

1863-Missouri-Walther-Proper Form Calling pastor, Ordination; OCR'd by [BackToLuther](#), August 16, 2015. (97k) — Translated English in [Essays for the Church I](#), pgs 69-87; German text file [HERE](#). — Note: Ordination is covered beginning bottom page 51. Last edit: 2024-07-26

[Full Section 21 below.](#)

[30](#) [70b]

[Calling a Pastor:]

Proceedings on § 21 of the presentation by Prof. Walther on “The Proper Form of a Local Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State.”

At the instigation of the St. Louis Local Preachers' Conference, which had already discussed the paper, it had been printed and distributed as far as possible before the Synod convened, together with the relevant evidence from God's Word, the symbols and the writings of our orthodox doctrinal fathers, so that the Synod members could familiarize themselves with its contents for the time being, make a note of certain very urgent points about which they would like to receive information soon, and raise such points first.

Therefore, all synod members in general, as well as the members of the St. Louis Conference in particular, were asked to indicate what they wished to discuss first and foremost.

As it was now recalled how for years our presidential reports have been complaining about wrong practices in the organization of our parochial system, in particular many abuses in appointments and appointments to parish offices, and how it was therefore extremely important and necessary to come to an understanding and agreement on the procedure to be followed in the future, a member of the St. Louis Local Conference pointed to § 21 of the paper as shedding light on this point as well as other very important points. The Synod therefore decided to go through this paragraph in such a way that

each individual point contained therein would be emphasized and discussed according to the evidence relating to it. The result of this work, to which the morning sessions were devoted, now follows here.

The first point contained in § 21 is the principle that the appointment of a preacher should always take place with the involvement of preachers already in office, but not as a must, but as an excellent order.

In this regard, it should be remembered that as much as it is emphasized here that the involvement of preachers is not part of the essence of a right and valid call, the beneficial effects of the same is pointed out. The fact that so many disturbances, unrest and grievances come to light here and there in the congregations is undoubtedly due to the fact that the congregations are called without the involvement of experienced preachers and especially the district presidents and the general president, who, due to their knowledge of the congregations and pastors, would be the most competent men to give [71a] advice, so that no mistakes are made in the election and our gifts are used most appropriately for the common good.

We hear of examples of these men not being consulted at all. Admittedly, such examples do not occur out of ill will, but out of a lack of knowledge, but it is nevertheless to be deplored that the congregations (with one exception, of course) do not focus enough on the general and the common good when making appointments. Because in their need they first and foremost have their own benefit in mind, they lose sight of the whole. Even in such cases, since preachers are very well known to them, congregations should always consult experienced preachers and especially the presidents, since the gift taken away from another congregation may cause disastrous disturbances and another equally suitable man may be suggested.

For a long time now, we have been accused of being democratically minded and of having transplanted a worldly element into the Church. As proof of this, they cite the fact that we have fought so earnestly for the rights of the congregations, i.e. the believing children of God. Our opponents seek to create the impression that when we speak of these rights as such, we are prescribing the order in which these rights are to be exercised. But there is a big difference between saying that the church has such and such a right and saying that the church must act in such and such a way when it exercises its right. Some congregations seem to have misunderstood us. They have learned that they have the right to vote on appointments — and woe betide us if we were to deny them their sacred right in the slightest! — but they have concluded from our discussions that the right way to make an appointment is not to ask anyone for advice, but to help themselves to the best of their knowledge and conscience. —

This is not right: the choice of a preacher [Predigers] is such a highly important, sacred and serious matter that it should not be carried out without the advice of experienced preachers already in office, not only so that the congregations may choose the right man for themselves, but

also so that they do not harm the whole.

The most important thing for us to know is how the election was handled in the apostles' times. There we find that everywhere the right to vote is granted to the congregations in the most decisive way, but we do not find that they exercised this right without the involvement of an apostle or bishop.

From the passage in [71b] Titus 1:5 quoted in the lecture: "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," our opponents want to prove that it is not the congregation [*Gemeinde*] that has the right, but the bishops, but other passages show clearly and distinctly that they are greatly mistaken and completely misunderstand this passage of Paul. When Paul commands Titus to appoint elders to and fro in the cities, he is not telling him to choose preachers, but to conduct the election hearings. Other scriptural passages prove that the apostles appointed bishops by having the votes of the congregations cast; for the Greek word translated appoint or ordain means to cast the votes. The passage Titus 1:5 therefore testifies that the churches have the right to vote and should exercise it, but in such a way that a man, like Titus, conducts the election proceedings.

We find the execution of what Paul instructs Titus to do in Acts 1:26, where we are told. 1:26, where we are told how another apostle was elected to take the place of Judas Iscariot. In this act the apostles do not carry out the election, but give advice and show how the election is to be carried out in the right way.

Likewise Acts 6, where we are told how almoners were chosen in Jerusalem. There the apostles did not say: you must choose such and such, but gave instruction as to what qualities the men to be chosen must have, and how the church could come to a right choice.

How can congregations avoid the accusation of recklessness if they insist on their right to vote in elections, but do not act carefully, do not seek good advice, but follow their own wisdom? Truly, according to the apostolic process, Lutheran congregations may never be deprived of the right to vote, but neither should they vote without the good advice of faithful bishops. This is not only biblical, but is also decisively stated in our confessional writings, *) especially in the Smalcald Articles [or Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope]. [72a] None of our confessional writings emphasizes the right of the congregations [*Gemeinden*] to vote as strongly

*) The misgivings expressed about this sentence, whether it might not give the impression that we are placing the Symbols above the Scriptures, were resolved by pointing out what we are dealing with here, namely, not apostolic doctrine, but apostolic order [or practice]. We Lutherans confess that the apostolic examples are not binding with regard to church orders and institutions; but it is all the more important to us if our old Lutheran church in its best times took certain apostolic orders as a model and followed them. In its best times, our old Lutheran church took certain apostolic orders as a model and recommended them to the church. Only the doctrine of the apostles is binding, not their ecclesiastical institutions. There are, however, certain apostolic practices, such as ordination, Sunday observance, and the manner of calling ministers, which our Church has retained and recommends to the congregations.

as the Smalcald Articles [Treatise], but they also emphasize the involvement of preachers more strongly than any of the other symbolic books. This is not to say that an election is not valid without this consultation, no, that is far from it! — The only question is whether it has been carried out carefully, whether it has been done in a godly manner, whether it has been done wisely, whether it has been done with the right humility. A congregation should and must not only have in mind whether it chooses justly, but also whether it chooses wisely and without harming the church as a whole.

A great deal of idle talk among us comes from the fact that this is not sufficiently recognized and taken into account. The presidents should work with all seriousness to ensure that their good counsel is loved and valued by the congregations and sought with joy. What a blessing their good counsel could bring! How many a deep wound, which is inflicted by being called away, could be avoided if the congregations always turned to them!

Following on from the above, it was further recalled that:

This applies not only to the congregations that ask for advice, but also to those who are asked for advice. It has happened that a student has given advice to a congregation as to whom it should choose, thereby undermining a call that was already in progress. Such a young, immature, incomprehensible, inexperienced person should not undertake to give advice. When it is asked who a congregation might be able to get, it should always be referred to the presidency, because even an ordinary pastor does not know who the right man is; for it takes an overview of an entire district to be able to give proper advice. The fact that the presidents have been ignored is much to blame for the fact that we have often disposed of our gifts and powers badly; it would be much different if our congregations had always been accustomed to ask the district president: "Which man is available and able to minister for us?"

In the composition of conferences, too, care should be taken that their members fit together well. If there are only the same people in a conference, there is no good conference; different gifts must be brought together so that the spirits rub against each other and thus make the conference sessions lively. This is also important for district synods. In many cases, one could do without what the other would need. With our lack of leading forces, we find that one has accumulated what the other sorely lacks.

Let everyone help to achieve this goal; [72b] even the professors will no longer be involved in any profession in the future; that we reach the goal is not up to one person, no, the feeling for what is to be striven for and achieved must permeate the whole — congregation, pastors and professors. So far it has not been possible to keep to the stated order, but it must come to that.

Here the advice was given:

If we want to reach the goal quickly, if we want to cut off the evil at the root, then it is best that, since the preachers are so often uncertain about the divinity of a call coming to them, we make the requirement that the president gives his consent to a call. We do nothing if the congregations are not referred to the presidents in this way — each one always sees how it can provide for itself most quickly.

However, the Synod could not agree with this. It is true that an evil tree would be cut down at the root by the means indicated, but a good tree would also be cut down. We must never and do not want to force the congregations from above to act according to our thoughts and insights. They should not think that we want to diminish their right to vote in the slightest. That alone is the evil, that they do not act carefully, wisely, humbly and according to love, when they elect and appoint so completely independently at their own discretion and without consideration of the whole.

Our congregations must be won over to the good and praiseworthy order solely by convincing them of its salvation and necessity through instruction. We must never again give them cause for such thoughts: Yes, you must get behind the president if you want to get a pastor, he has all kinds of good friends and cousins and can get you one. No, a congregation should and must know that it never has to fear that we are encroaching on its rights; it has to choose, and we have nothing to say about it; we only say: If you want to act carefully, wisely and humbly in such a high matter, ask for the advice of the best counselors — and as a rule these are the district presidents; but we do not say: You must go to the president. On the contrary, whom they consider to be a man who 1) considers such sacred matters before God and 2) has the experience and insight to give good advice, they may consult. We only have to convince our congregations that if they choose so independently according to their own best knowledge and conscience and without regard to the whole, this is evil, because they thereby hinder the inner growth of our [73a] Synod and thus of the kingdom of God, of which our Synod is also a part, even if only a small one.

The objection was raised here:

It is strange that the congregation is first given the right to choose and appoint, and then denied the wisdom and gifts to exercise that right. Where God gives a right, he also gives the gift and wisdom to exercise it. Only the right humility must therefore move the congregations to seek counsel.

The answer [by the essayist] to this was:

If a congregation believes that it has enough wisdom to choose its preachers on its own without consulting preachers, but brings them in out of humility, that is arrogance. It should believe that it lacks all wisdom and insight for such a high, holy work, that it is blind and incomprehensible. God has appointed the ministry of preaching for this purpose, that there should be men who search and study the Scriptures all their lives and therefore naturally have a higher degree of wisdom and knowledge than the listeners.

Now there may well be people in a congregation here and there who surpass the preacher in wisdom and knowledge, but in general it is the case that the congregations do not know who are the right, suitable men to be preachers for them. "Where there is a right, there is also the ability to exercise it" — this sentence must certainly be denied. An infant of one day old has the right of every adult Christian, but not the ability to exercise it. Likewise, a woman has the right and the power to choose,

but God, through St. Paul, has expressly forbidden her to exercise it. It is frightening to say: I have a right, therefore I also have wisdom and skill to exercise the right. The sentence does not apply in secular matters either. Underage children, for example, have the same right to their parents' property as mature children; but do you let them go over the money bag themselves and exercise their rights? Not at all! They are given a guardian. This is a different matter, but analogous, i.e. a similar case, only in a completely different area.

