus seen to be nothing else than the power of saving and edifying souls by the administration of the means of grace.

This power of the keys is originally conferred upon every believer alike—upon the whole Church of Jesus Christ, not only upon an elect portion. Many as there may be who doubt this, or even positively deny it, it is, nevertheless, susceptible of the clearest proof. The Bible teaches it directly and indirectly, and our Church, here as everywhere, meekly and firmly follows the Bible. We trust no reader will, from prejudice, reject the truth without even weighing the evidence.

[1.] There is an abundance of indirect proof to establish our position, even if there were none bearing directly upon the point. The Church is the Saviour's bride, the Lamb's wife.

"I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness." Hos. 2:19.

These were no empty words; they were accomplished, as all Jehovah's words must be. "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom," John 3:29; and Jesus hath the Bride. Therefore the apostle says: "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 1 Cor. 11:2. Again, speaking of the relation of husbands and wives, and their mutual duties, he declares:

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Eph. 5:32.

Now, as the wife has conferred upon her equal authority over the treasures of the house with the husband, though submitting herself to him, so has the Lamb's Wife, as such, the free use of the keys in the Lord's house, in submission to His holy will. For the wife does not sustain the relation of a servant to her husband, reaping many benefits, merely as a servant, from his wealth, but that of a companion, who is made joint owner of the wealth, with power to share it with others. The analogy suggested would fail in the most important point if the Church had not, as Christ's Bride, the power of the keys.

“Therefore let us, as Christians, who should know their treasure and glory, learn to glory in this marriage, rejoice in it and comfort ourselves with it, that we, by the grace of God, have attained to this exalted dignity of being, and being called the Bride of His Son... If thou art become His Bride, thou hast the keys and art the lady of the house, and art in possession of His heavenly treasures.” Luther 18, 312.

Because believers are the Lord's Bride, the Scriptures assure us that they are proprietors of all that is in His House, even of the ministers:

“Let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours.” 1 Cor. 3:21—2.

Therefore, too, the Church is called “the mother of us all.” Gal. 4:26. If the power of begetting children unto God, of regenerating fallen men, that they may receive the adoption of sons, were the prerogative only of a distinct order of men, independently of the Christian priesthood, not of all believers, then this order, not the Church, would be called the mother of God's children. But if the Church, not a select class, regenerates men, and renders them heirs of heaven, then to her, to the congregation of believers, must belong the authority to administer the means, by which alone children can be born unto God.

Moreover, that which is plainly implied in the passages referred to, is directly affirmed in others. For when the Lord says to Peter, Matt. 16:19:

“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven,”

It would be an ignoring of the context, as well as of the proportion of faith, to limit this to Peter alone. The Church is confessedly not built upon his person, but upon Christ: upon this “living stone” all Christians are founded and built up as “lively stones” into a spiritual house; and although some are first in point of time, and these, being inspired preachers of the truth, which alone supports the Church, are said to form the foundation, yet they are all coordinate in point of rank and dignity.

To understand the passage in question, we need but observe in what character Peter was addressed. This is an easy task. The Lord asked His disciples whom they believed Him to be. “Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Upon this confession of divine truth, which flesh and blood could not reveal to him, he received the keys of the kingdom.

The allusion to Peter’s name, and his designation as a rock upon which the Church is built, forms no difficulty. The truth saves; persons who believe it are established upon it as on a rock; but because the truth brings salvation, the person who declares it brings salvation also: he brings it by the truth. Therefore the confessing person is, in a secondary sense, a rock also: he stands immovable while he clings to the truth, and by his confession and consequent spread of the truth, the building progresses. As this may be said of believers confessing the truth in general, it may be said especially of inspired men. But the name of Peter merely suggests the rock upon which the Church is built, which is God’s everlasting truth. The truth which he confessed is the true rock upon which all believers stand, and which remains immovable though individuals should fall. The keys are given to Peter, as a believer and confessor of the truth; therefore they of course belong to all who believe and confess, a representative of whom he was.

The words of our Lord in Matt. 18:15—20, must banish every lingering doubt of this. Here it is the persons instructed to tell each other of their

faults when they trespass, who have the promise that their prayers shall be heard, and that Jesus is in their midst when two or three are gathered together, that form the Church of the living God, to whom the keys are delivered. "O what an advantage it would be for the pope if this passage were not in the Gospel! For here Christ gives the keys to the whole congregation, not to St. Peter. And to this place belongs also the passage in Matt. 16, where He gives the keys to St. Peter, in the name of the whole Church. For in this 18th chapter the Lord explains His own words, and shows to whom, in the preceding 16th chapter, He gave the keys in the person of St. Peter. They are conferred upon all Christians, not upon St. Peter's person." Luther 27, 363.

This is unmistakably the doctrine of our Symbols. The Treatise on the power and primacy of the pope, appended to the Smalcald Articles, after showing, in opposition to the arrogant claims of the papacy, that the words of Scripture to which we have just referred, apply just as much to the other apostles as to St. Peter, proceeds thus:

"Besides this, it must be confessed that the keys are not given to one person only, but that they belong to the whole Church, as this can be satisfactorily proved by clear and certain evidences. For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately to the whole Church, so must the keys belong immediately to the whole Church; because the keys are nothing else than the office, by which such promise is communicated to those who desire it, as also the practice of the Church evinces that she has power to ordain ministers. And Christ shows, in connection with these words, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind,' etc., to whom He gives the keys, namely, to the Church: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name,' etc. " 833, 24.

The attempt which is sometimes made to prove the irrelevancy of this passage to the question in hand, by laying stress on the fact that it is directed against papal arrogance, is manifestly a miserable failure. We admit the fact to its fullest extent; we would emphasize it; we would entreat those who deny the rights of the Christian priesthood well to consider it. For the words are a solemn protest against Romanizing tendencies beyond the borders of

Rome, as well as against the developed hierarchism within them. The design of the passage is to prove the baselessness of the pope's pretensions, that the keys belong to him alone. It shows that they do not belong exclusively to him, not even if he were Peter's successor. This is done by furnishing evidence to prove that the other apostles had the keys conferred upon them just as much as St. Peter, and, in addition to this, that these keys are given and belong to all Christians, to the whole Church, not even to the apostles only, much less only to one man among them. The argument to establish this is conclusive. The promise of the Gospel belongs immediately to the whole Church, to every believer; every believer must accordingly have power to communicate that which belongs to him, as it is God's will that it should be communicated; but the keys are the means by which alone such communication is made, or can be made, by him: therefore the keys necessarily belong to all. Further: it is a manifest fact that the Church has power to ordain ministers; the right and duty of these is to exercise the keys; but men cannot confer powers which they do not possess: therefore the keys must belong to the whole Church.

But there are those who, finding the scope of the argument against them, still strive to discover something in isolated expressions to save them from the ignominy of fighting against our Church, while they profess to be enlisted under her banner. Thus it is said that because the keys are styled the "office," by which the promise of the Gospel is communicated, therefore they can belong only to the ministers who hold the office. This looks like misery. It would be bad logic, indeed, to argue thus: The evangelical promise, and of course the power of spreading it abroad, belongs to all; but the keys impart the promise; therefore the keys belong to some. And this, too, as an argument in addition to the one presented just before, showing that they do belong to some, namely, to the apostles. Our fathers are perfectly innocent of this. They prove that the keys cannot belong to the pope alone, because they belong to all ministers, and more than this, to all believers. The word office, in the passage in question, as in scores of other instances, is evidently synonymous with function. The keys are the means of imparting the promise—their exercise is the function by which it is imparted.

Further, it is sometimes maintained that when the keys are said to belong to the whole Church, which, therefore, has the power to ordain ministers, this power is ascribed to the Church only because the ministry, who are supposed to have the power exclusively, belong to the Church. But this is

shown to be an error, not only by the argument as a whole, but also by the distinct declaration that the Church is and the power is lodged, "Where two or three are gathered together in Jesus' name." Not only the Church as a whole, but every part of it, has such power; and where two or three are gathered together, they have authority to ordain ministers to exercise the power, because they have it. No amount of prevarication can make the passage, or any part of it, say anything but that the keys belong to all Christians, and belong to them *principaliter* and *immediate*, as the Latin copy expresses it. The minister, as the steward of the house, has them mediately and at second hand, and exercises them in the name of the Master and His Bride.

The same doctrine is also stated on page 341, 678, and proved by similar arguments. The design is there to vindicate the Church's right to the election of her own ministers. In proof of this it is said: "Where the Church exists there is always the command to preach the Gospel. Therefore the churches must retain the power of calling, electing and ordaining ministers. And this power is a gift which God has, in the proper sense, bestowed upon the Church, and which cannot, by any human power, be taken away from her, as St. Paul testifies, Eph. 4:8: 'He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.'" Among these gifts, which belong to the Church, he enumerates pastors and teachers, and adds that these are given for the edification of the Body of Christ. Hence it follows that where there is a true Church there must also be the power to elect and ordain ministers; as in case of necessity a mere layman can absolve another and become his minister. So St. Augustine relates the case of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the other and then was absolved by him.

Here belong also the words of Christ, which testify that the keys are given to the whole Church, not to several particular persons, as the text says: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It will be observed that here the right to elect pastors is based upon the command given to the Church to propagate the Gospel. This propagation is the duty, not of a class supposed to be of an order superior to Christians, but of Christians, who are, on this very account, for the better performance of that duty, to elect persons who should act as their ministers, and must, therefore, have the right to elect them. This duty, and therefore, as a necessary consequence, the means of performing it, belongs inalienably to each believer, so that when it cannot be discharged through the ministry,

that is, when a case of necessity occurs, each can exercise the keys in his own right. For these are not given only to “special persons”—let the reader mark the words well—but to all. It would seem almost incredible that there should be any controversy about the doctrine of the Lutheran Church, when her Symbols are so positive and so plain.

Equally so are also her greatest teachers.

“The keys are given to him who stands by faith upon this rock. But here we must not have respect to any person who stands upon the rock; for one falls today, another tomorrow, as Peter fell. Therefore no one is designated as possessor of the keys but the Church, that is, those who stand upon this rock. The Christian Church alone has the keys, and nobody else; although the bishop and the pope may use them as persons to whom the congregation has entrusted them.” Luther 15, 394.

“The keys are not the pope’s, as he pretends, but they belong to the Church, the people of Christ, God’s people, or the holy Christian people throughout the whole world, or wherever there are Christians. For they cannot all be at Rome, unless the whole world were at Rome, which will not be for some time to come. Just as Baptism, the Lord’s Supper and the Word of God are not the pope’s, but belong to the people of Christ, and are called keys of the Church, not keys of the pope.” Ib. 25, 364.

“They should first show and establish the claim to a different power from that which is common to the Church; but instead of this they assert it as if it were already shown and established, and bring forward their falsehoods and imaginary differences, declaring that the Church has indeed the right and power of the keys, but their exercise belongs to the bishops. These are flippant assertions, which fall to pieces of themselves. Christ here gives to every Christian the power and use of the keys when He says: ‘Let him be to thee a heathen man.’ Who is meant here? Whom does He address when He says ‘to thee?’ The pope? Nay, He speaks to every Christian in particular. But when He says ‘let him be to thee,’ He not only gives the right and power, but commands and orders its use and exercise also.” *Ib.* (W.) 10, 1845.

Chemnitz, in speaking of papistic errors in regard to the administration of the means of grace, says:

“In opposition to these tyrannical notions, Luther teaches, according to the word of God, that Christ delivered and commended the keys, that is, the administration of the word and sacraments, to the whole Church.” *Exam.* 2, 20 (Ed. 1585.)

“It is to be considered, in the second place,” says Polycarp Leyser, in the *Ev. Harmony of Chemnitz, Leyser and Gerhard*,

“to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven are entrusted. For since Christ here says to Peter, 'I will give to thee, the Papists would elicit from this also the primacy of Peter, which he is supposed to have received over all, even over the apostles; upon which again they build the primacy of all those who are their successors in the See of Rome. But here we must observe the context of the whole history, in order that we may arrive at the certain, true and indubitable sense. Christ asked all the apostles, whom they declared Him to be? Peter answered in the name of all, and confessed their common faith. What Christ said again to him must, therefore, be referred equally to all. Indeed, what He here declares to Peter alone, He presently, in Matt. 18:18, applies not only to the apostles, but to the whole Church.” II, Cap. 85, p. 1619.

The illustrious Gerhard uses the fact, that the keys were given to the whole Church, as the first scriptural proof for the Church's right to elect her own ministers, and notices an objection thus:

“Bellarmine objects that Peter received the keys in the name of the Church, in the sense that he received them for the benefit and use of the whole Church, and that he would not use them himself alone, but transmit them to his successors, and communicate them to other bishops and presbyters. Answer: We admit that Peter received the keys for the benefit and use of the Church, and that he had them in common with other bishops and priests; but we deny that this is to be understood in an exclusive sense, as though the keys were given to Peter and the bishops alone, and not to the whole Church. For as Peter confessed Christ in the name of the Church, not only in the sense that this confession inured to the benefit of the whole Church, but also in this, that in Peter confessing, the whole Church confessed, so also the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter in the name of the Church, not only because they were given to him for the benefit and use of the Church, but also because the Church received them in the person of Peter, that she might exercise them herself.” *Loc. Theol.* 24, §87, p. 85.

III. Proof From Biblical Precepts And Examples

The truth, that the grace of God and the means of imparting it to others, are the glorious heritage of all believers, not merely of a select class, is still further confirmed and illustrated by numerous precepts and examples of Holy Scripture.

[1.] The precepts which imply this are so abundant, that the only difficulty is to make the selection. For every command to teach and edify, to admonish and comfort, with which the Scriptures abound, must either be confined to the ministerial office, or must be admitted to involve the truth for which we contend, that all believers are equally heirs to the means by which alone such command can be obeyed. Few will be so desperate as to put such restrictions upon God’s words which are addressed to His children in general.

“For no one can deny,” says Luther,

“that every Christian has God’s word, and is taught of God and anointed as priest, as Christ says, John 6,45: ’They shall be all taught of God,” and Ps. 45:7: “God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.’ These companions are the Christians, Christ’s brethren, who are consecrated with Him as priests, as St. Peter also says: ’Ye are a royal priesthood, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Pet. 2:9. But if it is true that they have God’s word, and are anointed of Him, they are also under obligations to confess it, and teach and propagate it, as Paul says:”We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken, we also believe and therefore speak. 2 Cor. 4:13. And in Ps. 51:13, the prophet says of all Christians: ’I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” Thus it is obvious, here again, that a Christian not only has the right and power to teach God’s word, but is bound to do it, if he would save his soul and retain divine grace.” 22, 146.

For he has plain commands to this effect. Thus St. Paul says to the saints and brethren at Colosse, not merely to the bishops:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.” Col. 3:16.

Again he tells the Ephesians, who are now light in the Lord, that they should “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Eph. 5:11. To the Thessalonians he speaks solacing words about the last times, and adds: “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thess. 4:18. And no one can possibly have read the New Testament carefully without having found frequent instances of precepts, encouraging us to exhort and admonish one another in the Lord.

“I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” Rom. 15:14.

It is evident that the ability to edify must also be exercised.

“Edify one another, even as also ye do... Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” 1 Thess. 5:11, 14.”

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.” James 5:19—20.

Now, these instructions to Christians, which are met with so frequently in the Scriptures, certainly cannot mean anything else but that the word of God belongs to all alike, and should be used to mutual edification. For no believer will be likely to suppose that Christians are to edify, admonish, rebuke, comfort one another by any other means than the word of God, which is His power unto salvation. If there be a reader to whom these passages seem inconclusive as proofs for our position, because they may all be referred to Christians in their private intercourse with each other, we would entreat him to consider, that the question here is whether Christians have the right and power to use the means of grace, not whether it is right to use them in this or that particular manner. We by no means identify the Christian priesthood with the pastoral office: our Church never gave the least countenance to such confusion: but we do maintain, and we have given reasons for maintaining, that all Christians have the right and the duty of saving souls by using the only means through which they can be saved.

In what order this is to be done is a separate question, the decision of which in no way effects the fundamental one in hand, which is one of right, not of order. The question of order will receive our attention in another place. The passages do conclusively prove that all Christians have the right to use the word of God for the conversion and edification of souls.

[2.] Furthermore, numerous examples of such use, recorded in Scripture, also prove it. Some such have already been mentioned, showing how Christians, in their joy and gratitude, told the people around them of Christ and the blessedness He came to bring. After the establishment of the Christian Church, this proclamation of truth, by persons not in office, by no means ceased, but rather increased with the growth of the kingdom. Zeal for God's glory and man's good impelled them to preach the glad tidings of the Gospel.

“Thus did St. Stephen, Acts 6:7, to whom the Apostles had not commended the office of preaching; still he preached and did great wonders and miracles among the people. So did Philip the deacon, Stephen's colleague, upon whom again the office of preaching was not conferred. Acts 8:5. So also did Apollo. Acts 18:25.” Luther 22, 147.

And so did Aquila and Priscilla, who “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Acts 18:26. If still other examples should be desired, we would refer to Acts 8:3—4, where it is said: “As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the word.” It would require an almost incredible degree of attachment to a preconceived opinion for a Christian to suppose, that those who were scattered abroad by the persecution were all incumbents of the pastoral office, when every house was entered and men and women were scattered abroad. Even Loehe, who rejects the doctrine here set forth, admits that here there were lay-preachers, (Kirche u. Amt, 43.)

That it was possible for these persons, as it is for all others, to do wrong, we of course admit; we admit, too, that the example of fallible men is never, in itself, sufficient to prove that which they do to be right; but here we have examples which illustrate the right, proved by other evidences, and which, therefore, afford confirmation to our argument, especially as the wrong, if such there had been in this lay-preaching, would not have been left unrebuked.

IV. Errors Involved In The Denial Of Common Rights

As a final proof for the truth of this doctrine, that all believers have the right to administer the means of grace, we would call attention to the grave errors which its rejection involves.

[1.] It has led to the error of making the efficacy of the means of grace dependent upon the administrator, not upon the administration according to God's word. This is expressly asserted by men who limit these means to a select class. "We are convinced," says Pastor Grabau, (*Hirtenbrief*, II, 3) "that a person arbitrarily chosen by the congregation, can neither give absolution nor distribute the body and blood of Christ, but that he distributes merely bread and wine." And again: "Hence it is clear that, ordinarily, God will bestow His blessings by the word and sacraments only through the ministerial office." *Ib.* p. 45.

Statements similar to these are to be found in numerous publications by professed Lutherans, both in this country and in Europe. And if these persons usually insert clauses, by which they would fain preserve the efficacy of the means of grace in themselves, independently of their administrators, this just as usually makes the impression, upon unbiased minds, of an amazing inconsistency. Pastor Grabau says that "the office is not merely an order which God has established for the preaching of His word, but a divinely powerful, ministerial means, to pour and plant into our hearts the sacred sense and meaning of the word and its fullness of grace." When it is conceded that notwithstanding this, laymen may effectually exhort and comfort, and even absolve, in case of necessity, it is not easy to reconcile this with the statement just quoted. Strive as they may to avoid it, the doctrine of such persons implies that the special office is necessary to give efficiency to the means of grace, and that when grace is conferred without the office, it is on the same principle that its bestowal is admitted to be possible, in a case of necessity, even without the divinely appointed means, inasmuch as God is not bound to them.

It is easy to perceive that such a doctrine is subversive of the truth that they derive their efficacy alone from God's appointment and promise. The office is not only conceived to be a means of grace itself, but a superior means, upon which the efficacy of the word and the sacraments depends. For, although this is sometimes said to be an unfair presentation of the view of those who deny that the keys belong equally to all believers, inasmuch as

they would not have the office called a means of grace, but only a means of administration, yet it is obvious that if the treasures of divine grace exist, indeed, for all men, and are intended to be offered by the appointed means to all, but can be obtained only through the special ecclesiastical minister, the bestowal of the treasures is conditioned just as much by the minister as by the word and sacraments.

And when it is denied that believers are all priests, and the administration of the means of grace is one of the sacerdotal powers which all enjoy—that the keys belong to all, and can be exercised by all—and when it is maintained that these rights and powers belong only to an order called the ministry, it is impossible consistently to hold any other view than this, that the means are efficacious in the hands of pastors, because they have the keys, but never so in the hands of any others, who have them not; for unless this is maintained it cannot be seen what advantage is to be derived from denying that the priesthood has the right of using the keys, and that this use is limited to the public ministerial office merely by a divine law of order.

[2.] As a consequence of this, the rejection of these common Christian rights deprives us of the certainty of God's grace, and, therefore, prevents our hearts from attaining to full peace in Jesus. For our comfort depends not on our past or present experience, but upon God's unchanging grace; and if there should be the least uncertainty in our minds whether God has really made us recipients of that grace, our peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost, would necessarily depart. We cannot rest assured and peaceful in faith, when we have no solid ground for faith to rest upon. But if the keys are given to an order separate and distinct from the universal priesthood of believers, not to these in general, and their efficacy is dependent upon their administration by members of that order, we never can be fully sure that grace is ours, and very frequently we must be troubled by doubts.

For the question must then arise, not only whether the person who dispenses the means comes to us as one of the order to which this right is confined, but also whether there may not be some defect in his title to such dignity. Especially when persons make the right of membership in such order dependent on succession, whether episcopal or presbyterial—when they maintain the order to be self-propagating, as those who deny the priesthood of all believers usually do—does such question become tormenting. Whether the baptism and the absolution which we received for the remission of sins, and on the ground of which we would bid defiance to earth and

hell, if we knew they were given by our Maker, was administered by a person of the authorized order, and whether, even if the appearances were such as to prove him duly received into the order, there was no defective or worthless link in the chain of succession somewhere in the past, on account of which none subsequently could be duly authorized, would be a momentous and harassing inquiry to one who is convinced that the communication of grace is made only through the ministerial office.

That we do not find many troubled thus, in fact, does not prove us mistaken in viewing this as a consequence of such false theory; it only proves that among those who teach it, there are not many who have carefully considered the consequences. Generally, sincere men are better than their false views, which influence their own hearts but little, while they conscientiously hold fast truths with which such falsehoods are inconsistent. But whatever may be the fact, or its explanation, in this regard, it cannot be denied that the legitimate consequence of limiting grace to the ministrations of ecclesiastical officers, is the uncertainty of such grace in proportion to the uncertainty respecting the validity of their official claims.

[3.] Another consequence of such false theory is that it excludes the administration of the means of grace by laymen, even in case of necessity. It is scarcely needful for us to repeat that, according to the theory we are opposing, those who have not the priesthood cannot exercise it, and those who have not the keys cannot use them, under any circumstances. Our Symbols base the right of laymen to officiate, in case of necessity, not upon the supposed abrogation of all law, when an emergency arises, but upon the original right of all Christians to spread the Gospel, which is to be done through the public ministry, for the sake of order in the congregation, but which is to be done in any way where the rule of order will not apply: for the main thing is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to which the order in which it is to be done must always be subservient. "Where the Church is, there is always the command to preach the Gospel. Therefore the Church must retain the power to demand, elect and ordain ministers... As also in case of necessity a mere layman may absolve another and become his pastor." B. of Concord 341, 67.

That this is the ground upon which Luther based it, is known to all who are acquainted with his works. He acknowledged no right to do wrong by necessity. If the right to administer the means of grace belongs exclusively to an order, by God's command, no necessity, however urgent it may be,

can give it to one who is not of that order. The first necessity always is to do and suffer God's will, and all departures from this, on the pretense of its necessity, is a mere effort to justify a palpable sin by a pretense as palpably vain. Necessity, the most extreme, will not justify the robbing of our neighbor in order to purchase bread, or the murder of a relative in order to obtain his property by inheritance. Order will yield to necessity, but right never. The members of a household may have an order in the administration of affairs by a steward, and submit to it fully in ordinary times; but when they need bread and cannot secure it in the way of the established order, they will have it notwithstanding; they might rather starve than steal, but they would be guilty of supreme folly if they would rather starve than break through the usual order and help themselves, when they have an abundance in store. They would take that which is their own, whether according to the appointed order or not. The teaching respecting the case of necessity should direct doubting persons to the truth, if everything else failed. For there are none of the Lutheran name, so far as we know, who deny the powers of the laity in cases of necessity; that is, there are none who deny it expressly, though many do so by implication. But it is strange that persons think of exercising powers, in cases of necessity, which they have not, and which no necessity can bestow. Such an absurdity probably never even occurred to Luther and his coadjutors. He insisted on the sacerdotal rights and powers of all believers, on the right of congregations to elect their own ministers, because they had the priesthood and keys, for the exercise of which ministers are appointed, and on the right to exercise these themselves when necessity required it. The following passage contains a clear expression of his doctrine:

“That I may say it still more plainly, if a number of pious laymen were taken prisoners and placed in a wilderness, without a priest consecrated by a bishop, and these agreed among themselves to elect one of their number, whether married or not, and commit to him the office of baptizing, administering the Eucharist, absolving and preaching, he would be unquestionably a priest, as much so as if all bishops and popes had ordained him. Hence it is, that in case of necessity, every one can baptize and absolve, which would not be possible if we were not all priests.” 21, 282.

