[1867 Eastern District essay by Walther; translation by BackToLuther utilizing the DeepL Translator; pagination follows original German w/ links;
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"1867 Eastern, True Visible, Theses XI-XIII" ToC

Second session.

Two papers were presented to the Synod for discussion, firstly theses by Prof. C. F. W. Walther: **"The Lutheran Church, the True Visible Church of God on Earth."** …the former was discussed in greater detail. The Western [EC7] and Central [EC8] Districts of our Synod had already made the same theses the basis of their negotiations in the course of this summer, beginning with the third thesis, where the discussions of the last general Synod meeting in the fall of 1866 had ended, and had reached the 10th thesis inclusive. Subsequently, therefore, the Honorable Synod now began with Thesis XI, which thus reads:

Thesis XI

"The Lutheran Church is not the One Holy Christian Church, apart from which there is no salvation and no salvation, although it has never separated itself from it, but confesses to it alone." op. cit. p. 54.

Comments on this:

What the Lutheran Church should be regarded as. Grabau's erroneous teaching on this. False doctrine of the Reformed concerning the Lord's Supper. That there are also many believers outside the orthodox Lutheran Church.

It was said:

The thesis is clear: the Lutheran Church is not and does not want to be the only saving church; but it has also never separated itself from the One Holy Christian Church, apart from which there is no salvation, i.e. it has always been a part of it, otherwise it would not be a true church.

It is also sometimes called catholic, but not in the sense that it includes all those who believe and are saved, but in terms of doctrine, because it has not accepted, believes and confesses a new doctrine, but the old doctrine common to all Christians. With this assertion we were, of course, always in opposition to the old Buffalo Synod, which did not deign to assert that <page 9> the Lutheran Church, by which they basically understood only those who taught and practiced as they themselves did, was the One Holy Christian Church of the Third Article, apart from which there was no salvation. In this way they chained consciences to their synod, and also gave practical effect to this teaching [145/2] by banning those who separated themselves from it even for the sake of doctrine, as people who had fallen away from the One Church of God and were therefore necessarily lost.

Nothing was further from Luther's mind; he did not want to bring the whole of Christendom out of the papacy in order to gather it around him and be able to say: Here is the One Church, the assembly of all believers, but he wanted to free the already existing Church from error; precisely because he knew and believed that the children of God, i.e. a real, true Church, were also under the papacy, he did not go out himself, but persevered until the papacy itself expelled him from its midst; but he knew that he was nevertheless and even then still intimately united in spirit with the Christians in the papacy and belonged to the One Church.

As Lutherans, we also want to be nothing other than members of the One Christian Church, apart from which there is no salvation, but insofar as we have

renounced and still renounce all false churches and sects, we call ourselves Lutherans. But not all of God's children have recognized the depths of Satan and the corruption of the sects; not all of them, like us, have therefore gone out from them, and yet have embraced Christ in simplicity by faith, and are therefore children of God, who reigns even in the midst of his enemies, even where heretics and false prophets rage. There are many believing children of God who have left the sects in conscience but not in body; for example, many baptized children languish under the papacy.

As long as there has been a Lutheran church, the error that it is the one holy Christian church, apart from which there is no salvation, has never been expressed; only Stephan, Grabau and von Rohr reserved this for themselves. But this is indeed a damnable error, a heresy; for it asserts that faith in Christ is not enough for salvation; that one can believe in Christ and yet be damned; thus Christ is robbed of his glory and the visible church is made a second savior; thus all the faithful children of God in other churches are condemned, and the Lutherans are also put on the slippery slope; for if today they consider themselves to be right Lutherans, and tomorrow they realize through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that they have hitherto held an un-Lutheran doctrine, they must think: so yesterday we were not yet true Lutherans, and therefore not yet true children of God; but then doubt can and will immediately arise: but how? Perhaps tomorrow you will recognize and find a new error in yourself! — In short, everything is made uncertain for the Christian.

Church tyrants who teach this doctrine certainly help themselves by making their listeners believe in their [the tyrants'] (infallibility) and calling out to them: do not worry, you are with the right true church, [**146/1**] even if you have erred, the church does not err; in addition, the ministry is then endowed with special privileges and made into a new savior; oh unfortunate is he who allows himself to be taken captive by such people.

If we claimed that the Lutheran Church is the One Christian Church, apart from which there is no salvation, we would be on weak ground against the Jesuits. For if they ask us: where was your Lutheran Church before Luther, if not in name, then in character? we could not answer otherwise than: it was not there in this way before Luther. To this they would then reply with complete justification: So there has been no church for a thousand years and Christ's word would have been a lie, since he says: the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church. If one were to claim that the Lutheran church is the **<page 10>** one holy Christian church, one would also arrive at the absurdity that all hypocrites and the ungodly, who are nevertheless also mixed in with this church, are true members of it and would therefore be saved; Grabau denies this consequence, but it is irrefutably correct.

"Testimonies."

They then proceeded to the reading of the proofs and testimonies attached to the theses; the first from the *Formula of Concord* begins with the words: "Was denn die Condemnationes — — zu finden sein." *)

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*) The reader will do well to obtain the book on which this is based and read the relevant passages for himself. It is entitled: The Evangelical Lutheran Church, the True Visible Church of God on Earth." A paper by Prof. C. F. W. Walther. St. Louis Mo., 1867. pr. 50 cts.

In this regard it was noted:

The condemnations also concern, among other things, the errors of Holy Communion and their stubborn defenders and teachers. But our church does not dare to condemn those who err in this out of simplicity.

For it is quite easy to imagine how a simple-minded person who has been brought up in the Reformed Church and has imbibed the false doctrine of the Lord's Supper from an early age, nevertheless fails to realize the consequences of this doctrine and the errors on which it rests, namely, that the Lord Christ is thereby stripped of his true incarnation, his omnipotence, omnipresence and truthfulness. He does not believe that Christ's body and blood are truly distributed and received in Holy Communion, simply because he has never been taught otherwise than that it only signifies his body, [**146/2**] but he nevertheless believes that Christ is true, omnipotent and omnipresent even according to his human nature, and places all his trust of salvation in him alone, so that such a person can remain a Christian and be saved despite his error; this is what the Formula of Concord confesses and what we therefore also gladly confess.

It is also important that it says "but much less whole churches," for by this our symbols indicate that there are also children of God apart from the Lutheran Church, and that for the sake of the latter one can also call other communities of false believers, which do not deny God's word in all things, churches. Nothing was further from the minds of our fathers than to condemn everything outside their circle in a broad brush. Grabau and v. Rohr, on the other hand, did not deign to declare the entire Missouri Synod pagan and publican in 1859 and thus pronounce the curse on it as a whole, as can be seen from their synodal letter at that time.

It should also be noted that the symbols speak of "many pious and innocent people" in the false-believing communities. Fanatical Lutherans may also say: it may be that here and there a believer is to be found among them as an exception; but no: whoever signs the symbolic books confesses herewith by a noble oath and signature that he believes that there are also many holy children of God outside the visible Lutheran Church. For although these words are from the preface to the Book of Concord, they are an important part of it, because the preface indicates precisely how the symbols are to be understood and signed. Grabau, therefore, no matter how often this passage was held up against him, never accepted it.

The following personal confession was also made.

Someone had been awakened in the United Church, and had many believing friends in it, but although he himself was heartily attached to the Lutheran church, the erroneous idea that by joining it he should condemn everything but it made it unspeakably difficult for him to leave the Union. But as soon as he recognized from the symbols that the Lutheran Church itself confessed that <page 11> there were still many righteous children of God even in communities of false believers, he was able to leave the Union with a light and cheerful heart and publicly confess the Lutheran Church. [Walther or Brunn?]