The apostle is very careful not to infringe on the right of the congregations; he does not command, but asks and exhorts; but we never read of a congregation having carried out a vocation without the involvement of a bishop. There is not the slightest thing to be gained from this if one presumes to have much wisdom and understanding and at the same time speaks of humility; this is not humility, it is only called modesty, since one recognizes his deep insight and superiority over the other, but opposes him as if he were deeply inferior to him. But such modesty cannot be regarded as a virtue, but is a shameful, godless vice. — [73b]

When, despite this explanation, the above objection was repeated once again, the Synod said the following:

The wisdom that Christians have consists mainly in the fact that they consider themselves fools, do not trust themselves, and seek as much advice as possible. If a Christian cannot find advice from people, there is of course only one thing left for him to do, which he always does first and last: he falls on his knees and asks God for mercy, wisdom and understanding.

But this is sad wisdom when congregations consider themselves wise and enlightened enough to carry out such a difficult task as choosing a preacher on their own. When we refer the congregations to those already in office, especially to the president, for good advice, we are by no means saying: “God helps the children of God, as he does the pastors and even the president of the Synod!” Let that be far away! Faithful officials of a synod, presidents and professors, would have to spit on themselves if they believed that wisdom and understanding were with them as such and that they knew how to do everything well; they would have to fear that they had fallen from grace if such thoughts were to gain ground with them. The idea that they, as wise, learned men, should know what the stupid people in the congregations want is far from their minds and is deeply abhorred by them. Important matters, in which they have to worry and advise, worry them day and night; they are often in the greatest distress, fall on their knees in fervent prayer, open old books and search for the wisdom of the fathers; If they meet with fellow ministers, they are immediately consulted, or if they even come to conferences, the burden of worry is immediately placed on them; in short, all possible advisors who are available are asked for advice and help, so that the will of God may be rightly recognized and accomplished.

This is how all true Christians act in important and difficult matters, and this is also how righteous churches should act when electing examiners. Woe to us if we wanted to work towards depriving the congregations of their right to vote, their holy, precious right to vote, or to

wither away!

No, they should keep it undiminished, but they should also recognize in the deepest humility their blindness in such high, divine matters and therefore seek as much and as good advice as they can always find, and should not be so easily satisfied with the advice of just one neighboring preacher who perhaps does not know how to advise properly. Those who do not seek counsel in important and difficult matters because they think they do not need it should not believe that God will give them grace and wisdom, for God only gives grace to the humble. Therefore, if the churches want to insist: We have the right to choose, we ask God for wisdom and ask for no one else, they will be given a beautiful wisdom, namely [74a] God will let them go their own wrong ways! This is the wisdom that God gives, that one looks for good advice in every important undertaking.

Another concern was expressed in the following question: When it says in § 21: "Every voting member of the congregation is permitted to propose a candidate," does this not contradict everything that has been said so far?

Answer:

Only in this way can the right willingness of the congregations to consult preachers in appointments be brought about, if the matter is handled with them in such a way that not one iota of this right of the individual members of the congregation is disputed, but they are given guidance as to how they should make proper use of this right. When the matter is discussed in distant congregations, we should try with all our might to ensure that it is handled with a great deal of love and interest on the part of the congregations.

The path of instruction that we must take is as follows:

If we ourselves are first convinced in a lively way and would now like to convince our congregations as well, then of course it is best if we do not begin by showing them how limited they are, but rather what sacred and high rights and duties they have in relation to the election of preachers, and if we then proceed to show them how they should begin to exercise their rights carefully, wisely, humbly and for the common good.

When the right knowledge reaches the congregations, and they have been convinced how profitable the right exercise of their suffrage, as recognized by us, is, then the right proposals of individuals will be the result of careful consultation with faithful preachers; they will have the conviction that they cannot make proposals until they have ascertained exactly whether this or that man can be taken away, and whether he is also a puffing man.

It is certain that every member of the congregation entitled to vote has the right to propose and the whole congregation the right to vote; but they should not trust themselves, but use the sacred office as a gift of God also to give good counsel in matters of profession; they should therefore ask a faithful and discerning preacher to attend their hearings and speak to him: You shall pray before us, give us instruction on how to begin our choice rightly, which men would have the most unsuitable gifts, which we could choose without harming the whole. Once he has done all this, then the congregation must propose and choose to the best of its knowledge

and conscience. If, on the other hand, he wanted to prescribe: "You may not choose such and such a one, but you must choose such and such a one", then the congregation would have to say to him: Go your way; we have sent for you, not to [74b] give you our rights, but to listen to your good advice. This is also where Christ's words belong: "If two of you shall agree on earth, it shall be done for them" [Matt. 18:19]. Here there are, as it were, two parties facing each other, one, the congregation, speaking to the other, the preacher: "You also pronounce your judgment, you are impartial in this matter."

To the words of the first note to § 21: "As important as it is, by the way, that the electing congregation calls in those already in office, this is not absolutely necessary for the validity of the election," the following explanation was given:

"The election is indeed valid and divine if only the congregation and no one else has carried it out. If the bishop alone performs it, it is null and void, but the congregation alone can validly elect; however, it is another question whether the election was made carefully, wisely and with right humility.

There may indeed be cases where a congregation, even without consultation and with the best humility, has the firm conviction of a pastor it knows: this is the man for us; in most cases, however, it is very important, indeed necessary, that the congregations do not vote alone.

If, of course, there is already a pastor in a congregation and a second one is to be elected, and the congregation wants to say to the first one: You have nothing to say in this, we choose for ourselves whom we want, then the pastor would have to reply firmly: No, dear friends, I am also one of them, indeed I am one of them above all others; for I have the heavy responsibility for you and must therefore ensure that you choose a faithful pastor; moreover, I am also part of the congregation, the newly appointed pastor will also be my pastor, so I also have a say. If a congregation elects an assistant pastor without its pastor, the election is also null and void.

Information was also sought about the conclusion of the citation of the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope to Cyprian in Note 1, where it is said that "the bishop is to be elected in the presence of the whole congregation, which knows everyone's walk and life." It had always been said that the invited bishops should draw the attention of the congregations to the right men, but not the congregations to the bishops, as Cyprian's words indicate. — [75a]

The requested exclusion was given as follows:

That Cyprian here demands the testimony of the congregations concerning those to be elected is explained by the fact that in those days bishops were generally elected and appointed from the congregations. Because the apostles or other bishops could not know for themselves who had the best gifts and the most godly conduct when they were called to election in foreign congregations, they had the congregations testify to this.

Finally, the following discussion took place on the first point of § 21:

So far, we have spoken primarily of those disturbances that arise through new appointments when supplying

congregations that already had preachers; but it is also very important that we take newly emerging congregations into consideration.

In providing for them, the counselors must take special care that missionary gifts are given to them. Furthermore, many a grievance arises when a neighboring preacher is asked by such a congregation to help provide for it. Through a superficial knowledge of the conditions, the pastor forms an opinion, presents the matter according to it and creates the conviction that the greatest need exists and that the provision can be accelerated, whereas this may not be the case at all. Pastors who come into such a case should be careful, take a close look at the situation and not trust their judgment too much.

This was followed by the reading of Annot. 2 of § 21 and its further discussion.

It is extremely important that it emerges from the citations cited that it was the fault of the Lutheran churches and congregations of Germany that they remained dependent on the state. People often express their astonishment that Luther and his comrades, since they taught rightly on this point, nevertheless did not put their doctrine into practice, and accuse them of having left the German churches quite calmly in dependence on the state; but this is not so; they did not confirm or seal the dependence of the church on the state and the remaining practice in filling parish offices. It is not Luther's fault that the congregations remained dependent, but the congregations themselves, their avarice, that they preferred to keep their money rather than use it to obtain the independent exercise of their rights. —

What is said about earlier ecclesiastical oppression in Holland is also important for our congregations. As is well known, it is still the case here and there in our synod that certain rights of parishioners are made dependent on financial circumstances. For example, there are still congregations in which only the resident farmers are recognized as full members, but not the pensioners and servants, and the latter two are denied the right to vote and be [75b] elected. This is also a grievance that must be eliminated.

Inspired by what Chancellor Pfaff had said about the manner of choosing preachers in Rostock, the question arose as to whether it was wrong in itself under all circumstances to hold trial sermons;

To which the answer was as follows:

First of all, it must be said that it is not wrong in itself to preach test sermons. When Paul writes: “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work,” [1 Tim. 3:1] it is clear from this that under certain circumstances it can be something very praiseworthy and pleasing to God if a candidate applies for a position. For it depends on the attitude, whether he really does it out of heartfelt love for souls and a fervent zeal to proclaim God's Word. However, this only applies to those who are not yet in ministry. If someone is already in the ministry and preaches a trial sermon, he does not want a position (because he has one), but wants to leave his congregation. Whether and when he should leave, however, he should leave to the Lord Jesus, who has placed him in his office. If he seeks to get away,

he does not want to wait until the Lord Jesus calls him away, thinking that He might forget him; his action is therefore a work of unbelief. That under certain circumstances a congregation desires first to see, get to know and hear the man who is to become its pastor is not at all to be blamed and is not wrong; If, however, he is already in office, it cannot demand a trial sermon from him, but it may send some of its most capable and knowledgeable members to hear him, which is also for that reason the best, because they will then see and hear how he usually administers his office, while experience teaches that trial sermons tend to be specially trimmed and embellished for the particular purpose, so that many a congregation has been bitterly deceived and has not found in the man afterwards what the trial sermon suggested.

In Note. 3 the Synod pointed out how our old doctrinal fathers demanded that all three estates in the church, including the teaching estate, should be involved in appointments, and that the latter should be particularly involved in an advisory capacity. From this it is clear that we do not want to bring up anything new, but only strive to regain the glorious treasures of our old Lutheran church, also with regard to the right way to call preachers. But here again we see quite clearly that our church does grant the right to vote to the [76a] Christian people. Indeed, we must accustom ourselves to regard the quotations contained in the note as true cornerstones of the doctrine that the people, the congregations, have to vote, since people like Löhe, Harms and others misuse the scriptural passages cited and interpreted therein for the opposite purpose. They say: It says that the apostles and bishops appoint preachers, not the congregations.

Regarding Note 4, which it now made, the Synod gave the following explanations:

In our days it has become the rule that, when one speaks of the symbolic books, they are presented as an abominable yoke which has been put on the Church and from which one must free oneself. But don't be deceived by idioms! The churches are promised freedom if they shake off this yoke; but precisely because they want to take away their freedom, they try to rob them of their Confessions.