The system which limits the power of the keys to the ministry as a special order, cannot, consistently, admit that, in case of necessity, any Christian can use them; for this would involve the double error of supposing that necessity gives powers which are not possessed without it, and, secondly, that it makes right what is positively wrong without it.

[4.] The denial of the doctrine that the administration of the means of grace belongs primarily to all believers also trenches upon justification by faith alone. For when it refers us exclusively to the public ministerial office for the grace which is offered through the appointed means, and teaches that these are effectual, ordinarily, only when administered by the authorized order, it is not difficult to perceive that something else than faith is made essential here to Justification, namely, the intervention of the minister, and our submission to his acts. To take the Bible and believe it, to hear a neighbor urge its truths and accept them humbly in faith, gives me no pardon and peace, according to this theory, because the truth is not brought to me by the proper authority. The official ministerial work must first be done before the soul can be declared just in Jesus. A ceremonial law must first be complied with—a law which makes it requisite to receive the word and sacraments from the hands of duly authorized clergymen before we can have grace unto salvation. Let it not be said that if this is in conflict with the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith, then the necessity of the means of grace must be also. It is not so; the difference is manifest. The means of grace are necessary, not as ceremonial observances, but as means for the bestowal of blessings, channels for the conveyance of grace. If there could be faith without them, there would also be salvation without them. But there is no faith without them; and we must always use them, that God may always convey to us the necessary grace to produce and preserve faith.

If the word and sacraments were not means of grace, and the Church still insisted upon their being necessary conditions of its bestowal, there might be some reason for supposing their necessity as much in conflict with justification by faith alone, as the necessity of ministerial mediation. The doctrine of the sacraments held by those denominations which deny them to be means of grace, but still insist upon their use as necessary to salvation because God has commanded it, not because they convey blessings for the saving of the soul, is just as little evangelical as that of the ministry which is here controverted. It sets up a ceremonial observance as necessary to salvation, and thus conflicts with the doctrine of justification by faith alone. But

those who claim the mediation of a public minister to be necessary to save souls, take pains to ward off the suspicion, that they suppose the grace to flow through the pastor, as through a necessary channel. They still speak of the grace as being conveyed by the divine word and the holy Sacraments which the pastor administers. But if the truth is always in the Scriptures, and the grace in the sacraments of His appointment, how could a person be justified by faith alone, if, in addition to his believing reception of the truth, it were necessary to receive official absolution before his sins are forgiven: The whole theory of those who deny the rights of the common priesthood tends to dim, if not to destroy the sun of our system of truth—justification by faith alone. It does so, not only by making a kind of ceremonial observance a condition of pardon, but also by maintaining the necessity of other mediation, between God and man, than Christ's. For if our Lord's mediation suffices, then is the promise of the Gospel ours, immediately in the word, and requires no further intervention of an order, endowed with special powers, to impart it or render it effectual, just as little as it does to render our offerings acceptable to God.

It has thus, by evidences clear and cogent, been shown that the administration of the means of grace belongs originally to all believers. The priesthood of all believers involves this; the bestowal of the keys upon all, involves it; the commands to teach and edify, which are given to all, and the examples of obedience recorded, involve it; and, finally, the errors and inconsistencies which its rejection involves, admonish us that it is the only safe ground. We cannot see the least, reason for standing in doubt in regard to the question; the Bible and the Church speak plainly and decisively. Nor can many who reverence the Scriptures find it in their hearts utterly to condemn the Church's doctrine, when they once understand it well. Few will deny the father's and mother's right to exercise priestly functions in their houses, and use the keys in their families, or doubt the efficacy of the means thus used; few will deny the ability of laymen effectually to teach and comfort one another, or doubt their authority to do so; few would suppose that the word declared in heathen lands by one who had no higher claim to authority for doing so than that of believing in Him whom he preached, is utterly null and void. But this teaching in one's own family, this admonishing or instructing brethren in private, this preaching to heathens where there are no organized congregations and ministers, does not

render the pastoral office unnecessary, it may be said. Such functions do not render every man a minister.

The ministerial office may exist, without being interfered with in the least, even admitting the rights of the laity thus claimed. This is precisely what we maintain. We have been contending for common Christian rights and powers; we come next to consider how these rights, which belong alike to all, are to be exercised in the congregation.

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1. The references are to the page and paragraph of Mueller's Edition of the Book of Concord.↩

3. The Ministerial Calling

ALTHOUGH THE MEANS OF GRACE, through which life and salvation are imparted to men, are the property of all believers, God has, for the sake of order, appointed a special calling to administer these means publicly, in the name of all; and this calling is the ministerial office.

From the common possession of property by a number of individuals, it does not follow that each must be its administrator for himself. Reason and experience both teach that their common property can be best administered by one person, who acts as steward, or administrator, in the name of all. Every Christian is possessor of the priesthood and keys, and has the right and duty of exercising them. He may do this by his own immediate action, or by the employment of another to do it in his name. The public administration of the keys is to be committed, where a congregation exists, to some person or persons who are skilled and qualified for this, and who are to do it for the congregation by whom they are called; and when a call is given and accepted, all the congregation observes the order thus introduced, and leaves the keys of the kingdom, so far as their public use is concerned, to the chosen public officer, without in the least relinquishing the priesthood and privilege of the keys, as a right of each individual believer, or the authority to use them directly where the established order does not apply, i.e., in private, or where there is no congregation.

I. Existence Of A Special Ministerial Calling

There is a special pastoral office, or ministerial calling in the Church, the duty of which is to administer the means of grace publicly. The Scriptures teach the existence of such office, and its limitation to those who are specially called to discharge its functions.

“Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?” 1 Cor. 12:29.

Evidently they are not, and the questions were designed to make it plain that they are not. Not all have the gifts requisite for, nor the call to the public office. "How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? Rom. 10:15. Therefore Christians are urged to pray for the mission of men with proper qualifications for the office.

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.” Matt. 9:37—8.

It would be mere presumption for all, indiscriminately, to undertake the public office; for it cannot, in the nature of the case, be held by all, and some are utterly unqualified for it, even if all could hold it. That it is in possession of those only who are chosen for this purpose, or who are sent, the passages quoted sufficiently prove. They who run, though the Lord has not sent them, disturb the peace of Jerusalem and bring the sin of arrogance and uncharitableness upon their souls. Perfectly coincident with the Scriptures are the statements of our Confessions.

“Concerning Church government it is taught, that no one should teach or preach publicly in the Church, or administer the sacraments, without a regular call.” Augsb. Conf. Art. 14.

While the rights of the priesthood are everywhere maintained, the special rights of the public office are also set forth and defended. The two were never confounded by Luther or the Lutheran Church.

“It is true, all Christians are priests, but they are not all pastors. For besides being a Christian and priest, he must also have an office and a parish entrusted to him. The call and command make a pastor and preacher.” Luther 39, 225.

This is not merely the doctrine of the great Reformer’s maturer years; he taught so from the beginning of the Reformation, notwithstanding that some accuse him of changing his views. In 1521 he tells Emser: “Thou sayest falsely that I make bishops, priests and pastors of all laymen, and teach that they may officiate without a call; and, holy as thou art, concealest the fact that I also write, that no one should presume to administer the office without being called, except in extreme necessity.” 27, 255. So the most illustrious writers of the Church always taught. Thus Chemnitz says: “All Christians are indeed priests, because they bring spiritual sacrifices to God, 1 Pet. 2; Rev. 1; and all can and should teach the word of God in their families. Deut. 6; 1 Cor. 14. But not every one can assume and arrogate to himself the public office of the word and sacraments.” Exam. 2, 216. The special ministerial office exists in the Church beside the universal priesthood, neither interfering with the other.

II. This Special Ministry A Public Office

The special Ministry is a PUBLIC office of the Church. The public administration of the means of grace in the Church, is its design. Our Confessions lay stress on this point of publicity, as it is essential to the understanding of the character of the office. It will be observed that a distinction is always made between the right to teach, and the right to teach publicly in the congregation; the former belongs to all believers, the latter to such as are called to the public office. Not as though a right belonging to all Christians extended only so far as it could be privately exercised, and ceased where its public exercise is demanded. The right remains the same in all cases: it is not abrogated by the regulation of its exercise. But one way of exercising it is preferable to another; the immediate exercise of it by each individual would render the orderly activity of a congregation impossible.

Therefore its exercise is regulated; the authority, which every believer has, must be used according to God's will, that all may be done decently and in order; and this will is, that since one can accomplish what many, acting at the same time, cannot, the many should appoint an agent to officiate for them all, the rights of each being exercised by one in the name of all. The right to officiate publicly belongs only to him, who is called, because the call delegates to him the individual rights of each. For any individual to undertake the exercise of his priestly authority in such a case, would be a manifest interference with the equal rights of others, who exercise them through the duly authorized agent of all. The individual, although he is a priest, and possesses the keys, just as fully as any person can, still cannot act in the name of others without their appointment. But this activity on behalf of others, by their authority, is that which is peculiar to the office. "No one should teach or preach publicly, in the Church, or administer the sacraments, without a regular call." For since all believers have equal rights in this respect, he who would exercise them publicly, while all the others remain quiet, must have the authority of all. In other respects, the immediate exercise of our common sacerdotal powers is unrestricted.

When one presumes to teach publicly, where the people have chosen another to this office, he commits a grievous sin by trampling on the delegated rights of the congregation. But when one teaches his children at home, or edifies his neighbors by expounding the word of God in private circles, not in any official capacity; or when he goes where there is no congregation, and strives, publicly or privately, to form one, he is doing what every priest has authority to do, notwithstanding the existence of an office which is intended to administer the means of grace publicly in the Church. For private teaching interferes not in the least with the public functions of the ministry, and teaching a company collected together, where there is no congregation, interferes not in the least with the teaching of the public ministry in the Church. Wherever our Confessions and fathers speak of the office, it will be noticed that this limitation of special pastoral privileges to the public administration in the Church, is always expressed or implied; and that for the exercise of the keys, beyond this and beside this, no official character or call is necessary.

III. The Functions Performed In The Name Of The Church

The special Ministry officiates IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH. Its essential powers are already in the hands of the Christian priesthood, so that the pastoral office was not instituted for the purpose of bestowing powers upon the people of God which they could and did not otherwise possess. It was intended as an order in which the common rights of the priesthood should be exercised, where circumstances will not permit each to officiate for himself. These circumstances always exist where there are many with equal rights, the exercise of which, by each individually, would produce such confusion as to render the attainment of the end in view difficult, if not impossible. Therefore this order is established, that a minister should be chosen who should administer the means of grace publicly, as the agent of the rest. That this is Luther's doctrine, is now denied by comparatively few and is too plain from his works to admit of reasonable denial. That it is the doctrine of Holy Scripture can be questioned only by those who are unwilling to accord to Christians the rights which, as has been shown on previous pages, the word of God confers upon them. To remove all doubt the scriptural testimony is adduced as exhibited by standard writers of the Church, showing that it was the constant doctrine of the Church in harmony with the Scriptures. "But one will object," says Luther,

"...how if one is not called: then he dare not preach, as thou hast thyself often taught. I reply, the Christian is to be considered, as regards this subject, in two different situations. In the first place, if he is in a region where there are no other Christians, he needs no other call than that he is a Christian, internally called and anointed of God. There he is bound to preach to the erring heathens and unbelievers, and to teach the Gospel, by the requirement of brotherly love, though no man should call him...

Secondly, if he is where there are other Christians, who have the same power and right as himself, he must not put himself forward, but must wait until he is called and put forward, that he may teach and preach in the place and at the command of others." 22, 146.

"But perhaps thou wilt say: If it is true that we are all priests, and entitled to preach, what must the consequences be? Is there to be no difference among the people, and are the women to be priests also? Answer: Under the New Testament none should wear the tonsure; not because it is evil in itself, for one might be shorn entirely if he chose; but because no difference should be made between the priest and the common Christian, which faith cannot bear; those who are now called priests, should all be laymen like the rest, only that several officers should be chosen by the congregation to preach. So there is a difference only with regard to the office to which one is chosen by the congregation; in the sight of God there is no difference; and several are selected from the multitude only to this end, that they may, in the name of the congregation, administer the office which all have, not that one has more power than another." 51, 387.

"We are all ordained priests in baptism, as St. Peter says, 1 Pet. 2:9: 'Ye are a royal priesthood, an holy nation,' and as is said in Rev. 5:10: 'Thou hast made us kings and priests unto God.'" For if we had no higher consecration than that which the pope or bishop gives, we never could be priests, nor administer the Lord's Supper, nor preach, nor give absolution. Therefore the bishop's consecration is simply the same as if he, in the name and on behalf of the whole assembly, took one from the multitude, who all have equal powers, and commanded him to exercise this power for the others. Just as if ten brothers, sons of a king, and all alike heirs, elected one to administer the inheritance for them: they would all be kings and equal in power, and still the government be in the hands of one." 21, 381.

“Therefore the Holy Ghost has intentionally avoided giving the name priest, in the New Testament, to an apostle or any office: but it is the name only of the baptized or Christians—an innate, hereditary name from baptism: for none of us is born an apostle, preacher, teacher or pastor in baptism, but we are all born priests; afterwards persons are chosen from such born priests, and elected to such offices, who exercise the office on behalf of us all.” 31, 350.

And this is the doctrine of Luther’s followers generally. While the order of the ministry is always observed, and persons are warned against overthrowing it, the special ministry still is a ministry of the priesthood, discharging the functions of this in its name. The statements of our most distinguished teachers are inconsistent with any other theory. Thus Leyser says:

“As the public office of the Church belongs, ordinarily, only to those who are properly called by the Church, who have the authority, in the name of God and the Church, to loose and bind their hearers, so in case of necessity this authority recurs to any Christian. For as the power of loosing and binding is promised to Peter, in Matt. 16:19, and given to all the apostles, in John 20:23, so it is bestowed by our Lord upon the Church, in Matt. 18:18, which can delegate it, ordinarily, to persons properly called; but extraordinarily, and in case of necessity, every true member of the Church has precisely the same right, and may use it for God’s glory and his neighbors’ welfare.” Harm. Ev. I, Cap. 92, 1748.

And Gerhard:

“Augustine writes that the Lord gave these keys to His Church, that what she loosed should be loosed in heaven, and what she bound should be bound in heaven. This judgment of Augustine is confirmed by all those texts of Scripture, in which the Church is called wife, Ps. 45:10, spouse, John 3:29, and mother, Ps. 68:13. The keys are delivered to the housewife by the master of the house; so Christ, the Lord of God’s House, which is the Church, Heb. 3:6; Tim. 3:15, has given the keys to His spouse. The ministers use them, as stewards, 1 Cor. 4:1, in the name of the Church, and only ministerially.” Loc. 24, §87, p. 85.

IV. The Office Instituted For The Sake Of Order

The public ministry acts in the name of all FOR THE SAKE OF ORDER. The regulation, by which one acts in the name of many, is not a moral nor a ceremonial law, but simply a law of order. It is required, not by the moral, but by the natural necessities of the case. The fundamental law on the subject is this: “Let all things be done decently and in order.” 1 Cor. 14:40. The power to administer the means of grace belongs originally to all alike; the ministry of the Church is a divine arrangement, made necessary by the fact that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”

Its design is the orderly public administration of these means in the congregation, where confusion must necessarily ensue, if each exercised his right without reference to the equal rights of others. That our Symbols teach this, we have already proved by showing that they teach the right of all believers to the means of grace, and that they maintain the necessity of a call for their public administration in the congregation. And Luther teaches it expressly.

“The Christian Church alone has the keys,” he says, “no one else; although the bishop and the pope may use them as persons to whom they have been committed by the congregation. A pastor exercises the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Holy Supper, and performs other offices in the service of the Church, not in his own name, but in that of the Church; for he is a servant of the whole Church, to which the keys are given, even though he were a knave. For if he does it instead of the Church, then the Church does it; and if the Church does it, then God does it. There must be ministers. For if the whole congregation would rush upon the child to baptize, they would probably drown it, as a thousand hands would be employed. This would never do. Therefore we must have a minister to do it in the name of the congregation.” 15, 395.

No language can be plainer than this. We would not know how more emphatically to state our Church’s doctrine, to wit, that the keys belong to all believers, but are committed by them to ministers, for the sake of order, to be publicly used in and for the congregation. This was Luther’s doctrine always. We present several extracts from works of different dates, in confirmation of this.

“Because all Christians are called out of darkness, they are all obligated to proclaim the power of Him who called them. This we admit, that many should not preach at once, although they all have power. For when Paul spake, Barnabas was silent. Acts 14:2. Must Barnabas therefore have been without the authority to speak? All things must be done decently and in order. 1 Cor. 14,40. But this does not abolish the common right to the office of preaching, but establishes it. For if not all had the power of preaching, but only one, what need would there be for commanding and observing order? Just because they all have power and authority to preach, is it necessary to observe order.” 28, 47.

These passages were written in 1522 and 1527. In 1536 he writes:

“This is not to be so understood as if we rejected the office of teaching and administering the sacraments in the Church; for this is necessary; there must be a certain order observed, according to which certain persons do this, that no confusion may arise.” W. 6, 2119.

In 1539:

“There must be bishops, pastors or preachers, who publicly and specially administer the four things mentioned above, on account and in the name of the Church, but by the appointment of Christ, as St. Paul says, Eph. 4:11. For the multitude cannot do this, but must commit it, or have it committed, to an individual. What would the consequences otherwise be, if each would speak and officiate, and none would give way to the other? It must be committed to one alone, and he must be permitted to preach alone. The rest must all hold their peace and consent to it.” 25, 364.

In another work of the same year he says:

“Thus every Christian has and performs such priestly works. But besides this, there is a common office which proclaims the doctrine publicly, and for this pastors and preachers are required. For not all can attend to the office in the congregation, and it is not proper to baptize and administer the Eucharist in every house. Therefore several must be elected and ordained, who are qualified to preach, and who may exercise themselves in the Scriptures, who shall hold the office of teaching and defend the doctrine, and who shall also, in the name of the congregation, administer the sacraments, so that we may know who has been baptized, and all things may be done in order. Otherwise a Church would be slow to arise, if every neighbor preached to the other, and all did everything without order.” 40, 174.

Finally, in 1544, he declares:

“When we assemble in the congregation, and I preach, this is not my word and act, but is done for the sake of you all, and in the name of the whole Church. For there must be one to lead and speak the word, by the command and consent of the rest, who all confess the truth by hearing it, and thus are engaged in teaching it also. So when a child is baptized, this is not done alone by the pastor, but also by the sponsors, as witnesses, yea, by the whole Church. For baptism, like the word of God, and Christ Himself, is the common property of all Christians.” 17, 250.

The same is implied also in statements already presented from other writers; but others also make express mention of the divine law of order as the basis of the ministerial office. Thus Leyser:

“Notwithstanding this, the right of every believer, even the humblest, which God has given with regard to the keys, remains unimpaired. For as every citizen of a free city, as many as inhabit it, has, as respects the republic, a common right and equal liberty, and as they elect senators and a consul notwithstanding, for the sake of order, to whom they commit the keys and statutes of the city, that he may administer them in the name of all, and govern the republic in accordance with them: so is it also with the citizens of the city of God. They are indeed a communion of Saints, and all things are theirs, whether Paul or Peter, or life or death, or things present or future. 1 Cor. 3:21. They possess all things under one Head, which is Christ, who by the merits of His blood has acquired everything necessary to salvation for His Church, and for every member of it in particular, even for the least; but yet, for the sake of order, they elect certain persons, to whom they delegate the administration of the keys of the kingdom, such as among us are called deacons, pastors, doctors, bishops or superintendents, etc., that thus all may be done decently and in order, according to Paul’s doctrine, 1 Cor. 14.” Harm. Ev. 85, 1821.

And Gerhard says:

“If no regular minister of the Church is present, the administration of baptism is not to be omitted, because it is by no means essential to this sacrament that the administrator be a minister of the Church: in such case the order yields to necessity.” Loc. 21, § 34, p. 96.

But whilst this ministerial arrangement, as our Church incontrovertibly teaches, is made for the sake of order, it is also certain that

V. The Activity In The Name Of All Is By Divine Appointment

The ministry acts in the name of all BY DIVINE APPOINTMENT. It is no mere human arrangement, originating in the requirements of expediency. The order to be attained is God’s will, and the means of attaining it by the ministerial activity of one, in the name of many, are God’s institution. Expediency does indeed require the office; but if men did not see it to be expedient, it would be none the less necessary; God sees it to be so; it is a divine institution to accomplish an object, which can be accomplished only thus. Let no one say that, by the doctrine set forth, we render it a mere matter of indifference whether congregations have the office or not. Christian congregations are obligated to have it, not by a ceremonial law indeed, but by a law of order, which God has been pleased to establish, and which His children are therefore bound to observe. That the ministry is a divine institution, we could not doubt, in view of the Scripture proofs which establish it. For, in the first place, we find prophecies in the Old Testament that God would give public ministers under the new dispensation:

“I will give you pastors according to my own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Jer. 3:15.

And this, like all God's words, was fulfilled. For, secondly, we read that the Son of God appointed the apostles to be teachers: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. 28:18. Thus were the seventy disciples also called, according to Luke 10. And not only were these first preachers, who were immediately called to the office of the ministry by the Lord, thus incumbents of a divine office: those who are mediately called are so just as well. For, thirdly, those who are called through the mediation of men, are represented as called of God also. St. Paul says to the elders of Ephesus, who were not called immediately:

"Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."
Acts 20:28.

Again, in 1 Cor. 12:28—9, we are told:

"God hath set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?"

God hath done this, not man. So again, in Eph. 4:11:

"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

The divine institution of the ministry is proved, fourthly, by the fact that those who were immediately called of God, recognize colleagues in those mediately called. Thus says St. Peter: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who also am an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ." 1

Pet. 5:1. And St. Paul declares Tychicus to be “a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord,” Col. 4:7, and Epaphroditus a “companion in labor and fellow-soldier.” Phil. 2:25. This divine institution of the office our Church attests, just as distinctly as it does the common right of all believers to the administration of the means which the officer is called to exercise, in their name, for the sake of order. Our Confession declares:

“The Church has a divine command to appoint preachers and deacons; and because it is very consoling to know that it is God’s will to preach and work through men, and through those who are appointed by men, it is right to respect and honor such appointment, especially over against the satanic Anabaptists, who despise and revile such appointment, together with the office of preaching and the corporeal word.” 203, 12—13.

So Luther taught from the beginning. While he declared that “the right of the community requires that one, or as many as the congregation choose, should be elected and received to discharge these offices publicly, in the name of all those who have the same right, so that there may not a miserable confusion arise among the people of God, and the Church may not become a Babel;” he also asserted that this is required by the word of God, not merely by a natural necessity. “We all have authority to preach,” he says,

“...indeed we must preach God’s name—it is commanded us in 1 Pet. 2:9—10. But St. Paul, notwithstanding this, establishes an order in 1 Cor. 14:40. As in a house there must be an order: for if all the heirs undertook to be masters, affairs would be badly managed; but if all agree in the selection of one, into whose hands they commit the management, while they withdraw, everything moves along well: so here must one be chosen, that the order may not be reversed.” 12,847.

This regulation, moreover, is not made by the apostle in the exercise of the liberty which belongs to all Christians in things indifferent. It is God’s regulation in a matter that is not indifferent. This too is clearly expressed by the great Reformer:

“Paul says to his disciple, Titus: ‘For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.’ Tit. 1:5. He who believes that the Spirit of Christ here speaks and orders through Paul, must be convinced that this is a divine institution and order, that in every city there should be a number of bishops, or at least one.” 28, 54.