Furthermore, although the Symbols say in another passage of such "pious people" that they would hopefully still come to a complete knowledge of the truth, they are already called "pious and innocent" because they are still in the false churches, the whole thing basically shows that [**147/1**] even those who have been born again can still be caught up in various major or minor errors. For

example, the holy apostles, who were converted according to Christ's testimony: "You are now clean because of the word that I have spoken to you" (John 15:3), were still smitten with many erroneous ideas before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, especially about the nature of Christ's kingdom. Even on Ascension Day the doctrine of the Church was still unclear to them, and it was only after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they gained the right full knowledge of it.

Luther, too, had long been a believing Christian, indeed had already begun the Reformation, and yet was still stuck in a false doctrine of the Church, so he was frightened and offered to give way when he was asked to do so in the name of the Church, until he finally realized that the Church extended further than Rome and what was attached to it.

When the Symbols call false-believing communities, especially the Reformed, to whom they probably look here first, "churches", it is of course important to distinguish in which sense they do so; insofar as God's Word has remained essential, Baptism and children of God are present, they are called churches; but insofar as one takes into account their false, godless teaching and their obstinate false teachers, they are sects.

Luther's bold words are to be understood with the same distinction, as he says: “Cursed is he who does not call himself a saint!” Insofar as a person believes in Christ, he is completely holy and not a sinner, but insofar as one looks at the life of the Christian and insofar as he still has flesh and blood on him, he is and remains a sinner.

Second testimony, Ibid. S. 54.

The knowledge of pure doctrine is like sanctification in general; it is piecemeal. False doctrine is to be avoided with earnestness.

Luther:

“We must confess that the enthusiasts have Scripture and God’s Word in other articles, and whoever among them hears and believes will be saved, though they are unholy heretics and blasphemers of Christ.” (*Letter Regarding Anabaptism* [1528; *StL* XVII, 2212; cf. LW 40, 251])

Here is the following:

Luther herewith testifies quite explicitly that the listeners to the swarm spirits can also be saved, provided they still have essential pieces of the truth and a person holds to them with simplicity.

Grabau teaches that the Word of God loses its power in the mouths of enthusiasts and false teachers, and maintains, since he makes salvation dependent on fellowship with the orthodox Lutheran Church as indispensable for salvation, [**147/2**] that he cannot be saved who does not have the right knowledge of all the fundamental articles of faith; hence Rev. von Rohr confessed at the Colloquium that they could not recognize a fellowship which erred in one fundamental article as a church. Rohr confessed at the Colloquium that they could not recognize a community as a church if it erred in one fundamental article. But Luther here confesses the contrary, and the experience of every individual Christian confirms it. For let anyone ask himself how he came to believe in Christ, and he will have to confess: not by having previously acquired an exact knowledge of all the articles of the faith, but by recognizing this or that individual doctrine, by this or that saying of Holy Scripture which has particularly touched his heart. Since that time he had been a Christian, and from then on his knowledge had grown more and more and the **<page 12>** various

erroneous ideas which he still had at his conversion had increasingly disappeared.

It is the same with knowledge as it is with sanctification in general! Just as knowledge increases gradually, sins are put away more and more and good is accomplished more and more, but it never becomes perfect in this life, so it is with knowledge; it grows gradually, but remains a work in progress according to 1 Corinthians 13:12. Grabau, of course, accuses us of the spirit of union for the sake of this teaching, but he also accuses Luther, who expressly testifies that God's word retains its power for salvation even in the mouths of enthusiasts, where it is not presented purely. But Grabau makes the power of the Word dependent on the divine calling of the person and now also declares the divine truths still remaining among the enthusiasts to be poisonous to the soul and ineffective because it is not proclaimed by a properly called person.

Far be it from us to believe or say that souls in the sects are saved by the false doctrines and human opinions preached there; that would be blasphemy; but we say with Luther that the believers in the sects have become so through the Word of God still remaining in the community in question, which they have accepted with simplicity. Nevertheless, a Christian should and must avoid the false churches with all seriousness if he does not want to sin against an explicit Word of God and bring his soul into the greatest danger; for he who allows a false teaching into his heart and builds his hope of salvation on it cannot be saved. But it is conceivable, and experience confirms it, that a person relies entirely on Jesus Christ with his heart, but in his mind all kinds of erroneous and confused ideas and opinions still lurk, because the enlightenment of the mind is not always in the same relationship to justifying faith and has its different degrees.

This was made clear by another example: Zwingli, as is well known, denied the presence of the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion; in the deepest sense he undoubtedly did so because he did not believe [**148/1**] with all his heart that the Son of God had truly become man in Christ; Nor did he believe that all men were already redeemed in Christ, and that this redemption had to be presented and offered to man in the means of grace and grasped by him only in faith, therefore he denied the efficacy of the sacraments as means of grace; with his false doctrine, which is thus especially evident in his doctrine of the Lord's Supper, he overturned the foundation of faith.

But simple-minded Christians in the Reformed Church, who wholeheartedly believe Christ to be the Son of God and the Bible to be the Word of God, and to whom it therefore does not occur to deny that Christ as the God-man can truly be present everywhere and therefore also according to his promise in Holy Communion, but who do not have such a trained mind that they recognize that their false doctrine of the Lord's Supper overturns precisely all these teachings; Finally, those who have been taught in this way from their youth and do not know why their teachers teach in this way, all sin, but their unrecognized error, as resting especially only in the mind, does not overthrow the foundation of their faith.

It was asked here:

Since in the physical realm, if one mixes the pure with the impure, everything becomes impure, one could also think that where false doctrine is introduced alongside the pure, the pure doctrine also becomes false, how should one think of this?

Answer:

The parable of the sower gives the right understanding. Christ sows the children of the kingdom through his ministers of the Word, the devil sows the children of wickedness through his false teachers. So whoever accepts the divine truth in his heart becomes a child of the kingdom and is saved, but whoever allows the false doctrine sown by the devil to enter his heart becomes and remains a child of wickedness and is lost. Just as error does not become truth when truth is added to it, truth does not become error because error <page 13> accompanies it, for its blessed effect is disturbed. It is also important to distinguish between error and denying the truth. Even a child of the kingdom can err, as Augustine says so beautifully: *errare potero, hereticus non ero*! He means to say: I can certainly err, but as soon as the truth is presented to me, I throw away the error and do not deny it, as the heretics do.

Incidentally, when we teach that people are also saved in false churches, we do not mean to say that it makes no difference to which church someone belongs. No, according to God's Word everyone should adhere to the orthodox church, but whoever is in a false church is in the greatest danger of his soul, and whoever knows that false teaching is going on and yet remains there will perish, for he sins [148/2] against an express commandment of God, 2 Cor. 6:14 ff, makes himself a sharer in the sins of others, strengthens the band of false teachers and fights with them against the confessors of the whole truth, and by his example strengthens others who are less enlightened in error, thus hindering the spread of the truth in the hearts of men; just as he himself thus denies, so Christ will deny him again at the last day. A believer can fall into great sin and still receive forgiveness and salvation as long as he sins out of weakness or ignorance, as we see in Peter's denial, but if he does the smallest sin knowingly and willfully, or even if he is in doubt as to whether it is right or not, he is damned, as the apostle says in Romans 14:23: "But he who doubts and yet eats is damned."

Fourth session. *)

*) The following are the meetings in which the doctrine was discussed.

Third testimony. ibid. p. 55.

Believers are also under the papacy. The pope is the Antichrist. He is still in the church. What to think of the Roman communion.

First, another testimony by Luther was read:

"I say that in the papacy there are true Christians, indeed the real quintessence of Christendom, and many great and pious saints. . . . Listen well to what St. Paul says, 2 Thess. 2:4:'. . . the Antichrist as God sitteth in the temple of God.' If then the pope (as I firmly believe) is the real Antichrist, he will not 'sit' or rule in the sty of Satan, but in the temple of God. He will certainly not sit where there are only devils or infidels, or where there is no Christ or church of Christ, for he must be the Antichrist and therefore be among Christians. And since he must sit and rule there, he must reign over Christians. . . . We do not rave as do the enthusiasts who reject everything over which the pope rules, for in that case we would also reject the Christians, the temple of God, with everything they have received from Christ." (*Ibid*. [*StL* XVII, 2191; cf. LW40, 232])

This was noted:

These words of Luther (written out here) have often been misused by the

Jesuits to make us believe that the Roman Church must therefore necessarily be the very best church because, according to Luther's testimony, it itself contains the quintessence of Christendom. But Luther speaks this word in a completely different sense, he does not want to praise the papal sect, but the faithful who lie under it like a man under a bear and put up with so much from it, for to hold and profess faith under the papacy was and is connected with many dangers and sufferings. We are now such tender saints that we are inclined to consider ourselves martyrs for the sake of a little ridicule or temporal harm.