It is precisely the Confessions that keep Lutheran congregations from becoming servants, from having to accept preachers who preach what they think is good; they are the palladium of freedom, the bulwark that congregations do not have to accept and listen to just any preacher. With the confessions in hand, they can confront any preacher and speak: Here it is written how the Bible must be interpreted in the Lutheran Church; if you do not interpret it in this way, then only depart from us, we do not want any other pastor than the one who binds himself by a holy obligation to interpret the Holy Scriptures according to these books. We have come to the realization that the doctrine laid down in them agrees in all respects with God's Word and is therefore the heavenly, eternal truth. If he does not wish to have this obligation imposed upon him, he only indicates that he does not intend to preach the full Lutheran truth, but rather wants to secure for himself the freedom

to preach whatever he pleases. Not only the General Synod, but also [76b] so-called strict Lutherans, such as the Iowa Synod, write publicly to the world: “Not everything that our Confessions contain is therefore also confessional. One must interpret and understand the symbolic books historically, i.e. consider how things looked 300 years ago, take the history of the Reformation as an aid in order to see against which contradictions much is said; there one will find that for the sake of certain circumstances that prevailed at that time, our Symbols say much that no longer applies now, since the circumstances have changed. They are a historically valuable, venerable document, but these are now different times, different contrasts.” When they use certain expressions against the pope and the papacy, they must be understood according to the standpoint of the confessors of knowledge at that time; for example, when they call the pope the Antichrist, we should know that at that time the development of doctrine was in its infancy, but now this development is progressing rapidly towards completion.

Under these circumstances we should consider what a precious treasure we have in the Symbols, and thank God warmly that he has firmly placed and founded us on the same with our confession of them. What and where would the Missouri Synod be if we did not have these books and profess them with all our hearts!

This is where the concern arose: If pastors were required to read all the symbolic books, could one be satisfied if congregations constitutionally required their members to read only the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession when accepting them?

To this objection the following reply was made:

It is assumed that every preacher has not only read the entire Book of Concord, but has also carefully examined whether every doctrine contained therein agrees with Holy Scripture. But this cannot be demanded of every member of the congregation, and it is impossible for someone to be committed to something he does not know. What good is it if it is written above the door of a church that it professes all the symbols, but those who enter do not know them? On the other hand, if they not only know the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession, but also profess it from the heart, they will not reject, reject and despise passages from other confessional writings and these themselves, but rather rejoice heartily when [77a] this and that in their Catechism is explained to them. It should also be remembered that the Symbolical Books themselves say in one passage that the Small Catechism is to be regarded as an exception to the Lay Confession, and that another passage calls the Augsburg Confession a public confession to which all Christians profess in general. By these two passages they themselves indicate that it is enough if common Lutheran Christians are only obliged to these two. It cannot be denied that it is actually a burden on the conscience if one wants to commit all Lutheran church members to the entire Book of Concord, however well-intentioned and praiseworthy the zeal for our confessional writings that is expressed in the above concern. —

Since the above discussion had not given universal satisfaction and therefore the question of whether it would not be necessary to commit the members of the congregation to all Symbols arose again,

the Synod felt compelled to explain itself further:

First of all, if it were deemed necessary, the practical consequence would be that a pastor, if he were called by a congregation, would have to say: I cannot accept you until I am convinced that you all know the symbols, so I must first study the symbolic books with you for a considerable time. Then what is required of the congregations is not really a commitment to the symbols, but a confession of them. If a congregation professes the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession, it is professing the same. Confession, it professes the doctrines which are only further developed in the other symbols. It is true in a certain sense that the whole Book of Concord is not for every true Christian. However, we only want to say that not every true Christian has the skill and gift to understand and use it correctly. Our church therefore has various symbols; it has some for the children and the very simple, such as the Small Catechism; it also has some for the more advanced, such as the Augsburg Confession; finally, it has some for the more advanced. Confession; finally, it has some for the very knowledgeable and gifted, especially its preachers and teachers, such as the Formula of Concord.

This does not mean that the congregations do not recognize the symbolic books as a whole, no; for there are always people among them who can teach and instruct them about the symbols and in whom they have confidence. Now if a congregation hears that its pastor is also committed to other books than the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession, it still trusts him, because it sees that the man always argues for our Catechism, with which everything he brings from the other confessions always agrees so wonderfully.

Suppose a Lutheran congregation wants to appoint a man as its pastor, but realizes in conversation with him that he utters all kinds of rebukes [77b] about Luther and his writings — what will happen? They will think and say: This is not the right man for a genuinely Lutheran congregation, we will not choose him. This will happen even more if he attacks the *Book of Concord*; for the congregation knows that Luther, Chemnitz, Arndt, Heinrich Müller and others all held so firmly to the confessional writings and committed themselves to teaching strictly according to them, and yet they were all orthodox men of God who have already proven themselves many times through their writings to be true guides to eternal life. —

When a candidate has been sent by us to a new, still raw congregation, he has always been instructed to demand nothing more than that no one can be or become a member unless he believes that the Small Catechism contains the pure Christian truth. He should make it desirable that confession of the Augsburg Confession should also be required. But if the congregation had reservations about doing this second thing because they do not know the Confession, then he should be satisfied with the first, that would be quite sufficient. From the Catechism the congregation can be led through all the other confessions, and if the pastor does this properly, the congregation will of its own accord in a few years demand the confession of the Augsburg Confession, and in ten years perhaps the confession of all

Symbols. An analogous case is what we pastors do in the Confirmation; we demand of the less gifted that they know at least the text of the Small Catechism as their confession, which does not mean that they should not also confess the interpretation.

Here the question arose: If, then, we demand that our congregations confess all symbols (at least indirectly), if our ministers are committed to all symbols, do we consider it necessary that the same commitment must also be made in other churches, such as the Norwegian, if we are to recognize them as true Lutheran churches? —

Answer:

Each of us will agree that when what has been said about the commitment to all the symbols is recorded, we do not mean to say that a church is not truly Lutheran if it does not proclaim the whole convolute of our symbols as its confession. The Danish-Norwegian Church has not officially adopted the Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles or the Formula of Concord as its confession, and yet it has always been recognized as a righteous Lutheran church. This country was so fortunate that no crypto-Calvinists, [78a] crypto-Papists and other Enthusiasts, against whom the Formula of Concord had to be established in Germany, caused unrest in the church there, although there was no lack of individual secret Calvinists. If the Danish-Norwegian Church had wanted to introduce this confession into the country, it would have run the risk of provoking the worst disputes and unrest within itself. This was also the reason why this confessional document was not officially adopted in that church. It is wrong and false to read so often that the Norwegian Church is not fully formed in a confessional manner like the German Church; for even if the Symbols were not all officially adopted there, theological men such as Brockmann, Lassenius and others prove that the Formula of Concord has nevertheless always been regarded as the book of Lutheran faith and confession in Norway. Incidentally, not only the faithful Norwegian Lutherans here are now striving to adopt the entire Formula of Concord, but it is also being translated into the national language in Norway itself.

Now the Synod came to speak of how important it is that we lead our congregations to an ever better and more thorough knowledge of the symbols — In the past the Lutheran Christians were better acquainted and familiar with the content of the confessions and therefore also better informed about the meaning and value of the obligation than today. It is a fact that our present Lutheran congregations are not as familiar with these treasures of our church as the earlier ones were. If we now consider what treasure God has entrusted to us in these writings, this must give the dear brethren in the ministry a new incentive to draw the attention of their congregations to them and to teach them diligently how, through the right use of the symbols, they can be most effectively established in the pure doctrine, how they can be made more skillful in reading and hearing the Word of God the longer the more with right benefit, how they can protect themselves and others from being seduced into all kinds of errors if they diligently research the confessional writings.

When we learn how little our congregations are still generally acquainted with the symbols, this must on the one hand deeply humble us, but on the other hand also be a powerful incentive to bring them more to the people and to encourage them to read them diligently and to introduce them to their proper understanding. The older and more experienced our congregations become, the more earnestly and urgently we should exhort them to do so. It is desirable to be able to presuppose a more precise knowledge of the symbols at least among their leaders and church councils.

In order to get the desired process going and gaining momentum, it would be very important if all congregations were to introduce “study hours” [78b] in which the Symbolical Books were studied. These Concordia lessons, which already exist here and there, should not be arranged in such a way that a lot is read out in one hour — that is highly uninteresting and makes one inclined to sleep, especially in the evening — no, only a little should be read out at a time and spoken about quite lively.

In each individual piece, one shows how each person should apply it first to their inner life and then to the nature of the church and congregational life. It is a splendid idea that church council members should be required to have a more precise knowledge of the Symbols, and it would be desirable for this to be made a requirement for their eligibility.

In order not to misunderstand the latter, however, some qualification is perhaps necessary. Some would like to make this requirement too early and prematurely, for a certain degree of maturity is required before a congregation can make such a determination. It is certainly marvelous and delightful when a congregation is promoted to the point of doing the above, and this should be the goal of all congregations; but do not rush the matter.

Then exceptions would also have to be made. If such a provision is included in the church order, we know how the congregations usually lean on it with tooth and nail — unfortunately, often more than on God's Word — and it is very important that such men come to the church council who have the gift of influencing the life of the congregation, even if they lack the other gift of reading and studying books and penetrating deeply into what they have read and making it their own. If the above provision is included in the church order, there is a danger that many excellent people will be excluded from church leadership, while some vain people would read through the Concordia Book in order to be eligible. —

When asked whether it would not be desirable for our professors to provide an interpretation of the Augsburg Confession, the answer was: That would certainly be desirable; but who would expect it of professors who are already almost overwhelmed by their work? But perhaps they could arrange for the publication and distribution of some old interpretation. It was also recalled that the General Conference [Ohio Synod?] had [79a] already made a good start on such an interpretation and had brought beautiful things to light; furthermore, that it would be excellent if the pastors, following the example of our elders, would interpret the Augsburg Confession in weekly sermons, and indeed very thoroughly.

Hereupon the Synod spoke out on what was said in the last quotation of Note 4, page 81, that the oath on the Symbols is no obstacle

to progress in the heavenly doctrine:

It is here expressly testified that this oath does not hinder the true development of doctrine. History proves that the most beautiful and detailed development of doctrine has taken place precisely within the boundaries of the Confessions. That the so-called It is, of course, certain that the so-called progress of the present day is thus decisively resisted; but what is this progress? At the present time, scholars are introducing their errors into the symbols, and then they try to make us believe that they lie in them, such as that Christ is the ideal man or the primeval man and the like. The interference of reason with its perversions in the divine doctrine is certainly resisted, but the true, right progress in doctrine should not be resisted in any way, it should only be subject to confession.

In order to clarify the actual difference between what modern theologians call progress and what we call progress, the following should be noted: When we talk so much about progress in doctrine, we really mean to say nothing other than this: the doctrine as the ancients laid it down in the Confessions is not really correct. It is true that the symbols contain seeds of truth, and it is true that the ancients already recognized some important things; but what we teach is actually true. We, on the other hand, say that our confessions contain nothing but the eternal, imperishable divine truth.

Whoever denies it and finds something other than divine truth in it, well, let him prove it! This is not to say, however, that everything that can be said about the individual doctrines of faith has already been brought to light. No, there is no doctrine that is not capable of infinite development; every doctrine is rather a seed that can unfold infinitely. If the world were to stand for a thousand and a thousand years, and God were to keep giving people like Luther, new glories of doctrine would always come to light.