We cannot concede that such statements mean nothing more than that the Church has a mediate, derivative command to choose pastors, as Dr. Hoefling maintains—that the command is merely styled divine, in the sense that we must feel divinely obligated to do that, to which we are impelled by an inevitable inward necessity. There is, indeed, such necessity for the pastoral office, if the means of grace are to be administered publicly in the congregation, with decency and order. But it pleased God not only to command the order, but also the means of attaining it, namely, the election of ministers to act in the name of all. We can see nothing more of ceremonial law in this—against the introduction of which into the Church, Hoefling particularly contends—than in the law of order in general. For the right to administer the means, and their efficacy when administered, are not made dependent upon any work to be performed, or ceremony to be observed, as is the case when the common rights of all believers are denied, or the ceremony of ordination is deemed necessary. The latter position would lie open to the objection, that a ceremonial ordinance is assumed as binding upon believers. But the mercy of God is magnified by the confession that He has assisted our weakness and proneness to error, by specifying how, in this particular instance, the general rule of order must be complied with.

The sense in which the expression of our Symbols, and of Luther, are used, when they speak of the divine command to appoint ministers, clear as they undoubtedly are in themselves, will perhaps be illustrated, in case an illustration were deemed necessary by any reader, by extracts from the writings of other prominent teachers in the Church.

“That the office of the word and the sacraments is instituted by the Son of God also in the New Testament, is unquestioned. The Church has the command, also, to appoint ministers; and the promise is added, that God approves the ministry of those who are called by the voice of the Church, and separated for the ministerial work.” Chem. Ex. 2:220.

“The principal efficient cause of the ecclesiastical ministry, is the one and only true God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This is proved by express passages of Scripture.” Gerh. Loc. 24 §49.

The pastoral office is thus, according to the Scriptures and the Church, shown to be a divine institution, not a human ordinance.

VI. The Public Office Distinct From The Universal Priesthood

It is furthermore an office distinct from the priesthood of all believers. This is manifest from the proofs adduced above to show that there is a special public office in the Church, by divine appointment, which publicly exercises powers belonging to all, in the name of all. The priesthood is no public office, no more than is citizenship in a country governed by the people. It possesses all the powers which the ministry exercises; but one cannot, because he possesses them, be the representative and minister of many. Others have the same powers and the same rights, on which account the appointment of a minister to exercise them, on behalf of all, is requisite, as we have seen, to prevent confusion, or the trespass by one against the equal rights of all. The pastor thus acts, not for himself, but for others: he has the public office in virtue of the call of a community.

He is the servant of a priestly people in the same sense as State officers are the servants of the people who elected them, and in whom the sovereignty is vested. He discharges public functions in the congregation, not because he is something more than other Christians, but because his equals, recognizing the gifts with which God has endowed him, and which

render him competent for the work, have designated him to officiate for all, since some one must officiate for the rest, where it is impossible for all to exercise their rights at once in their own persons. This public office is so utterly distinct from the priesthood that there are not only multitudes of priests who are not pastors, but there may be pastors, and probably are such, who are not priests. They should be priests, indeed; congregations should be very careful not to choose pastors who are not such; but congregations, with the best intentions, and despite the utmost care, may be deceived. When one is chosen, however, who is not a priest, that is, who is not a believer, he is a pastor still, and his acts are valid and efficacious still. He exercises the powers of others, in virtue of their vocation. The administrator must not, necessarily, be one of the heirs of the property administered, to make his administration valid.

“Although the Christian Church is, properly, nothing else than the congregation of all believers and saints, yet, as in this life there are many hypocrites and false Christians—open sinners remaining even among the pious—the sacraments, nevertheless, are effectual, even if the preachers by whom they are administered are not pious.” Augsb. Conf. Art. 8.

Therefore, when a pastor is duly chosen, and performs the functions for which he is called, no person has a right to interfere with his office, and exercise the powers of the priesthood publicly in the congregation, on the plea that he is a priest and has, therefore, divine authority to officiate. He has no divine authority to exercise the rights of others without their consent.

“It is taught that no one should teach or preach publicly in the Church, or administer the sacraments, without a regular call.”

Privately, and where there is no congregation, each can, and should, exercise the priesthood. But publicly in the congregation it can be done lawfully only by the authority of those who possess the right in common; and the refusal to respect their choice, is selfish and schismatic. Our Church, in her

jealousy for the common rights of all believers, never even by implication spoke lightly of the special rights of the public Gospel ministry. She always revered God's order, and held it to be a grievous sin to trespass against it. Indeed, instead of disparaging the Gospel ministry, by her doctrine of the general priesthood of all believers, and of the common inheritance of the keys by all, she magnified it. For while she reverences it as the divine order, for the public use of common rights, she sees in the refusal of an individual to submit to such order not only a sin against God's ordinance, and an infringement of the pastor's delegated rights, but a trespass against the rights of each individual in the congregation who agreed to delegate them. Her earnest contending for the rights and privileges of each and all, involves an earnest defense of the rights and privileges of the ministers called to exercise them, in the name of all.

Therefore her writers, in accordance with Art. 14. of our noble Augustana, with great earnestness maintain the prerogatives of the public ministry, and condemn the sinful arrogance of erring men, who, on the pretense that every priest is a pastor, or on any pretense, presume to interfere with them. With respect to such errorists Luther says:

“It avails them nothing to say that all Christians are priests. It is true all Christians are priests, but they are not all pastors. For, in addition to this, that he is a Christian and priest, he must have an office and a parish committed to him. The vocation and command makes a pastor and preacher; just as a citizen or layman may be learned, but is not, therefore, a doctor, authorized to lecture publicly in the schools, or take upon himself such office without being called.” 39, 255.

“For if the call and command were not insisted on, there would at last be no more Church; because just as the sneaks come among us, and strive to divide and destroy our Church, so would other sneaks afterwards come into their churches and divide and destroy them; and thus the sneaking and dividing would continue without end, or until there would be nothing left of any Church. This is what the devil designs, and strives to compass through such schismatic spirits and sneaks. Therefore our decision must be: either show your call and command to preach, or keep silence and presume not to preach. For here an office is in question, yea, an office of preaching. But an office no one can have without a command and call.” 31, 218.

Chemnitz shows that all are priests indeed, but that this does not entitle them to the public office, and then adds: “For not all are apostles, not all are teachers, 1 Cor. 12, but those whom God separates for this office by a special and regular vocation.” Exam. 2, 216.

And Gerhard says:

“Neither is there any force in the objection that Peter adds, concerning the pious believers,”Ye are a royal priesthood, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you to His marvelous light.” For we must distinguish between the general command and vocation which all the pious receive when they are made Christians, and in virtue of which it is required of them to declare the praises of God, by whom they are called into communion with the Church, to confess Him in word and work, privately to instruct their families in true piety, Deut. 6:20, to see that the word of Christ dwells among them richly in all wisdom, and that they teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16, and to comfort one another with the word of God, 1 Thess. 4:18, etc., and the special vocation, by which the administration of the word and Sacraments, in the public assembly of the Church, is committed by the Church’s public consent, to certain proper persons, which Vocation is not common to all Christians, as is manifest from 1 Cor. 12:29; Eph. 4:11; James 3:7.” Loc. 24, § 67.

But whilst the pastoral office is thus plainly different from the priesthood of all believers, we must lay stress upon the fact, on the other hand, that

VII. The Office Not A Superior Order, But Simply A Ministry

It is not an order of superior holiness, but simply a ministry. Although pastors should, by all means, be ensamples to the flock in all piety, yet no man becomes a better or holier man by the call to the public ministry. Pastors are not a superior order of Christians, with a sanctity unattainable by the laity. They are poor sinners, saved, if saved at all, by sovereign grace, and, if faithful, not deeming that they have already attained all attainable virtues, but humbly striving, day by day, to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. There is an order of men who have higher privileges and titles than other men—the order of priests unto God. But to this order belong all believers: the public minister’s highest dignity is to belong to this.

Here we are all brethren—all one in Christ Jesus. To higher dignities than those which all the sons of God possess, no pastor can attain, and none should wish to attain; whatever may be the difference between men, in talents and stations and offices, faith in Christ, and fidelity to one's place, are the only distinctions of lasting worth: the poorest peasant, who believes, is an heir of heaven; the richest emperor can be no more.

It is a great privilege to be a minister of such mysteries as those which pastors are called to dispense: it implies corresponding responsibilities also: but it renders not pastors better Christians than others; and those who think themselves more than the brethren, because of their office, which is but for time, have least understood their calling, and honor it least. They should think of what our Symbols say, in full accordance with God's word:

“Among other reasons which Gabriel adduces for not administering the sacraments in both kinds to the laity, he presents this also, that a distinction must needs be made between priests and laymen. And I think this is the principal reason why they hold so fast to this abuse at present, that the sacerdotal may appear holier than the lay order. This is a human notion, and whither it leads it is easy to see.” 23:3, 9.

And Luther's words should be well considered:

“In itself, there is no difference between bishops, elders, and priests and laymen: nothing whatever to distinguish the former from all other Christians, except that they have a different office committed to them, that of preaching the divine word and administering the sacraments: just as a mayor or judge is not otherwise different from other citizens, than that the government of the city is committed to him. Those who have introduced such sects among Christians, dividing them into clergy and laity, some shorn and some unshorn; of the shorn ones, some monks and some priests; among the monks again diversities of clothing and diet—those who have invented this, have divided and rent the unity of Christendom. They are the same who have destroyed the Church and the word of God, and, by the old Serpent’s subtlety, have Sundered the hearts and minds of Christians from the unity in Christ Jesus, as Paul says, 2 Cor. 11:3. Therefore the name bishop, or priest, is not the name of a sect, but of an office. Priest signifies an elder; bishop, a superintendent. Of these such godless men have made orders and dignities. Paul calls them stewards, ministers of Christ and servants of God.” 28, 59.

Their highest dignity lies in this, that they are permitted to serve their equals in the administration of holy things. They are ministers, that is, servants—servants of the Church, and because the Church has the command to administer the means of grace, and serves God in such administration, and the minister attends to this by the Church’s vocation, in her name, they are, of course, servants of God also. They are so called in Scripture. “Let a man so account of us, as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” 2 Cor. 4:1. Every Christian is a servant of Christ, and is required to be found faithful in His service, just like the servant in the Church’s office. But the pastor is a servant in another sense also: he is a minister of the Church, in whose name he performs the work of the priesthood publicly in the congregation. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” 2 Cor. 4:5. We are ministers of Christ, of the Gospel, of the Church.

“He who has this office is not, on account of the office, a priest, which we all are, but a servant of all the rest. And when he is no longer able or willing to preach and serve, he returns to the common assembly, leaves the office to another, and is not different from any other common Christian. Thus we must distinguish between the office of preaching, or ministry, and the priestly order of all baptized Christians. For such office is nothing more than a public service, committed to one by the whole congregation, who at the same time are all priests.” Luther 40, 171.

The minister is God’s messenger to men; for it is God who gives the call through His Church; but he is at the same time the servant of the Church, ministering before God in her name, and performing functions which belong to all. He holds the highest office on earth, being an ambassador of God; but on account of this temporal office in the Church, it would be folly for him to suppose himself superior to other children of God and heirs of heaven, to be which is an everlasting honor.

The nature of the ministerial office, as the Scriptures, and our Church in coincidence with them, describe it, is thus, we think, fairly presented. It is the public office of the Church, by which the functions of the general priesthood of believers are publicly performed, in the name of all; by which the means of grace are administered and the people’s sacrifices offered through a person chosen, according to God’s law of order, by themselves, and acting in their stead.

Part 2. The Call To The Ministry

WE HAVE ENDEAVORED to render it plain that although every Christian is a priest, this does not imply that every one is a pastor. All have equal rights, but equality of rights does not involve possession of the same office. The incumbent of the ecclesiastical office exercises common rights not in his own name, but in the name of those who hold the rights in common. He is the agent of the community whose common rights are exercised by the office. Such agent cannot appoint himself, but must be chosen by the persons for whom he is to act. We proceed, therefore, to consider the call to the public ministry.

4. The Necessity Of The Call

WHILST THE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, in her high appreciation of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, has jealously guarded the rights of the universal priesthood of Christians, who are heirs of God and all His infinite wealth, she has always faithfully taught that all must serve the Lord in the vocation given them and in the station assigned them, and that therefore the public office of the Church belongs only to those who are called to discharge it. No one has the right to exercise the functions of the priesthood, or the power of the keys, publicly in the Church, without a call. This is evident from Holy Scripture and from reason, from the Symbols and the best writers of our Church.

I. Direct Scripture Proof Of Such Necessity

The Holy Scriptures, while their teachings in reference to the common rights of the Christian priesthood are quite explicit, distinctly teach that none should presume to exercise common rights in the Church without common consent. The Lord prohibits such arrogance. When He wants men to minister He will call them; whether He does so immediately, as in extraordinary cases, or mediately, through the Church, as ordinarily, the prerogative is His, and the sin of officiating without a mission is heinous. His controversy with false prophets in ancient times was not only on account of their falsehoods, but also on account of their officious running without a vocation. For thus saith the Lord:

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” Jer. 23:21.

Indeed, the two sins of teaching lies and teaching without authority are intimately connected. For the inflated self-conceit which induces a man to think he must needs be a public teacher, because of his transcendent abilities, even though the Church should be too stupid to appreciate them, and the wild enthusiasm which prompts the fanatic to imagine himself especially called of God to enlighten the world, even though benighted Christendom failed to perceive it, are not likely to draw their possessors to the word of truth, that they may there learn God’s will in meekness. In the New Testament the necessity of being sent in order to be a legitimate preacher in the Church is expressly asserted.

“How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they are sent?” Rom. 10:14—15.

That they are sent by the Lord, whose truth they preach and in whose name they preach it, is undeniable, and is just as little denied by those who insist, according to the Scriptures, that the call comes through the congregation, as by those who maintain that it comes directly from the Lord or is given

through the pastorate. All are agreed that the call is necessary, and this is what we are at present concerned in showing. To this the manifold examples recorded in the Scriptures also bear testimony.

“No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” Heb. 5:4.

Of the Levitical priesthood it is said:

“The Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that ye should minister unto Him and burn incense before Him.” 2 Chron. 29:11.

And as these ordinary pastors of the people were divinely called, so were the extraordinary teachers who are styled prophets. Isaiah declares:

“I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And He said go.” Is. 6:8—9.

Jeremiah says:

“The word of the Lord came unto me, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” Jer. 1:4—5

Ezekiel testifies that the Lord said to him:

“Son of man I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me... I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God.” Ez. 2:3—4.

And “the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, Saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it.” Indeed, no intelligent reader of the Bible could suppose that any true prophet of God ever ran when he was not sent: they could be God’s messengers only when God commissioned them. So it was also in the new dispensation from the beginning, and is so now. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” Of the harbinger of this merciful dispensation it is said:

“There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.” Jn. 1:6—7.

The first official preachers of the glad tidings that the Saviour had come, were called and sent as messengers to fallen man.

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matt. 10:5—7.

The same is true of all their successors in the pastoral office. Elders were ordained in every Church, receiving the ministerial calling and ministerial commission. Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5. So it must ever be; for the command is to go into all the world and teach all nations, and this is to be continued unto the end of the world, Matt. 28:19—20; wherefore we are instructed to “pray

the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.” Matt. 9:38. Without such mission and call the Scriptures recognize no right to administer the pastoral office.

II. Indirect Proof

From the premises furnished by inspiration, moreover, reason readily deduces the necessity of such call. That which is equally the property of all, evidently cannot be administered by one, without the consent of the rest. We have seen that the Lord has conferred the keys upon the Church, not upon select individuals within her pale. To officiate without a call is therefore a violation of the rights of the Christian community. It is at once a sin against the Lamb who grants and the Bride who receives these rights. That each individual Christian possesses the keys and is entitled to their administration is true; but to infer from this that each one may administer them in any place and manner he pleases, is as unreasonable as it is unscriptural.

The logical inference is just the reverse of this, so far as the public administration in the Church is concerned. Privately each one exercises his right as best he can, and spreads the truth in love according to the ability which the Lord bestows. As long as the individual, in the exercise of his rights, does not encroach upon the rights of other individuals, no one is authorized to interfere.

But it must be apparent to every one who is willing to see, that just as soon as such exercise assumes a public form in the congregation, something more than the rights of an isolated individual enters into the question. The individual is then merged in the congregation; he is no longer isolated. One has just as much right to administer the means of grace as another. All are equally privileged. They are one in Christ, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. They act as a corporation, not as a mass of incoherent particles. It is totally at variance with any adequate idea of an organized community in general, and with the idea of a Christian Church as presented in the Bible in particular, to suppose that each member of the body may act, in matters pertaining to all, without any regard to the other members.

Indeed, according to such a doctrine the Church could never assume a visible form on earth; there might be Christian individuals, but certainly no

organized Christian congregation. But the Holy Spirit gathers the people of God. They are joined together in one heart and one mind. In such union they live and love and labor; in such union they publicly administer the means of grace. Thus the Master wills, thus the Holy Spirit prompts. For such administration they must necessarily appoint agents. The word cannot be preached by the thousand lips in the congregation at once, nor the sacraments administered by the thousand hands. The agents so appointed are the ministers of the Church. They exercise the rights of all, and do it in the name of all. But this they can do only when called to such office. To pretend to act for others without their appointment or consent is palpable arrogance, and tramples upon their rights.

“For since Christians have all things in common, as we have shown and proved, it could not be right for one to push himself forward and appropriate to himself what belongs to us all. Let him maintain this right, and exercise it, where there is no other person who has also received it. But this is required by the rights of the community, that one, or as many as the congregation chooses, should be elected and accepted, who shall administer the offices publicly in the place and name of all those who have precisely the same rights.” Luther: W. 10, 1857.

And as this is the only way in which the rights of all can be preserved inviolate, while all are discharging the duty of disseminating the truth, so it is the only possible way in which the decency and order enjoined in the word of God can be maintained without sacrificing these rights. The Church would become a Babel if each one, confounding the possession of a right with the authority publicly to exercise it in the Church, would consider himself a public functionary. When it is granted that all have an equal right to the keys, and that the Lord requires all things to be done decently and in order, it follows by inevitable necessity that one must be called to the public office before he can lawfully administer it. Nor can we see any objection to this in the diversity of gifts with which men are endowed.

That such diversity exists is confessed by all. But this does not imply that the requisite endowments will or can elevate their possessors to the pastoral office without a vocation. An arrangement by which the possession

of the necessary qualifications should in itself endue a person with pastoral prerogatives would neither preserve order nor secure rights. For in some places there are many who have the qualifications needed, and the public exercise of their gifts, in the absence of any designation of those among them who should officiate, could only result in confusion. Besides, there are always many who suppose themselves to possess that, of which they are utterly devoid. If each person were left to determine for himself whether he has the qualifications required for the ministry, it must be obvious to all who have any knowledge of human nature in its ruined condition that not a few would rush into the office without the proper qualifications, and many who possess them would be deterred from entering upon it by that very meekness and humility which render them specially fitted for it. The apostle deemed it necessary to exhort even Christians not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, and not all who are found in the visible congregation are even Christians. It is not for the individual to be the judge of his own abilities; others can do this much better, and others are appointed to do it in the case of a candidate for the ministry. The call to the office is the proper recognition of the candidate's gifts. It need not be at all feared that those, who have the requisite gifts of grace, will quarrel with the Church for choosing others to the holy office, if she sees fit, rather than themselves. They will rather rejoice that others are deemed better qualified than they, and will use their own abilities in the sphere which Providence assigns them, fully and justly assured that if God wants them in the ministry. He will find them, and call them in the proper way, and that if He assigns them some other vocation, His assignment is their advantage. God bestows gifts in order that there may be proper persons to whom to extend the call, not by any means to render the call superfluous. As order can be maintained only by such designation of persons to administer the office, not by the mere existence of requisite gifts, so can the common rights of Christians be preserved only in this way. For the fact that one has more talents than another does not give him higher privileges in the kingdom of God; he is a king and priest like all other believers, and nothing more. To say that he has the office because he has the gifts, is to make great Christian rights dependent on endowments which cannot be deemed essential to Christian character.

Against this every believer should feel bound to enter his solemn protest. We are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and we cannot possibly

be more. But if those who are less gifted than others have still the same rights as those who have the highest abilities, which cannot be denied, it is just as undeniable that their consent must be obtained before those common rights can be exercised in their name; in other words, the agent must be called by those for whom he acts. They should choose the person who is qualified; but the choice, not the qualification, constitutes the minister. The conclusion from plain Bible truths is unavoidable, that no one can lawfully hold the office without a call to this effect.

III. Proof From The Confessions

In accordance with this our Symbols also teach when they declare, as already shown, that

“Concerning Church government it is taught that no one should teach or preach publicly in the Church, or administer the sacraments, without a regular call.” (Augsb. Conf. 14.)

No words can be plainer. A clear distinction is made between public teaching and private, and between teaching in the Church and in places where the Church is not yet established. The means of grace are every Christian’s inheritance, and the duty of administering them for the conversion of souls and the edification of the Church is implied in their possession. Such administration is not only an inalienable right, but, because it is God’s will that souls should be saved by the employment of these means, a solemn duty. The Christian therefore exercises the functions of his priesthood in his own family, not in virtue of a right communicated by the pastor of the congregation, but in virtue of the right communicated by his Lord to him, as to every other believer, through faith. So he counsels and admonishes and comforts his brethren in his private intercourse with them, not because he has received a special congregational call or pastoral vocation to do this, but because, as a spiritual priest and as possessor of the keys through faith, he has an immediate commission from the Lord to do it, as every believer has. This the article obviously implies.

It is much to be desired that those who are sincere in their efforts to understand the doctrine of the Lutheran Church would give attention to the careful wording of the Confession. It does not say that no one should teach or preach without a call. It would not say the truth, if it said this, and meant by the word "call" a vocation from the Church. Nor would the practice of the Church have corresponded with it; for it never was claimed that she made or now makes a congregational call necessary to authorize a believer to teach privately. No one who will fairly examine the article, with its guarded expressions and well defined limitations, can conclude that teaching and preaching, as such, require a regular call from the congregation. No one should teach or preach publicly without a call. But there is still another qualification, which shows that the rule requiring a vocation does not only not apply to the activity of believers in their private relations, but not even to the exercise of their priestly functions in all cases which, in one sense, may be called public. A call is not always necessary where the word of God is proclaimed to an assembly of people, though it is required in all cases where the rights of others are exercised, as well as those of the individual who performs the functions. In the latter case he must have public authority.

Where no Church exists, no call is requisite. A believer whose lot is cast among the heathen need not wait for a vocation to authorize him to preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. Whence, indeed, should he receive a call? No intelligent Christian would, we trust, so far forget his character and calling as a Christian, as to accept a call from the heathen, while still remaining such, to become their minister and pastor. When a number of believers has once been gathered by the divine means, they must call some one to the pastoral office; but until there are such, it would be absurd to speak of a regular call among them. The private Christian is called to win their souls to Christ; he has not only a right to teach them the truth, but would manifest a want of faith and charity if he refused to do it when circumstances permitted. Nor need he shun publicity in doing it: he should pity their benighted souls and bring them to the marvelous light of the Gospel as best he can, privately or publicly.

“It is taught that no one should teach or preach publicly in the Church without a regular call.”

The Church has stated her doctrine with precision and abides by it with firmness. She has no wavering faith nor hesitating expression. She is careful to curtail no privilege and encroach upon no right of the lowliest believer, for her treasure is the treasure of believers. But as the welfare of the congregation, and the rights of believers associated in the congregation, require that the public administration of the means of grace should be conferred upon and, where possible, confined to persons called to this office, and as God has been pleased to command such order, she maintains the rights of the public ministry, as the divinely instituted representatives of the congregation, just as sedulously as she does the rights of the spiritual priesthood of all believers. Whatever her enemies may say to the contrary, her Confessions, while affirming that the keys are given originally and immediately to the Church, condemn all those false theories which lead to anarchy and confusion in their public administration, and insists that none should presume to act as a public officer without being duly called and thus receiving public authority. With this, as we have abundantly shown, the uniform doctrine of her most distinguished teachers perfectly accords. We know of none, indeed, who ever taught otherwise within her limits. Some have been charged with doing so, but falsely. Especially was this the case in reference to Luther. But we have already quoted passages from his writings in which he expressly denies the unjust accusation. His works everywhere deny it, even if it had not been done expressly. The papists so little understood his defense of the Christian's rights that they naturally supposed him to identify the spiritual priesthood and the ecclesiastical pastorate. Besides this, they trembled for their honors and emoluments, and not without reason. Such a distinction as they made between the laity and the clergy he never acknowledges. Their unscriptural priesthood he did indeed labor to undermine and overthrow, for it robbed the people of their noblest rights and stripped them of their choicest privileges in the Church. With their usurpations, Luther's doctrine was and is inconsistent. But he never uttered a single word in conflict with the scriptural doctrine of the Christian ministry: on the contrary, he said and wrote much to defend and elucidate it as a divine institution, designed not to lord it over God's heritage, but to minister in the Church, where all are one in Christ, though their offices be different.