But since Luther now confesses that the pope is the Antichrist and, according to 2 Thess. 2:4, sits in the [**149/1**] temple of God, he draws the irrefutable conclusion that there must therefore also be a true church under the papacy.

According to the language of Holy Scripture, "sitting" in this connection, as Paul uses it here, means nothing other than sitting on the throne in the capacity of reigning, as it says in the 110th Psalm: "Sit at my right hand, etc." But if the Antichrist sits in God's temple or church in the capacity of a ruler, then Christians must be there; and not merely in his vicinity, or as among the Turks, but they must be subject to him, he must have arrogated to himself the scepter over them as Christians. Whoever therefore denies that the **<page 14>** church is under the papacy rejects God's word and also denies that the pope is the Antichrist.

It is also very important that Luther says here: "We do not rave like the red spirits, that we reject everything that the pope has under him; for then we would also reject Christianity, the temple of God, with all that it has of Christ."

We are accused of adorning the sects with our teaching that outside the true, visible Lutheran Church there are still children of God, and of allowing false doctrine to be accepted. But this is by no means the case, for even in children of God are not begotten through false doctrine, but through the pure Word of God that still remains with them; with this doctrine we only do not want, like Luther, to reject the precious children of God in the false churches with what they have of Christ, nor do we want to deny that Christ is a King for whom the Lutheran church is far too narrow a kingdom, whose kingdom boundaries extend from one end of the earth to the other; We only want to maintain that God's Word does not lose its power when it is taken into the mouth by false prophets, if only it remains essential and is recognized and accepted as God's Word.

If we were to deny that the Church is under the papacy, we would also have to deny that Baptism, absolution, etc. exist, and, as far as we are concerned, we would be real murderers of souls, for we would rob Christians under the pope of all consolation, including that which they derive from their baptism. But how, for example, can Christians in Spain, Italy, etc. free themselves from the power of the priests? Or how can they give themselves the strength of faith after which they went joyfully to their deaths? Historical evidence could be cited from the first period of the seventeenth century, when some Lutheran theologians corresponded with the heads of the Greek Church in order to pave the way for the Reformation there too; of course, the attempt was unsuccessful, but what good would it have done if ours had shouted to those in the Greek Church: "You have no Baptism, no absolution, no communion, in short, nothing necessary for salvation! Not only would [**149/2**] the union have become even more impossible, but the believers in this church would also have been deprived of all consolation, and what little they had would have been destroyed.

The question was raised whether Holy Communion in the papacy was also one of the valid and salvific institutions of which simple-minded Christians could

rightly take comfort under the pope, and the answer was given: yes, certainly, if only it were distributed in both forms; but it is well known that there are not a few papal congregations which have the privilege of the chalice from earlier times.

It was mentioned that Grabau did not deny that the Pope was the Antichrist, but that the Reformation had thrown him out of the Church, and that the Council of Trent had made this separation manifest and permanent. But this is quite incorrect. Through the Reformation the pope has merely become manifest as the Antichrist, and millions have therefore withdrawn from his rule, but not all have gone out from him, nor have greater and grosser abominations been set up by the Council of Trent, as Spener also seems to assume a substantial change in the papacy for the worse from this time on, but this Council [of Trent] has even abolished some of the grossest abominations, as Luther, for example, testifies. Luther, for example, testifies that in his time the people were fed with foolish (loose) questions, preached about chicken's milk and blue ducks, etc., but besides this, the abominable heresies of the papal sect were only presented and confirmed by this Council in a somewhat finer and more refined manner than before; if one wants to make a difference before and after the Reformation with regard to the abomination of the papacy, it can only be a gradual rather than a substantial one. **<page 15>**

Fourth testimony. Ibid. S. 56.

That it is nothing to do with the so-called diaspora. Grabau's false interpretation of the 7th article of the Augustana. The church is a spiritual assembly.

Luther:

"Accordingly I believe that there is one holy Christian church upon earth, namely, the congregation or sum total or communion of all Christians in the whole world. This Christendom is not only in the Roman Church, or the papacy, but throughout the world, just as the prophets predicted that the Gospel should be preached in the whole world (Ps. 2[:8]; 19[:4]). Hence Christendom is scattered physically under the pope, the Turks, the Persians, the Tartars, and everywhere else, but it is gathered spiritually by one Gospel and faith under one Head, namely, Jesus Christ." (*Great Confession of the Lord's Supper* [1528; StL XX, 1101; cf. LW 37, 367])

[The essayist] commented as follows:

It is very important that Luther says that [**150/1**] "Christianity is scattered physically, but gathered spiritually", for it follows that there can be no question of a diaspora (dispersion) in the sense in which this word is so often used today; for Christians, wherever they may live, are not isolated, but as spiritual stones are already incorporated into the building and temple that God is building for Himself here on earth; they are all together the One Church of the saints, and already gathered and assembled in the Spirit.

Grabau, of course, had to welcome this idea of the diaspora, for since for him the church is actually a church state with a well-organized church government and pure word and sacrament, he could not of course admit that the church was also outside this organization, otherwise there would be a church outside the church or two churches, but since he also could not deny that outside the visible Lutheran church there were still believing children of God as scattered believing souls were regarded as spiritual building blocks, which at present still lie fallow and must first be added, and this is precisely the concept of diaspora, but, as I said, a fundamentally false one, for as soon as one believes, he is and will be added by the Holy Spirit to the one holy Christian Church, he may be wherever he wants to be physically. Therefore Luther says that Christianity is indeed physically scattered among the Popes, Turks, Persians and Tartars, but spiritually gathered under one head, which is Christ.

The fact that Grabau believed he could unite his wrong concept of the church with the Symbols could only be due to a gross misunderstanding and distortion of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, in that he took and interpreted the word "assembly" in the grammatical sense and therefore understood a physical, outward and visible gathering of good and bad people around the pure preaching office to be the church, despite the fact that the suffix "assembly of **all** believers" [according to the German]could and should have taught him otherwise.

From this he then concluded: First, that the Church must be visible as an assembly; — Secondly, that only those could be the Church who were gathered around the pure Word and Sacrament and thus professed it.

But the word "assembly" here does not mean a physical, visible assembly; but assembly here means a union or congregation of all true believers. And this spiritual assembly or union through the One Faith, the One Word and Sacrament, the One Christ, is a much more intimate and solid union than a physical union, for if two have the same Christ in their hearts, they are obviously much more

intimately united than if they only go to one and the same church building; they are, so to speak, one, as Paul says of all believers that they are all one in Christ. So we say that a member [**150/2**] of the church is one who has Christ in his heart through faith and in whom Christ reigns. But wherever there are people in whom Christ reigns as King, there is his body, there is the church; even if these people are physically wherever they want to be, they are nevertheless united and gathered together with him, the Head, and among themselves as members of one body through this spiritual reign of Christ.

Fifth testimony. Ibid. S 56.

False doctrine of the Donatists. Refutation of it by Augustine. Interpretation of the 7th Art. of the A. Conf. whether the Church, where false doctrine prevails, is mutilated.