Church history gives us the evidence for this. In the first three centuries, people had no idea of all that lay in the doctrine of the person of Christ and the union of his divine and human nature. Although everything that was developed later was [79b] believed, it was by no means so clearly and deeply recognized.

The same applies to the doctrine of justification. All Christians at all times have clearly recognized that they must believe in Jesus Christ or else they cannot be justified and saved before God; but what a wealth of thoughts on this doctrine Luther brought to light! How many thousands of passages has he held up to us as proof that the sinner is justified before God by grace alone through faith alone! He points this out to us and says: "You see, even Isaiah in the Old Testament taught this, indeed even in the first book of Moses it had to be written in such and such a way to clearly indicate that faith alone justifies. Furthermore, before the dispute with Zwingli and Oekolampad, who could have seen the rich weapons laid down in Scripture for the pure Lutheran doctrine of Holy Communion and for the defense against all false teachings about it!

Luther

took this armor out of the armory of the Word and left it to us. Who would have guessed after the battles of the early church with Arius and Eutyches that much great and important information could still be brought to light about the relationship between divine and human nature in the person of Christ? And yet in the Concordian formula there is still such an enormous wealth of thought unfolded before us! This is doctrinal development! This is how the Church has progressed! But in the process it has not abandoned a single word of the ancient Church that was expressed in its confessions.

Our fathers also considered the old symbols to be such exquisite treasures that they did not want to forgive even the slightest of them and professed them wholeheartedly. If we want to develop further, if we have the gift of developing the divine doctrine further, well then, that is not forbidden to us, indeed it is a precious work; but the proof that our development is the right and true one is that we remain with what has already been given to us by God through the Church, and only continue to show and explain how much there is in it and how much follows from it.

Accordingly, progress does not really concern doctrine, but the knowledge of doctrine. The example of the Iowans shows us what false progress is. They teach: What the symbols say about the Antichrist requires development, and with their so-called development they come to the assertion that the Antichrist is not a doctrine. With their so-called development they come to the assertion that the pope is not the actual Antichrist, as he will only appear in the future. But this is not a further development, but a correction (i.e. a wanting to improve, whereby a completely different doctrine emerges) of the symbolic doctrine.

That that the pope is the real, actual Antichrist was not only believed by our confessors, but also **[80a]** so clearly and decisively expressed and taught in the Confessions that it is either shameful malice or boundless stupidity to say that this doctrine cannot be found in the symbols. Is it not now a shameful deception and a worthless theft from the Church to rob her of this teaching?

It is the same with chiliasm. Our Confessions have not only condemned it, but have also described its very character, namely, that it is a Jewish opinion. But now all actual chiliasm is Jewish, i.e. always a Jewish conception of a glorious kingdom of Christ, which is to be temporal, earthly, worldly, and if it is therefore to be brought into the church, it is not a further development of symbolic doctrine. Teaching about it. — With us, in the struggles against Chiliasm, a little right doctrinal development has taken place; for we have clearly shown that the Augsburg Confession is also the newest and finest doctrine of the Church. Confession rejects even the newest and most refined chiliasm, and why it does so.

Now it has been pointed out that we should pay attention to what has been said on pages 78 and 79. There we are reminded that our symbols are also such a great treasure of the Church because they cut off once and for all all doctrinal disputations with false spirits within the Church.

That the doctrines which are expressly laid down in the Confessions and explained in their right

understanding should no longer be disputed between Lutherans, seems to many to be a false and perverse assertion; but just consider: we would not have a Lutheran Church at all if we had one which had never come to a clear understanding of certain doctrines and had established its confession of them as a doctrinal norm once and for all. There can be no dispute about the fact that this is the case.

Now it is frightening when theologians who want to be Lutherans, who profess the doctrine of the Lutheran Church and are committed to the symbols, nevertheless cast new doubt on individual doctrines of the same when they say: It is not yet so certain whether Christ is the Son of God, whether Christ's body and blood are really present in Holy Communion, whether the treasury of grace of Holy Communion is Christ's body and blood, or the forgiveness of sins, and so on. Whoever wants to argue anew about a doctrine of the Lutheran Church that is clearly stated and established in the Book of Concord, should first give up the name Lutheran, since he is no longer Lutheran, and then we will argue with him from the Scriptures.

Here the question arose:

What is to be thought of it when current theologians say: We accept the doctrine of the Symbolical Books, but we reject their justification of the teaching? Can it be admitted that an incorrect justification of the doctrine exists and that it can be rejected? — [80b]

Answer:

To this we reply to the learned theologians: We know quite well that you only say this because you no longer believe the doctrine of the Church. It is nothing but lies and deceit when you pretend that you accept the doctrine of the Symbols, but reject the explanation for the doctrine. Nevertheless, we admit the possibility that here and there a doctrine may not be correctly based; but for this reason we cannot say that those who give evidence have erred, for their interpretation is always "analogy of faith." Show us places in the Symbols which are not interpreted "according to faith"! But let all the intellects and enemies of our Confessions be rebuked for bringing us a single such passage! We admit that the Concordia is a human book, that it is tainted by human weaknesses, but it is correct in doctrine, and in all respects.

It is shameful when theologians make young people, whom they are supposed to train as future church teachers, believe that they agree with the Lutheran doctrine and merely deviate from it in their reasoning, and then lead the poor into the most atrocious errors through their so-called better proof of the doctrine. For example, when a von Hofmann says: "I am Lutheran in all points, I prove the Lutheran doctrine differently than the old theologians. The doctrine of the symbols of the person of Christ, the relationship of the natures, the communication of the attributes is quite correct, but the manner of proof must be different and more correct, and yet in his proof he comes to the abominable heresy: The Godhead in Christ at His conception and birth was only a germ which could gradually develop into the full Godhead; in the state of humiliation the Godhead lay as it were pupated in Him, at His resurrection it had already significantly developed and at His ascension the butterfly finally unfolded completely. Consider also what a disgraceful,

blasphemous doctrine Kahnis arrived at through such reasoning! He actually says that one must not ascribe divinity to Christ, but only godliness. This is the most complete, most developed Arianism.

Upon request, the Synod further explained what it means to interpret "according to the faith", namely: to interpret the doctrine of faith according to what emerges from very clear, sunlit Scripture and is irrefutably certain. Reference was made here to the well-known example of Luther, who in the Church Postil denies that the words of John the Baptist: "He was before me" [John 1:30] prove the deity of Christ, whereas in the House Postil he uses them as proof of Christ's deity. You can [81a] see that Luther first believed that the proof was not there, later he changed his mind, but in both cases his interpretation is "similar to faith." Who would now say: Because it cannot be proven from this passage that Christ is God, therefore Christ is not God? A thousand other passages clearly teach this, indeed it is attested by the whole of Holy Scripture. — God does not demand that the interpreter always hit the one, special meaning of the Holy Spirit exactly, but only that the interpretation does not argue against the analogy of faith. It is therefore not heresy if one and the same passage is interpreted differently, but nevertheless "similar to faith".

A layman should therefore not be immediately alarmed if his preacher interprets a passage differently from Luther; he should only see whether the interpretation agrees with his catechism; if it does not conflict with the clear, light catechism teachings, then the passage may well have been interpreted incorrectly and applied wrongly, but the pastor has not therefore taught false doctrine.

It was further recalled that we are accused of denying the rule of faith. This accusation can only be proved by specific examples that we have presented something as an article of faith which is not one; but mere accusation is no proof. It is certain that not all that is written in the Bible are articles of faith; it is true that all that the Scriptures say is true, but an article of faith is a member of the body of doctrine, so that if one article is missing, the body is no longer whole and complete. A human body without a hand is no longer a perfect body; as often as one looks at it, the eye is offended and one feels that something is lacking in it. In the same way, no article, i.e. no part, of the doctrine must be missing.

Tell us where we have made something an article of faith that is not an article of faith! Or is our doctrine of the last things such a thing? Never ever! Christians know what they have to hope for. They would be beautiful Christians if they did not know what to hope for! And that is a sad Christian who hopes in temporal, worldly, earthly, carnal things! It is precisely in the chiliastic dispute among us that it has come to light how clearly it is stated in Scripture what Christians have to hope for and how certain their hope is.

To justify our Synod for the position it has taken in these

disputes, the following must be mentioned: We have expressly declared that we do not accuse anyone of heresy who still expects a general conversion of the Jews. This would not be impossible. Who can say how quickly God can bring about the conversion of many of a people! It is true that we do not all cherish this hope; but if someone did, we would not denounce him [81b] because it does not overturn faith. On the other hand, we have decisively rejected the doctrine of a millennial kingdom and condemned it as a dangerous heresy, because it deprives Christians of what Christ has laid upon them. Christians are everywhere earnestly warned and admonished by the Lord in Scripture to flee from security and to wait every hour for his appearing for judgment; but the doctrine of the millennial kingdom actually seduces Christians into security; instead of being expectant of the last day at every moment, it teaches them to think: "My Lord is not coming for a long time yet," thus virtually destroying all Christian vigilance.

Now it was discussed to what extent the symbols guarantee peace for the congregations.

Reference was first made to the example that our synod itself had experienced. Would there have been peace in Altenburg if the congregation had not known from the symbols that chiliasm was an anti-Lutheran rapture? — But they knew that and could therefore dismiss their fanatical pastor with a clear conscience. Furthermore, how many hundreds of rogue preachers have stayed at home with their heresies, which they secretly harbored, because they knew that they would immediately be confronted with the confessions in the most decisive manner and deposed. The whole history of the past three centuries of our Lutheran church will only become clear to us in eternity; there we will see with astonishment how much dynamite was heaped up in the church, how many dishonest people occupied the preaching chairs, how many false ideas of the way to salvation filled their heads! Had it not been for the bond of Symbols, the wild beasts would have broken loose and laid waste the vineyard of God! And so, even today, the confessions are the means by which the Lutheran Christian people can defend themselves against such scoundrels.

If, for example, a preacher were to come and preach that the resurrection of the dead is nothing, a Lutheran congregation would immediately send him away without engaging in further disputation with him. The congregation has no duty to argue with him, it simply says to him: "You know what the symbols teach, you are bound by them, you know what is written in your vow; but you no longer believe the Lutheran truth, so get out of here! O how much this is worth, how mightily it secures peace in the churches, how many souls are thereby saved from eternal ruin; for where battles are fought, even spiritual battles, there some also fall! That is why our Church has never allowed [82a] heretics who have become manifest to argue publicly, so that many weak people would not be annoyed, deceived and spiritually murdered.

When asked who the "little foxes" were that the quotation from John Gerard mentions, the answer was:

They are also all kinds of restless spirits and false teachers, but they do not speak out properly,

but secretly blow out their poison, as Luther says, while wolves are heretics made manifest. If it were not for the symbols, the common man could not get these little foxes out; but now, when he goes and says, "Pastor, such and such is written in the symbolic books, do you believe it?" behold, the little fox comes out of his hole, shows himself for what he is, and says, "Yes, that is what it says, but in our time they have gone further.