5. The Call Given Through The Congregation

THE PERSON who publicly performs the functions of the priesthood in the name of others, whose original right it is to perform them, must be appointed for the purpose. This appointment is divine, but it is not given immediately by the Lord, who has commanded the appointment. Nor is it made by any other powers than those in whom the rights primarily inhere.

The Call to the Pastoral Office is given mediately through the Congregation only.

I. Not Given Immediately

The call is not given immediately. It always comes from the Lord and renders the called person in an especial sense a servant of the Lord. But this does not imply that God must give the call immediately. A mediate call is just as much divine as one that is immediate.

[1.] There have, indeed, been pastors and teachers who were immediately called. This all who read the Scriptures attentively must admit. To the prophets under the old dispensation the word of the Lord came directly, and they were called to their exalted mission immediately, as the extraordinary character of their office would lead us to expect. The same is true of the first public preachers of the Gospel after the advent of Christ: the apostles were all called to their great work immediately by the Lord. In both these cases it could not well be otherwise. A new order was to be introduced, and this of course must break in on the accustomed and ordinary course of things. Beginnings are always, in the nature of the case, different from the normal condition of things as previously established. The first disciples were called to the marvelous light of the Gospel, as well as to an apostleship under it, immediately by the Lord; but it is plain that the ordinary voca-

tion into God's kingdom is given in a different way since the Lord is no longer visibly present among men, and so is also the ordinary vocation to the office of the Church.

Not that it is essential in itself that the call should be mediately conferred, or that it is impossible for God to give it without the Church. He has conferred it immediately, and no power could prevent Him from doing it again, if it thus seemed good in His sight. But that they have been so called does not prove that this is done at present.

[2.] Persons are not immediately called to the ministry now. The case of the apostles proves no rule in this respect. If all the circumstances were now the same, we could indeed appeal to the fact of the immediateness of their call in proof of the immediateness of the call in general. But the rule is, as the Scriptures fully certify us, that the call should be mediate, and the circumstances in the cases of immediateness show why they are to be properly regarded as exceptions. The prophetic office was established, not as the regular pastorate in the old dispensation, but as supplementary to it, to provide a remedy for evils growing out of the unfaithfulness of those who were incumbents of the regular office. Extraordinary officers could of course not be expected to receive their commissions in the ordinary way. The apostolic office was a means of founding the Church in its specifically Christian form.

A Church must be organized before it can call its pastors. This fact, which is self-evident, is generally overlooked by those who argue against congregational rights on the ground of apostolic practice. The pastors of our present churches are not apostles, although the apostles were the first incumbents of the public ministerial office. These lived and labored in peculiar circumstances and were endowed with peculiar powers. They were missionaries to organize congregations, and missionaries in a different sense from that in which those are such who are sent forth now, inasmuch as their calling was to be inspired messengers to establish Christianity upon earth. Their field was the whole world, and their miraculous powers attested their divine mission and the truth of their message. All this should be considered by those who think the whole question of the ministry settled by a mere reference to the nature and powers of the apostleship.

Of persons claiming an immediate call, or the whole world as their field of labor, and on this ground refusing to admit the necessity of the Church's call and to respect its assignment of a special parish, to which their labors

must be confined, we must demand miracles also in proof of their apostolic character and commission, the absence of which evinces their claims to be mere arrogance. If they will not subject themselves to the biblical tests of an extraordinary mission, they should certainly be willing, if disposed to be at all reasonable, to limit their claims to the ordinary office, and subject themselves to the regulations bearing upon it. They should not expect Christians to respect their pretensions, when they claim extraordinary powers, without offering a single evidence to establish their claim. They should expect rather to be rebuked for their presumption or pitied for their silliness. Evidence sufficient to satisfy men of a call must always be given, not because the efficacy of the means of grace depends on the validity of the administrator's call, but because the order and peace of the Church requires the call to be respected, and this can of course be done only where its possession is known. The mediate call is given by a congregation and publicly certified, that whosoever will may know it. How should or could the immediate call be known and certified otherwise than it is in the cases recorded in Scripture, i.e. by signs and wonders? When there can exist no certificate of men who witnessed the call, there must be this certificate of God, which all the prophets and apostles had. Those who come as teachers without such testimony must be rejected. Impostors are easily discovered in this way.

“When they are asked about their vocation, and requested to say who told them to creep hither and come and preach in a corner, they are unable to answer and to show their commission. And I say the truth, if such creepers were guilty of no other offense, and were otherwise pure Saints, this one fact that they come without commission and call, is sufficient to prove them messengers and teachers of the devil. For the Holy Ghost does not creep, but flies openly from heaven. Serpents creep, but doves fly... Here there is no other remedy but that both spiritual and temporal offices interfere. The spiritual must constantly and diligently instruct the people, that they may admit no creeper, but may recognize them as messengers of Satan, and ask them: Whence camest thou? Who sent thee? Who has commanded thee to preach to me? Where are thy papers and seal certifying that thou art sent by men? Where are thy miracles to show that thou art sent by God? Why dost thou not go to our pastor? Why dost thou secretly come to me and creep in a corner? Why dost thou not stand forth publicly? If thou art a child of light why dost thou fear the light? With such questions they could easily, I think, be driven back; for they cannot prove their call.” Luther 39, 215—6.

“In a word, St. Paul will not tolerate the presumption and guilt of meddling with other men’s matters; each is to attend to his own business and vocation, and leave others unmolested in attending to theirs. Then he may be wise, and teach and sing and read and explain, where he has authority to do it, until he is tired. If God desires, beside and above this order of offices and the call, to do something extraordinary and call some one apart from the prophets, He will prove this by miracles and signs, as He commanded the ass to speak and rebuke the prophet Baalam, her master. Num. 22:28. Where He does not do this we should adhere to the appointed offices and commission and act accordingly.” Ib. 223.

As we are urged to beware of false prophets and to labor for the preservation of peace and order in the Church, we cannot, according to the Scrip-

tures, regard a call which is not proved; and we must reject all claims to an immediate and therefore extraordinary call, unless it be extraordinarily certified by miracles. Such call and certification we have no reason to expect in these times, whilst the regular call to the regular office continues

II. Call Given Mediatly Through Congregation

This call is given through the congregation. So the Scriptures teach, and so, in accordance with them, the Church teaches. In proof of this we adduce the following evidence.

1. Church Has The Priesthood

The Church must give the call, because she alone has the priesthood and can, therefore, alone confer the right of publicly exercising it. That the Church, and every individual member of the Church, possesses the spiritual priesthood, has already been proved. The inference from this is obvious. What the Church possesses can be conferred only by the Church; and he who takes it without her consent and without having it immediately bestowed by the Lord, the original owner and donor, must be justly styled a thief and a robber. The pastoral office exercises functions which belong to all priests: it is instituted for the public administration of Christian gifts and privileges. The officer is the public agent of the Church, exercising common rights in the name of all. Who shall appoint such officer and agent? When it is promptly answered: The Lord appoints him, expression is given to a manifest truth. The rights exercised and the means administered and the gifts imparted are all originally His, and all authority over them must of course remain His. But the husband surrenders no rights and titles when he makes his wife a partner in his possessions; the Lamb ceases not to be proprietor and ruler of all because He mercifully confers great gifts and privileges upon His Bride, the Church. The Lord appoints the pastor, certainly; but He does it not immediately; He does it not in such a way as to ignore the Church, with the manifold privileges which He has Himself conferred upon her; He does it through His wife, whom He has made partner in the

ownership of the sacerdotal powers which are exercised in the ministry. There exists no other authority by which the office could be conferred.

The Lord was pleased to bestow on all believers the rights which it exercises, and to command the election of proper persons publicly to exercise them in behalf of all. The rights are lodged nowhere else but in the Church, and the authority to elect an agent to exercise them cannot be given to a body different from that whose rights are to be exercised. No call can be valid, excepting the extraordinary immediate call, unless the Church confers it, or at least consents to it, and thus grants authority to officiate. This inference is expressly drawn in our Symbols, and no one can reasonably doubt its Lutheran character, as no one has just ground for doubting its scripturalness. Among the proofs presented in our Confession to establish the Church's right to elect pastors occurs this:

“Finally, this is also confirmed by the words of St. Peter, when he says: ‘Ye are a royal priesthood.’ These words refer to the true Church which, because she alone has the priesthood, must also have the power to elect and ordain ministers of the Church.” (341, 69.)

Nothing can be plainer than this argument: the Church has the priesthood, and therefore she must have the authority to appoint persons publicly to exercise it. It is found frequently in the works of our theologians. Luther shows, in opposition to Emser, that no human ceremonies and no functions make a priest, but that

“the priesthood and power must exist before, received in Baptism, common to all Christians through faith, by which they are built on Christ, the true High Priest, as St. Peter here declares. But to exercise such power and put it in practice is not proper for every person; this must be left to those who are called by the congregation, or by those who have the congregation's command and will, who then act instead and in the name of the people and by common authority.” 27, 316.

It will be observed that Luther does not make it essential that the congregation should be immediately active in the election; nor has the Church ever deemed this essential. But without the people who have the priesthood there can be no valid call to its exercise. They may call the minister immediately, or they may delegate the right of calling to an ecclesiastical council, or even to the State, only so that it be their right which is exercised by their consent. Hence Luther says:

“Every one who would be a Christian should be certain, and should well consider it, that we are all alike priests, that is, that we all have equal authority in reference to the divine word and the holy Sacraments. But it is proper for each one not to use them except by the consent of the congregation or the call of the superiors. For what belongs equally to all, none can claim for himself in particular, unless he is called.” (W. 19, 189.)

Those who have the priesthood can call persons or have them called to the office; but it is a manifest usurpation of others’ rights to officiate without the call of those who possess the priesthood.

2. Church Has The Keys

The Church must give the call because she alone has the keys. The fact of such possession we have also proved in a previous chapter. But if she alone has the keys, it follows of necessity that she alone can lawfully use them, and appoint the agent to do this in her stead, as she cannot do it without such agency. This inference is also drawn in the Symbols, where the argument to prove the congregation’s right of calling, as based on the possession of the keys, stands thus:

“To this place belong the words of Christ which testify that the keys are given to the whole Church, not to several special persons, as the text declares, ‘where two or three are gathered together in my name,’ etc.” (341, 68.)

The Church, not some select persons, has the keys. They exist in the congregation, no matter how small it may be; where there are two or three, the Church's rights exist. But if the keys are not given to some select individuals, it cannot be claimed that they alone have the right of calling ministers to exercise them, as the papists dream; if they are given to the whole Church, the whole Church, not only the clergy, have the power to call the officers whose business it is to use them: wherever, as is declared in the paragraph preceding the words quoted, the Church is, there is the command to preach the Gospel, and there must accordingly be the power to choose and ordain ministers; and wherever such are needed, no matter how little the flock which is assembled in Jesus' name, the flock, having the keys, has the duty and, of course, the right of appointing them. This argument the writers of our Church have always found cogent. It is used by them as an irrefragable proof of the proposition under consideration.

“This is and must be our ground and firm rock, that where the Gospel is preached truly and purely there must be a holy Christian Church; whoever doubts this must doubt whether the Gospel is the word of God. But where there is a holy Christian Church, there must also be the sacraments, Christ Himself and the Holy Spirit. Now, if we are a holy Christian Church and possess the greatest and most necessary things, as the divine word, Christ, the Spirit, faith, prayer, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the keys, office, etc. , must we not have the least also, namely, the right and power of calling persons to the office, who shall administer the word, Baptism, the Supper, and minister to us? What kind of a Church would this be if we had not such right? What would become of Christ's word: ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them?’ And again: ‘If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.’ If two or three have such power, how much more a whole Church.”
Luther 131, 374.

So Gerhard also writes:

“To whom Christ has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to him belongs the right of calling ministers of the Church. But the keys of the kingdom were given by Christ to the whole Church. Therefore with the whole Church is the right of calling ministers.”
Loci 24, § 87.

It is plain that, since Christ has given the keys to His Bride, her consent must be necessary to authorize any person to use her property; and no call can be valid which ignores her just claim.

3. Divine Commands Imply This

That the Church must give the call is evident, further, from divine commands which imply this. Only when congregations can choose or refuse ministers is it possible to comply with the divine precepts requiring us to shun false doctrines and false teachers, and to cling to those which are true. But such precepts abound in the Bible.

“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.” Gal. 1:9.

“Beware of false prophets, who come unto you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Matt. 7:15.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” 1 Jn. 4:1.

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 Jn. 10:11.

If the congregation has no power to elect or reject a minister, how shall they guard against ravening wolves and the poison which they disseminate? It will not be supposed that the numerous admonitions in this regard mean only that each individual is to distinguish the true from the false for himself, and keep silence about it: that he is to reject the error and the errorist in his own mind, but say nothing to any of the brethren. Such charity, which sees the wolf and gives no warning, the Scriptures cannot be charged with inculcating. But if each Christian is bound to reject the false doctrine and the false teacher, and to do this openly, each Christian must necessarily have a voice in the election of the teacher; for it is a manifest contradiction to say that we must adhere to or reject a teacher, according as he is true or false, and yet that we have no choice. We must express our adherence to or rejection of the proposed pastor either by vote, or by separating from the congregation.

It will not be presumed that the ordinary way of expressing the rejection of a false teacher is to leave the congregation. The proper way is to reject the teacher and preserve the congregation entire, if possible. But this cannot be done unless the members are permitted to give expression to their conviction by their vote. In no conceivable way can believers prove all things and beware of false prophets, without the power of election, if congregational organizations are to be preserved. Nor will the case be remedied by saying that congregations must indeed preserve the right of election, if the members would discharge their duty of preserving the purity of doctrine according to their ability, but the call is different from such election, and is given by a body different from the congregation. We shall come to speak presently of the field, to which one is called, and of its limits; for the present it will suffice to observe that if one is a pastor before he is presented as a candidate for a congregation's election, he is not their pastor and, if rejected, cannot be: to them he will be to all intents and purposes an uncalled person, as he is in reality so long as no congregation has called him to their pastorate.

“Whoever has the duty of discerning teachers from impostors, of proving sound doctrine, of distinguishing the voice of the Great Shepherd from the voice of the false shepherds, of not following, but fleeing from strangers, of anathematizing those who preach a different Gospel from that preached by St. Paul, must also have the duty, in the proper mode and order, of calling the ministers of the Church. But the former is, by divine precept, incumbent on the sheep of Christ, or the hearers. Matt. 7:15; Jn. 5, 39; 10:27; Gal. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:19—21; 1 Jn. 4:1; 2 Jn. 10:11. Therefore the latter must be also. The inference is manifest. For if the hearers must beware of false prophets, they must in due order and form beware lest false teachers be introduced into the ministerial office, and consequently see to it that true and pious teachers are called to this ministry.” Gerh. Loc. 24, § 88.

4. Ministers Are Ministers Of The Church

The Church must have the right of calling the ministers because they are her ministers. This the Scriptures plainly affirm.

“Let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.” 1 Cor. 3:21—22.

The ministers, however great may be their gifts, are not our lords, that we should idolatrously cling to them, and by our partiality for persons cause schisms in the body; they are ours, not we theirs. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” 2 Cor. 4:5. When erring men are driven to the desperate expedient of interpreting this passage as ironical, they furnish the best evidence of its decisiveness. For if it were at all possible to understand it in any other sense than that of making the pastor a servant of the Church, by no means the reverse, these men, in their zeal to subordinate the Church to the ministry, would find some explanation to square with their theory, without resorting to the reckless shift of assuming the whole to be irony. One is strongly

tempted to suppose that it sounds quite ironical in the ears of such men for a bishop to declare that he preaches not himself, but Christ Jesus, the Lord. Let men say what they can to support unscriptural theories, the Scripture truth still remains clear, that ministers are the people's servants for Jesus' sake, whom they serve, while they serve His bride. St. Paul, speaking of himself, says:

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you to fulfill the word of God.” Col. 1:24—25.

But if pastors are the ministers of the Church, it must be obvious to all who are willing to see that she must have the right of choosing her ministers. He who owns the property and whose servant or steward the minister is to be, must assuredly have the power of appointing him. If it should be objected to this, that it places the Church higher than the ministry and consequently degrades the latter, we admit the premise and deny the conclusion. We hold, as our fathers held and expressed it in the Symbols, that in “1 Cor. 3. St. Paul makes all ministers equal, and teaches that the Church is more than the ministers.” (330, 11.) But they who suppose themselves degraded by having the Church placed above them, have but carnal notions of Christian dignity and honor. The Master's words and example should have taught them better.

“Jesus called them unto Him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matt. 20:25—28.

“In the Church there will be bishops, pastors, preachers and other like official persons; these are to serve only, and not to assume to themselves external power or glory on account of such office or service, as the Lord’s example here shows. ‘For whether is greater,’ says He, ”he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth" Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.’ Luke 22:27. And Jn. 20: ‘As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’ Now it is obvious to see that Christ was not sent by His Father to rule like a temporal prince and to seek temporal honors. But He was sent to preach and suffer. So He sends His servants. Therefore those who hold ecclesiastical offices should never permit this image to fade from their eyes and hearts, and should beware of the devil, who would lead them to abuse their office for the attainment of personal honor and glory. In the temporal government it must be thus, that whoever has the office must also have the power. But in the Church ‘serve’ and suffer is the word, not rule and fare sumptuously. He that will do it, let him do it. He that will not do it, let him not boast that he ministers in the kingdom of Christ." (Luther 6, 380.)

But if he is willing to serve, he must acknowledge the right of the Church, whose servant he would be, to call him to her service, and not officiate at the bidding of those who have no authority to call, in contempt of the flock who has it. For, in the words of Gerhard, “To those, whose ministers the pastors are and are called, must belong the right and power of calling the pastors. But they are and are called ministers of the Church. Therefore to the Church belongs the right and power of calling pastors. The minor proposition is proved by 1 Cor. 3:21; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:2—3.” (Loci 24, 89.)

That the Church has the right to call her ministers is thus established beyond controversy. She alone has the priesthood and keys, and alone can confer the right of exercising them. They can be legitimately exercised only by her, whether directly or by her individual members, as in private, or through an agent, as in her public ministrations, when the minister acts in her name in virtue of her call. She is called to guard the purity of the doctrine and ward off false teachers, which can be done only on the ground of

her having the power to call in her own hands. The ministers are asserted to be hers, which of course implies that she has the right to choose them. But there is still another argument to be offered in confirmation of our position, which we deem it necessary to present, not only because it is of great weight in itself and may serve to banish lingering doubts arising from pre-conceived opinions, and to clear away objections, but also because it has been supposed to countenance the opposite view.

5. Involved In The Practice Of The Apostles

That the congregation gives the call is proved, finally, by the practice of the apostles, as recorded in Scripture. The presentation of the argument chiefly in the words of distinguished authors, will subserve the purpose of showing the teaching of the Church, at the same time that the scriptural truth is elucidated. “We should not doubt,” says Luther,

“...that the congregation, which has the Gospel, may and should elect and call the person who is to teach the word in its stead. But thou sayest: St. Paul commanded Timothy and Titus to ordain priests, and in Acts 14:23 we read that Paul and Barnabas consecrated priests in the congregations; therefore the congregation cannot call any person, nor can anyone come forward of himself to preach among Christians, but the permission and commission of the bishops, abbots, or other prelates, who sit in the apostles’ seat, must be obtained. I reply: If our bishops and abbots, etc. , sit in the room of the apostles, as they pretend, it would pass as an opinion that they should be permitted to do what Titus, Timothy, Paul and Barnabas did in the ordination of priests. But since they sit in the devil’s room and are wolves who will not teach nor tolerate the Gospel, the appointment of ministers and pastors concerns them as little as it does the Turks and Jews. They should drive asses and lead dogs.” (22, 148.)

It is a palpable misconception of Luther’s meaning to assert that he, in this passage, admitted the ministerial right of appointing ministers, and denied it

in the case of the papists, only because they were not faithful ministers. He merely asserts that an arrangement could be made, if they were faithful, by which the ordination would be left to them, as it has been and should be in the Church, not by necessary divine right, but as a matter of propriety and order; not as a matter of faith, but, as he expressly asserts, as an opinion. If this were not certain from the words quoted, it certainly would be from those which follow. He proceeds:

“Besides, if even they were true bishops who desired the Gospel, and were willing to ordain true preachers, they could not and should not do this without the congregation’s consent, election and call, except where necessity requires it, that souls may not perish for the want of the divine word. For in such necessity, as thou hast heard, not only may every one procure a minister, whether through prayer or the power of the civil government, but may also, if able, hasten forward and teach himself. For necessity is necessity and has no measure, just as every one should rush to the rescue when the city is burning, and not wait until he is requested to help. But where there is no such necessity, and where persons are found who have the right and power and grace to teach, no bishop shall ordain anyone without the congregation’s election, consent and call, but he shall confirm the person elected and called by the congregation. If he refuses to do this, such person is confirmed at any rate by the congregation’s call. For neither Titus, nor Timothy, nor Paul ever appointed a priest without being elected and called by the congregation. This is clearly proved from Tit. 1, 7 and 1 Tim. 5, 2: ‘A bishop must be blameless,’ and from the command to prove the deacons. Now it is not likely that Titus knew who were blameless, but the report must come from the congregation, who must designate them. Again we read in Acts 6. that the apostles themselves were not at liberty to appoint persons, even to the much less important office of a deacon, without the knowledge and consent of the congregation; but the congregation called the seven deacons and the apostles confirmed them. If the apostles could not by their own authority install officers whose duties referred merely to the distribution of temporal things, how could they have been so bold as by their own authority to confer the highest office, that of preaching, upon anyone without the congregation’s knowledge, consent and call?”

The celebrated Chemnitz exhibits the truth on this subject, in opposition to the errors of the Tridentine Council, as follows: "Here the question occurs, by whose voice and suffrage this election and vocation must be given, in order that it may be considered divine, that is, that God may Himself by these

means elect, call and send laborers into His harvest? In respect to this there are certain and manifest examples in Holy Scripture. In Acts 1, when another was to be elected in the place of Judas, Peter proposed the matter not only to the apostles, but also to the other disciples, as the believers were then called, the number of whom assembled was about one hundred and twenty. And there he showed from the Scriptures what persons should be chosen and how they were to be elected, and, in connection with this, prayers were offered. Lots were cast, indeed, because the vocation was not to be simply mediate, but apostolic, on which account the lot was not to be used subsequently in merely mediate calls. When, according to Acts 6, deacons are to be elected and called, the apostles are unwilling to arrogate to themselves alone the power of calling, and therefore call the congregation together. But they do not altogether decline all care for the vocation, and leave it to the blind and confused arbitrary will of the people or the multitude, but they are, as it were, the governors and moderators of the election and call; for they propose the doctrine and rule respecting the persons to be chosen and the manner of choosing them. Those who are elected are placed before the apostles, that the election may be approved by their judgment as to its validity, and they approve the election by the imposition of hands, while prayers are offered. According to Acts 14. Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in the several congregations which they had evangelized. But they do not assume to themselves alone the right and authority to elect and call; for Luke uses the word *cheirotonesantes*, which, in 2 Cor. 8, 19, is employed to designate an election by the voice or suffrage of the congregation; for it is derived from the custom of the Greeks to give their vote by extending the hand, and signifies the designation of anyone by vote, or the manifestation of consent to anything. Paul and Barnabas did not, therefore, impose the elders upon the unwilling congregations without asking their consent.

And when, as recorded in Acts 15, men were to be appointed to bear messages to the church at Antioch, Luke says: ‘Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas.’ It is important to observe in the apostolic history that sometimes the ministers and the rest of the Church, at the same time, proposed and elected the proper persons jointly, as in Acts 1. Sometimes the congregation proposed and elected, but the election was submitted to the apostles for approbation, as in Acts 6. But. frequently the

apostles, who were better able to judge of these things, proposed to the congregations the persons whom they judged qualified for the ministry, and when the vote and consent of the congregation was given, the call was valid. Thus Paul sends Timothy, Titus, Sylvanus, etc., to the churches. Thus presbyters are proposed in Acts 14, whom the Church approves by their suffrage. Sometimes persons of their own accord offered their services to the Church, 1 Tim. 3: 'If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.' But always, in the times of the apostles, there was found and required in a legitimate call the consent of the congregation and the judgment and confirmation of the Presbytery. So Titus was left in Crete to lead and direct the election of elders, that it might be properly held, and that he might by ordination approve and confirm the election properly made. For in Titus 1. Paul uses the same word in reference to the appointment of elders which occurs in Acts 14, where mention is made of the election as well as of the ordination of presbyters. And he commands Titus to rebuke those sharply who are not sound in doctrine and do not teach as they should; that is, as he expresses it more clearly in 1 Tim. 5: 'Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins,' namely, by approving an election or vocation which is not properly made." Exam. II, 226.