It reads: Luther:

“Wherever there are the Gospel and the words of the Spirit of Christ, there, beyond all doubt, is the true church of Christ, for the Spirit of Christ never speaks except in His church. Therefore, because here (Ps. 19:4) the text speaks clearly that the doctrine [Gospel] of the apostles has gone out through all the earth, and there is no place where we read that it was disavowed, we must take care that we do not glory in ourselves as being the only believers, as did the impious Donatists, no matter who they might be, whether the old or the new.” (*Exposition of Psalm 19* [1521; StL IV, 1136])

It was noted here:

Luther wrote these words to interpret the 19th Psalm, and it was from this Psalm that the great church teacher Augustine most powerfully refuted the Donatists. They had also taught that their church community in North Africa was currently the right, true church of the Third Article and that there were no more Christians outside of it, only apostates. Augustine held up to them the following passage in particular: "Their cord goes out into all lands, and their speech to the ends of the earth." According to Ps. 19:4, compared with Rom. 10:18, the gospel had been preached in all the world, i.e. also outside North Africa, and the word could not return elsewhere, according to Isaiah 55:11, so there must necessarily be believers elsewhere, and Christ's church must extend further than the Donatist community. By this conclusion he brought many Donatists back into the fold of the orthodox church.

Question:

Whether it is also right to say that the church is hidden among the sects, since the church is first and only then do the sects arise?

Answer:

The apostle expressly says: the Antichrist sits in the temple of God, i.e. in the church, and yet the same apostle also declares: there must be rivals among you, so that those who are righteous may be revealed. So one could say both: the church is hidden among the sects and [**151/1**] the sects are in the church. It just depends on what you make the first term in your mind. For example, if one has wheat and tares together, one could just as well say: among this wheat are tares, as: among these tares is wheat.

Just don't be offended by the fact that there are supposed to be believers among the sects. There are just many simple hearts that are not able to see through error so easily, or do not have enough strength of faith to leave immediately and therefore outwardly adhere to the sect in simplicity. Our ancients make good use of the example of Absalom's revolution, 2 Sam. 15, to explain this. 200 honest men from Jerusalem went down with this unrighteous son and rebel, who were taken in by his flattery and did not realize what he was up to. Scripture therefore expressly testifies of them: "But they went in their simplicity, knowing nothing of the matter." [2 Sam. 15:11] Thus some still follow the false prophets in simplicity and do not realize that they are fighting against Christ and his kingdom.

At the same time, a concern was expressed with regard to Art. VII Augsburg Confession:

It seemed, it was said, as if one of the two following conclusions had to be drawn, and neither could be true. Either one seems to have to assume that the Church is only the community of those who have the Word and Sacrament pure, and that is only the visible Lutheran Church. Or one must assume that the church is the invisible community of all true believers and then the given characteristics of the pure Word do not fit.

The answer was given:

In this article [AC VII] one must distinguish precisely between the definition (description) of the church and its characteristics; if the characteristics are included in the essence, the above false conclusions arise. In the words: "It is also taught that there must always be and remain a holy, Christian church, which is the assembly of all believers," the definition of the essence of the church is given, namely what it is: the assembly of all true **<page 17>** believers. This definition does not fit any particular church, because none includes "all" believers, consequently the visible Lutheran church cannot *a priori* be understood as such.

But now the question arises: Where is the congregation of believers to be found; this is followed by an indication of the characteristics with the following words: "in which the gospel is preached purely and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel," that is, where the Word of God is preached, there the true church is to be found; even in the case of sects, the mark of whether and that there is still a church, a group of believers, is not error, but the remaining essential parts of the pure Word of God, so [**151/2**] the pure word always remains the mark of the church or of all believers.

Question:

Is the church among the sects mutilated because the Word of God is not preached purely and clearly?

Answer:

No, not the church is mutilated, but only the characteristics of it.

Objection.

But there is nothing in Article VII to indicate that there is also a church where the Word of God is preached in part but not entirely purely!

Answer:

In a definition one is always in the habit of describing the thing as it should be; so here too the church is described according to its ideal state, as it should actually be, but this does not mean that there is no longer a church where these characteristics are not in complete clarity and purity. If, for example, one wants to describe a human being according to his ideal state, one would say: man is a spiritual-physical creature who can pronounce a reasonable judgment. Here, then, man is described as he should be, but this is not to deny that he is also a man where the ability to form a rational judgment is not yet fully developed, as for example in a child.

But as absurd as it would be to say that a man is a spiritual creature who sometimes cannot pronounce a rational judgment, or sometimes has only one leg or one arm, so foolish would it have been if our Fathers had thus described the Church as being where the Word is not preached quite purely. The following Article VIII of the Confession already shows that the Church does not always appear as it should according to the Article VII.

Sixth session.

Sixth Testimony, Ibid. S. 57.

Of error, when it results in condemnation, when it does not, shown by the example of the faithful in the papacy, the apostles and Luther. We are to help others from error.

Luther reads:

"No doubt many pious Christians with sincere faith in their hearts observe the Mass and regard it as a sacrifice. But because they do not put their trust in the Mass, but rather consider all they do as sin, clinging only to the pure mercy of God, they are kept from perishing by this error. However, when the priests, reading the Mass, uphold this error without such faith . . . they deserve that this error be laid to their charge and they perish eternally . . . for God regards, searches, and tries the hearts and reins (Ps. 7:9-11), that is, the in ward inclinations. Hence God remits and forgives an error in one while He condemns it in another, for their [**152/1**] hearts differ in faith and humility. … But (because of this) you dare not say: 'I will err in a Christian way.' The error of a person who is a Christian stems from ignorance; and in Rom. 14:1 the apostle commands us to tolerate and bear such weakness. Therefore it does not become us to despise or condemn those who do not see and understand their error (while they trust in God's mercy) until the time when they recognize the error. But this we must do, namely, show up the error to everyone. . . ." (*The Misuse of the Mass* [1521; *StL* XIX, 1131 f.; cf. LW 36, 188 f.])

It was said:

Luther considers even those among the sects to be Christians who are not only in minor, but even in serious errors, if they hold them out of weakness and simplicity. He even believes that even those who still hold the Mass, that greatest abomination in the papacy, and regard it as a sacrifice, can be both laymen and simple-minded priests, "pious Christians". By these simple-minded, however, he undoubtedly means those who do not rely on the sacrifice of the Mass, but place the hope of their salvation in the Lord Jesus alone, but who also think that they **<PAGE 18>** have to go along with it because they have not been taught otherwise from their youth. They do not see through this abomination, because the priest sacrifices Christ again, and thus declares his one-time sacrifice on the cross to be insufficient, contrary to Heb. 10:12, 14. Because they only err out of simplicity and thus hold Christ next to it, this error does not condemn them.

Luther beautifully calls this a "Christian error," because they remain Christians. In itself, of course, every error is sinful and condemnable. And whoever under the papacy holds on to the error of the Mass in such a way that he builds his salvation on it is lost. So we see that one and the same error can condemn one person but not harm the salvation of another.

When Christ entered Jerusalem, for example, both the Pharisees and the disciples of Christ had chiliastic ideas about his kingdom, but while it did not harm the disciples' souls, because they were faithfully attached to the person of the despised Savior, it condemned the Pharisees, because they rejected Christ because of it.

Nathanael is another example of this. Although he mistakenly and contemptuously exclaimed: "What good can come from Nazareth?", he nevertheless believed in the promised Messiah, and despite his error Christ gave him the testimony: "Behold an Israelite indeed." John 1:45. ff. But against the Pharisees, who entertained the same error, John 7:52, he pronounced eternal

woe, for God, says Luther, "searches and judges the hearts." If the error is only in the head, and the heart remains attached to Christ, one can still be saved.

Luther himself is a striking example. He [**152/2**] was still in great error when he nailed his 95 Theses to the castle church in Wittenberg in 1517, thus sounding the first trumpet of the glorious work of the Reformation. He certainly had the right knowledge in some of the main points, but not in all: he still held Mass and the Lord's Supper under one figure, still invoked Mary and the saints, still considered monasticism to be right, including celibacy, and even in 1518 he still called the Pope a sheep among wolves; and yet who would claim that Luther was not a true Christian and a believing child of God despite these strong errors? Even Grabau will not dare to deny this, although he must thereby break the rod over himself and his hypocritical doctrine. Indeed, just start a catechesis even in our orthodox churches, even among those who have heard the Word for 20 or 25 years and are believers, and you would be surprised what hard pieces of false doctrine would still come to light.