To a second question, to what extent the symbols preserve Christian freedom, the Synod replied:

Christian freedom here is above all that no man can bind my conscience; Christ alone is my King. Now the symbols preserve Christian liberty by teaching it so clearly and gloriously for the first; for the second, if there were no Symbolical Books and the preacher had not sworn an oath to them, and could therefore teach whatever he liked in his congregation and tamper with them as he pleased, the poor people would have to be his servants and slaves.

Finally, the following was said about Note. 4:

It is extremely important to recognize to what extent it is necessary to oblige the teachers of the Church not to deviate from the symbols not only in doctrine but also in speech. Probably no age proves as well as our own how necessary it is for public teachers in the Church to observe the right way of speaking. Recent theologians use a language that is absolutely incomprehensible not only to the laity, but also to most preachers. Not only can such atrocious, monstrous language not promote the explanation of the truth, but it must of necessity produce error. Our theologians of old, however important and difficult the doctrinal points they treat, use a language that is understandable to everyone;

Our high and learned theologians of today, on the other hand, consider it a disgrace if they do not use such language in theological matters that can only be understood by their peers, so to speak, by their scholarly minds. In doing so, they not only "reveal" a dreadful scholarly arrogance and caste mentality, but they also have the Jesuitical idea of cloaking their own divergent doctrinal opinions in such a way that only highly educated fellows can hear what they actually want. But by accustoming young students to speak as they do, they hope to bring their new doctrine into the church, to place it in the pulpits and finally in all the chairs. [82b]

Melanchthon's testimony concerning the purpose and necessity of commitment to the Symbols is also extremely important, precisely because it came from the pen of Melanchthon. In modern times it is often claimed that two theological currents have formed in the Lutheran Church, which can be traced back to the time of the Reformation, one to Luther and the other to Melanchthon. One is called the Lutheran fanatic, the other the Melanchthonian mild, loving one. The fanatics, it is said, had made the beautiful Confessions into a certain burdensome church law, but the Melanchthonians had not even thought that the church teachers should be bound to teach just as the symbols teach. It would not have occurred to Luther and Melanchthon, least of all to Melanchthon, to think of such a thing,

even to bind them with an oath. But that is an obvious untruth.

It was precisely Melanchthon who first stepped into the breach, and such a wretched man as **Andreas Osiander**, was the first to rebel against it. Osiander was an excellent theologian, fundamentally learned, brilliant, generally one of the most important minds of his time, but a man who thought a great deal of himself. At the colloquium in Marburg, where he was present, he preached a sermon so erudite and brilliant that everyone was amazed at the man's extraordinary talent and enormous erudition. No one dared to judge him; only Luther said: "I can preach better than that." When people were astonished at this arrogant statement and asked Luther, "Reverend Doctor, how is that to be understood?" he replied, "I preach simply, and that is the best." He secretly said to several people that he was very much afraid that this man [Osiander] would cause much trouble and unrest in the church, even though he was still completely Lutheran at the time; for he had written a so-called Augsburg Confession for Nuremberg, which is quite excellent.

Very soon, however, this man began to question the Lutheran doctrine, especially the basic doctrine of justification; for he was annoyed that he should play second fiddle to Luther, but did not dare to do so immediately, but waited for Luther's death. No sooner had Luther died than he rejoiced: "The lion is dead, I will deal with the foxes!" Now he came out with his false doctrine of justification.

He taught that we are justified by the fact that righteousness is wrought in us, not that it is imputed to us. Christ had acquired righteousness for us, not according to His human nature, but according to His divine nature. For when the Scriptures speak of the righteousness of Christ, they speak of the righteousness which Christ has from eternity according to His divinity. But according to Scripture, Christ's righteousness, [83a] by which we are justified, is not the righteousness that belongs to Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit from eternity, but the merit which Christ has earned for us through deeds and suffering. It was such a wicked, abominable, arrogant false teacher [A. Osiander] who first rebelled against the commitment to the Confessions. He said that a shameful tyranny of conscience prevailed in Wittenberg; just as the Iowans complained against our Synod, so he complained against the Wittenberg church about the narrowing of the rule of faith.

Melanchthon, in spite of his other weaknesses, took a firm stand against him, for he realized that the devil wanted to rob the church of the jewel of the doctrine of the person of Christ and justification. At that time people also cried out: "Freedom! but they wanted anarchy, i.e. a state of affairs in the church in which everyone can teach what he wants and still be regarded as justified in the Lutheran church. What Melanchthon says of the restless spirits of his time: "They take an unrestricted liberty to cast doubt on everything that has been correctly handed down," now also applies to those who maintain that much in the symbols is still an open question; for if this is true, then of course the doubt is also justified.

And what he then adds of the purpose of the obligation is not only sought to be achieved through the Symbolical Books, but also through another institution. If a

public teacher had doubts about the teaching of the Symbols, he had no right to go public with them without further ado, but had to go to Wittenberg to the theological faculty and obtain their opinion. Of course, he was not forced to be content with the faculty's decision, but it was a formidable barrier that the doubter could not immediately drag a lot of other Christians into his doubts by coming out in public; otherwise it was self-evident that if the faculty could not satisfy him, he retained the right to act according to his conscience. —

Melanchthon's further statement that the vow had already become customary twenty years ago should be noted by our Uniteds [Prussian Union] and the people of the General Synod, who often claim that this custom only arose later. According to Melanchthon, it [the vow to subscribe to Confessions] was actually introduced as early as 1533, that is, three years after the Augsburg Confession was handed down, but not in the sense that the Symbols were to be a law that everyone had to believe, but the vow was a fresh, cheerful confession of the heavenly truth that was believed with all one's heart.

We are accused of causing the disintegration and complete dissolution of the church because we insist so strictly and rigidly on the symbols; but the opposite is true, we rather promote the peace of the church, in that, as Melanchthon says, the younger [83b] and more upright are reminded of modesty through the pledge. Disintegration and dissolution are caused only by the wild, impudent, self-admiringly puffed-up false spirits, who do not want to be bound by the bonds of Symbols or by other bonds. Moreover, we know very well that pure doctrine can never be preserved by mere Symbols; for if that were possible, the doctrine would always have to remain pure. But the heretics in the Church always oppose the pure doctrine in the Symbols and falsify it.

It is also important that Melanchthon says that good talents should be reminded of modesty, i.e. those who are richly endowed. Such people can easily be seduced by the richness of their minds to go out and deceive the poor people with a thousand strange thoughts that run through their heads. Luther says that "if" he had wanted to print everything that went through his mind, all the printing presses in the world would not have been enough. — Finally, we must draw attention to the malicious cunning of our enemies in saying that the symbols are our papal pope. What Lutherans call freedom, they call coercion and papal servitude. But this makes the expression of the Lutheran faith, which we profess with joy, a yoke for them, because it resists their licentiousness. If, indeed, simple-minded people are led by such speeches to doubt their commitment to the symbols, the very best thing to do is to ask: Do you know nothing of the Apostol. Symbolum? Behold, that was the very first profession of it in the apostolic age. Our obligation is therefore nothing unapostolic, but the apostles preceded us with their own example.

Concerning the 5th note to § 21, concerning ordination,

the Synod expressed itself as follows:

By taking a decided stand from the outset against the doctrine that ordination is instituted by God, we have exposed ourselves to the suspicion that we are opposed to this glorious ordinance. The Buffalo Synod has done everything possible to create the idea in the Lutheran Church, especially in Germany, that we are against all good and strict order. But this is not so; on the contrary, we esteem ordination extremely highly and would regard the Lutheran preacher who did not desire it, although he could obtain it, as a miserable fanatic [84a] spirit. But the Buffalo Synod's doctrine of ordination is completely wrong. It asserts that he who is not ordained is not a true pastor, for the call does only something to confer the office; if a man is to become a full, true pastor, ordination is also necessary. Now consider this: If ordination belongs to the right preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments, the right granting of absolution, then the main doctrine, the article of justification, is robbed from us; for if I do not know for certain that when the Word resounds in my heart, the sacraments are administered to me, absolution is granted to me, that this is valid at all times and that it only depends on my believing it, then I am a poor man and am in great danger of suffering damage to my soul. If anything else is necessary other than that I believe that this preaching of the Gospel promises is valid for me, that the Holy Sacraments — this Word with the outward sign — seal the promises of God's grace to me, that absolution absolves me from sin, without anything else having to be added to make these means of grace powerful, then I do not know whether I have really been baptized correctly, whether I have been properly absolved, whether I have received the right Lord's Supper.

If ordination is necessary for the valid administration of the public ministry, I can never know whether my pastor is a true pastor; for if I want to know that, I must know whether he is properly ordained; if I want to know whether he is properly ordained, I must know whether his ordinator was properly ordained, and so on back to the apostles. And so I could never be sure whether I was properly baptized, properly ordained, properly communed, unless an unbroken chain of proper ordinations could be proven from my pastor up to the apostles. If this chain were once broken, I would have no proper Baptism, no proper preaching, no proper Communion. If, as the Romans and Episcopalians teach, a propagation of ministry really takes place by means of ordination, then one must know exactly whether the ministry has come to us through an unbroken chain of valid ordinations from the times of the apostles, if he wants to be sure of his faith in the power of the means of grace. But this will give rise to an eternal dispute as to whether the chain has not been broken at some point. Even today the Romans and the Episcopalians argue which of the two churches has the better certainty that the chain of ordination has never been broken; neither can prove an absolute certainty; but if there is no such absolute certainty, then to make the certainty that we have the right ministry and that the means of grace are validly and powerfully administered among us dependent on ordination is to deny Christ and deprive the poor souls of all certainty

of faith.

The doctrine of the Roman and Episcopal Church of ordination in an unbroken succession of bishops is therefore a godless, accursed and damned doctrine of the devil. God, of course, according to His grace, does [84b] not allow this godless doctrine to bear its soul-damaging fruit among His children in these churches, but it is clear that as soon as someone makes the power of the means of grace dependent on ordination in uninterrupted order, he has already lost the certainty of his faith. To illustrate this by a crude example, imagine a telegraph wire being drawn from New York to San Francisco, which is a tremendously long line. Now imagine further that the wire were cut in the middle with a pair of scissors; you might think that such a small cut would be of no importance, but everyone who knows the matter knows how much it means; for no matter how much telegraphy is used in New York, nothing is heard in San Francisco. Why? The line is cut and stops completely at the cut. Even if ordination by the laying on of hands propagates the ministry, if the order of the laying on of hands is interrupted even once from the time of the apostles, the propagation of the ministry has ceased from the point of interruption. The effect of the electrifying machine illustrates this just as aptly. When thousands upon thousands join hands in a long line and the last hand holds the conducting wire, all feel the electric shock; but if one hand lets go, for instance near the machine, all feel nothing from the point of interruption. —

Grabau teaches that a pastor may be ungodly if he only preaches correctly and administers the sacraments properly, but his administration is valid and powerful. There is no doubt that this is a very correct teaching. But it is frightening when he gives as his reason: The right ministry is still there after all, the means of grace administered by the ungodly are powerful for the sake of the ministry.