The advocates of the theory which makes the office dependent, not upon the congregation's, but upon the ministers' call, will not find it easy to refute the argument of this celebrated writer from apostolic practice, and it certainly requires no little hardihood on their part to maintain that the leading writers of the Lutheran Church ever countenanced their Romanizing error. The same argument is presented also by Gerhard, who, after showing that all orders in the Church must have a voice in the vocation of pastors, which belongs to the whole Church, not to a mere portion of it, and pointing out what part should be properly assigned to each in giving the call, continues thus:

"The general rule, therefore, that pastors are called by the consent of the congregation, and that no one is to be imposed upon it against its will, has the express testimony of Scripture and is confirmed by the constant practice of the primitive Church; but the particular form of election varies: for sometimes the votes of the people have been required to nominate persons, sometimes their approbation has been required in cases of persons previously nominated. This is confirmed by the apostolic practice in the election of Matthias, Acts 1, 15; Peter points out what kind of person should be cho-

sen, then 5:23 the congregation appointed two, one of whom, namely, Matthias, when he had been divinely chosen by lot, was elected to the ministry by the common voice of the disciples, 5:29. Although this call of Matthias was an immediate one, yet this suffrage of the believing people, which was added, is rightly applied as an example of mediate vocation. In Acts 6, when deacons were to be appointed, the apostles said to the brethren, that is, the rest of the Church: "Look ye out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. These then elect Stephen with six others, whom they set before the apostles, and when they had prayed they laid their hands upon them." So these deacons were appointed by the vote of the whole Church. According to Acts 14, 23 the apostles ordain elders in their newly organized congregations by collecting the votes, *cheirotonesantes*. In 1 Cor. 16, 3 we read: "Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send." According to 2 Cor. 8, 19 Titus was chosen of the churches, the congregations approving the choice of Titus by their consent and vote, and approving his person also (*cheirotoneis*.) In 1 Tim. 3, 7 it is said of a bishop that "he must have a good report of them which are without, how much more of them over whom he is placed. Therefore the judgment of the congregation must be heard respecting the person to be elected to the ministry. And St. Paul says 1 Tim. 5, 22: 'Lay hands suddenly on no man,' that is, not before the testimony and consent of the Church is added." (Loc. 24, 86.)

The record furnished of apostolic practice is thus seen to be so far from presenting a difficulty and forming a ground of objection to the Lutheran doctrine, that it affords a strong argument in its favor.

But the whole purpose of the present chapter is not yet accomplished by showing that the power of calling to the ministry belongs to the congregation. We have proved that it does lie there. But the Scriptures teach more than this; the truths exhibited imply that the power not only lies in the congregation, but that it lies nowhere else. This is of sufficient importance to merit special attention, as it sometimes appears to be considered a matter of indifference whether the call comes from the Church, or from the State, or from that portion of the Church which is called the ministry.

III. Refutation Of Conflicting Theories

The call to the pastoral office can be legitimately given only by the congregation, as the power of calling belongs exclusively to the Church, all whose members have equal rights in this regard. Two theories at variance with this truth have been advocated, the one claiming the right and power for the civil government, the other for the incumbents of the ecclesiastical office, to the exclusion of all other members of the Church.

1. That Call Given Through Civil Authorities

That the right belongs to the civil authorities is an assertion so utterly gratuitous that much need not be said to refute it. A Scripture argument to sustain it is not even attempted, unless the attempt to prove regulations, intended for circumstances and relations under the old dispensation, to be normal for all time, should be dignified with such a name.

The whole spirit of the New Testament, as well as all its teachings and examples, are so manifestly inconsistent with such a subjection of the Church to the State, that any endeavor seriously to establish it from the Gospel, would seem like madness. That Church and State are both divine institutions, that they are mutually to respect and aid each other, so far as this may be done within the domain of each, and that men's rights as citizens of the State and as members of the Church are equally to be protected, according to our Lord's will, is undeniably true; but it is just as certain that the two spheres, and the rights and duties pertaining to each, though both are equally divine, must not be confounded.

The Church serves the State by furnishing such power to men and inculcating such principles, as will render them quiet and orderly citizens, who will always be willing to give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's; the State serves the Church by protecting her against the violence of wicked men who, refusing to be directed by the gentle power of the word, which the Church employs, must be coerced by the rude power of the sword, which God has authorized the State to wield. But neither is subject to the other: they are coordinate powers, each with its peculiar mission; and the State can therefore as little appoint the Church's ministers by divine right, as the Church can appoint governors of the State. Either may be done *jure humano*; but neither can be done in virtue of powers divinely conferred to this end. The State may have an arrangement with the Church by which the latter may nominate the ruler, or consecrate the lawful head of the govern-

ment: there could be no objection to this on scriptural grounds, if the arrangement seemed expedient, so long as that which is freely entered into is not made compulsory, or represented as essential. It would be the sheerest arrogance for the Church to claim that there could be no legitimate ruler without her voice or benediction. So the Church may have an arrangement with the State by which the latter may be authorized to nominate or appoint pastors. There could be no valid objection to this either, so long as the arrangement were deemed a matter of expediency, into which the parties have voluntarily entered. The Church would thus be merely acting by proxy: the rights which she enjoys would be exercised for her, and of course with her consent, by the civil authorities, who of themselves have no power whatever in this respect, and who would be guilty of a most mischievous usurpation, if they presumed to exercise such power in their own name and to compel the Church's submission to it. By such delegated right the power of calling ministers was freely accorded to civil rulers by the Lutheran Church, at various periods in her history; and this fact has often been misinterpreted as though it subordinated the Church to the State. It was a mere expression of her unvarying doctrine, that the Church alone has the priesthood and keys, and can therefore alone appoint the ministers to use them; but she is free to make this appointment in the manner which suits her best, whether by the vote of her entire membership, or by the vote of a vestry, or committee, or person, to whom she has delegated the right. The words of Luther conclusively prove this, even if such interpretation of the fact were not rendered absolutely necessary by the principles expressed, apart from any direct statement as to how the Church understood it. He says, as we have already quoted the words on a previous page, that pastors are called by the congregation, or by those who have the congregation's command and consent to do it. This command and consent the civil powers frequently received in Lutheran countries, being called to act in the Church's name. Then the rulers sometimes acted, without any expressed consent, as principal members of the churches, by a kind of necessity, owing to the incompetency of the people, amid the papal darkness, to use their privileges. Thus Hartmann says:

“In our days the distinguished piety of our princes is worthy of praise, inasmuch as they appoint capable and worthy teachers for their subjects, not that the congregations might be deprived of their rights; but because the people neither understood nor exercised their right, and their judgment was clouded by ancient errors, the rulers took them under their guardianship and acted instead of the Church.” Past. 76, (as quoted by Walther, Kirche u. Amt, p. 314.)

Whatever may be said of the rights of the State in things sacred, it is certain that according to the Lutheran doctrine the consent of the congregation, even though sometimes, in cases of necessity, it should be mere silent consent, was always, and must always be, deemed necessary for the appointment of pastors, because believers, not civil rulers as such, alone have the keys. If theories have been broached and laws been enacted which are inconsistent with this, it must be apparent to those who have carefully considered the subject and examined the evidence, that they are just as little Lutheran as they are scriptural.

2. That Call Given Through Ministry

The other theory, that the ministry is an order which propagates itself, and that accordingly ministers are called to the office not by the Church, but by those who themselves hold the office, has not only more advocates, but has also more semblance of reason for it. But it is equally false, and can be proved to be so on scriptural grounds with equal certainty. For that all Christians are one in Christ and have, therefore, an equal share in the believer's privileges; that they all belong to the Lord's body and have equal share in the treasures which the Lord has been pleased to confer upon His bride; that they all possess the priesthood and the keys in common, has been proved from the Lord's infallible word. This in itself clearly evinces that every attempt to prove a doctrine which is inconsistent with these equal rights must be a failure. But the proofs adduced in favor of the doctrine that the ministry perpetuates itself as a distinct order, bear their weakness on their face. They would be inconclusive in any case; they are little less than an in-

sult to the understanding when it is seen that they are brought forward to subvert precious Christian privileges which are divinely guaranteed.

Thus it is argued that, because Jesus sent His disciples as He was sent Himself, they must necessarily have the power of calling others to the office as He had it. But the Scriptures nowhere affirm that the ministers become equal with Christ because He has called them to a holy office. It is almost blasphemous to base equality with Christ, in all things, upon the similarity of commission to preach the Gospel between Him and His apostles. But if equality in all things is not intended to be maintained, by what right is it claimed that pastors have equal power in commissioning ministers with the Lord Himself? The question is, in what respect is their commission like Christ's? and the proof is positive that it is not in respect to the right of commissioning others again. Further, the argument has been harped upon from the days of Bellarmine down to the present, until it has seemed as if it were the only one in which the advocates of this hierarchical system had themselves any confidence, that it contravenes all equity and propriety to maintain the authority of the sheep to elect their own shepherd. That the members of the congregation are called sheep, the congregation a flock, the ministers pastors, we all know. But it provokes a smile when men who profess to be reasonable, forthwith conclude that ministers must alone have the power of appointing ministers, because sheep cannot be presumed to have discernment enough to make choice of a shepherd. This is all very well when we are speaking of literal sheep: they manifestly have not the rational powers necessary to select a proper shepherd over themselves: such shepherd must be appointed by those who are of the same species with him, that is, by human beings. But it is an insult of the greatest magnitude to say that Christians, with the exception of the ministers, are all mere irrational brutes, and can therefore not be expected to have sense enough to make choice of a pastor, whose appointment must be left to those of the same species with himself. And yet this is precisely what the argument implies; it is of no force whatever, unless this be taken as its meaning. For if we assume that the shepherd is himself one of the flock, what objection can there then be to his being chosen by his peers? If there is an utter impropriety in the appointment of the shepherds by the sheep, how could the ministers themselves make the appointment, if they themselves are sheep of the Lord's fold also: The whole argumentation is preposterous. The flock is not one of brutes, but of rational creatures, whose wants the Lord supplies, and who is,

in this respect, called their Shepherd. In His name others are chosen to administer the means of His appointment, and thus to bear to His people the spiritual food which He prepares, and these persons are, in this respect, called the shepherds. Now, if there is any inconsistency or impropriety in maintaining the right of the people to select one from their own number to administer this office, seeing they all have the same dignity and the same character as Christians, it must require a special revelation to see it. The impropriety is precisely the same as it is in the case of an appointment to any office by the ballot of those over whom the officer is placed; that is, it has no existence at all, except in the imaginations of men who would perforce make ministers lords over God's heritage. Finally, when an argument is drawn from the practice of the apostles to prove the divine right of the ministry to appoint ministers, we need only refer to what has been said on this point above to prove its fallaciousness. It is false in its assumption of facts and its inferences from them. The facts in the case are that the apostles ordained men to the ministry, who were designated for the office and called by the congregation's vote, as this is conclusively proved in the extracts from Chemnitz and Gerhard. And if even the facts were otherwise, if even it could be shown conclusively that the apostles did send forth ministers without the consent or call of the congregations, it would not follow from this that the power of appointing the pastors is lodged not in the people, but in the pastors themselves.

For it must be observed, in the first place, that the whole world was then missionary ground, and that missionaries, whose business it is to plant churches, not to be pastors of already collected flocks, need no other call than that which they have as believers and lovers of souls, which entitles them all to speak about Christ to the heathen around them. If, then, the apostles did, without consulting the Christian people, send out preachers to evangelize cities and provinces, they did just what any pastor may do as well according to the Lutheran faith as according to the Romish theory, nay, they did just what any layman may do; and the persons thus sent had just the same rights where there were no existing congregations as they would have had if they had been sent by laymen, or if they had gone without any other commission than that which all have from the Lord in faith and charity, and no more. Preaching the Gospel where there is no organized congregation is a work of love, which every Christian who has the necessary gifts may perform, and which any Christian who has the necessary means may

send another to perform. It requires no special commission and no official authorization. It must be observed also, in the second place, that the relation of the apostles to the existing congregations was different from that of pastors in established churches. Their field was the world; there were no parochial limits, within which their vocation was to be exercised. The diffusion of Christianity throughout the world, not merely the preservation and edification of churches previously founded, being the object of their mission, their activity could not be limited to a narrow field, as is that of ordinary pastors. If, then, they did send persons to minister to congregations which they had gathered, they did only what Lutheran pastors may do now, without in the least conflicting with the Lutheran doctrine, as we have presented it. They sent vicars to act as their substitutes, in their own field and upon their responsibility, just as a pastor may have another to officiate for him in his own congregation, he bearing the responsibility, although this could not be long continued without the congregation's consent. But such a wide range ministers have not now; the world is not every pastor's field, but only that portion of it to which he is called, and in that limited parish he has just the same authority as the apostles in theirs, deducting that which grows out of the infallibility of these inspired men.

If such exceptional cases of apostolic appointment to pastoral duties did occur, they do not, therefore, conflict with the rule that the congregation gives the call; nothing more than a fair consideration of the extraordinary times and circumstances, in which the apostles lived and labored, would be necessary to show the consistency of the course pursued in such cases with the requirements of the rule.

Such are the arguments which are brought forward to prove the ministry to be an independent, self-propagating order, in opposition to the doctrine of our Church, which affirms it to be appointed by the Church. A score of such could not create the slightest presumption against a truth as plain as this, that the priesthood and keys belong to the Church, and must therefore be administered by her authority, especially as this conclusion is confirmed by numerous precepts and examples of the Scriptures. The arrogance of ministers and ministerial bodies therefore deserves nothing but condemnation, when they usurp all power and authority in this respect, as is frequently done, we grieve to say, even by those who love to bear the Lutheran name.

In many instances the congregations are not even allowed the right of veto, much less that of election. True, in most cases they are permitted to

vote upon the question whether this or that person shall be their pastor; they can elect him or reject him, so far as their particular parish is concerned. But ministers often, without asking any congregation whether they want him, and even in spite of their declaration that they do not want him, ordain a person, and make him and themselves ridiculous by styling him a pastor, even if nobody wants him. The congregation's veto is not admitted to have any force in regard to the ministerial call, but only, at best, in regard to the right of exercising in any particular locality the ministry already received. People can quietly endure such gross wrong, only while they are kept in ignorance of their rights; where they are conscious of their Christian prerogatives they must indignantly protest against such usurpation, as we do here. Not that the call is to be given altogether independently of ministers and Ministeriums.

Christian men who contend for Christian rights, will be least inclined to trample on the rights of the ministers, whose rights and privileges are of course not less than those of any other Christians. Where a parish has already a minister and desires to call another, it would be just as sinful to do so without hearing the voice of the pastor, as it is for a Ministerium to make pastors without people.

And in any case it is proper for the congregation to procure the assistance of ministers, if this is possible, in the appointment of pastors; first, because they usually are best able to conduct the examination with regard to the candidate's qualifications; secondly, because the reverence which is due to God's ambassadors to men requires this; and thirdly, because it is meet that the public ceremonies which are proper on such occasions should be conducted by those who already hold the office. So the appointment of ministers may be delegated to the Synod by the congregation belonging to it, and may thus be attended to in their name, just as such authority may be given to the civil government, and precisely in the same way. No wrong could be found in such an arrangement, freely entered into for the sake of expediency; although careful congregations would be very slow to perceive the expediency of resigning into other hands the right of electing their pastor, even if they had the greatest confidence in the wisdom and integrity of the ministers to whom it is proposed to delegate such right; and when a body to which rights were delegated, to be used in the name of their proprietors, usurp them as their own and deny the owner's title to them, it is certainly very questionable expediency to entrust them longer in such hands.

An outrage is then committed which faith cannot endure. In any case the power can be in their hands only by consent of the congregation to which it originally belongs. The proof of this from the Scriptures and the Symbols has been abundantly furnished. The call is thus given through the congregation, whether the power of conferring it is used directly, or is delegated by the congregation to others to be used in their name.

6. The Call Limited In Place

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE for those who adhere to the Scriptures to recognize a universal bishop who should have the rights of a pastor in every parish in Christendom. Christ alone is Head of the Church. The bishops or pastors under Him have their place assigned them, and have pastoral duties and pastoral privileges only there. The call to the pastoral office is given by a particular parish and is confined to its limits.

The notion that a minister is such absolutely, whether he has a parish or not, and that he accordingly has peculiar powers, which no other person has, beyond as well as within the limits of his parish, if he happens to have any, finds not the slightest encouragement among Lutheran writers of note, as it has not the slightest foundation in Scripture.

The doctrine taught by the Bible and by the Church is, that the pastor's peculiar calling extends no further than the congregation which has called him, and beyond this he has no more rights than any other Christian. This we proceed to prove.

1. From The Nature Of The Office

That the call is limited to the parish which extends the call, is evident from the nature of the public ministry. The pastor is not a lord over the flock, but an agent of the people of God. Where there is no Church there can, in the nature of the case, be no pastor; for, although there may be a missionary purposing and laboring to gather a flock, yet he cannot possibly do this as a minister of the congregation, which does not yet exist, or of the people of God who are yet to come into being. Whatever ceremonies may be performed by way of sending missionaries to places in which congregations of Christians have not yet been formed, and whatever names may be applied to the persons thus sent, it remains an undeniable fact that among the unbelievers they are not pastors, but simply Christians, and that their efforts to

evangelize the people are made in virtue of their royal priesthood, not in virtue of any peculiar powers which they possess above other Christians.

There is not the shadow of a scriptural reason for denying that every Christian, whether ordained or not, has a perfect right to make as many disciples as he can among the heathen. On heathen ground there can in reality be no distinction between pastor and people, for the very simple reason that a Christian people does not exist there. But it may be answered that a person can be appointed pastor in general, to whom a particular flock may be subsequently assigned. We see the same congruity in this as in the appointment of any other officer, who has no place and no power to exercise the office. It is ridiculous to speak of appointing a president or governor who has nothing over which to preside or govern.

One may be found qualified for a presidency and nominated and recommended for the office, but he will remain a candidate for it, not an actual president, until he is chosen by the proper authorities; and the proper authorities are the people to be governed, not the assembly of presidents or governors already existing, unless these are requested to act in the name of the people who have the power. So the recommendation of a person to the pastoral office by persons who are qualified to judge, and his designation and benediction, if persons see fit to give this in such cases amid public ceremonies, can present him as a proper candidate for the pastoral office, but cannot render him a pastor. This requires the election of those, whose pastor he would be. A king without a country and a pastor without a congregation are among the absurdities, into which people will sometimes fall.

Upon no other ground than the popish one, that the ministry is not a mere office, but an order of superior holiness, the members of which are made recipients of some indescribable something by the sacrament of ordination, which impresses an indelible character on them, can any rational claim be built of a public ministry without a parish; for only upon such ground can a man be a minister, when not a single individual, much less a congregation, desires any ministrations at his hands. To be a public minister a man must be called by a congregation. But a congregation cannot appoint ministers for another congregation: each has the right of electing its own pastor. If the congregation extends a call to a person, it of course means that the call is confined to that congregation, and no sane person understands it otherwise. If the call comes from a Synod, or committee, or Ministerium, it comes on behalf of some congregation for whom such body is agent, and

then the recipient of the call is again aware of his special field, and thinks of no other; or the call is of no force and validity whatever, giving no rights and conferring no privileges. Or what rights and privileges are conferred by a call that assigns no place in which to exercise it? Where does such a call give a person the right to officiate? Is it where there is no congregation? There all have the same rights without a call. Is it where there is a congregation? There he has no rights whatever, until it gives him a call. The congregation's call gives him, who previously had a right to officiate nowhere publicly in the Church, a right to officiate within its limits as their pastor; and, as one congregation cannot be lord over another, it gives him a right nowhere else. If he legitimately performs pastoral functions anywhere else publicly in the Church, it must be after being called by the congregation in which he officiates, or after being requested by the duly called pastor to officiate as his vicar, in his name and in his stead. No other theory could be brought into harmony with the words of our Symbols, that "God has given the keys not to several particular persons, but to the whole Church," and that "the Church is above her ministers;" for if a person could be pastor independently of the congregation or congregations, he must necessarily be in exclusive possession of the keys and therefore of the right of exercising them publicly, without receiving such right from the Church; and it would then not be true that God gave them not to particular persons, but to the whole Church. If the keys belong to the persons whom no Church has called, but whom some members of the Church are pleased to denominate pastors, so that the congregation is rather dependent on the ministry, than this on the congregation, for the use of the keys, it would follow that the ministers are superior to their churches rather than, as the Confessions affirm, that the Church is above her ministers. The steward's rights and duties are confined to the house of which he has been appointed steward, and extends not to the houses, the stewardship of which has been given to others.

Each member of the Church has the keys, and the man who claims to be a pastor without having a call publicly to use them in the name of those who possess them as well as himself, that is, without having a call from a congregation, either confounds the universal priesthood with the special ministerial office, or he arrogates to himself the right of trampling upon the rights of others in his proud claim of being exclusive possessor of the keys.

If he is pastor only where there are no Christian people to give a call, he is no pastor at all, but uses the keys, if he does use them, only in virtue of

his Christian priesthood received in Baptism. If he claims to be pastor among Christian people who have given him no call, he is an usurper of rights which do not belong to him, and must be treated as a wolf who would scatter the flock. The pastor can be such, in the nature of the case, only over the flock that has called him to discharge the functions of the priesthood publicly in their name.

2. From Direct Testimony Of Scripture

That the pastor's office is limited to his parish is evident also from passages of Scripture bearing more directly on the question. St. Paul says:

“So have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.” Rom. 15, 20.

This gives a reason for such limitation. The work to be done requires economy of powers. Where one is laboring, another must not exercise his gifts and energies, unless there is need for more than one. There are places enough where labor is necessary; we must not squander it in places where it is unnecessary. Besides, when we labor in a place preoccupied by another, we not only needlessly waste strength, but we at the same time encroach upon another's domain. What the apostle was constrained to guard against, namely, building on another man's foundation, we have the same, if not greater, reason for shunning. The same apostle, in opposition to the false apostles who gloried in themselves and reaped where they had never sown, declares in another place:

“We are come as far as to you also in preaching the Gospel of Christ: not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you, according to our rule abundantly, to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.” 2 Cor. 10, 14—16.

Now, if they, who had a so much more extensive call than we, whose field was the world, as no minister's is now, deemed it wrong for themselves to labor in fields which others had been cultivating before, and thus to appropriate to themselves honor which belongs to others, how deeply sinful should it not appear in our sight, if careless men should presume to break into parishes to which they are not called, and to do this especially in spite of the protests of another who is called!

But if a person who has received a regular call from one place is thus earnestly prohibited from officiating in the bounds of another, just as much so as the person who has no vocation to the office, the call must, of course, confine the office to the congregation by which it was given. The person who has no such call to a particular parish has not the office; the person who has the office has a parish. This is evinced also by the example presented in the sacred records. All the ministers of whom we there read, except the apostles and those who were employed by them as vicars, were ministers of special congregations, not of the whole Church in general. That the apostles were not limited to any particular place we grant; it was one of the peculiarities of their office, as distinguished from the ordinary ministry, that they had the world for their field. We therefore do not deny that they were a kind of missionary bishops and general superintendents, as well as preachers of the Gospel in the ordinary sense. The unlimited field of labor was one of the extraordinary features in the apostolate, and as such is not to be predicated of the ordinary ministry. We have no apostles now; least of all would we suppose those who have no parishes to be such, even if we admitted that the particular apostolic office with all its powers remained.

But it did not so remain. The apostles were the first ministers, and as such their office, which is the ordinary ministry, has continued until this day and will continue to the end. The administration of the means of grace for the saving of souls was their great work, as it is that of the ministry always. In addition to this they had prerogatives belonging to them as extraordinary ministers. They were inspired and, therefore, infallible in doctrine; they were endowed with the power of working miracles; and, as already stated, had an unbounded field of labor. But in the latter, as in the two other respects, the ordinary ministers differ from them. The example of the successors of the apostles, rather than of these themselves, must be deemed normal for us, for the plain reason that our ministers are not apostles, but their successors. Now, the examples recorded of such ordinary teachers after the

apostles show that each had his proper parish and definite place assigned him, being called and limited to that. Thus it is said Acts 14, 23:

“When they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord.”