When Luther concludes by saying that we should not condemn the erring who do not yet recognize their error, but on the other hand reveal the error to everyone, this is also to be taken to heart; we should not condemn the person, but always the error, not be indifferent to it, but try to help everyone out of it. We must therefore say to a reformer, for example: Your doctrine of Holy Communion is a damnable error. If he were now to exclaim: How, then, are all Reformed people damned? we would say: No, not that, for many in your community hold this error only out of weakness and ignorance, and if they also embrace Christ in faith, they will certainly be saved. But behold! You have now heard and felt my testimony about your error, that your teaching is contrary to God's word, see to it and purify yourself from it, so that you will not be found to be one who knowingly and willfully holds an error, and thus argues against God, you cannot keep faith and a good conscience and so will certainly perish eternally.

Luther behaved in a similar way towards the old teachers of the Church, who from the second century onwards harbored many errors; with regard to their persons and their lives he did not even dare to compare himself with them, but he freely and publicly rejected their false teachings and errors and was not afraid to claim that he could write better books than they.

Seventh Testimony, ibid. p. 57.

*The Lutheran Church is a particular church [or denomination] (*Partikularkirche*), because the universal (*allgemeine*) Christian church consists of [all] believers.*

It reads like this: Carpzov:

"No [particular] church dare glory in itself as being the one church; for it is one thing to be the one [**153/1**] church and another to be of the church. The whole church is the one; ours is of the one.. . . We admit that our church is a particular church, but we do not say that it alone is the true church. Though, so far as the visible communion is concerned, there may be no other church whose doctrine is as pure and free from blemishes as is the Lutheran church, yet we do not deny that there are other particular churches in which there are sincere members, known only to God, who are hidden in such a visible communion even if it is impure; and of such the true church properly consists." (*Isagoge in libros ecclesiae Lutheranae symbolicos* [ed. 2, 1675], pp. 303, 876)

[The essayist commented] as follows:

In this regard, the following: By "particular church" one understands a part of the One, Holy, Christian Church. Carpzov, in this recognized best interpretation of the symbols, thus readily admits what so many so-called Lutherans today deny, that the Lutheran Church is only a particular church. It is also very important that Carpzov, in the second half of the testimony, measures the ecclesiasticality (so to speak) of a community according to whether Christians are among them; for this reason he does not deny that there are other particular churches, because the Church consists of true Christians, and such are also hidden in the impure visible communities, known to God alone. The church is not a religious state with an organic constitution, but a number of believing children of God. Where there are no believers, there is no longer a church, even if there were thousands who outwardly maintained an ecclesiastical community.

Grabau, of course, referring to Matthew 16, claims that the church is where the public, pure ministry of preaching is, that is what makes the church. Since this ministry is pure and pure in the Lutheran church alone, then there alone is the church of Christ, and apart from it no salvation. Yes, to the question in the Colloquium as to whether a number of true Christians who were sent to an island and there chose one of their number as a preacher could not thereby establish the true preaching office? v. Rohr answered no, a man so chosen was to be regarded only as a reader or overseer, but not as a true pastor; according to this, therefore, the church does not have and give the preaching office, but the preaching office propagates itself solely within itself through ordination. The office of preaching therefore establishes the church, but the church cannot establish the office of preaching; this is the teaching of the papacy.

Eighth testimony. Ibid. S. 58.

That the Pope is the Antichrist. The newer theologians deny this just as much as the ancients, who took [**153/2**] *better care to testify to it aloud.*

Calov:

"Where the Antichrist is, there is also the church; otherwise the Antichrist would not be sitting in the church." (*System*., VIII, 227)

[The essayist commented:]

From this you can see how certain our forefathers were that the Pope was the Antichrist, because they even needed this to prove that there must also be a

Church in Rome.

Reference was also made here to a testimony by Carpzov and Heshusius, who were so firmly convinced that the Pope was the Antichrist that they also deny all taste for piety to those who do not yet recognize this and still flirt with the Pope. In J. *B.* Carpzov *Issag. in libr. symbol*. p. 921 we find the following*: "Et recte scripsit Heshusius in praefat. 600 errorum: ""SI quis revelato nunc Anti-Christo et patefacta Romani Pontif. turpitudine, non ex animo odit et detestatur Papam ut hominem peccati et adversarium Christi, eum necessc est, nullum pietatis gustum percepisse*."" "In the preface to the 600 errors, Heshusius writes quite correctly: 'If anyone, now that the Antichrist has been revealed and the shamefulness of the Roman head of the church has been brought to light, does not hate the pope with all his soul as the man of sin and as the <page 20> adversary of Christ, he has certainly not even acquired a taste for piety.'"

At the same time it was quoted a passage from the *Spiritual Rights of the Pope*, *dist*. 40 e. 6, where it reads: "If a pope is found negligent of his own and the brotherly salvation, useless and careless in his works, and moreover silent about the good, which is more harmful to him and to all, **but nevertheless leads innumerable peoples in heaps with him to the first damnation of hell**, let no mortal reproach him for this fault, because he who is to judge all must not be judged by anyone."

If we now consider what satanic wickedness is expressed in this, among other things, and at the same time that the pope really puts into practice what he says here, that he also persecutes poor Christians, tortures them and seeks to destroy them in body and soul, and has also destroyed countless numbers, then, on the one hand, one recognizes what an unspeakable good deed of God it was that he revealed his wickedness through Luther, and on the other hand, what horrible blindness and terrible ingratitude it is that so many newer theologians, including the Iowa Synod, do not believe that the pope is the Antichrist. They think that the pope is not, because he has not yet ascribed true divine nature to himself, as if he had not long ago, by his doctrine and works, recognized himself as a god and imposed himself on Christendom, even dubbing himself Vice-God. They are deceived by this, because the pope still throws God's word around and gives himself a holy appearance; but does the devil always come as a devil, does he not rather disguise himself as an angel of light? Although the pope, like [**154/1**] others, puts on more of a sheep's clothing, it is nothing other than saying I am God when he dares to put forward articles of faith that are not founded in Scripture, but flatly contradict it, and yet must be believed for loss of salvation, such as the immaculate conception of Mary, whom he has elevated to the status of Queen of Heaven. When he elevates people to sainthood and claims that not only in the church militant but also in the heavenly church triumphant they have been elevated so-and-so many steps higher than they were before, is he not also exalting himself to a God in heaven? Finally, when, as in Luther's time, he assigns the protection of the holy angels to those who went on pilgrimage to Rome to bring him money, as if he were their Lord, does this mean that he nods to himself above everything and pretends that he is God? 2 Thess. 2:4. But these modern theologians cannot see this, because they do not care about the Pope's abominations, and unfortunately they still think that this blindness is a special light of knowledge and an advance in theology! —

Ninth Testimony, ibid p. 58.

Who we can still count as part of the visible Lutheran church.

This is by V. Alberti and begins thus:

“ By catholic church we mean the sum total of true believers who are unanimous in preaching the doctrine of the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Of these many belong to the oppressed church (*ecclesia pressa*), living in such areas in which the doctrine publicly proclaimed is not Scriptural. . . . From this it follows that our Lutheran church is indeed not the catholic [universal] church, but still a pre-eminent part of it and the purest [in doctrine] among the particular churches, which flourish in one place and are oppressed in another.” (*Interesse praecipuarum religionum* [1683], pp. 439 f.).