We, on the other hand, teach: No matter how ungodly the preacher may be, his baptism, his preaching, his absolution, his communion does not lose its power; for it is not he who baptizes, preaches, absolves, but Jesus Christ, in whose stead he acts, even though he is unworthy. I can certainly ask whether my pastor is properly ordained, but not because I want to convince myself of the validity of his ministerial acts, but only because I do not want to participate in disorderly administration.

Suppose I am in a congregation and have hitherto believed that my pastor was duly installed and ordained in his office, and then I find out that he has interfered, snuck in, bought his way in, I am nevertheless certain that my child has been properly baptized and that I have received the right kind of communion; for whether I receive the Word and the sacraments correctly and vigorously depends on whether the pastor's actions are carried out correctly according to Christ's command, whether the preacher is who he wants to be, ordained or not

ordained, called or not called, pious or godless, — Luther says: The devil or his mother.

Here the question was asked:

Since, according to our doctrine, [85a] ordination is the confirmation of the call, but those who are called to other congregations from their first are not ordained anew, is their ordination to be regarded as the confirmation of their later calls as well, or are they to be regarded as non-ordained?

To which the answer was given:

Ordination is a testimony on the part of the church: this man is rightly called, is not a sneak, not a vagrant, did not run himself, but was sent. It would not be wrong at all if a preacher were ordained again with every new call; but our church has omitted to do so — without a doubt in honor of the sermon. In the Apostolic Church, by the way, it happened; Paul and Barnabas, for example, were ordained because they were only supposed to deliver money, so that they could do it properly; later it was dropped, as was to be feared, for the sake of the germinating false doctrine of the indestructible character. Those who have been ordained once and thus received the testimony of the church were not considered necessary to be ordained again in the Lutheran Church, because the testimony of the church is valid for life.

Incidentally, it still happens here and there that ordination is repeated, and one would almost wish that this custom had remained general; it would make it much clearer that ordination is nothing more than the confirmation of the call, and prevent those who have left the parish office from still being considered preachers; for it is certain that he who no longer has a congregation behind him can no longer say: "By virtue of my office." If, therefore, it still sometimes happens with us that professors perform ordinations, baptize, pronounce absolution, this is an old slackness which we should discard for the sake of the perversities of our time, which have been demonstrated by the following examples:

1) Our people still regard the pastor, who is out of office, as something more than an ordinary layman, demand baptisms from him in emergencies and are astonished when he refuses because he is no longer called to do so; although it cannot be denied that such requests among our people undoubtedly often stem from the fact that they shy away from performing the act themselves, and since they cannot have a pastor, they at least want someone who knows how to perform it properly and correctly. —

2) A superintendent in Germany temporarily transferred his office with all its functions to one who had resigned his office, because the same person had once been a pastor.

3) A conference in Hanover expressed its conviction that ordination gives the power to forgive sins, and another answered the question as to why the laying on of hands was used, by saying that forgiveness was communicated through the hands by virtue of the power [85b] inherent in the pastor through ordination.

Objection:

If a pastor performs official acts in a foreign congregation on behalf of his brother minister, he does so not by virtue of his [own] call, but by virtue of the call of his brother minister, — may not a professor baptize and perform other

official acts by virtue of the call of a pastor?

Answer:

That is at least contrary to the order [*Ordnung*] which our Church observes. It has never permitted the whole office to be conferred on someone who does not himself hold the whole office. Nor can the temporary transfer of the officer ever take place without the consent of the congregation. The administration of the sacraments requires pastors, which the mere preaching does not do, and therefore the latter [preaching] can be entrusted to a professor, but he should abstain from the former [administer sacraments]. Even a pastor should not hear confessions in another local congregation without necessity, least of all private confession, because even private pastoral care is presupposed here.

Furthermore, Johann Gerhard's earlier argument [on ordination] published in *Lehre und Wehre* was recalled as to why ordination is granted only once, namely because it gives testimony that this person is set apart for the service of the church for life, and it was pointed out that the call, however often it may be repeated, is always issued for life; but because a testimony of the church office was desired for new calls, ordination was replaced by installation.

In further debate, it was explained on the one hand that a later calling does not do what the first calling does; the person is not only now being set apart for the church ministry. The first call is, firstly, a call to the church in general, that one should be its servant; secondly, a call to serve the church in a certain place as long as it pleases God; on the other hand, however, it was declared against it, and indeed with the full approval of the Synod: That declaration of John Gerhard is one "in harmony with the faith," though contrived. The matter remains simpler if ordination is regarded simply as the confirmation of a call to the individual congregation. Now if there is an inconsistency in the fact that ordination is not repeated at each new call, consider this: What is wrong with it? After all, it is only an adiaphoron. This also shows quite clearly how little our Church regards ordination as a sacrament, otherwise it would have been much clearer and more definite about it.

The difficulty of determining the difference between ordination and installation was also mentioned, and it was remarked that there was no essential difference between the two. [86a]

To which it was replied:

That this is precisely the difficulty of distinguishing between them, because there is no essential difference between them and one has only been made in practice. In the introduction, the formula for the conferral of ministry to be spoken with the laying on of hands was omitted, but the laying on of hands is part of the essential character of ordination, which is why it is often called the laying on of hands.

In response to the question expressed here: Why do we not ordain one and the same pastor again and again at each vocation, since this is in a certain sense desirable and we do not remain consistent if we do not do so?

The Synod answered: Because we follow the example of our church and do not want to start something special on our own.

The wish was then expressed that it

should be proved that a pastor is not called to serve the whole church, but only the individual congregation.

The Synod had the following brief discussion on this point:

First of all, the practical proof is very plausible. You only have to try it once, to act as a pastor elsewhere than where you are employed, to preach, to administer the sacraments, then you will realize quite tangibly that you are not called to the church in question [whole church]. Furthermore, the individual congregation can only call me to preach to it; if it wanted to call me to preach to other people, it would be setting itself up as the pope of other people. Every Christian has the right and the duty to bear witness to the gospel in the world; through his calling he only gives me the right that he himself can confer on me, namely to preach; therefore I only have the right to preach in the church that has called me. That is why God's Word says: "Feed the flock that is commanded to you," [[1 Peter 5:2 Luther](#)] and again: "Take heed therefore to the flock among which the Holy Spirit has placed you." [[Acts 20:28, Luther](#)]

The above discussion about Note 5 provoked a long and lively debate concerning our traveling preachers. It was said:

That traveling [or itinerant] preachers go out without a calling to a pastorate, and therefore without ordination; their only calling is the calling of love. When they now come to the abandoned people and preach, they often get into great trouble of conscience when they are asked to baptize children; they get into even greater trouble when they have to administer Holy Communion here and there in cases of necessity. The administration of baptism has so far been permitted to them, but not the administration of Holy Communion. This is not because they have no right to do so, but because [86b] there can be no such emergency in the case of Holy Communion as there is in the case of Baptism.

Here a battle arose between two different opinions on the matter, which could not be brought to a complete conclusion.

Some claimed:

That under certain circumstances, a traveling preacher can perform all official duties, if on the one hand he does not interfere with another's ministry and on the other hand he does not create a disorderly atmosphere. If I come as a traveling preacher to a place where people ask me to perform official acts, they give me a job. Since I have to deal with people who are in great need, when I help them I act like someone who pulls a drowning man out of the water. —

On the other hand, they replied:

But we must not forget that the ministry of preaching is a divine order and not a human one. If it is a divine order, then I may not transgress it never ever again, except in the greatest emergency, when the poor sinner's salvation is at stake. However, the Lord Jesus did not make this order for the destruction of souls, but for their salvation, so in an emergency the traveling preacher may baptize, and even administer Holy Communion. But this can only be justified by the emergency. A traveling preacher is without office; if he makes it a rule to baptize wherever it is requested and to administer Holy Communion wherever it is desired, he commits a grave sin against God's order. That one says: He is called, that is nothing; people do not call him, but only charge him with a single official act.

Luther says: "Nor does it follow that every citizen may set up a parish in his house, for no one is allowed to do so; there is a great difference between a common and a public assembly and between a household; for what a citizen does in his house is called secretly done." The commission of individual householders to perform this or that official act is therefore not a call to the preaching office. If he is asked to run, he should say: "You see, I am not a pastor, so I am not called to baptize; I know that in an emergency every Christian may baptize, but it is better that you do it yourself, otherwise I might get the reputation of a vagabond. The man replied, "Yes, I can't have a minister, he's too far away, and I wouldn't like to do the baptizing myself, I can't read well, I'm too anxious, I won't do it right in the end, so it's an emergency and the traveling preacher can go ahead and baptize.

Then they asked:

If I am not allowed to baptize, how can I preach in public without a proper call?"

Answer:

There is a big difference between baptizing and preaching. If people could themselves preach just as well as they can themselves baptize, then it would of course be [87a] ungodliness if I wanted to preach to them publicly as someone who is not called; because then I would be interfering with someone else's ministry and people could justifiably say: Go your own way, we don't need you to preach, we can do that ourselves! But they cannot and are therefore in great danger of being lost. So we ask a brother to let love urge him to seek out the poor people and bring them the gospel. Baptism is a different matter; they can and should administer it themselves in an emergency. Of course, even if people say with regard to Baptism: We are too clumsy to do it, then baptize, but let emergencies be emergencies and a traveling preacher should not call himself a pastor, otherwise he transgresses God's order. —

On the other hand, it was further reminded:

We send traveling preachers to save the poor abandoned and neglected people; they come to a settlement; there are people living there who are to hear God's Word; there are children who are to be baptized. If they are told: I am not a pastor, do it yourself, they will open their eyes and run away, for they are ignorant and unintelligent. —

Answer:

But I am not to seal up the ignorance, but to teach the ignorant people; I would sin greatly if I did not say to them: Dear people, you have been baptized, but you do not know what great treasure you have gained through it; to show you this is why I have come. If they are of God, they will certainly be wide-eyed, but they will also accept the teaching all the more eagerly. If I am asked to baptize in the emergency circumstances already mentioned, I say: Well, I will do it, just as you yourself or your neighbor could do it. —

New response:

It remains unclear why I could not do, outside of an orderly church setting, what an ordinary citizen or farmer can do in an emergency if he has the gifts to do so. —

Answer:

Baptism and Holy Communion presuppose congregations, since the preached Word has already fulfilled its purpose. A historical example is important. Our church bore witness with great earnestness against the Calvinists, who in the last half of the 16th century

sent traveling preachers all over France to convert people to their church; it did not regard these traveling preachers as preachers, but firmly maintained that they had [87b] no call, were not servants of God, but emissaries; they also stole France from the Lutheran church. —

Objection:

That was something quite different; the whole of France was ecclesiastically organized and assigned to preachers, so they were taking over other people's offices. What the Augsburg Confession says, that “no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called” [[Art. XIV](#); [Triglotta, p. 49](#)], refers to countries where the church and congregation were organized; but here in America there are quite peculiar conditions, such as have probably never existed in our church; here no one intervenes in other offices when he seeks out and serves scattered fellow believers. It is to be feared that we are acting wrongly if we judge these circumstances according to the earlier, already ordered circumstances and apply to them what was said in the Confession. —

Answer:

What has been said does not apply. We are all agreed that our traveling preachers should preach; only that they should not baptize or administer the Lord's Supper without the most urgent need. If I have preached to people as a traveling preacher, then I wash my hands of it, for I have done what I could and was allowed to do to save them. As far as baptizing is concerned, it is quite the same whether I baptize a child here in Fort Wayne or in Oregon — I am always only allowed to do it in an emergency, when either danger of death or other emergencies urge me to do so. So it is admitted: If a traveling preacher comes to a place as a stranger, he may baptize if those who are initially called to do so, and first and foremost the fathers, do not dare to do so themselves; yes, he may also administer communion in certain urgent emergencies; but he should be careful and check carefully whether such emergencies exist, otherwise his actions could cause him great anguish of conscience even at the hour of death.