It has been shown that the word translated “ordained” means to appoint by vote. These elders were elected in the churches under the supervision of the apostles: they were regularly called by the congregations, whose ministers they were to be. Each one had his charge; each church had its minister. The words cannot be fairly interpreted to mean anything else: every church had its elder. This is confirmed by Acts 20, 28:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.”

The pastor has his flock to attend to: for this he is to render an account; among them he has solemn duties to perform and precious privileges to exercise; but beyond this fold he has neither the right to officiate nor the responsibilities of the office to bear.

When a man is a minister he necessarily has a flock to feed and consequent rights and responsibilities; the minister is a minister not of the whole world, nor of all the churches in the world, but of the church which has called him to the office. When people speak of one's being a minister, even though he have no flock, we cannot but insist that they must either suppose the minister to be made the subject of some ineffable something, which elevates him personally above other Christians, though he exercise no ministerial functions whatever and have, in fact, no right to do so, seeing he has no vocation, or they must confound the qualifications for the office which may have been found in a person, with the office itself, being guilty of the same absurdity as those who, having found in a person the requisite qualities to make a good ruler, declare him to be a mayor, to whom nothing is wanting but a city: a mayor in general, until he is called to some particular city by

the people's vote. A man ceases to be a pastor when he ceases to have a parish. It is customary, indeed, to give a person the title even after he has ceased to have the reality, and this custom is sometimes adopted even by persons who have a clear view of the fact that it can be done only as a matter of courtesy.

But it cannot be denied, in the first place, that such courtesy is out of place, because involving a serious error, when the ex-pastor has chosen some other profession, and has therefore ceased even to be a candidate for the office; and, secondly, that there is something abnormal in the case of one who had been called and ordained to the ministerial work, and is still able to prosecute it, but who is without a charge and without a call to labor in the service of the Church. A pastor may be called by a number of congregations conjointly, i.e. by a Synod, to do necessary work for the Church which is not of a pastoral character strictly, e.g. teaching in the Institutions of the Church, and he has a perfect right to accept such a call; but to resign a pastorate without having a call to labor elsewhere, could be justified only under very peculiar circumstances. Normally a person who has once been found qualified for the pastoral office, and has received a call to a congregation, and who is able and willing still to discharge the duties of the office, is not without a parish, but continues in one until the Lord calls him to another.

3. Testimonies Of Lutheran Writers

Of such errors and incongruities as are involved in the idea of pastors without flocks, our fathers were never guilty. They taught the limitation of pastoral functions to the parish by which the call was given, and knew of no office or right to officiate, apart from such call. We shall give some extracts from writers of the highest authority in the Church to establish this, as evidence that the scriptural doctrine which we have exhibited is the Lutheran doctrine also. Dr. Luther speaks thus upon the subject:

“If Muenzer, Carlstadt and company had not been permitted to sneak and creep into other’s houses and parishes, whither nobody sent them and for which they had no commission, all this great trouble would have been averted. That the apostles also went to other’s houses and preached, is true; they were commanded to do so, and were appointed, called and sent to preach the Gospel everywhere, as Christ said: ‘Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;’ but afterwards no one received such common apostolical command; on the contrary, every bishop or pastor has his particular district or parish, which St. Peter therefore calls *cleros*, that is, portion, because to each one is assigned his portion of people, as St. Paul also says to Titus.” 39, 254.

This doctrine, which is here so deliberately expressed, is often presented incidentally in his writings, as no other would be at all in harmony with his doctrine of the ministerial office. He also speaks of the distinction between the priesthood which belongs to all Christians, and the pastorate, which only those have who are called, and makes use of this expression: “In addition to this that he is a Christian and priest he must have an office and an appointed parish.” The special parish is thus represented as essential to the minister: it is one of the requisites to distinguish a pastor from a common priest, i.e. believer. So again, in a letter to Dorothea Joerger, he says: “Whoever is called is consecrated, and shall speak to those who called him: this is the consecration of our Lord God, and is the true chrism.” 55, 105. In Luther’s view the call from those, whose minister a person is to be, is necessary, and nothing beyond this, however great might be the utility of other things, usually connected with the appointment of ministers, as ordination, etc. With this the expressed convictions of others of the most celebrated writers in the church coincide. Chemnitz writes:

“What we have above said concerning the vocation of the apostles, that it extended itself over the whole earth, we are not able to affirm of those who are mediately called. For doctors, pastors, bishops, presbyters are called to certain congregations, and have not absolute power to teach everywhere or in all churches. So according to Acts 14, 22 elders are appointed in every church, and in Tit. 1, 5 we are informed that Titus was left in Crete, that he might ordain elders in every city. And thus the Lord is accustomed to show each one, by a special vocation, where He desires him to use his gifts; and this vocation gives no authority to teach in other congregations which have given no call. Hence in the Council of Chalcedon, (held A. D. 451,) it was determined that no one should be absolutely ordained, that is, not until he is called to a certain and special congregation.” (Loc. P. III, p. 136—7.)

Gerhard in various places says substantially the same.

“The ministry of the apostles,” he remarks, “was not limited to a certain place, but to them the command and authority was given of preaching everywhere. Matt. 28, 19; Mark 16, 15. But the ministry of those who succeeded and now succeed the apostles in the office of teaching, is confined to a certain place. Acts 14, 23 presbyters are ordained in every city; Acts 20, 28 the ministers of the Ephesian Church are said to be constituted bishops of a certain flock by the Holy Spirit; Tit. 1, 5 Titus was left in Crete to ordain elders in every city; and 1 Pet. 5, 2 it is said: ‘Feed the flock of God which is among you,’ that is, the flock which is committed to your care and fidelity.” (Loc. 24, § 220.)

According to these authorities there can be no universal bishops now, such as the apostles were, but only ministers of congregations; and the pretended appointment of men to the office, who have no call to a parish, is an idle ceremony, which gives them not a particle of power or authority. A valid call, which renders a man a pastor, renders him the pastor of those by whom he is called, and of no others.

7. The Call Not Limited In Time

A LEGITIMATE VOCATION to the pastoral office always designates the parish in which the ministerial functions are to be discharged, but it cannot determine the duration of the ministry. The call is not given for a definite period, but is unlimited in regard to time.

The limitations which the Scriptures affix to the pastoral office in regard to place are not applicable in regard to time. The pastor has his particular parish, but no definite limit can be fixed to the time, during which he is to officiate. The office is conferred without any reference to time; its duration will be determined by circumstances. A call for a stated period would ill accord with the nature and the objects of the office. To prove this, and to point out the legitimate consequence of it, is the design of the present chapter.

I. Proof That No Limitation In Time

It might be supposed that there is no necessity for the presentation of evidence to establish our proposition, since few, if any, deny it, and since especially it is not easy, and usually not required, to prove a negative. but evident as the truth stated appears in itself, and general as may be the assent to it in theory, it is still frequently denied in practice, which indicates that it is not fully admitted in all its consequences, as it should be. The following considerations may contribute something towards illustrating and enforcing it.

1. Scriptures Fix No Limits

The Scriptures teach that the office is conferred for an indefinite time, because it prescribes no limits in precept or in example. Man has no authority to prescribe limits to a divine call, or to assume, without warrant in Scripture, that God has prescribed them. All the ministers, of whom mention is

made, were so permanently. The ministry everywhere meets us as a vocation for life. Not only do we not read of any who were appointed for a limited time, but we do read of a number who continued their ministerial labors until death, and the legitimate inference is, that they were appointed to the office during life, or for an unlimited time. The language, also, which in many cases is used in Scripture, in reference to the officers of the Church, necessarily implies the permanence of their appointment.

For example, St. Peter addresses the elders thus:

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” 1 Pet. 5, 2—4.

This manifestly presupposes that they should retain their office and be faithful in the discharge of its duties while they live, or until the crown of glory should be given them in heaven.

Again, St. Paul says to Timothy:

“Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.”

The apostle remained a laborer in the ministry until his departure, and Timothy is also, by implication, exhorted to labor faithfully until death, making full proof of the ministry. Of the elders and bishops who were ordinary pastors in particular congregations, there is no account given from which we could learn how long they remained in their office; but in the absence of direct proof to the contrary, the presumption of their permanence, furnished by the cases of ministerial service during life which are recorded, and the

undeniable fact that no case is mentioned in which the call is given for a definite period, must be sufficient to convince all reasonable persons.

2. Reason Forbids Limitation

This must appear conclusive especially when it is taken in connection with the fact that reason teaches that the call should not be limited in time. For, in a matter so momentous, it is scarcely to be expected that congregations will be so reckless as to act before they are convinced of the candidate's qualifications. But if they are convinced of this, there is no reason why the appointment should not be made absolutely as regards time, since there certainly is no limit, beyond which a pastor's services will not be necessary. On the other hand, there is abundant reason for desiring their indefinite continuance. Experience only increases the qualifications for the ministry, and supplies the skill to render it more successful. The first years of a faithful minister's labors are usually those in which least has been accomplished, although appearances would sometimes indicate the reverse. The more extensive the knowledge acquired in process of time, and the experience gained in the life within and without, the more efficient will the minister become in his calling. The treasures of knowledge are enlarged in the lapse of years, and the ability rightly to divide the word of truth, upon which the minister's success in so large a measure depends, may be expected constantly to increase.

In view of this it would be a mistaken policy to choose the minister only for a limited time, and leave him, after the expiration of this, to assume his place again among the hearers. Nor would the case be rendered any better if the design were to re-appoint him at the end of his term, if he continued acceptable. Indeed, it is a question, whether this does not make the matter worse. For, in the first place, it is the expression of some lingering doubt or suspicion as to the pastor's fitness for the office. Then the election, as it was made without confidence in the person elected, can only be pronounced sinful. Or it is the manifestation of that wanton spirit which desires a preacher merely for excitement and amusement, not for the administering of the means of grace unto salvation, and which, therefore, seeks to be free from any obligation to retain a pastor longer than he can satisfy their carnal requirements. And, in the second place, if even a pure motive could exist, the arrangement would prove injurious to congregations on account of the op-

portunity presented of giving vent to those prejudices and personal predilections which will always exist, and the influence of which at elections tends to disturb the Church's harmony. It is, therefore, inexpedient as well as wrong to give calls to the ministry for a limited time.

It does not, indeed, render the call itself invalid; but it is so directly against all scriptural usage and enlightened reason, and so generally based on sinful grounds, that a congregation could rarely give, or a minister accept such a call without sin. The cases in which the call can be legitimately limited to a specified period are such as belong to the category of temporary supplies, rather than to that of the regular pastorate. A person may be in circumstances to accept an invitation to attend to the ministerial duties of a vacant congregation until a regular pastor is called, but he could not with good conscience resign a charge, or, if he is a candidate, decline a call to become pastor of a congregation, for the purpose of accepting such an invitation.

II. Call Not Incapable Of Being Revoked

That the call may terminate before death, is readily admitted. The legitimate consequence of our doctrine is not that the call is absolutely for life, and cannot, under any circumstances, cease to be of binding force; but it is that the call cannot usually expire by previous limitation. It must, therefore, be abrogated, if at all, on grounds which were not seen to exist at the time it was given.

The call is not of such a character that it cannot be revoked or abrogated under any circumstances. This would be a necessary consequence, if it were maintained that it is given absolutely for life. But such is not the case. There is no limit fixed, at the time it is extended; but this does not prevent its limitation by Providence, or by man's folly.

Divine Providence may, in the first place, render a severance of the pastoral relation desirable, by a visitation which disables the minister, but which does not incapacitate him for some other pursuit. Under such circumstances it is evident that the resignation of the office is a plain duty, that the former pastor may engage without encumbrance in some other employment. The call has then no more binding force than if it had never been given. It may, secondly, terminate a call in one place by assigning the pastor, through another call, to a different parish. Reason teaches that, as there

are diversities of gifts and diversities of requirements in different congregations, such changes are sometimes necessary. A man may be adapted to one place while he is not adapted to another, or he may be better suited to a certain place than any other who can be secured, while his place may be readily supplied by another.

God disposes his gifts for the welfare of the whole. A person who has a call should be content to labor faithfully in the place which the Lord has given him, though it be amid great privations and sufferings. If his abilities are such as to adapt him to a larger or more important field of labor, the Lord will find him in due time, and assign to him his proper place. It is not for man to measure his own talents and determine his fitness for this or that position. Such self-esteem leads only to misery and mischief. But when the Lord, through the Church, designates a pastor as suitable for another field, and thus mediately extends to him a call, he must not consider the prior call so absolutely binding during life as to render its acceptance impossible.

If he is convinced that the Lord calls him, it will be rather a matter of conscience with him to consider the former call abrogated by the Lord, who gave it, and who can release from it when it seems to Him good. Generally it will be taken for granted that if the new call is really divine, the congregation whose pastor has been called away can be brought to see it, and consequently to release him from his obligations to them. Ordinarily their consent to an acceptance of another vocation will be considered necessary to certify the pastor that it is really divine. But congregations may be selfish and obstinate, and refuse their consent, even when the evidence of God's will that the pastor should be transferred is plain. If it is plain to others who are disinterested, he may be assured that Providence has abrogated the former call by giving another to a new field.

Human folly may also be instrumental in terminating the call, and this in a two-fold manner: first, by misleading the pastor, and secondly, by misleading the people. The pastor is required to be sound in faith and blameless in morals. The call is given upon evidence furnished that the candidate has these qualifications, in addition to the necessary physical and intellectual powers. Where the Scriptures are complied with, this is always the condition under which it is extended.

But the called person may become unsound in the faith, or immoral in his life, or may even have been so previously, though he succeeded in concealing the sin. In either case the call terminates, not of course by limitation

to a definite time, but by a breach of essential conditions under which it was given; and the congregation, which would comply with the divine word, must revoke it immediately.

On the other hand, the congregation may become, or prove to be one whose minister the called person cannot conscientiously be. The people may refuse to endure sound doctrine, and, in spite of all their pastor's warnings and entreaties, adopt a false Confession, or may so refuse to submit to the word of the Lord as practically to amount to this. He would have no other choice, in such a wretched case, but to shake the dust from his feet and depart thence. The call would then again, not expire by limitation, but by a failure on the part of those who extended it to fulfill the conditions under which it was accepted. But while the call may be terminated by circumstances, and is thus not necessarily obligatory for life.

1. But Pastoral Relation Cannot Be Arbitrarily Severed

It is a legitimate consequence of our proposition, that the pastoral relation cannot be arbitrarily severed, at any time, by either party. Excepting in those cases in which the one is bound to reject and condemn the other for false doctrine or life, and therefore to revoke or resign the call, mutual consent is required to abrogate it. The pastor has no right to depart from his people whenever his fancy prompts him, and just as little has the congregation a right to depose and dismiss him according to their whim. The vocation to perform solemn duties cannot be cast off so easily. It may be man's pleasure to flee from the awful responsibility rather than to labor and pray, trusting in the grace of God for ability to bear it, and be faithful; but man's flight cannot compel God's permission, as it does not necessarily presuppose it. The vocation, though it came through the congregation, is divine; and a divine call, especially to an office so important, cannot be nullified by a human notion. If we would be released from it, we must ask release from Him who gave it, and seek it through precisely the same channel through which it was given.

The congregation calls in the Lord's name; if circumstances come, in which the call should be revoked, the congregation must revoke it in the Lord's name. There may be occasions on which a pastor, who finds no cause which necessitates the relinquishment of his present field, may desire to be released from his obligations to the congregation. Nor need this desire

be in conflict with his duty. Another charge may have called him to take upon himself the duties of the office there. There may be cogent reasons for his being convinced that the change would be an advantage to the Church: that it would be a gain for at least one of the congregations, if not for both. But this conviction by no means abrogates the call, which his present charge has given him. If it is God's will that the change should be made, there is no necessity for a departure from God's order to make it; the congregation which extended the call will usually be made willing to take it back when, under such circumstances, it is again resigned into their hands. Ministers sometimes deceive themselves by assuming it to be the divine will that they should accede to this or that vocation. The call which they have is binding first of all, and from the obligations which it imposes they must be released first, before they are free to accept any other; and it is safest to abide by the decision of the brethren in reference to a second call, even apart from the imperative duty, ordinarily, of compliance with the requirements of the call previously given, until released by the party giving it. It is amazing with what levity ministers sometimes treat their vocation and with what facility some will sever the relation which God has formed. It is not a rare thing that they practically treat a new call as divine, but the old one, under which they had thus far labored, as merely human; for they feel bound by the new, but not by the old. A new call cannot be supposed to be binding as long as the former one remains in force; and in force it must generally be thought to remain, not only until it is resigned into the hands of those who gave it, but also until these have accepted such resignation. When this is done the minister is released from all obligations; the divine order is satisfied; and human order is also observed. The conscience is at peace, and the pastor enters upon his new field with a light heart, not burdened by the fear that he may have fled from God when he changed his location, or that he may be performing duties in one place which, by a previous call, he owes to another. But just as the fact that the call is given for an indefinite time requires, that the minister must not, while he can conscientiously remain, change his present relations without the consent of those who called him, so it requires, on the other hand, that the congregation should make no change in their relation to the pastor, without his consent. They have given him a call, and they are bound to comply with its stipulations, as well as he who is called. And just as the departure of a minister without further notice, or the submission of his resignation to the people for

their acceptance, does not release the minister from his obligations to the flock, unless they accept the resignation laid before them, so the deposal of the pastor by the congregation and the election of another without further notice, or the submission to him of a request of demand to return the call, does not release the congregation from any obligations imposed on them by the terms of such vocation, unless he complies with their request and returns it. They may depose him for false doctrine or immoral conduct, and the call is annulled by this act; so the minister may reject them for their unscriptural confession in word or practice, and the call is again abrogated. But they cannot depose him, nor he condemn or reject them, without scriptural grounds, and still justly claim their acts to be legitimate.

III. No Human Authority Can Prescribe Limits

It will scarcely be deemed necessary to present arguments in detail to show that the call cannot be limited by any authority aside from the congregation which extends it. If no limitation can be imposed by the congregation which primarily has the keys and therefore alone possesses the right of appointing the ministers publicly to use them, it may be considered self-evident that no limitation in its duration can be placed upon it by others. But plain as this truth is, there are persons in the Ev. Lutheran Church, as there are many in other churches, nay, there are even whole Synods, who virtually claim the right of limiting it, and whose practice corresponds with the assumption. When a flock has given a pastor a regular call, not only exercising a right which God has given and which man cannot nullify, but also practicing a duty in accordance with the divine command, it is perfectly proper that the ministry approve the call and give its benediction. When a Synod establishes an order for this purpose, it does what comes legitimately within its province. But if, because the pastor who is called is perceived to be a young man, or, if not young, is regarded as inexperienced in the ministry, a Synod or Ministerium resolves to sanction the call with a limitation of its validity to one year, or any definite time, it usurps rights which do not belong to it, and is guilty of trespass upon the rights of the people.

The right cannot, in such a case, have been conferred upon the representative body by its proprietors, because these have already acted in the premises by extending a regular call, without any limitation to a specified

period. Only under this condition would a conscientious Lutheran minister, who will not stoop to be a hireling, accept it. Any change in this respect can therefore be made only in violation of the rights of the congregation. Such a violation is involved in the system of licensure for one year, which was once largely in vogue among the Lutheran Synods of this country, and which, in spite of the frequent protests against the wrong inflicted by it upon Christian people, is still retained in a few synodical organizations. There is nothing of any plausibility to be advanced in justification of this usurpation. It manifests a reckless disregard of the value of immortal souls to approve the vocation of a man whose qualifications for the holy office is questionable, and it indicates a deplorable lack of conscientiousness when men consent to become partakers in the sin of placing a pastor over a flock, while his ability or willingness to feed it with the bread of life is justly considered doubtful.

But if there is no reasonable doubt entertained, it is both unjust and uncharitable to withhold approval of the call extended and to refuse the rite of ordination to the person called. It is a contradiction to speak of one as a candidate for the office when he already has it and discharges its duties, and this becomes the more glaring when it is considered that he is licensed to perform its functions by those very persons who still persist in calling him a candidate, notwithstanding his regular election and vocation. If, for the purpose of attempting a justification of the absurdity, a distinction is drawn between pastors of unlimited and others of limited calls, intelligent Christians will demand a warrant for the distinction. It contravenes the doctrine of ministerial parity, which the Scriptures clearly teach and which the Evangelical Church of the Reformation has always maintained; and it smites in the face the palpable fact that the limitation is not made in the call extended, but is superadded by men who have no right, either original or delegated, to impose it.

Not even the congregations have the right, as has been shown, to call a pastor under limitations of the duration of the call to a specified time, and as they have not the right they could not delegate it to Synods and Ministeriums if they would. When such organizations presume to limit a call which was legitimately given by a charge, they therefore not only do that which has been proved to be wrong in itself, but they do so under circumstances which aggravate the usurpation. Their action not only virtually denies the congregation's right to call the pastor, but it refuses to accord to the people

the privilege, even as a matter of courtesy, of extending it in the scriptural way. The call given is revised and materially changed by limiting its force to a definite period, and is rendered unscriptural besides.

It is evident, therefore, that the call to the ministry must, according to the Scriptures and the Confession of our Church, be regarded as ordinarily a vocation for life, and that there is no authority, either in the congregation or in any other body, to limit its duration. Faithful adherence to this biblical rule of permanence in the call to the holy office will guard against the tyrannical abuses to which reference has been made, and will secure for ministerial labors the greatest possible success by affording the greatest possible advantages.

Part 3. Ordination To The Ministry

THE POWER OF APPOINTING MINISTERS lies in the company of believers, not in any privileged select portion of them. A pastor, thus chosen by the congregation, has all the rights and privileges which it is possible to confer upon him as such; for he is invested with the office by the highest authority. There are persons, however, who think something else requisite for the Gospel Ministry, which something they denominate ordination.

In entering upon the consideration of this subject, it is important, first of all, to guard against the confusion which is, in many cases, apparent in regard to it. This arises mainly from the failure to observe the various significations in which the term in question is used. Sometimes it is employed to designate the call to the ministry as extended by other ministers. In this sense it is not necessary to speak of it any further here, as we have shown, in former chapters, that the call cannot be given legitimately by ministers, except in the name of the congregation. If the word ordination be used synonymously with the word call, that which it signifies must always be insisted upon as necessary, and the only questions which it then presents are those which have been elucidated in the preceding part of this volume. Sometimes the word is used to indicate the appointment to the ministry, embracing the call as well as its solemn public announcement, and the ceremonies connected with it. In this wide sense we do not employ it here, as we affirm of the one part embraced in its meaning, when thus used, what we must deny of the other. It is obvious that if we would have a distinct apprehension of the subject, a vague use of the word must be avoided, and care must be taken to define precisely what it is of which anything is denied or affirmed. Generally it is used to signify the solemn separation of ministers to the holy office, by the imposition of hands, coupled with prayer. Ordination, in this sense of the term, or at least in the sense of setting apart ministers by other ministers, is supposed by some to be a necessary divine

command, and to be the means of conveying some necessary official gift. Many imagine that it is this ceremony that actually confers the office; nay, there are some among Protestants, and even among Lutherans, who take sides wholly with the Papists, and affirm that an indelible ministerial character is in some way impressed upon the subject by this rite, in consequence of which he is to be considered as belonging to the ministry, even though he should never have a charge, or though he should cease to perform ministerial functions and devote his talents and time to some other employment. In opposition to these grave errors, we affirm that such ordination, though we confess its utility, is not at all necessary to the office, but that it is only a solemn confirmation of the call which must precede it, and which is valid without it.

8. Ordination Not Essential To The Ministry

Whatever importance may be attached to it on other accounts, the rite of ordination, as something superadded to the call by the congregation, is not necessary to render that call valid, or to confer the office. In proof of this position, we shall show that the doctrine of the necessity of ordination is without any foundation to support it; that it conflicts with truths which are undeniable; and that it was always rejected as an error by the best authors in the Lutheran Church.

I. Ordination Not A Sacrament

The necessity of ordination is sometimes based on its sacramental character. This sacramental character, so far as it can be of any weight in proving such necessity, cannot be admitted. It will not prove the point to say that ordination bears some resemblance to a sacrament, and has some of its attributes.