In this regard:

Here the Leipzig theologian Alberti declares that those among the sects who believe as Lutherans also belong to the Lutheran Church, so he calls the Lutheran Church the catholic church, but not in terms of persons, but in terms of doctrine. Such Christians in the sects are also regarded here as Lutherans who have a conscious knowledge of the pure Lutheran doctrine, but who lack the power and opportunity to organize themselves into pure Lutheran congregations. They are therefore free of conscience, but not of worship. He counts this *Ecclesia pressa* (oppressed church) among the orthodox **<page 21>** Lutheran church, because through the confession which they make in the midst of the false church, they also become, so to speak, visible Lutheran congregations, even if they cannot organize themselves into such and take on the Lutheran name. [**154/2**]

The Salzburgers, for example, were such congregations; they were Lutherans, even if they did not bear this name. We heartily agree with this. On the other hand, it cannot be said that all believers, even those who are not aware of the Lutheran doctrine, belong to the visible Lutheran Church, for insofar as they are in the sects and have accepted their confession, they are different from the visible pure Lutheran Church and do not belong to this particular church, although they belong to the general Christian Church by virtue of their faith.

Tenth Testimony, Ibid. p. 58.

The Lutheran Church is catholic according to its doctrine, but not according to its persons.

Hollaz:

“The Christian church which adheres to the unaltered Augsburg Confession is the true [visible] church and professes the catholic doctrine. But with regard to its extent and range it is not the catholic or universal, but a particular church.... The catholic doctrine is that which (1) stems from Christ and the apostles; (2) is at all times and places impressed upon all believers; (3) and is received and believed by unanimous consent. The church is dedicated to the Augsburg Confession, accepts, believes, and confesses that doctrine. It is therefore catholic so far as doctrine is concerned. But with respect to its extent and range the Lutheran church is not the catholic or universal church, for it does not embrace all the regenerate and the elect of all times and places. Hence the Lutheran church is indeed the orthodox church and yet also a particular church.” (*Exam.*, part IV, ch. I, qu. 37)

The following has been remarked:

Here we see in what sense the word "catholic" or general can be used of the Lutheran Church; namely, when it is called “catholic” in regard to the doctrine which it holds, for it has the catholic, i.e. But in respect of persons, "in extent and propagation, it is not the catholic or universal, but a particular church ... because

it does not embrace all the born again and elect of all times and places. Whoever therefore teaches that the visible Lutheran Church is the only one that saves is teaching a terrible error. Incidentally, it is less misleading to say that the Lutheran Church is orthodox than to say that it is Catholic, for it is only in the former sense that the word Catholic can be applied to it.

Seventh session.

Eleventh Testimony.

Why no particular church can claim to be the only one that saves. "Difference [**155/1**] *between division and sect.*

Baier:

"After one or another part of the called have besmirched themselves with heresy or have separated themselves from the others by a schism, the rest no longer constitute the one catholic church, outside of which there are no true believers and saints and no salvation, because outside of them there may be, and actually are, God's Word and Baptism, by which faith and salvation are conferred upon men." (*Compendium*, part III, ch. 13, par. 26c, p. 646)

On this point it was remarked:

This quotation was obviously directed against the papists, who claim that there is no salvation outside their visible communion. Baier points out that it is true that in apostolic times there was a true visible Catholic Church, outside of which there was no salvation.

But this did not last long, soon larger or smaller houses broke away for the sake of various heresies, and the previously outwardly one church divided into various particular churches; from that time on one could no longer say that believing Christians, and therefore the church, were to be found in this or that alone, for no particular church encompasses all the born-again children of God.

If now the Pope's presumption must be rejected with disgust that his community alone embraces all believers and that there is no salvation apart from it, although in the papacy, which has spread over almost all countries, millions of children receive the right baptism every year and die blessed and believing in it, how wondrous it is **<Page 22>** it is then when Grabau wants to call his few hundred souls the catholic church, and thus limit Christ's kingdom in such a way that it shrinks to a speck against the whole world. What would Baier have said to that?

Baier also makes a distinction here between "sect" and "division". To make a sect or heresy is to hold to a fundamental error, to make a following for oneself and to blaspheme the truth; division, however, is to leave the orthodox church not for the sake of doctrine, but for the sake of ecclesiastical orders, institutions and similar external things. Grabau, for his part, makes no distinction between the two causes and declares separation from his house because of adiaphora to be just as much a cult, which is synonymous with heresy according to Scripture, as separation from him because of doctrine.

Twelfth testimony. Ibid p. 59.

The Lutheran Church has never taught that it is the only church. Whether the old Buffalo Synod was a sect.

[Fridemann] Beckmann:

"The controverted question whether the church [**155/2**] of the Lutherans is the true and pure church is being discussed especially by us [Lutherans] and the papists. But in order that the point of controversy might be rightly determined, it is necessary to state that the question concerns not the universal church, as the

papists foolishly demand of us, namely, that we prove that the church of the Lutherans is the true church [in the sense that it is the one universal church]. The question therefore concerns a particular church, that is, whether the Lutheran church among the many particular churches is a true and particular church." (*Theol. polem.*, 1702, 4, p. 781)

It has been said in this connection:

This distinguished theologian [1628-1703], the second successor to John Gerhard at the University of Jena, declares it to be downright silly for the Romans to demand proof that the Lutheran Church is the catholic or universal church, which embraces all who are saved, since and because the Lutheran Church has never claimed this of itself.

It is also curious what inconsistencies the German theologians are guilty of with regard to the doctrine of the Church. Thus Petri in his treatise on the church. He makes the visible Lutheran Church the only one to be saved; but when he is asked where the Church was before the Reformation, to whom: it is the Lutheran Church alone, he answers: With regard to this question, I simply adhere to the Apostles' Creed, since we say: I believe in a holy Christian church. Here, then, he must unconsciously admit that it is the invisible Church, which always remains and always was, and apart from which alone there is no salvation, even that it alone must be believed and cannot be seen.

It was asked here:

Whether it would not be going too far to call the old Buffalo Synod a sect? Of course, one could not deny that it had sectarian beginnings and connections, but if one looks at the often false teachings of the German theologians, which one would not yet consider a sect for that reason, then this name should probably not be applied to the old Buffalo Synod either.

The answer was given:

It is not yet said that it was already a sect, but it was very close to becoming one; for Grabau not only had false doctrine, but had already gathered a community on the basis of it and caused a division; he had also banished those who rejected or left his errors, and had publicly rejected and blasphemed the truth. Now, however, after the events that have taken place, since almost all his followers have separated from him and once again testified loudly against his doctrine and practice, and Grabau has not ceased to follow the old ways with the few who still follow him, he is in double danger of becoming a sect with his followers. The comparison with the German theologians does not apply because they only develop and write false doctrine, while Grabau, as [**156/1**] I said, is building up a special community on the basis of his false teachings.

Thesis XII.

If the Evangelical-Lutheran church has the characteristics that the gospel is preached purely and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel, then it is also the true visible church of God on earth. Ibid. p. 59.

Compare the evidence and testimonies under Thesis VIII.

It was noted that the title of the book gave particular offense at the fact that it says: The Lutheran Church is "the" true one, etc.; instead of "the" the indefinite article "one" was desired.

But we simply ask: Where is another visible church community that would be as orthodox as the Lutheran? We do not absolutely deny that there could be one on earth, but we know of no other at present, so we will retain the word "the" until we are shown that there is another orthodox church that does not bear this name. In addition, we include in the Lutheran Church all those who consciously profess the true Lutheran faith anywhere in the world, even if they are *ecclesia pressa*, and thus do not bear the name Lutheran.

Since, by the way, the evidence for this has already been discussed under Thesis VIII, and further evidence is given in the following theses, we proceeded immediately to

Thesis XIII.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes the written Word of the apostles and prophets as the sole and perfect source, rule and guide and as the judge of all doctrine, a) not reason; b) not traditions; c) not new revelations. Ibid. p. 59.

(Holy Scripture alone is the source of divine teaching. Errors of modern theology in this respect. Consideration of the biblical passages cited).