§ 21.

The election and call of a preacher is the first part of the dutiful care for the establishment and maintenance of the public preaching ministry [*Predigtamts*] in the midst of a congregation. For the proper execution of this highly important act, according to God's Word and with a heartfelt common invocation of God, the congregation, where possible, calls in one or more experienced ministers of the church already in office, uses their advice and, if they can be present, entrusts them with the direction of the public election hearings. 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." Cf. Acts 1:15-26, 6:1-6, 14:23. Every member of the church who is able to vote is allowed to put forward a candidate, Acts 1:23: "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias." The eligibility of each of the nominees is then discussed on the basis of 1 Tim. 3:2-7, Tit. 1:6-9, 2 Tim. 2:15, 24-26, and the one who receives all the votes or at least an absolute majority of the votes from those recognized and nominated as eligible is recognized and accepted as the one called by God through the congregation [*Gemeinde*]. On the basis of this election, a certificate of election is drawn up, read to the congregation, signed in the name of the congregation by the board or persons chosen for this purpose, and sent to the elected person, 1 Cor. 16:3: "whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send." In such a document, the elected minister is to be committed by the congregation to the writings of the apostles and prophets of the Old and New Testaments, as to the Word of God, **<page 70>** as well as to the public confessions of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and to the faithful execution of the holy preaching ministry in all its aspects, Col. 4:17: "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." (Cf. Acts 15:23. 26:22. 20:20, 21, 26, 27. 2 Tim. 1:13, 14, 8; 4:2, 5. 1 Pet. 5:1-4.) In such a deed of vocation, however, the congregation must at the same time promise that it will recognize the called one as its shepherd, teacher and guardian, receive the word of divine preaching from him as God's Word, obey him, love him, be at peace with him, honor him and provide for his support, on the basis of the following Scriptures: Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." 1 Thess. 5:12: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." 2:13: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Heb. 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." 1 Thess. 5:13: "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." 1 Timothy 5:17: "The elders who are good leaders are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching." Luke 10:7: "And in the same house **<page 71>** remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house." 1 Cor. 9:13-14: "Know ye not that they that sacrifice eat of the sacrifice, and they that keep the altar eat of the altar? So also the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should feed on the gospel." Gal

6:6: "But he who is taught in the word shares all good things with him who teaches him." If the chosen one accepts the call, the congregation presents him, where possible, to orthodox church ministers already in office (Acts 6:6: "They set them before the apostles and prayed, and laid their hands on them"); so that, if this has not yet happened, they may "try" or examine him (1 Tim. 3:10: "And let these be tried first; then let them serve, if they are blameless") and, by public ordination according to apostolic order, declare, commit and confirm him as one duly called (1 Tim. 4:14: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"), or else publicly and solemnly induct them into his ministry, Acts 13:2-3: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Note 1: That the Christian congregations have always elected their preachers with the assistance of ministers already in office is attested by our Confession, when it says in the Smalcald Articles [*Treatise 13-15*: "13] VII. Again the *Council of Nice* determined that bishops should be elected by their own churches, in the presence of some neighboring bishop or of several. 14] The same was observed [for a long time, not only in the [page 72](#) East, but] also in the West and in the Latin churches, as Cyprian and Augustine testify. For Cyprian says in his fourth letter to Cornelius: *Accordingly, as regards the divine observance and apostolic practice, you must diligently keep and practice what is also observed among us and in almost all the provinces, that for celebrating ordination properly, whatsoever bishops of the same province live nearest should come together with the people for whom a pastor is being appointed, and the bishop should be chosen in the presence of the people, who most fully know the life of each one, which we also have seen done among us at the ordination of our colleague Sabinus, that by the suffrage of the entire brotherhood, and by the judgment of the bishops who had assembled in their presence, the episcopate was conferred and hands laid on him*. 15] Cyprian calls this custom a divine tradition and an apostolic observance, and affirms that it is observed in almost all the provinces." (First Appendix.) Incidentally, as important as it is that the electing congregation should call in those already in office, this is not absolutely necessary for the validity of the election. Luther writes about this: "No bishop should appoint someone without the election, will and appointment of the congregation, but should confirm the elected and appointed person by the congregation. If he does not do so, he is nevertheless confirmed by the calling of the congregation." (*Reason and Cause from Scripture that a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the Right and Power to Judge all Doctrine and to Appoint, Install and Dismiss Teachers*. X, 1804. [*StL X, 1546*]) It is self-evident that in electing congregations, which already have one or more pastors, these must necessarily be among those called, because the whole congregation only calls if they are also called, indeed, because it is precisely because of their pastoral office that they are particularly concerned to provide the congregation with true ministers of the Word. Luther therefore writes to a preacher: "Accordingly, your office requires that you look up so that the congregation or church does not intrude on you against your will. For that would be just as tyrannical against the pastor as if a pastor wanted to intrude against the will of the congregation and church." (XXI, 448.)

Note 2: Since the right to vote belongs to the whole congregation, the election is naturally to be carried out by those who represent the whole congregation. In a congregation independent of the state, however, the most natural representatives of the congregation are all its voting members, who therefore have to carry out this highly important work. Admittedly, this did not happen in most German-Lutheran parishes; the main reason for this originally seems to have been that the parishes did not want to drive the parish estates, which were partly donated by the state, partly by individuals, especially nobles, who therefore claimed the supreme right to call on these parish estates. Therefore, when the Swabian peasants in Luther's time stirred up a revolt and demanded, among other things, the right to vote in twelve articles, Luther wrote: "A whole congregation should have the power to elect and dismiss a pastor. This article is right, if only it were carried out in a Christian manner (without the chapters, noted in the margin, serving no purpose). Now if the goods of the parish come from the superior and not from the congregation, the congregation may not give the same goods to the one it chooses. For that would be robbed and taken; but if it wants to have a parish priest, it must first humbly ask for one from the superior. If the superiors will not, then let them choose one of their own and nourish him from their own goods, and let the superiors have their goods, or obtain them from them by right." (XVI, 84 [[StL XVI, 65](#)]) But Luther complains in many places in his letters that the congregations did not want this. And because the congregations usually did not want to have the independent right of election under this condition, they had to be content with having only the so-called *Votum negativum*, that is, the right to refuse to accept a proposed preacher, if they could justify this refusal as a just one. Nevertheless, in our German-Lutheran Church the doctrine has continued to be maintained that the right of election is a congregational right and that therefore the election is not valid without the consent of the congregation; and in a not insignificant number of congregations they even retained <page 74> the right of election. Fröschel, a former deacon in Wittenberg in Luther's time, testifies of this city as late as 1565: "Bugenhagen was elected pastor and accepted by the laudable university and by the lords of the council and the whole congregation, as is still the case." (see *Unschuld. Nachrr.* Jahrgang 1731. p. 695.) Dannhauer testifies to this of the Strasbourg church. He writes: "The best vocation is that which flows from the coming together of all three estates, namely the political, the ecclesiastical, and the domestic.... This is in use here in Strasbourg, but not elsewhere, or at least in a few places." (*Theol. cas.* p. 230. 231.) Chancellor Pfaff reports of Rostock: "When a preacher leaves there, some candidates for the preaching office present their gifts of grace and abilities to the people in public sermons. Afterwards, the people gather in the town hall, and in a chamber there are boards posted on the same, and on each board is the name of one of the aforementioned candidates; and when the people pass through this chamber, each one makes a mark on the board on which is written the name of the person to whom he gives his vote. Whoever subsequently has the most votes is elected preacher. All this is done without confusion or noise." (*Treatise on the Origin of Canon Law.* 1722. p. 302.) Lassenius also testifies to the same thing when he writes "And in this way, as you know, the evangelical preachers are still mentioned to this day, but with the difference that in some

places it is done by all and everyone in the congregation, in others only by the most distinguished who are in the congregation and those to whom others have given their right, and by the authorities alone, and in some places by the preachers alone, after the congregations in such and such a place have compared themselves with one another, but in such a way that the one called recognizes the whole congregation as his callers." (*Eighty-two Short Consolations*. St. Louis, Mo., 1861. pp. 331-332. [*Der Lutheraner* book review by Sihler]) Löscher reports the following in his so-called "Innocent News": After from the beginning [<page 75>](#) the Lutheran congregations in Holland, namely those at Amsterdam, had had free universal suffrage, about the year 1683 the Consistory determined that the poor should no longer cast their votes in the election of preachers, preacher-elders, and ministers to the poor! The congregations complained about this. They finally turned to the synod, but even this did not help the congregations to gain their rights! The Lutheran consistory, on the other hand, turned to the ruling Reformed mayors of Amsterdam and issued the decree that anyone who did not pay 20 Dutch guilders a year should not vote with the others. As deeply aggrieved as the congregations felt by this shameful encroachment on their rights, they could do nothing for the time being but present the story of this flagrant injustice to their co-religionists in a public publication, which was done in 1683. In 1689, the congregation in Amsterdam turned to the Lutheran theological faculties in Greifswald, Giessen and Tübingen and asked for their advice and instruction. They all agreed with the theological concerns expressed by the congregation, but warned them not to cause a schism for the sake of this injustice. When the mayors of Amsterdam were informed of this, they rebuked the congregation for having obtained such theological responses, and reduced the 20 guilders required for the right to vote to ten guilders, but declared that otherwise their decision must stand; whereupon in 1691 the congregation published a new pamphlet under the title: "Authentische Belege vom Gewissenszwang", in which they, the congregation, poured out their complaint "especially because of the poor" and expressed their concern that it would become an Arminian Caesaropapism (i.e. an authoritative papal coercion by government), since their consistory itself had finally left religious matters to the secular authorities of another religion. At the same time, the congregation communicates the theological concerns it has raised in its letter. (See *Unschuldige Nachrichten* 1742. sect. 776-777.)