To establish this, it must be made clear that it is a sacrament, from which it would of course follow that we are under obligations to use it and honor it, both on account of the divine command, and on account of the blessings which it is designed to convey. But that it is a sacrament we deny, and do so with abundant reason. It lacks all that is essential to a sacrament. It lacks the *materia terrestris*, and the *materia caelestis*, and the divine institution. It has no external element as a channel for the communication of a heavenly gift.

The imposition of hands, of which the Romanists are accustomed to speak as such an element, is not such and cannot be. It is no *materia* at all, but an action, and can be the earthly element in a sacrament just as little as the distribution could be in the Holy Supper, or the application of water in Holy Baptism. Both presuppose the presence of the element, the bread and wine in the one, the water in the other; and no action can, under any circumstances, supply their place. This imposition of hands, moreover, which is spoken of as the necessary earthly element, or as a substitute for it, is not even divinely appointed, and could not, therefore, be such an essential part of a sacrament. If there are those who take it upon themselves to maintain that our Lord did institute this ceremony, we challenge the proof. Where is it so recorded? Where is the command, explicit or implicit, that hands must be laid upon the minister by other ministers to set him apart for the office? So far as we know, there is no such divine institution claimed even, that is, no direct institution of the rite by the Lord; and an apostolic appointment, if even such could be proved, would not suffice to institute a holy Sacrament.

Besides, the imposition of hands is not even peculiar to the benediction or solemn consecration of ministers, and could not, on this account, be considered as one of the essentials of a sacrament appointing them: it could be deemed part of a sacrament for other purposes just as well. This would render the healing of the sick, the benediction of persons in various circumstances, the impartation of extraordinary spiritual gifts, etc., sacraments also. For the Scriptures speak of the imposition of hands as applied in all these cases, as well as in some others. It is said that among the signs following them that believed, should be this: "They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover," Mark 16, 18. It is said of our Lord, that "There were brought unto Him little children that He should put His hands on them and pray," Matt. 19, 13. We read that "Through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given," Acts 8, 18. So it is known that patriarchs laid

their hands upon their children's heads to bless them, and that now, as always, the benediction is given to babes and catechumens, indeed to all Christians in the congregation, so far as may be, by the imposition of the pastor's hands. It is folly to assert that all these acts are sacraments, or to assert of the act in one case that it is a sacrament, and deny it in others, notwithstanding the plain fact that there is just as much and just as little proof for the sacramental character of the one as of the other.

Now, as there is nothing else which is even claimed to be the necessary external element in ordination as a sacrament, and as the imposition of hands has not the characteristics of such element, there is nothing left for us but to deny that ordination is a sacrament. This denial is made also for another reason. As this rite lacks the earthly, so it lacks the heavenly element also. God has not only appointed no external sign as a channel to convey a special gift in ordination, but he has appointed no heavenly good as a special gift to be conveyed in it. It confers no grace, as do Baptism and the Communion; it is no means for the bestowal of salvation; it is, therefore, no sacrament. For persons may speak as much as they will about the special official grace conveyed and the gift bestowed, through ordination, they will not, as reasonable men, expect us much to reverence their assertions, unless they will point to the Scripture passages in which we are instructed about this means of grace, and about the gifts which it is designed to convey. But as they are unable to do this, and cannot even point to experience—which could prove nothing without the word of God, in any event—in evidence of their claim that extraordinary powers are given through ordination, they must not take it amiss if we persist in denying their assumption, and in warning them against the superstitious confidence in human acts and institutions which it betokens. Gifts are indeed spoken of in connection with ordination.

Even an apostle speaks of a gift which was in a minister by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. But we must always be careful not to confound occasions of receiving gifts, or acts with which they are cotemporaneous, with the divinely appointed channel of their impartation. It is a grave error to attribute the blessings, which the word alone bestows, to the rite with which it is connected, or to ascribe the gifts communicated in answer to prayer, through the ordinary channels, to the ceremony performed simultaneously with it. There is not the least shadow of proof that ministerial qualifications, natural or spiritual, or that some extraordinary indefinable

something, elevating the recipient into a superior order, are conveyed to men's minds and hearts through the medium of ordination. It is no sacramental means of grace, and cannot be shown to be necessary, therefore, on the ground of its being such.

Although this seems plain enough, it may be objected that for Lutherans there is still a difficulty in the way. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, it is said, virtually admits ordination to be a sacrament, and the question is asked with something of triumph in the tone, whether we would reject this part of our Symbols, and charge our fathers with superstition in this respect? We think of no such rejection and no such charges. But one thing we confidently assert, that our fathers were well aware of the truth, and maintained it manfully and consistently. We hold it to be a gross wrong to them and to the Church, to interpret isolated passages in such a manner as to render them inconsistent with the principles which they clearly stated, and illustrated, and proved. It is an unjust method of interpreting any author or work. But is the statement of the Apology, in reference to ordination, capable of an explanation which is in harmony with the doctrine of the ministry as, according to the evidence adduced, it was held by the Reformers and by the Church ever since, and with the statements of her great divines in regard to ordination especially?

So we believe, and so we think every unbiased reader of the passage in question will, upon closer examination, see reason for believing. It reads as follows:

“If the sacrament of orders should be called a sacrament of preaching and of the Gospel, it would not be grievous to call ordination a sacrament. For God has instituted and commanded the office of preaching, and has added glorious promises: The Gospel is the power of God to every one that believeth, Rom. 1, and, The word that goeth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, Is. 55. If the sacrament of orders be thus understood, we might also call the imposition of hands a sacrament. For the Church has a divine command to appoint preachers and deacons.” 203, 11—12.

There are two things to be observed here, in order to understand this correctly.

In the first place, the sense in which ordination must be understood, if it is to be called a sacrament, is defined. If what is meant by ordination be not a mere ceremony, but the appointment of ministers to dispense the treasures of grace to men, it is not particularly objectionable to predicate of it a sacramental character; for such appointment has a divine command. It is expressly stated that only under the condition that it be understood as defined, could the imposition of hands be denominated a sacrament, namely, not as a ceremony, but as an authoritative appointment to the holy office, which of course includes the call. The preconceived notions of persons sometimes interfere so much with their clearness of vision, that in reading they see rather what is written on their minds than what is written on the paper before them. In consequence of such prejudice the Apology is thought by some to say that the appointment of ministers in general, and even the ceremony of the laying on of hands in particular, may be called a sacrament, both being designated by the word ordination. Such persons are entreated to look again, and to strive to deal fairly with the Reformers. There are two admissions in regard to the subject founded on the meaning of the word ordination. One is that it may be called a sacrament, if this is applied not to the officer, but to the office, not to the person, but to the function. That this is the meaning, is rendered certain by the proofs given; for both proof texts show the power of the word of God, and say nothing of the preacher of that word. It is a "sacrament of the Gospel," or of the ministration of the Gospel. In this respect no reference is had to any particular administrators; the ecclesiastical office is not particularly referred to; the promise is that the Gospel will accomplish God's will, no matter who preaches it.

It is God's command that it shall be promulgated, and it is His promise that it shall be effectual: thus understood we may call the ministry a sacrament. But we may also admit more than this. We may admit that the appointment to this ministry can also, without endangering the truth, be styled a sacrament, if the ministry is taken in the sense stated, as a ministration of the Gospel. For not only has the preaching a divine command and promise, giving it a sacramental character, but this sacramental character is transferable also to the appointment of special preachers, who shall apply the Gospel's saving power by proclaiming it to men. That, as in the first instance, the ministration, without reference to the minister, is referred to, so,

in the second, the appointment of the minister to perform these functions, not some accidental ceremony, is meant, is clear also from the proof adduced to establish the proposition. "We might call the imposition of hands a sacrament because the Church is commanded to appoint ministers." The imposition of hands is manifestly used synecdochically as including the call, and thus synonymously with appointment. The necessity of preaching and the obligation to appoint preachers we also earnestly maintain; but this proves nothing for the necessity of ordination as a ceremony of laying on of hands, or as a special authorization given by ministers to the persons called. It clearly proves nothing, even were we to admit that ordination, as described in the Apology, is called a sacrament in the proper sense, for it would only prove that preaching and appointing preachers are indispensable, which we also teach.

But, in the second place, the word sacrament is also used in a much wider sense than when it is applied to Baptism and the Holy Supper. We mention this, not because it is essential to our argument, but because it is important to guard against an injurious misapprehension of the passage under consideration. Even Gospel preaching and the appointment of persons to attend to it are not sacraments in the strict sense, nor are they so represented in the Apology. This is plain from the fact that matrimony and the civil government are said to be entitled to the name of Sacrament, on account of their divine institution, just as much as the ministerial office. The following passage clearly shows that the word sacrament was used in a wider sense:

"Finally, if everything which has God's word and command for it, were to be called by this glorious name of sacrament, prayer should be called so in preference to everything else. For here there is a forcible divine command, and there are many glorious divine promises. And there would also be reason for it. For if such a high title were given to prayer, people would be moved to exercise it. So could alms be classed with the sacraments also, and the cross and tribulations of Christians, for these have the divine promise also. But no reasonable person will much contend about it whether there are seven sacraments or more, if only God's word and command be not endangered." 204, 16—17.

Thus ordination is in no respect called a sacrament in the proper sense of this word, in which sense there are but two; and the ceremony of ordination, understood in the narrow sense, as excluding the congregational vocation, is not even called a sacrament in the broadest sense. The passage teaches nothing but what all Lutherans cheerfully admit, and the attempt to prove by it the necessity of ministerial ordination by the imposition of hands, is wholly futile: the ministry, not the ceremony, is necessary; and this is all that the passage in the Apology asserts.

II. Word Of God Does Not Teach Its Necessity

The word of God does not in any manner teach the necessity of ordination. By some who admit that it is not a sacrament, and that it is not necessary on this ground, it is contended that it is of divine authority still, and that its necessity is capable of proof on other grounds. These claims and their evidence must be tested.

1. No Divine Command For It

There is no divine command for this rite of ordination. If there is, those who so vehemently defend its necessity have failed to discover it, notwithstanding their wistful search for it, or have at least failed to show where it is to be found. Indeed, the absence of such divine command is now pretty generally, if not universally, conceded in the Lutheran Church. This is fatal to the theory of its necessity to the ministry; for the Lord, who instituted and commands the office to be perpetuated unto the end, would surely not omit an essential thing in His institution.

But He did omit ordination both in His practice and in His instructions. When He sent out His messengers to evangelize the world, it is nowhere recorded that He conferred on them the office by the imposition of hands, or even that He used this ceremony in connection with their appointment, nor that He enjoined its use upon His disciples when they should appoint other ambassadors. But to bind it upon our consciences, as a necessary thing, requires an explicit precept from on high, otherwise we would sacrifice our liberty as God's children and be brought under a human yoke, as well as make ourselves guilty of an idolatrous submission to men, who pre-

sume to arrogate God's powers of binding the conscience. Where there is no command of God we may urge the expediency, or beauty, or antiquity of a thing, and may, on such grounds, strive to maintain it, or to introduce it where it does not exist, but we cannot demand its adoption, and must not abuse language and mislead unsuspecting souls by speaking of its necessity.

2. No Proof From Apostolic Authority

But while it is admitted that there is no direct divine precept appointing it, it is maintained that there is apostolic authority for insisting upon the ceremony of ordination, and that it has thus the divine sanction, which renders it necessary as a scriptural rite. In reply to this we shall show that there is no proof of the necessity of ordination to be derived from apostolic authority. That the apostles used this ceremony is true. That they in some sense commanded it may also be admitted, in view of Tit. 1, 5:

“For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”

For as the vocation of ministers is indisputably the right of the Church, not of a small number of her membership, the charge committed by St. Paul to Titus of ordaining ministers, of course assigned to him the public solemnities connected with the consecration of the pastor elect, and thus ordination by the imposition of hands, which was the apostolic custom, may be considered as involved in the charge, not as a commandment forming part of its essence, but as a ceremony usually practiced in accomplishing its purpose. Such apostolic example and precept, however, does not necessarily require us to follow and obey.

An example never obligates merely as such; the obligation, where such exists, lies in the divine injunction which a good example illustrates. The conduct of the best men must not be imitated where they err; nor must we feel under obligations to walk in their footsteps when they do a thing of indifference, which is not wrong, but which is not commanded. That which must decide in every case is not the example, but the divine precept. As to

the precept contained in the charge of Titus, it cannot be of universal obligation on the ground of its being given by an apostle. We do not, in the least, doubt the inspiration of all their words. But it ought to be plain to every Christian that, though they were inspired, they were not by this incapacitated to make temporary arrangements of expediency, or disqualified to make appointments which, if not temporary, were not intended to be obligatory upon all. Not everything which they did, and everything which they ordered, could be binding on all men in all time. In the sphere of revelation they are our infallible guides: in the sphere of liberty they are not, and do not pretend to be our masters. In the former they stand before us in the name of God, speaking words of the Holy Ghost; in the latter they present themselves as men ordering things according to enlightened reason, in the name of man.

Only those who will give heed neither to reason nor revelation, will persist in maintaining that the apostles had no voice in questions of mere human order and expediency, or that when they uttered their voice this utterance was a divine decision, which, by that very fact, raised the subject to which it pertains above the sphere of the indifferent. Are the directions of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in reference to covering the head in prayer, of binding force always? The commentator who should affirm this, ignoring the peculiar circumstances which rendered such directions temporarily expedient, would prove by this, that biblical interpretation is not his vocation.

Are the directions of the apostolic council, of which we read in Acts 15, of universal obligation, except so far as they contain what is elsewhere and otherwise made binding? We would hazard nothing in saying that the man who should maintain this, betrays his ignorance of the essentials of the Gospel as distinguished from the law. The mere fact that ordination, as a ministerial sanction of the call given to a minister, performed by the laying on of hands, was practiced, and ordered to be practiced by the apostles, in itself proves absolutely nothing for its necessity. For the question still remains whether the directions given were in the domain of divine revelation and obligation, or in that of human reason and freedom: whether the thing appointed is required by our Lord as necessary in itself, or whether it is merely desired by men as means to attain a necessary end, which may be accomplished by other means as well, and at some times and in some places better, or which at some times and in some places may have no influence in accomplishing it at all. The appointment of ministers to administer the

means of grace is necessary by divine command: it is no mere apostolic arrangement of expediency, but an institution of God, which is indispensable to the accomplishment of the divine purpose, because the means of grace convey salvation only by being administered. But the appointment of ministers by other ministers, without the consent of the Church, is not only not necessary, but it is not lawful, since it tramples upon divinely given rights, as has been proved by an abundance of evidence. All that the ministry should do, according to the directions given, is to teach the people in reference to the necessity and qualifications of ministers, and urge them to elect such where they are needed, and, after the election has taken place, by public services attest and confirm the election. The pretended divine command of ordination means, and can mean nothing more than this, according to the teaching of other Scriptures. And even this attestation and confirmation is of no indispensable necessity: if ministers are elected without such ministerial instrumentality to effect it, the end is accomplished, and all is just as well as if ministers had been present; and if no ministers can be had to add to the solemnity of the call, by public ceremonies, the call is none the less valid, and the end, which is necessary, is again accomplished. If these means to effect the requisite vocation of pastors, and to consecrate them when called, are not always necessary, much less can the particular form of such consecration be deemed essential: the activity of the ministry, as such, is not essential in general, much less is their activity necessary in the particular form of the imposition of hands. But, it may be said, it is very easy to make assertions: where is the proof? Let those who affirm the necessity of ordination be reasonable, and fairly weigh the proofs presented, and not, because they do not harmonize with their prejudices, cast them aside as worthless, without a fair examination; and let them consider, that as they affirm, and we deny, it would not be amiss if they should endeavor to offer some reason and evidence in proof of their position: this might lead them to perceive that their theory has no foundation in Scripture, and to appreciate the force of the evidence which has been adduced to disprove it. The apostolic precept, which has just been considered, in itself so manifestly proves nothing in its favor, that its constant repetition merely proves how barren of proof the position is. It leaves the question open whether the ordination of ministers by the imposition of the hands of those already in the ministry, or even the confirmation by ministers of the call given by the people, is essential to render the vocation valid and to confer the office. Whether what the

apostles enjoin, in any case, is a divine command, is precisely the question; we deny that it is in this case, and refer to the whole scriptural doctrine of the ministry in proof of it; and it should not be expected that the mere assertion of opponents affirming it, will be considered of sufficient weight to overthrow the whole system of the Church with its scriptural foundation.

3. No Evidence In The Gifts Bestowed

Conscious that such a demand is preposterous, the opponents attempt the construction of another argument on the ground of the effects produced by the imposition of hands, concluding that that which conveys such great gifts must be essential. We shall not find it difficult, however, to show that there are no necessary gifts imparted by this rite of ordination. Let the passages of Scripture which are quoted to prove the bestowal of requisite gifts by ordination, be calmly considered. What do they say? One of them says this:

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” 1 Tim. 4:14.

The other says this:

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” 2 Tim. 1:6.

Here there is, without controversy, a gift spoken of, and one that is in the subject by the putting on of hands. What remains to be ascertained is simply the sense in which this is intended. Does it mean that official grace is sacramentally conveyed by the ceremony? It has been proved that ordination is not a sacrament, and therefore cannot produce the effects of a sacrament. Does it mean that some extraordinary gift, which cannot be defined, is imparted magically by means of the rite? Such an opinion would pass only among those who have not the marvelous light of the Gospel to guide them, and who are, therefore, easy victims of superstition. It is unutterably pitiful

when people, having heard that a sound faith will receive doctrines upon the mere authority of Scripture, even in spite of reason and the senses, forthwith conclude that the highest pinnacle of faith is reached when they receive doctrines as utterly devoid of scriptural support as they are of reason and of sense. Among enlightened Christians such assumptions of magical power in religious rites, will be regarded as superstition, not as humble faith. True faith rests upon the clear word of the Lord. It is not an unquestioning confidence in everything that may be represented as heavenly truth: it rather questions everything that is so represented until the Lord's word is shown for it, and it requires this to be interpreted in harmony with the whole Scripture. The idea that gifts are imparted magically by ordination is inconsistent with such faith. What is the nature, then, of the gift bestowed by the laying on of hands?

As it is not magical, nor sacramental, it must be either the extraordinary communication of the Spirit for the performance of miracles, or the bestowal of ordinary spiritual gifts by the ordinary means, as these are used in connection with the imposition of hands. The latter was the ordinary ceremony used in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8, 17—19. If the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were thus imparted to Timothy, to whom both texts refer, it does not follow either that these gifts will be bestowed upon all who are called to the Gospel ministry, as we know they have not been, nor that, if it should please God to confer them now, they would be imparted by this means. As a symbol of such communication the rite has, indeed, been continued until this day, and is in constant use where confirmation is practiced; but among Protestants, at least, such rite will not be deemed essential for the bestowal of the Spirit with His gracious gifts. The extraordinary gifts have ceased and are therefore not imparted by any means whatever. The ordinary are manifestly as necessary for a layman as for a pastor, because they are gifts imparted not simply to qualify for a particular office in time, but to prepare the soul for eternity. As the rite is admitted not to be necessary in the one, it follows that it is not necessary in the other case, being a symbol merely of the communication of spiritual gifts, not a means for their bestowal. But if it be decided that the gift referred to is not this extraordinary spiritual power, which is no longer conferred upon men, it must be affirmed that it is an ordinary spiritual gift, for the conveyance of which there are ordinary means. There is no room for any other position beside those mentioned.

But if the effect of ordination is not the infusion of some physical or intellectual power qualifying for the office, which all experience denies, nor some wonderful something, elevating the subject above the congregation of believers, and rendering him more than a son of God and heir of heaven, which all Scripture denies, but simply an ordinary gift of strength and comfort in the divine life, it will require no argument to convince well-informed Christians, least of all will it require such an argument to convince Lutherans, who are acquainted with God's plan of working invariably through His appointed means where the end can at all be accomplished by them, that the gift is conveyed not by the ceremony, but by that which is more powerful, and which is known to be a means of conveying gifts, namely, the word of God, which is used in ordination. The laying on of hands is used synecdochically, as in the Symbols, for the whole solemnity of which it forms a part.

That is ascribed to ordination which properly belongs to the word of God that is always used when ordination is practiced. The truth is thus exhibited by a figure which is easily understood, and which is of frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture. Even if it should seem strained to include in the signification of the word ordination the proclamation of biblical truth which is usually connected with it, and its meaning should be limited, so as to include only the prayer accompanying the ceremony, it would be correct to say that gifts are bestowed by prayer, not as a means of their conveyance, indeed, but as an exercise which has the divine promise. The gift is not in the least dependent upon the ordination, because it may be obtained without this ceremony; and we cannot, therefore, infer from this the necessity of ordination.

III. Doctrine Of Necessity Inconsistent With The Scripture

Not only is such necessity incapable of proof from Scriptures, but the doctrine is inconsistent with them. For if any ceremony is taught to be requisite, it is not the imposition of hands, but one entirely different from this.

“Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Jn. 20, 21—3.

This rite of insufflation is the only one which our Saviour used in sending forth ministers, so far as we can learn from the record; it is the only one applied in the commissioning of the apostles, with the exception of Paul, upon whom Ananias, who, as far as we know, was not ordained himself, laid his hands; and it is therefore the only one which could, with any degree of propriety, be considered obligatory upon all.

This would seem still more probable were we to press the words employed in the narrative. For it might, with some semblance of justice, be decided that, because our Lord commanded the apostles to send others as they were sent, they were bound to use this ceremony of breathing on them as it had been used in their mission. Now, if the question were fairly proposed, whether a rite used by our Lord or one used by the apostles—though in commissioning them the former was employed—should be considered of universal necessity, no well established Christian would hesitate to decide in favor of the former. But the former is admitted to be indifferent as respects its relation to the conscience, and therefore the other must be. But if any rite must be used of necessity, insufflation would be that rite. The truth is that the Scriptures neither teach, nor allow us to teach, that either rite is necessary. What God has left free, it is sinful to attempt forcing upon the conscience.

The doctrine of such necessity would be pernicious and utterly unscriptural also on another account. It would be introducing a ceremonial law, to admit the obligation of which upon the conscience, would be to relinquish not only our liberty, but one of the essentials of the Gospel dispensation, namely, that since Christ, the substance, has come, we need no more shadows, and that since we are brought to the light of the Gospel we are no longer under a legal schoolmaster. It is subversive of the whole economy of salvation to maintain the necessity of a mere ceremony.

Such a ceremony is ordination. It is not required by any moral law or natural moral necessity; no one is so blind or perverse as to maintain this:

there is no trace of any precept binding it upon the conscience, and never could it have been thought a duty, but for a mistaken notion of its being a positive obligatory institution. It is not required as a means of grace: in the Lutheran Church no one would have the hardihood to maintain this. Its necessity is either barely ceremonial, or nothing. To evangelical Christians it is no little thing to see an effort made to bind mere ceremonies upon their consciences. They, being dead with Christ, are not subject to human ordinances, nor are they subjected to divine ordinances otherwise than as they communicate and invigorate the divine life.

Justification by faith alone can admit of no necessary ceremonies, unless their necessity rests upon their appointment as channels to give or nourish faith. Ordination does neither; and any doctrine which makes its use essential must, therefore, be condemned as pernicious, having a tendency to undermine the Gospel.

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days: which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ.” Col. 2, 16.

And if even divine ceremonial appointments are not to be bound on Christian consciences as necessary, much less may those for which no divine appointment can be shown.

“If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not, taste not, handle not, which all are to perish with the using,) after the commandments and doctrines of men” Col. 2, 20—2.

We must confess with Spener:

“We ascribe to ordination no extraordinary character or other spiritual power, except as it is the public testimony respecting the call, and as the benediction is not without fruit on account of the Christian prayer; but to this the succession of persons contributes nothing; and if a superstition should be made of it, for my part I would rather not have it.”