Here is the following:

It is not without reason that the thesis says: "The written Word of the apostles and prophets," instead of the writings of the Old and New Testaments, because the Lutheran Church has never established, nor can establish, the whole canon, but what is certainly proven and established as the writing of a prophet or apostle, it accepts as the Word of God. When it says "sole source," it means that there is nothing apart from it that can be a source, etc., and when it says "perfect source," it means that nothing apart from it is needed; the written Word of God is perfectly sufficient and adequate for salvation. 2 Tim. 3:15.

Above all, it is extremely important to [**156/2**] recognize Scripture as the only source of divine truth. Many German theologians [and Prof. Joel Biermann of Concordia–St. Louis] admit that it is the rule and judge of divine truth, but not the source alone: the source is actually the Christian self-consciousness that propagates itself in the church, and the Bible is merely there to reject everything that steps out and goes too far, or to test what this consciousness sets as true against Scripture; or, as von Hofmann in Erlangen says, it is there to wash and cleanse oneself again with the water of Holy Scripture when one has defiled oneself.

Unfortunately, even the otherwise so excellent theologian Philippi assumes a threefold source, namely: enlightened reason, the teaching of the Church and the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (*Dogm. I.* 226). The Dorpat opinion of the Iowa Synod even suggests that the catalog of dogmas or doctrines of faith only gradually became more complete in the course of time; In addition, the outrageous assertion is made that what is not taught and decided in the symbolic books of the Lutheran Church is not yet to be regarded as a known doctrine accepted by the Church and therefore not to bind consciences to it; according to this, the Lutheran Church would therefore be required to believe not only in what the Bible clearly and distinctly teaches, but rather in what the symbols teach.

No, all the articles of faith were already present at the time of the apostolic church, but on the one hand the knowledge of them shone brighter, on the other hand it was clouded by false doctrines. Just as the moon is always in the sky and always remains the same, it may be brightly lit one time and darkened another. But the Lutheran symbols do not contain all the articles of faith that are clearly revealed in Scripture, but only those that were particularly contested, obscured and disputed at the time the symbols were created, just as circumstances required.

We now proceed to the consideration of the proof-texts; the first was:

Deuteronomy 4:2:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

So after Moses had finished his books, he received the express command from God to conclude his canon with these difficult words: "You shall do nothing to it. So that this book should be the only source for the Jews; if there were other sources which it pleased God to use, this prohibition would have been unnecessary and would not have been added. The Jesuits, of course, believe that no error should be added, but that one could certainly [**157/1**] add truth, for example from tradition; but no, nothing, nothing should be added.

The objection was made here:

[Despite the prohibition] additions were made.

Answer: Yes, but not men, but God himself has added to it through the prophets and apostles; it is only forbidden to us, not to Him. Before the Word was written down, God preserved and propagated it through oral tradition, which worked quite well with the long life of mankind; from Adam to Noah it only took three intermediaries for the Word to be preserved purely, but when the life of mankind after the Flood was set by God for such a short period of time, this would not have been possible and therefore God had it recorded.

"Canon" here means not only rule and guideline, but also source; for if I am to accept nothing except what this word teaches me, I must first learn and impart it to myself through divine wisdom; My enlightened reason can help me to draw correct conclusions, can and must be my servant in conveying divine thoughts to me, but it cannot itself be the source of them; if it were, it would also have to be a rule and a guide, but how does that agree with Paul's admonition to take reason captive to the obedience of faith, i.e. not to let it be a judge?

Secondly, it says "neither shall ye diminish ought from it!" From this it is clear, firstly, that there is nothing in the Bible that is useless or superfluous; secondly,

that every word in it is necessary for us and contains eternal life.

This is very important because in recent times it is really thought that one must add that church doctrine develops gradually and grows in proportion to the age of the church. In apostolic times the church was, as it were, in its infancy, but now it is gradually maturing into a perfect man in Christ. But we are not to develop the line further, so that new doctrines come forth, as with the modern theologians, but we are to exercise our minds diligently, that we may rightly recognize and grasp the doctrines which the Church has always had; it is not a further development of the doctrines, but of our knowledge of the doctrines already <page 25> revealed and always known by the Church, that we have to strive for. Here in America God has made us realize by grace that not man's enlightened reason, nor anything else, but only God's Word is and can be the source of all teaching, as long as we hold on to it, we will remain shaken as on the rock, and we will gratefully hold on to it and not let the devil drive us away.

Concerning the second passage, Joshua 23:6:

“Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.” [157/2]

It was noted:

These words are a confirmation of what Moses had said. To "depart to the right" means to add to the written word, as the papists, for example, do by virtue of their tradition. To "depart to the left" means to depart from God's Word, as for example the Reformed depart in the doctrine of Holy Communion.

Concerning the third passage, Isaiah 8:20:

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”

it was explained:

Isaiah speaks these words to those who ask the dead and calls out to them: "Yes, according to the law and the testimony", etc. By this he refers to the Canon of Moses and the Prophets, and means to say that everything is to be taken solely from the Canon; whoever seeks heavenly truths elsewhere will find only lies and error and will be eternally lost.

The papist interpretation is completely wrong, according to which the "law" is to be understood as the written word and the "testimony" as tradition.

Luther's statement that all prophets actually drew their teachings from Moses is important. This agrees with what Paul says. Acts 26:22: "I say nothing except what the prophets have said should come to pass and Moses."

The fourth passage Luke 16:29:

“‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’”

[The explanation was given:]

This is just as beautiful: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." The rich man also thought that God's word alone was not enough to come to a knowledge of the truth, and that the preaching of a returning dead man would better convince his godless brothers. But Abraham testified to him that anyone who does not accept Moses and the prophets with faith would not believe a dead man either, for such a man does not believe with all his heart that a dead man could rise from the dead; he would declare it to be a play of his reason and yet remain unbelieving.

2 Timothy 3:15-17:

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to

make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

This fifth passage is quoted primarily because of the word "perfect". Paul means to say that whoever faithfully accepts the Scriptures is thereby made perfect, so that he lacks nothing and needs nothing else to become a man of God and a true scholar of God. The Romanists think [**158/1**] they still have to learn much from their tradition, the moderns from their enlightened reason, which is not in God's Word; but Paul says: "No, if you want to become truly perfect, let the Scriptures be sufficient for you. Do you want sound doctrine?" - Holy Scripture is sufficient for every true and wholesome teaching: do you want to punish? — Holy Scripture gives you everything you need to refute false teaching; do you want to reform? — Holy Scripture shows you enough ways and means to perfect a broken life; do you want to discipline to a pious, holy life? — Holy Scripture is sufficient for chastening in righteousness.

It was asked:

How is the passage 1 John 2:27 to be understood, where it says: "the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie."

It was said:

The anointing is nothing other than the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians. He is not idle in it, but impels them to this and that good work and teaches them rightly; so if I act in a given case out of faith according to love, I am acting rightly, I do not need to keep to the letter of the law. It was quite different with the Jews, they were under a threefold law, they could act according to love and still sin if it was against an explicit commandment of God.

So this teaching is not to be understood from new articles of faith, but from the lives of Christians. For the Holy Scriptures do not give instructions for every single case that occurs in life; if a Christian finds himself in a situation where he does not have a clear word from God as to how he should behave, what he should choose and what he should reject, the apostle teaches him here to let the anointing, i.e. the Holy Spirit, show him his way. He should pay careful attention to what the Holy Spirit teaches him in his heart or through the counsel of other Christians, so that he will finally come to a firm certainty of what he should and should not do. However, he must ultimately test whether he is doing right by the Word of God, for he must not baptize contrary to it, not contrary to the rule of faith and love that is shown to us in it; anyone who acts contrary to it is certainly not driven by the Holy Spirit and is sinning.

Ninth session.

Reason cannot be the source of pure doctrine. Right use of reason in matters of doctrine. Traditions and new revelations cannot be a source of doctrine either. What the office is.