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Note 3: Chemnitz explains in his usual thoroughness how the election of preachers must be carried out according to God's Word in the following words: "Here the question arises as to who must be those through whose voice this election and calling must take place, so that it can be regarded as divine, that is, that God Himself chooses, calls and sends the laborers into his harvest through these means. Now there are certain and clear examples of this in Scripture. Acts 1:15 ff. Peter, since another was to take Judas' place, presents the matter not only to the apostles, but also to the other "disciples"; for that was the name of the believers at that time, whose number, as

many as were gathered together, amounted to 120. And then Peter presents from the Scriptures who and how they should be chosen, and prayers are also associated with this. Although the lot was also cast (because the calling was not to be a completely indirect one, but an apostolic one), the lot was no longer used later. As Acts 6:2 ff. deacons were to be elected and appointed, the apostles did not want to arrogate to themselves the right of election alone, but called the congregation together. They do not, however, entirely dispense with the care of the appointment and do not leave it to the blind and disorderly caprice of the people or the crowd, but take the government of the election or appointment into their own hands; they present the doctrine and rule as to whom and how to elect; then the chosen ones are brought before the apostles, so that it may be confirmed by their judgment whether the election has been carried out lawfully; these, however, confirm the election by laying their hands in prayer to God. According to Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas appoint presbyters in individual churches to which they have preached the gospel; but they do not take the right and authority to elect and appoint for themselves alone; but Luke uses the word *cheirotonesantes*, *) which 2 Cor. 8:19. which is used of the election by the votes of the congregation; the same is taken, namely, from the custom of the Greeks to cast their votes by [page 77](#) stretching out their hands, and denotes one who by casting a vote elects or indicates his assent.

*) The word actually means as much as stretching out the hand.

Paul and Barnabas therefore did not impose the presbyters on the church against its will without seeking its consent. And when, according to Acts 15:22, men had to be chosen who were to be sent with commissions to the Antiochian church, Luke says: 'And it seemed good to the apostles and elders together with the whole church to choose men from among them with Paul and Barnabas. It is necessary, however, to note this in apostolic history, that sometimes the ministers and the rest of the church together presented and elected those whom they considered worthy, as Acts 1:23. Sometimes the church had the presentation and election, but the confirmation of the election was subject to the judgment of the apostles, Acts 6:5, 6. Often, however, the apostles, who were better able to judge these matters, presented to the congregations those whom they considered qualified for the office, and when the vote and consent of the congregation were added, the appointment was valid. Thus Paul sends Timotheum, Titum, Sylvanum etc. to the churches. Thus presbyters are presented in Acts 14:23, in whose appointment the congregation agrees by vote. Occasionally some have also offered their services to the church themselves, 1 Tim. 3, 1: "This is certainly true, if anyone desires the office of bishop, he desires a precious work". In the time of the apostles, however, a legitimate appointment always required the consent of the congregation and the judgment and confirmation of the presbytery. Thus Titus was appointed in Crete to preside over and govern the election of presbyters, so that it might be carried out in the proper manner and that he might confirm and

ratify the election by ordination. For Paul uses the same word in Titus 1:5, where he speaks of the appointment of presbyters, as in Acts 14:23, where mention is made both of the vote (by the people) and of the appointment of presbyters." (*Examen Concil. Trid. II, loc. 13. ©. 586. ff.*) Gerhard writes about this: "Although [page 78](#) it hardly seems possible to prescribe a certain rule down to the smallest detail..., nevertheless, if we want to speak of a general model, the examination, ordination and induction belongs to the presbytery [or elders]; the appointment, presentation and confirmation to the Christian authorities; the consent, vote and approval or, depending on the circumstances, the demand to the people. The general principle, therefore, that pastors are elected with the consent of the congregation, and that none are imposed upon them against their will, has express testimony in Scripture, and has been proved by the constant practice of the early church; but the form of election according to its individual parts is different. In some churches the people, renouncing their right, leave their part to their authorities and ministers of like confession, and rest without hesitation in their will and election; in some they transfer their right to certain more distinguished persons, who execute everything in the name of the people. In neither of these ways does the right to appoint preachers cease to belong to the whole church, for the right is surrendered to the fidelity of others, not given up if someone voluntarily renounces his right for a time, nor can this result in a limitation or abrogation of the right." (*Loc. de min. § 86. 106.*)

Note 4: Concerning the commitment of preachers to the Symbolical Books of the church, it should be noted that this is one of the chief bulwarks of the churches, that preachers cannot make themselves lords over their faith (2 Cor. 1:24: "Not that we are lords over your faith, but we are helpers of your joy, for you are in the faith"). All false teachers say that they want to teach according to the Holy Scriptures; therefore, if preachers do not want to be committed to the public Confessions of the orthodox church, the congregations have no guarantee that their preachers will not present papist, Calvinist, chiliastic, Methodist, rationalist, etc. doctrines to them, without their being able to teach them according to the Scriptures. If they could do so, they would be exposed to ever new disputations and disputes even about the articles of the general Christian faith, which would be forever cut off by the commitment to the symbols of the church. Therefore, as dear as a Lutheran congregation is to the pure doctrine of the divine Word, its faith, its Christian freedom, its peace and tranquility, it should be very careful not to accept any preacher who would not commit himself to our holy Concordia. From the beginning, therefore, our Church, following the example of the ancient orthodox Church *), has not accepted as her minister anyone who did not first make a sacred promise to teach according to her Confessions and not to deviate from them either in the doctrines contained therein or in the manner of speech observed therein.

*) Which already in apostolic times did not even exchange or accept as a member anyone who did not profess and commit himself to the so-called Apostles' Creed.

The first person in the Lutheran Church to rebel against the connection to the church Confessions was the restless mind and false teacher Andreas Osiander in Königsberg, who declared it to be a tyranny of conscience. He wanted the freedom to teach what he liked, but the church should be his servant. However, Melanchthon replied to him in a speech in 1553 as follows: "Osiander prides himself on having retained freedom and not having tolerated these bonds. In the great licentiousness and anarchy of this time, many take pleasure in this shouting, who take unlimited liberty to invent opinions and, like (the philosopher of doubt) Pyrrho, to cast doubt on everything that has been correctly handed down. But the pious and the wise see not without great pain where this furious rebuke is headed, namely, that the young and the righteous should not even be reminded of modesty. For wild, impudent men, puffed up with self-admiration, cannot be held in check either by such promises or by other restraints. — But first I will speak of the originators of our habit and the intention behind it. This vow was not only recently devised by us, but **was** introduced by this college about 20 years ago <page 80>, namely by Luther, Jonas and the pastor of this congregation, Dr. Pomeranus. **Osiander does great dishonor to these sincere men when he sows the suspicion that they wanted to set up a tyranny**, since it is now clear that they had the most honorable cause for their plan. At that time, too, many enthusiastic people roamed about, who soon afterward spread new follies, Anabaptists, Servet, Campanus, Schwenkfeld, etc. And there is no lack of such pests at any time. Therefore, as much as human diligence could prevent it, **this faculty wanted to remind good talents of modesty** and show them the barriers that could not easily be broken; it also wanted, as much as it could, to restrain the restless minds. This was also the custom of the old church, in which no tyrants ruled and the sources of doctrine were still pure. Signatures were required in godly synods. In the Nicene Synod, not only the bishops but also Emperor Constantine signed the decrees of the same synod with their own hand. Also, no one was admitted to the ministry of the Gospel without prior examination and explicit confession, in which those called to teach declared that they were devoted to the unadulterated teaching of the Gospel and promised not to throw it away." (*Corp. Reform. Vol. XII, p. 7.*) Of the oath to the symbols, J. Gerhard also writes: "The purpose is to promote God's honor and to preserve the peace of the church by drawing to the light those who secretly harbor erroneous opinions and wait for opportunities to spread them in the church. In this way the little foxes are drawn out of their hiding-places, who are out to devastate the vineyard of the Lord, and a bridle is put on the swarming spirits, so that they refrain from stirring up discord, spreading error and confusing the Church for fear of the penalties imposed on perjury, and thus the unity of faith and the Church is diligently preserved." (*Loc. de magistr. § 210.*) In another place he writes about this: "But even by such an oath the symbolic books of Holy Scripture are not put <page 81> on an equal footing, nor are cords thrown around the consciences of men, nor is a greater progress in heavenly doctrine prevented, but only a confession is demanded, care is taken for the peace of the church, and the way is closed to secret machinations." (*Disputat. theol. p. 963.*)

Note 5: Our Confession testifies that ordination is only a confirmation of a previous call, when it

says: "For formerly the people elected pastors and bishops. Then came a bishop, either of that church or a neighboring one, who confirmed tho one elected by the laying on of hands; and ordination was nothing else than such a ratification." ([*Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope. § 70*](#)) Luther also says this. He writes: "It depends on whether the church and the bishop are one, and whether the church wants to hear the bishop and the bishop wants to teach the church. This is what happened. The laying on of hands, which blesses, confirms and testifies to this, as a notary and witnesses testify to a secular matter, and as the priest who blesses the bride and groom confirms or testifies to their marriage, that they have previously taken each other and publicly confessed; whether the priest is an angel or a devil: because the office is done, the bride is blessed." (Schrift: Erempel einen rechten christlichen Bischof zu ordnen, vom J. 1542. XVII, 156 [[StL XVII, 114](#)]) Therefore Balduin writes: "The office of the Word has a certain commandment and institution, John 20, but of the ordination to the office one reads nothing of the kind; therefore it has always been reckoned among the indifferent things [adiaphora] in the orthodox church." (*Comment. in epp. Pauli, ad 1 Tim. 4, 14. q. 3.*) Thus Aegidius Hunnius also judges of the case when one cannot have ordination thus: "If a body of believers, lacking any pastor, agree to choose a person competent to teach, and in this case of necessity call and choose him to be a preacher, while the cooperation of neither a presbyter nor a bishop is to be had, from whom he could receive ordination, then a minister appointed and chosen by the voice of the church is undoubtedly a true pastor of the church, who has a [<Page 82>](#) legitimate call and can perform all the duties of his office in a proper manner." (*Exam. P. I. assert. 6.*) That, however, a congregation should not fail to present its chosen one for ordination, except in cases of extreme necessity, Chemnitz testifies when he writes: "This also is beyond doubt, that the calling to the ministry of the gospel for the sake of those who run, and are not sent, Jer. 23:21, should have some public testimony and act of testimony of the church; wherefore the apostles manifested and as it were sealed the calling of those who were lawfully chosen to the ministry of the word and sacraments by a public testimony and act of testimony of the church. For the Holy Spirit also wanted Paul, who was directly called, to be proclaimed and presented as the apostle to the Gentiles by a public testimony of the Church. But in this public confirmation, testimony or proclamation, since it was a public act, the apostles used the outward ceremony of the laying on of hands, which was customary among that people at that time, both because of the public designation of the called person and because of the prayers that were made by the whole church over the called person.... Fasting was also added to prayer, Acts 13:3, and this earnest prayer at the ordination of ministers is not in vain, because it is based on divine command and promise. But this is what Paul says: 'The gift that is in you by the laying on of hands.'" (*Exam. Conc. Trid. II. loc. 13.*) Finally, what makes ordination necessary and useful, naturally also applies to the induction of one who has already been ordained.