Its use is ancient and honorable, but it is free; and if it were to be forced upon those who have the glorious liberty of the children of God, it would be much better to dispense with it entirely, beautiful and useful as it is, than to have it imposed on them as a yoke of bondage. To ordination itself no Christian who is versed in the Gospel can object; but the doctrine of its necessity they will resist and reject, as in conflict with the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

IV. Symbols Of The Church In Conflict With Its Necessity

The Symbols are perfectly innocent of teaching any such necessity. They teach that a regular call is requisite to authorize a person to teach or preach publicly in the Church, or to administer the Sacraments, that is, to perform ministerial functions in a public office. But nowhere do they teach, expressly or by implication, that ordination is requisite for this. They not only do not teach this, but they plainly enough maintain the reverse. This seems evident from the statements of the Apology in reference to the article in question. It is there said that the Papists were willing to receive the 14th Art, if the confessors would understand the regular call as implying canonical ordination; that these had expressed their willingness to preserve the established ecclesiastical polity, as a human arrangement, provided those would tolerate the truth and receive teachers of the truth; and that, as the Papists refused this, they were guilty of the division which must ensue, for the Protestants must adhere to the word of God. This certainly implies that they did not understand the regular call as embracing canonical ordination; for they insisted upon the former as necessary according to God's word, while they rejected the latter as a human ordinance which they would be glad to

comply with for the sake of peace, and order, and unity, but which they felt bound to dispense with under existing circumstances.

It is true, they could have ordination without receiving it in the way prescribed in the canons; and it might be said that what they did not consider implied in the regular call was its reception according to the canonical regulation, while the rite itself they deemed indispensable. But aside from the fact that there is nothing whatever in the passage to suggest this as their meaning, the reverse is rendered highly probable, to say the least, by the absence of any distinction drawn between the ceremony as such, and the ceremony as required by the canons, and of any exception made in favor of the former. And this probability is rendered a certainty by another passage which expressly makes a distinction between the call and ordination, and shows what is held to be the import of the latter.

In the appendix to the Smalc. Art. it is said:

“Formerly the people elected pastors and bishops; then the bishop of the place or of the vicinity came and confirmed the elected bishop by the imposition of hands, nor was ordination then aught else but such confirmation.” 342, 70.

If there are those who would seek to evade the force of this decisive passage by drawing a distinction between a pastor’s election and his vocation, and affirming that a pastor elected is not necessarily called, we would reply in the words of Gerhard:

“The distinction between election and vocation is rather in the fancy of our minds than in the thing itself. For whoever is legitimately elected to the ministry is also called, and whoever is so called is, also, elected, on which account the Scriptures use these terms indifferently on this subject.” Loc. 24, §52.

But if still further proof should be desired that the Church does not teach, but denies the necessity of ordination, it will be found in the works of those

who may be presumed to understand the Confessions best, and whose praise is in all the churches.

V. Best Writers Of The Church Deny Its Necessity

The earliest and most highly esteemed writers of the Church deny the necessity of ordination. Luther declares in his reply to Henry VIII:

“Although Paul commands Titus to ordain priests or elders, yet it does not follow from this that Titus did this by his own power, but rather that, according to the example of the apostles, he installed them with the people’s consent and approval, otherwise the words of Paul would contradict the example of the apostles. As to his applying the imposition of hands to the sacrament of priestly ordination or consecration, even children can see that this is irrelevant, and that he, according to his papistic manner, makes everything of the Scriptures that his fancy dictates. The imposition of hands was then the visible communication of the Holy Spirit.”
(W.) 19, 432.

That this was not merely meant to deny the necessity of ordination as a sacrament, is evident from the last sentence, which shows that its object was one which is not attainable now, and for this reason, it cannot now be insisted on because of the command to Titus. But he expresses himself to the same effect in other works also. We have already quoted his letter to a lady which declares that “He who is called is ordained and should preach to those that called him; this is our Lord’s consecration and the true chrism.”

The call, not the ceremonies connected with its public proclamation, gives the office; therefore it matters not who ordains, provided only the vocation be right. "They need not trouble themselves much about this, as I think, for their own canons teach them that a bishop is rightly ordained who is consecrated by a simoniac or heretic. And even more than this, they deem it right if the most shameless pope, as Boniface VIII, or Julius II, or

Clemens VII, or the devil himself does it in the office. For it depends on this, that the bishop and Church are agreed, and the Church is willing to hear the bishop and the bishop to teach the Church. Thus it is accomplished.

The imposition of hands gives the benediction and confirms and bears testimony to this, as a notary or witness testifies to a temporal matter." 26, 105. Chemnitz explicitly denies that ordination is enjoined by our Lord.

"The office of the word and sacraments has divine promises," he says, "and upon these the prayer in ordination rests; but these promises are not to be bound to the custom of laying on hands, for which there is neither a command of Christ nor such a promise as is annexed to the ceremony in Baptism and the Lord's Supper." Exam. II, 222.

Baldwin not only expressly denies its necessity, but shows reason for it:¹

"Ordination is not absolutely necessary; for it is not commanded by God, so that it could not be dispensed with, nor is its efficacy so great, as the papists falsely pretend, that it would not without danger be omitted, nor does the success of the office depend upon it, as if the Gospel could not be savingly taught without it; but it is an ecclesiastical custom which recommends the minister of the word and reminds him of certain duties." De cas. cons. 1032.

Similar are the words of Gerhard:

"As respects ordination, this is not necessary by the force of any divine precept, nor because the essence of the ministry depends upon it, nor because it impresses a certain character, as the papists dream." Loc. 23, §202.

He also quotes Chytraeus as affirming the same:

“It should be known that those who are called and elected by the voice of the Church and administer the office without the laying on of hands, are really ministers of the Church, and are authorized to teach and administer the sacraments. For by this ceremony no special character is impressed upon the ordained person, nor does the ecclesiastical power, or the right to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, depend upon this rite, nor is the office of the ordained person efficacious on account of it.” Loc. 24, p. 139.

This is the uniform doctrine of the great teachers in the Lutheran Church, without a single exception, so far as we could ascertain, at least down to the days of the pietistic controversy; for although there are occasional expressions which would seem to indicate the contrary, they are easily reconciled with these plain and positive statements, when it is considered that ordination was sometimes understood as embracing the call, and that even in the narrow sense it was uniformly used and defended as a rite which, though not necessary, is still, because it was recommended by apostolic example and long continued usage, not to be unnecessarily omitted, especially as it is of great utility as a confirmation of the call.

VI. Attempts To Invalidate Testimony Vain

If it should be attempted to invalidate this array of evidence by drawing a distinction between the ordination of the pastor elect by other ministers, and the ceremony of imposition of hands, by which that ordination is performed, the attentive reader will readily perceive that the attempt is nugatory. If it could be shown that the Scriptures confer upon the ministers, who already hold the office, the power to confer it upon others, it might, indeed, be possible to show that this must be done before a called person really has the right to minister in holy things, whether it be done by the imposition of hands or by any other ceremony. But those who urge this distinction admit that the part performed by the incumbents of the office in appointing other ministers, is that which is embraced in the rite of ordination; and they must therefore admit, as a necessary consequence, that the evidence which proves such ordination not to be essential, clearly establishes the position

also that the ministerial function in appointing other ministers is not essential to constitute the called person a pastor. The Augustana explicitly declares that no one should publicly officiate without a regular call, and the proofs adduced above show clearly that the right of calling belongs to the whole Church, not to a select ministerial class. The congregation, including pastors, if there are such in it previously, gives the call, not the ministers who subsequently add their public testimony in ordination. The latter is desirable, for reasons that shall be stated in a subsequent chapter, but it is not at all of the essence of the call. Not only the imposition of hands is non-essential, but ordination, in the sense of a ministerial act, authorizing elected ministers to officiate as such, no matter by what ceremony it is performed, is so.

The right to appoint ministers is in the people to whom they are to minister, not in those who hold the ministerial office. This the evidence exhibited above must render incontrovertible to any candid mind that embraces the Lutheran faith, and thus adheres strictly to the Gospel and recognizes the force of reasoning from premises which it furnishes.

1. Quoted by Prof. Walther, Kirche u. Amt, p. 343.↩

9. Ordination A Confirmation Of The Call

THE RITE OF ORDINATION was adopted in the Lutheran Church for a well-defined purpose. It was designed as a confirmation of the vocation which was previously given by the Church. So the Church, in perfect coincidence with the Scriptures, constantly taught and still teaches.

I. This Is The Doctrine Of The Scriptures

As regards the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures on this point, it is evident that, according to them, ordination can be nothing more than a confirmation of the call. For, as has been shown, they ascribe the right and duty of election to the congregation, and represent the elected, or called person, as invested with the office. There is nothing essential wanting after such an election, as this constitutes a regular call. The ordination subsequently conferred, can stand in no other relation to the call given but that of a confirmatory rite: it is either this, or nothing.

The reader should be careful not to overlook the true state of the question. It is the interest of error to encourage confusion of ideas, that it may be smuggled in under the cover of truth. This is frequently practiced in this question of ordination. When ordination and vocation are assumed to be identical, it is, of course, easy enough to see that the former cannot be a confirmation of the latter. But this assumption is utterly baseless. The word ordination is, indeed, sometimes used, as we have shown, in an extended sense, so as to include the call. But by no writer of any care, or any authority, in the Church, is the vocation of the Church and the imposition of hands by a few in the Church, represented to be the same thing. When two things are, for the sake of brevity, included in the same term, it by no means follows that they are not two things, or that the writers so designating them

supposed them to be one and the same thing. Not a single Ev. Lutheran writer, of any name, can be found who maintained that ordination, strictly speaking, gives the call, or that the call is not valid without it. The congregations have sometimes transferred their right of appointing ministers to another ecclesiastical body, as they did sometimes to the civil government, so that it was possible for the vocation and ordination to proceed from the same persons, and be almost simultaneous; but even then, the two were in strictness of speech never identified. The true state of the question is this: whether the original right to call pastors belongs to the congregation of believers, or whether it is restricted to those who are incumbents of the pastoral office, and to whom the rite of ordination is usually and properly committed; and whether, if the congregation has such right, ordination is anything more than a confirmation of the call? Now, it has been proved from the Scriptures and the Symbols that the congregation has such right, and that the ministry, as such, has it not. Must it not necessarily follow from this, that ordination, viewed as something distinct from such congregational call, whether this be given by the congregation directly, or, in its name, by the civil government, or by a consistory or ministerium or synod, or by the vestry or some particular individual, merely testifies to such call and confirms it? We repeat it: it is either such confirmation, or it is a mere ceremony, the import of which it would be difficult to determine, and the use of which it would be difficult to defend. The Scriptures exhibit it in no other light than that of a ceremony confirmatory of the call which was previously given. In proof of this we would merely add to the evidences already presented, to show that the ministers were elected by the congregations to whom they were to minister, the decisive passage in Acts 6, 5—6:

“The saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them.”

The choice was made by the multitude, and confirmed by apostolic ordination. The objection that is made to this, on the ground that, if this were the design of ordination, it must be repeated when a pastor is called to a differ-

ent parish, is not of the least force. For, even if this did necessarily follow, it would be no reason for rejecting a scriptural doctrine: all that could legitimately be inferred is this, that there is an inconsistency in not renewing ordination whenever a new call is accepted. Indeed, the distinguished Boehmer contends for such repetition, and maintains that it was anciently practiced. (See art. Ordin. in Herzog's Enc.)

And it might easily be made to seem probable, as some have endeavored to prove, that the practice of conferring ordination but once, was occasioned by the Romish notion that it is a sacrament which impresses an indelible character, and must not, therefore, be repeated.

There is nothing in Scripture, either, which would forbid its repetition. On the other hand, from the case of St. Paul, an argument might rather be constructed to show that such repetition is scriptural. For in Acts 9, 17 we read that hands were laid upon him by Ananias; and again in Acts 13, 3 by the prophets and teachers at Antioch. This argument it would be very difficult for those to answer who deny the right to officiate without ordination; for their opinion would require them to admit that Paul was ordained to the ministry by Ananias, inasmuch as in verse 20 it is asserted that he "straightway preached Christ in the synagogues." He must, therefore, according to their theory, have been an ordained minister before he received the ordination to which Acts 13 refers. But it does not necessarily follow that ordination must be repeated when a new call is given. For the testimony borne once to a person's qualifications, and to the propriety of calling him, is sufficient, as all can be certified of the ordination which has once taken place; and as to the confirmation of the new call received to another sphere of labor, this is accomplished by installation.

In any case the Scripture truth is not changed by the inferences drawn from it; and this truth is that the vocation invests with the office, and ordination confirms the vocation.

II. This Is The Doctrine Of The Symbols

This truth the Symbols state in so many words. No prevarication can make the passage in the appendix to the Smalcald Articles say anything else to a mind that is able and willing to understand language. The Church has the right to appoint ministers, and no human authority can deprive her of it. She

has the command to preach the Gospel, and must, therefore, have the power to elect ministers, that this may be done in proper order.

To her are given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and hers must be the duty and, of course, the authority to appoint the officers to administer them in the congregation. This is confirmed by the fact that believers are called a royal priesthood, which words refer to the true Church, which, because she alone has the priesthood, must, therefore, necessarily have the power of electing ministers. Such are the arguments used in the place referred to. The Church is not dependent upon the existing ministry, as though she could not have pastors without it; for, although for the sake of good order, ordination should be sought at the hands of ministers, yet this is not essential, and must be dispensed with when they will not ordain teachers of the truth, inasmuch as ordination only confirms, does not bestow the call.

“This is proved by the common practice of the Church. For anciently the people elected pastors and bishops; then the bishop located in the same place, or in the vicinity, came and confirmed the elected bishop by the imposition of hands; and at that time ordination was nothing else than such confirmation.” Book of Concord, 341—2.

We have thought it sufficiently important to repeat the passage, which so far as the Symbols are concerned, decides the whole controversy. Of those who would insist upon making something more than this of ordination, we have simply to ask that they should consider the passage, both in its own plain terms and in the light of the whole context, that they may be convinced of their departure from the faith of our fathers in this particular.

The subterfuge to which some resort, in order to escape from the force of the Confession, when they assert that the confirmation refers to the person, not to the call, is so miserable that it scarcely deserves mention. For if the call is not confirmed, but the person, it surely will not be maintained that he is confirmed independently of the call; and if he is confirmed in the office, the truth remains the same, that he has the office before he is ordained, and ordination is simply the confirmation, not the collation of the call.

III. This Is The Doctrine Of The Best Lutheran Authors

Just as clear and decisive as the Scriptures and the Symbols, are the early writers in their statements on this point. They teach expressly, not only by implication, that the call must precede ordination and is merely confirmed by it. Luther's testimony to this effect we have presented before. We here add the following:

“As the mad papistic abominations have destroyed baptism, the sacrament, the preaching of the gospel, so they have also destroyed the ministry and the vocation, the call and the proper consecration to the pastoral office, by their scandalous private chrism. But Christ with His power and wonders was here, and preserved the office and the call to the ministry, notwithstanding, against the dreadful abomination. For the office has always been conferred, without and above the chrism, through princes, lords, cities, and also by bishops themselves, abbots, abbesses, and other estates, and by such collation the call and the true consecration to the ministry has remained; then such called pastors, who had received this grant, or office, were also presented, that is, directed to the bishop to be invested or installed, although this did not give the call or charge, but was only a confirmation of the call, and not necessary. For the called pastor could have discharged his office without such confirmation.” 31, 356.

Again, in his letter to the Bohemians, he says:

“Then being assembled, and freely coming together, let those whose hearts God has touched, so that they think and decide the same thing, proceed in the name of the Lord, and choose such person or persons as you please, and who may appear worthy and qualified for this office. Then let those who are more excellent among you, having placed their hands upon them, confirm and commend them to the people and to the Church, and let them by this act be your bishops, ministers, or pastors, Amen! What kind of persons ought to be chosen Paul sufficiently teaches in Tit. 1, and 1 Tim. 3.” (Ev. Rev. XII, 412.)

Melanchthon says:

“From all this it is clear that the Church has power to elect proper persons to the episcopal office, that is, to the charge of souls, and to confer the office upon them. And it is customary, and laudable, so to perform this, that several Christian and learned pastors are in attendance to examine them in regard to doctrine, and, as a testimony, lay their hands upon them.” (See Hoefling, Kirchenv. 99).

Chytraeus:

“The ministry is efficacious, and is a power unto salvation to every one that believes, on account of its divine institution; but the rite of the imposition of hands is added as a declaration of the person called, that the announcement may be more solemn, and that the rite may admonish him of certain duties.” (In Gerh. Loc. 24, § 139.)

Chemnitz:

“Nevertheless, on account of those who run without being sent, the vocation should have a public testimony of the Church. And the rite of ordination is nothing else than such public testification, by which the vocation is declared before the Church, and in her name, to be legitimate and divine... Therefore, although ordination does not make the vocation, yet if anyone is legitimately called, this rite is a public confirmation and declaration that the call is legitimate.” Loc. III, 137.

In 1597 a question arose as to the right of ordaining a person who had not yet been called to a parish, and this the Jena theologians decided in the negative. Mylius adduces these reasons for the decision:

"1. Because the Scriptures command:

"Lay hands suddenly on no man.' 1 Tim. 5, 22. But to lay hands on one who is not called by the Church, and to a certain congregation, would seem sudden and rash.

2. Because the Church's authority opposes it, as is plain from this canon of the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451, attended by six hundred and thirty bishops: "No man is to be ordained without a charge, neither presbyter nor deacon, nor, indeed, any who is in the ecclesiastical order; but whoever is ordained must be appointed, particularly, to some charge in a church of a city, or in the country, or in a martyr or monastery. But as regards those who are ordained without any charge, the holy synod has determined, that such an ordination is to be held void, and cannot have any effect anywhere, to the reproach of the ordainer."

3. Because reason condemns it. Whoever is absolutely ordained is not ordained minister of a church, but is constituted an apostle, who is not confined to any place, but is authorized to teach everywhere. But this is unlawful." (In Gerh. Loc. 24, § 158, note.)

Baldwin:

“Can any person be admitted to ordination who is not yet called to a particular ecclesiastical office? Answer: By no means; for ordination is the confirmation of the call; hence, if the call is wanting, ordination cannot yet take place.” (In Walther, 343.)

Gerhard:

“Can anyone be ordained who is not yet called to a certain place: We deny this, because ordination is the declaration and testification of the call, and ought not, therefore, by any means to be conferred where no vocation has preceded.” (Loc. 24, § 158.)

Kromayer:

“Ordination is to be taken in a wide or in a narrow sense. In the former it is identical with the vocation, but strictly it is the solemn testification of the call before the Church.” Theol. pos. 1060.

Assuredly there is abundant reason to trust that, in view of these testimonies, no unprejudiced mind will deem it doubtful whether our proposition fairly exhibits the Lutheran doctrine on this subject.

10. Ordination A Useful Rite

ALTHOUGH ORDINATION IS NOT ESSENTIAL, and is only the confirmation of a call previously given, yet it is of great utility, and must not be unnecessarily omitted.

I. Utility Of Ordination

It does not follow, from the denial of its necessity, that it is an unmeaning rite, or useless ceremony. It is merely an evidence, that the Gospel has been but imperfectly apprehended, to say the least, when such an inference is drawn. For between ceremonial law and evangelical liberty, there is the widest distinction; and to reject what the latter proposes, and uses as profitable, because not made obligatory by the former, is a procedure subversive of faith, as well as of all good order.

It is worthy of Romanism; but Protestants, who should rejoice in their freedom from every yoke of bondage, because the truth has made them free, can only condemn it. There are those, indeed, who, in the exercise of a zeal without knowledge, have pronounced condemnation upon everything which the Bible does not command—who think that what is not enjoined by law, must be prohibited as unscriptural; and it must be admitted that among these there are persons who take this position, not from sympathy with Romanism, but from hatred of its principles. But, crossing the middle ground of truth, they, in their endeavor to escape the enemy, pass over into his country on the other side. They run into an extreme which is substantially papistic. For they have yielded the main point to Rome, when they make the Gospel a new law, and will have everything by law, or not at all. No Lutheran will be guilty of this, whatever others may do. Those who love the light, which it pleased God to restore to the world through the great Reformer, will shun whatever the Lord's blessed word forbids, and whatever is inconsistent with its principles, whether expressly forbidden or not, and will

use what His word enjoins, and whatever, in consistency with its principles, promotes His cause and glory, whether enjoined or not.

Ordination is not commanded, indeed; but neither is it forbidden. Nor is it ever said by our Church to be inconsistent with the Gospel. If we had said this, then it would follow that we must reject it. But we have represented it as useful and desirable, as many another thing is, which can be dispensed with, when circumstances require it. It should not be omitted unnecessarily. It is to be highly esteemed, as having apostolic examples to recommend it; as being a ceremony of general use in the Church from the beginning; as bearing testimony to our reverence for the divine institution of the ministry; as affording opportunity to remind the pastor of his solemn duty and grave responsibility; as bearing public testimony to his qualifications and the regularity of his vocation; as being a solemn declaration to the people that he is to be honored as God's ambassador; and as, by the use of the word and prayer, conferring great blessing upon him through faith. It is thus of great utility; and he who would pronounce it worthless because it is not necessary by divine command, would be pursuing the same course as he who would condemn particular houses or forms of worship because they are not essential.

II. Church Teaches Its Utility

The Church always taught that it is important, and does so with the same unanimity with which she denies its necessity. Luther esteemed it so highly that he recommended to the people of Prague to request the chief men in the Church to lay their hands on the ministers chosen, as they could not procure ordination at the hands of the existing ministry. (See p. 238.) Neither he nor his coadjutors ever thought of rejecting or disregarding it because it is not indispensable. They retained it universally, and gave reasons for retaining it. We do not deem it necessary to give many extracts in proof of this. Those who desire testimonies will find them in abundance in the places already referred to.

It will suffice here to let one speak for all. Chemnitz, the greatest theologian of the Evangelical Church after Luther, points out the purpose of ordination thus:

“This also is manifest, that on account of those who run and are not sent, Jer. 23, the vocation to the ministry of the Gospel should have some public testimony and public testification of the Church. So the apostles, by a certain public testimony and testification, declared, and, as it were, designated those who were legitimately elected. to the ministry of the word and sacraments. For it was the will of the Holy Ghost that Paul also, who was immediately called, should, by a public testification of the Church, be proclaimed and designated as the apostle of the Gentiles. But in this public approbation, testification or announcement of the vocation, as it was a public act, the apostles used the external rite of the imposition of hands, which was customary among that people, both on account of the public designation of the person called, and on account of the prayers which were offered by the whole Church on his behalf. For this act the rite of laying on hands was very appropriate: that the person might be publicly designated and announced to the Church as legitimately elected and called; for by this rite Moses, Deut. 34, designated and announced to the people the call of Joshua as his successor: that by this rite the person called might be confirmed in his confidence that the call is legitimate and divine, and at the same time be admonished that he is destined, dedicated and, as it were, devoted to the ministry and service of God; so hands were laid upon the victims, and so Joshua was confirmed in his vocation: that it might be a kind of public and solemn protestation of the Church before God, that the form and rule prescribed by the Holy Spirit in regard to the election and vocation were complied with; so Paul tells Timothy, 1 Tim. 5, to lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: that by this visible rite it might be declared that God approves the call which was made by the voice of the Church: for as by the voice of the Church God elects ministers, so by the testification of the Church he approves the vocation; so the vocation of deacons was approved, Acts 6, and hence it is that God dispenses grace through the imposition of hands: and in prayer, when it is designed especially to invoke the name of the Lord upon any person, hands are usually laid upon him, for he is, as it were, offered to God and set before Him, prayers being offered that God would be pleased to bestow His grace and blessing on him; so Jacob laid his hands upon the children whom he blessed, Gen. 48, so the elders laid their hands upon the sick and prayed, James 5, and so Christ laid His hands upon the babes and blessed them, Mark 10... And this earnest prayer, in the ordination of ministers, is not in vain, because it is founded upon the

divine command and promise. This is what Paul says: "The gift which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." Exam. II, 221.

Thus it is seen that the call is not given, but simply confirmed, by ordination, and that this is an ecclesiastical rite which is not indispensable, but which is, nevertheless, of great utility.

We here close our essay on the Christian Ministry. The doctrine exhibited is dear to those who would be faithful to the word of our blessed Lord, and continue in the way of our honored fathers. They cannot otherwise than contend earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints, and protest solemnly against those hierarchical tendencies which, being so congenial to man's natural inclinations, seem to be spreading, even within our own Church, with fearful rapidity. It is for common Christian rights and privileges, secured to believers by our common Christian faith, that we are pleading, and we cannot be indifferent to the success of our plea. We are confident of its truth, and to the God of truth we commend it. Our hearts' desire and prayer to God is that He may make it instrumental in leading souls to prize their precious privileges and inalienable rights, as kings and priests unto God, through faith, to whom He has been pleased to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, so that the Church may be faithful to her Lord, and the ministers may not be ashamed, while they are servants of the Lamb, to be servants, also, of the Lamb's Bride!

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Cor. 4, 5.

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Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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