They went on to discuss:

Thesis XIII

I. That reason is not the source of pure doctrine.

The first proof was 1 Cor. 1:21:

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." [**158/2**]

[The essayist commented:]

From this we see that the way to salvation is by nature closed not only to the foolish or simple-minded, but also to the wise. What is called wisdom before the world leads away from heavenly truth and conceals God instead of revealing Him as He is. In what terrible blindness even the highly admired pagan sages, such as Socrates, Plato and Cicero, remained; they did not recognize the true God, much less his attitude towards us, least of all the way to him.

Although the apostle calls the Gospel a "foolish sermon", we must not forget that he uses this expression only because it appears to the world and was called so by it, for in itself it is not a foolish sermon, but full of wisdom and miracles.

The second passage of evidence, 1 Cor. 2:4-5:

“My word and my preaching was not in reasoning apart from human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith might not stand in man's wisdom, but in God's power,”

Human art and wisdom could do nothing to faith, God's Word alone can work and give faith, not human persuasion. It is wrong to try to make this and that in the Holy Scriptures plausible to reason, faith cannot be generated by reason; it is even more wrong, indeed sinful, to ignore or nullify what is offensive to reason in the Scriptures, and thus to want to remove the reproach and foolishness of the cross. Job's words apply here (Job 13:7): "Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him?"

The right use of reason in relation to the Holy Scriptures was also discussed here.

Christianity is not unreasonable, but it is not only above, but also against human reason, which has been corrupted by the Fall. A reasonable justification of Holy Scripture is therefore impossible. Whoever wants to nullify the

"foolishness" of the cross before the world nullifies the cross itself. It is treason against the sanctuary when the <page 27> modern theologians make such concessions to the unbelievers, e.g. with regard to their natural research, as they do only to win over the so-called educated.

Reason has only the position of a tool in Scripture. It should serve us, firstly, to enable us to receive divine truth, and secondly, to enable us to draw conclusions about other truths from the truth we have recognized. But it has no material value that could produce divine truth from itself; it is quite Pelagian to regard reason as the source of divine truth, for this denies the total corruption of human nature through original sin. [159/1]

The third proof, 1 Cor. 2:14, reads as follows:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

[The essayist commented:]

Here there is an intensification of the previous testimonies. 1) Reason cannot hear God's Spirit speaking in the gospel. 2) If God gives the gospel, then reason cannot produce it of itself, indeed it cannot even be. 3) And even if God gives the gospel in full clarity, human reason sees nothing but foolishness in it unless God gives grace and provides light and support from above. As it is written: "In Your light we see the light." [Ps. 36:9] ;"turn thou me, and I shall be turned." [Jer. 31:18]

The fourth proof text, Colossians 2:8, reads:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

[The essayist commented:]

Here the apostle warns against the misuse of reason alone and shows how easily the truth cannot be found through it, but can be lost. We should remember this.

Proof 2: **That traditions or ecclesiastical customs cannot and must not be a source or judge of doctrine**.

Matt. 15:9 says:

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Here it was noted:

Consider what a terrible word this is for all those who do many sour and hard works, but on the basis of the commandments of men. It is especially important for our circumstances here. How zealous are the sects and enthusiasts in this country, how sour they make it for themselves, and abstain from this and that; how sour it was also made for the Grabau Christians with tyranny and required obedience to the authorities, and yet it is all in vain, is nothing but devil's martyrdom.

If someone is to become cheerful and confident in the faith and skilled in good works that please the Lord, he must be grounded in God's Word, and what he is to do must be made clear to him as a commandment of his God; then he will also know that his toil and labor is not in vain, but pleasing to the Lord.

Statutes of men to which consciences are bound, traditions, etc., do not make hearts and consciences certain, and therefore do not make them cheerful and happy to do what they demand. The heart can never become calm and firm

with false teaching.

Whoever, for example [**159/2**] Grabau's doctrine of the necessary succession of the apostolic ministry through ordination, can no longer take comfort in any official act of his pastor, for he cannot convince himself whether the succession of preachers has not perhaps been interrupted by the fact that someone who has not been properly ordained has entered the ministry and ordained others, and yet he is taught that God's Word and the sacraments are not powerful and valid if they are not administered by a duly ordained preacher. The Episcopalians are in the same error.

Pastor von Rohr even goes so far as to claim that Grabau no longer administers baptism and the Lord's Supper, simply because the synod has declared him deposed, even though half of his congregation still <page 28> adheres to him, has not recognized his dismissal from office and he continues to officiate. According to this, the power of the word and the sacraments did not rest in the word itself, but in the qualification of the man who administered it. So deeply has the false doctrine of the ministry taken root in the mind of Pastor von Rohr that he himself has no qualms about uttering such nonsense.

All this is because one does not consider what the ministry is. Ministry is nothing other than service, as Luther calls it, the service of Word and Sacrament. Where word and sacrament are administered rightly according to Christ's appointment, there is also the right ministry, regardless of who conducts it.

This does not mean that everyone may do it immediately without being called. Rather, it requires a proper call, as Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession testifies. But above all it must be noted that the Word and sacrament do not receive their power through the administrant (*Amtsperson*), but have it in themselves. The office is διακονία (diakonia) Greek, *ministerium* Latin, *Embeden* old German, all of which mean “service and work”.

Proof 3. **That new revelations cannot be the source and norm of doctrine**.

The first proof is taken from Heb. 12:26-28, where it reads:

“But now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, indicate that the movable is to be changed, as that which is made, so that the immovable may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

To this end:

Many think that “although it says in Deuteronomy 1:2 that nothing should be added to this, yet how many new revelations have been added by Christ and the apostles. Why should this now have ceased forever; why should nothing new be expected now; why should we now be content only with what has already been written and wait for no more new revelations?” [**160/1**]

But this passage answers all these questions; for while the Old Testament was still changeable or movable, the New Testament doctrinal compendium is unchangeable and will not be enlarged. With the apostolic writings the canon is forever closed. For when it says in Hagg. 2:6, "Once more," the Holy Spirit himself interprets it in the Epistle to the Hebrews to mean that this is the last time; — he testifies both that, first, God has already once caused a change to take place, and second, that this change which has now taken place is to be the last, so that henceforth everything will remain unchanged and immovable.

The first change occurred in Moses' time, for before Moses the church had a

completely different form than after Moses, since the law was now given and the word was distinguished. Another change, the last, occurred when Christ appeared on earth and moved heaven and earth through his appearance in the flesh. The church had a completely different form before Christ, and a different form after Christ, for the Jewish church had a different form, and the Christian church has a different form. A third change of the church on earth should not occur according to this saying. The apostolic, Christian church is the "immovable," it is to remain in this form until the last day, consequently there is no thought of a millennial kingdom. The teachings of new revelations put forward by the traditionalists, the inspired and the Mormons are therefore wrong and fundamentally false.

A particularly remarkable passage is also 2 Pet. 1, 19. The apostle had only said in v. 16 that what he teaches is not drawn from clever fables, but that he himself had seen Christ's glory when he was with him on the holy mountain and saw Christ in the glory of heavenly transfiguration, and had also heard the Father's own <page 29> voice giving glory and honor to his Son. But he now continues in v. 19, "we have a more solid *(βεβαιότερος)* prophetic value" etc. as if to say: that testimony to the truth is indeed very great and certain, but the written word is even more solid and certain, for it does not pass so quickly, it remains and we can, as often as we are challenged, see and recognize the glory of Christ in it again and again. Cf. Jos. 8, 19, 20 and Luc. 16, 29, where revelations are rejected by apparent death. Hence Christ, as an example in Matthew 4, does not drive out the devil by new revelations, but by appealing to the written Word and repeating three times: "It is written!"

Luther asked God not to let an angel appear to him, for he would fear that the apparition was from the devil and if he could not believe, he would only be in distress of conscience. Of course, none of the enthusiasts understand this, [160/2] who flutter around the Word and base their faith on everything else, on their feelings etc., but not on the written Word. Although we should thank God for the experiences of His nearness of grace, we should not base our hope of salvation on it, otherwise we will lack all comfort in the hour of trial and in the hour of departure. God's Word alone can be our anchor, for it remains eternally clear, true and certain.